



# Attendance and Punctuality Policy

## Westways Primary School

March 2023

This policy will be reviewed annually

## **Why do we need a policy for attendance and punctuality?**

Children come to school to learn and good attendance is important if they are to gain as much as possible from their time in school. When children miss lessons, it is harder for them to reach their full potential. Poor attendance and punctuality can lead to children feeling unsettled at school; it can affect their friendships and reduce their confidence. Poor attendance can result in social and academic problems, reducing the long-term life chances of children.

Punctuality is important so children can be registered, seated and ready to start learning when the first lesson of the day begins. It is also important for the social and emotional well being of the children. Arriving a few minutes late each day has a cumulative effect which can make it harder for children to learning and progress.

It is the duty of the Local Authority to ensure that parents/carers fulfil their duty under section 7 of the Education Act 1996. This duty is to ensure that their child receives full time education.

## **Punctuality**

The school day:

- 8:40am: School doors open – staff collect children from the playgrounds.
- 8:50am: Morning registers are taken. Children arriving after this time will be greeted by a member of SLT and/or a learning mentor and recorded as late.
- 9:05am: All class registers are closed. School gates are closed. Any child arriving after this time must enter through the gate on Mona Avenue and report to the main office.
- 9:30am: Any child arriving after this time an unauthorised late mark will be recorded. This will show as an unauthorised absence for the morning on the register.
- Afternoon Registers are taken at 1:00pm in Key Stage 1 and 1:10pm in Key Stage 2. All registers are closed at 1:20pm.

## **Punctuality procedures**

- The Senior Learning Mentor monitors lateness every half term.
- Late arrivals are entered in the register and entered on our computerised attendance system.
- Parents/carers will be contacted to discuss any problem which may contribute to a lack of punctuality.

If records show a poor pattern of punctuality for a child:

- The Executive Headteacher/Head of School will be informed;
- The Senior Learning Mentor will contact parents/carers via red letter 1 and monitor your child's punctuality;
- If punctuality does not improve, following the issue of red letter 1, the Senior Learning Mentor will contact you via red letter 2 and invite you to a meeting to discuss your child's punctuality.

## **Collection of Children**

- The end of the school day is 3:15pm.
- Children are escorted to the playground by a member of staff to meet their parent/carer.
- Any children not collected are taken to Mona library to wait with a member of SLT or the Senior Learning Mentor, who will record which children are present and the time they are picked up.
- If a message has not been received in advance, school staff will try to contact parents/carers to seek an explanation as to why their child has not been collected.
- If a child has not been collected by 3:45pm, school will follow the procedures outlined in Local Authority's safeguarding guidance and social care will be contacted. In the event of a further delay, the police may also be notified.

## **Absence**

Children should attend school every day. If a child is unable to attend school, the child's parent/carer is requested to telephone school on the first day of absence to explain why their child is not in school. Simply reporting them as 'ill' may be challenged by the school who may require more details about the absence – illness for persistent absentees will not be authorised without medical evidence. The appropriate code will then be entered in the attendance register. If a parent/carer does not notify the school, the school office will phone them; the Senior Learning Mentor will phone specific families (e.g. those with persistent absentees; children open to services or with additional needs). This is known as 'First Day' absence calling. If no answer is received to this call, a voicemail message will be left, if able to do so, and a record of the phone call is kept in

the absence log in the school office. If no reply is received, a letter will be sent to the child's home requesting a reason for the absence and a copy will be kept on file. If we do not receive an explanation, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised.

### **Authorised/unauthorised absence**

It is important to note that a letter or phone call from a parent/carer does not authorise an absence. Only the school's acceptance of the explanation can authorise a pupil absence.

Absence from Westways Primary School may be authorised for the following reasons:

- Sickness;
- Days of religious observance (up to three per year);
- Exceptional family circumstances (such as bereavement);
- Medical/dental appointments (proof of appointments is required);
- Pre arranged visits to another school/educational setting;
- Exams (music, dance, gymnastics etc.).

Absence will not be authorised for the following reasons:

- When no explanation is forthcoming from the parent/carer;
- The school is dissatisfied with the explanation given;
- The child is staying at home to look after siblings, mind the house or because their parent/carer is ill. (Parents/carers are encouraged to contact school if their child has any caring responsibilities so that we can work in partnership to help them receive appropriate support and ensure the child's education does not suffer.)
- Children who are persistent absentees may not have illness authorised, if medical evidence cannot be provided

It is important to remember that any period of '*unauthorised absence*' could result in the Local Authority taking action against the parent/carer. This could include a fine or court action. Where parents/carers repeatedly cause their child to be absent from school, the Local Authority may pursue what is called the higher '*aggravated offence*'. Aggravated offences carry higher penalties and are listed on the Disclosure and Barring Service criminal records disclosure. This may impact on a parent or carer's ability to secure future employment, particularly if working with children or vulnerable adults.

