

WOOD FOLD PRIMARY SCHOOL

PUPIL ATTENDANCE POLICY

RATIONALE

Regular and punctual attendance at school is a legal requirement under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996. In compliance with the Local Authority School Attendance Code of Conduct, Wood Fold Primary School seeks to ensure that all its pupils receive a full-time education which maximises opportunities for each pupil to reach their potential. The Governors and staff at our school expect all children on roll to attend every day, when the school is in session, as long as they are fit and healthy enough to do so.

We believe that the most important factor in promoting good attendance is development of positive attitudes towards school. To this end, we strive to provide a welcoming, caring environment, whereby each member of the school community feels wanted and secure. We strive to make our school a happy and rewarding experience for all children.

We will reward those children whose attendance is very good. We will also make the best provision we can for those children who, for whatever reason, are prevented from coming to school and will challenge the behaviour of those pupils and parents who give low priority to attendance and punctuality.

To meet these objectives, Wood Fold Primary school will follow the guidance stated in the Local Authority School Attendance Code of Conduct to ensure an effective and efficient system of communication with pupils, parents and appropriate agencies to provide mutual information, advice and support.

AIMS

- To strive for the highest overall percentage of pupils present at school.
- Raise awareness of the importance of good attendance and punctuality for all those associated with the school.
- To provide support, advice and guidance to parents and pupils.
- Raise the levels of achievement.
- Promote opportunities to celebrate pupils' good attendance and punctuality.
- Ensure that attendance is monitored effectively and reasons for absences are recorded promptly and consistently.
- To promote effective partnerships with the Local Authority.

We will work with pupils and their families to ensure that each pupil attends school regularly and punctually by:

- Making parents aware of the Code of Conduct via the school website
- Issuing the Education Penalty Notice warning (Appendix 1) to parents at the beginning of the academic year and subsequently each term.
- Providing parents of mid- year admissions to the school a copy of the Education Penalty Notice warning (Appendix 1)
- Sending advisory letters when early patterns of unauthorised absence is evident.
- Reminding parents regularly of their responsibility in ensuring that their child attends school regularly and punctually
- Working towards a goal of 96% - 100% attendance for all children
- Regularly making parents aware of the impact of poor attendance on academic progress and attainment
- Informing parents of their child's attendance and number of late marks with termly reports indicating the percentage of child's attendance.

ABSENCE

Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 states that it is the duty of a parent to ensure his/her child receives efficient full time education suitable to his/her age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs he/she may have either by regular attendance at school, or otherwise.

Section 444 of the Education Act 1996, makes it an offence for a parent to fail in that duty which could result in a parent being prosecuted for failing to ensure the regular attendance of their child at school

Children are expected to attend for the full 190 days of the academic year, unless there is a good reason for absence. There are two types of absence:

- Authorised (where the school approves the pupil absence)
- Unauthorised (where the school will not approve the absence)

Authorised absence includes:

Genuine sickness, religious observance days, and funerals.

Unauthorised absence includes:

Shopping, visiting relatives in both the UK and other countries and holidays in term time.

In the rare circumstance when the Headteacher is satisfied that there are genuine reasons for an absence in term time, the number of days absence must be agreed in advance. This will be an **authorised absence