### **Arrangements for medical/dental appointments**

- A pass must be collected from the school office. When requesting a pass, an appointment card or letter should be shown at the school.
- The school should be informed if a child has an emergency appointment and because of this the parent/carer may not have been able to request a pass.
- For children who we are monitoring their attendance and/or punctuality, parents/carers may be asked for further proof of the appointment from the doctor or dentist, which they will need to bring in to school.

### **Expectations**

It is expected that parents and carers will:

- Ensure their child attends regularly and on time;
- Notify school on the first day of absence;
- Only request a holiday in term time in exceptional circumstances;

- Not keep their children away from school for trivial or minor reasons;
- Not keep their children off school during SAT's or at times of testing.

Westways will:

- Regularly communicate the attendance policy to parents/carers;
- Ensure that the Executive Headteacher/Head of School is informed about any attendance and punctuality matters and is in agreement with any action taken;
- Have an expectation that full time, punctual attendance will be the norm and all persistent absences/lateness will be followed up;
- Monitor attendance and punctuality by checking registers and the computerised attendance system;
- Have a system of pupil passes for legitimate time out of school due to unavoidable appointments;
- Identify and act upon problems with attendance and punctuality promptly;
- Work with the Local Authority to support families to resolve attendance and punctuality concerns.
- The attendance champion (Charles Hollamby – Head of School) and Anna Reynolds (Senior Learning Mentor) will meet with our local authority attendance officer every term to set individual whole school attendance targets.

## **Monitoring**

The registers are monitored on a regular basis by the Senior Learning Mentor, Learning Mentor and the Local Authority Attendance and Inclusion Officer. Attendance patterns are monitored half termly. Where a child's attendance and/or punctuality record raises concern, this will be discussed by the Executive Headteacher/Head of School, Senior Learning Mentor and the Local Authority Attendance and Inclusion Officer. Any issues identified will be discussed with the child's parents/carers.

At least every term, parents and carers will receive a letter informing them of their child's attendance:

- Below 95% = Amber letters for pupils with attendance below 90% in the previous academic year;
- Below 90% = Red letter.

Parents will be invited into school to seek ways of improving attendance and meet with the Senior Learning Mentor, senior leadership and governors.

Information on attendance is returned half termly to the Local Authority for monitoring purposes.

## **Attendance procedures**

If our records show a poor pattern of attendance for your child:

- The Executive Headteacher/Head of School will be informed;
- The Senior Learning Mentor will contact parents/carers via a letter 1 and monitor the child's attendance;
- If attendance does not improve, following the issue of red letter 1, the Senior Learning Mentor will contact parents/carers via red letter 2 and invite them to a meeting to discuss their child's attendance.

- If attendance does not improve following this meeting, the Local Authority will be informed and School Attendance Panel (SAP) will be arranged;
- The SAP will be with the Senior Learning Mentor, Executive Headteacher/Head of School, Local Authority representatives and the child's parents/carers will meet to discuss and implement strategies for improving the child's attendance;
- The Local authority will keep in contact with parents/carers where appropriate;
- If attendance does not improve, the Local Authority will issue a final warning;
- As a result parents/carers may receive a court summons.
- School will liaise closely with their local authority attendance office and set regular whole school targets.

## **Penalty Notices**

Where a child's attendance is consistently poor (less than 90% with at least 20% of the absence being unauthorised) and all steps have been taken to rectify this (including the school and the Local Authority working with parents/carers and their child), the Multi Agency Support Team (MAST) will, after consulting with the school, consider issuing a Penalty Notice (a fine). Families that take holidays in term time can also receive a fixed penalty notice if their child is absent for more than five days, this includes families that do not return on time after the summer break.

## **Children missing from education**

The Senior Learning Mentor will contact and work with the Council's Children Missing from Education Team if a child is absent from school for 20 consecutive days and unaccounted for. We will also inform Social Care, if appropriate. Pupils who cannot be located will be considered as missing. The Children Missing from Education Team will be informed and they will pursue the matter in accordance with Local Authority procedures.

## **Children in public care**

A child who is being looked after by the local authority is known as a looked after child. They might be living with foster parents, at home with their parents under the supervision of social services or in a residential children's homes.

The school's designated teachers for Looked After Children are:

- Martin Fallon (Executive Headteacher) – Designated Safeguarding Lead
- Jo Thomas (SENCO) – Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead

The Senior Learning Mentor will monitor the attendance of all looked after children and report this on a daily basis to Welfare Call and, on request, to the Virtual School. (Welfare Call is a service which collects and analyses attendance data for looked after children).

## **Vulnerable Families**

The processes taken around a child's attendance are always decided on a case-by-case basis and the standard procedures may not be appropriate for our more vulnerable families (families open to services, families experiencing bereavement/trauma, children with additional needs). In these cases, alternative support may be explored for the families or attendance may be discussed during multi-agency meetings.

## Home Education

The law states that all children must receive a full-time education between the ages of 5 and 16, and parent/carer are responsible for making sure that their child's education is suitable to their age, ability, and aptitude, and any special needs they may have.

*What is the process if I want to take my child out of school to home educate?*

If your child is of compulsory school age, (the term after the child's fifth birthday) and is already registered as a pupil in a Sheffield school you will need to write to the Executive Headteacher/Head of School.

It is then the Executive Headteacher's/Head of School's legal duty to remove your child's name from the admission register and the Executive Headteacher/Head of School will then notify the Local Authority. School will only remove a child from roll once they have been notified by the Local Authority to do so. Checks have to be made that this is an appropriate decision for the child before we can take them off roll. It is important that you know that once your child's name is taken from the school roll that it may not be possible for your child to return to the same school if you change your mind, because the place may have been allocated to another child.

If your child has a special educational need or disability, you can choose to home educate.

If your child has a statement of special education needs, or an education, health and care (EHC) plan, it is the Local Authority's duty to review the statement/plan annually to check that the provision set out in it continues to be appropriate and your child's needs continue to be met.

If you require any more information please contact:

Elective Home Education Level 5, North Wing Moorfoot Sheffield S1 4PL

Tel: 0114 203 7141

## Awards and rewards

Each week, the classes in Key Stage 1 and 2 with the best attendance are awarded 'Top Dog' and a certificate – one for each key stage. In addition, 'Punctuality [Red] Panda' is awarded to the class with the best punctuality – one in each key stage. The school will always sensitively take into consideration persistent absence due to illness/disabilities.

## Holidays during term time

Holidays in term time are not an entitlement and time off during term time must be requested in advance. Each request is considered individually by the Executive Headteacher/Head of School.

Regular school attendance is essential if pupils are to make the most of their educational opportunities. The Local Authority and Westways Primary School has a responsibility to provide the best education possible, but we can only do this if pupils attend regularly. Taking time out of school for holidays can be disruptive and it can also be difficult for pupils to catch up on the work they have missed.

*The Department of Education's most recent guidance states:*

'The current law does not give any entitlement to parents to take their child on holiday during term time. Any application for leave must be in **exceptional circumstances** and the Head teacher

must be satisfied that the circumstances warrant the granting of leave. Parents can be fined for taking their child on holiday during term time without consent from the school.'

The Executive Headteacher/Head of School may therefore only consider giving permission for a pupil to be absent from school in term time in '**exceptional circumstances**' and proof will be requested.

If you choose to disregard this guidance, the Local Authority may take legal action under section 444 of the 1996 Education Act which states that parents/carers have a legal obligation to ensure that their child attends school regularly.

*The Local Authority's position is as follows:*

'Taking unauthorised term time holidays and/or persistent absence (below 90%) may make you liable for a Penalty Notice (fine). The penalty is a **£60 fine if paid within 21 days** of receipt of the Penalty Notice, rising to **£120 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days**. If the Penalty Notice is not paid in full within the 42 day period **Sheffield City Council may prosecute**. This could result in a fine of up to **£1,000 plus costs**.'

At Westways, we are committed to raising the profile of attendance and its link to achievement. It is important therefore that parents/carers work with us by ensuring that their child attends school on time, every day and by not taking their child out of school for holidays during term time.

***If parents/carers feel that there are exceptional circumstances, which prevent their holiday being taken during school holiday periods, they need to complete a leave of absence request form (available from the school office) and return this to school at least 20 days before they intend to take the leave. A written response will be sent within 10 days of the request being received.***

### **Extended visits to a child's country of origin**

Extended holidays to a child's country of origin follow the same rulings as Exceptional leave requests during term time (see advice above). Children who do not return to school by the agreed date of return, or take unauthorised leave, are at risk of losing their place at the school.

We will, however, do our best to support children returning after long periods of absence. The Executive Headteacher/Head of School, Senior Learning Mentor and MAST will liaise closely to employ appropriate reintegration strategies where appropriate.

**Signed:** Executive Headteacher

**Signed:** Chair of Governors

**Date:** March 2022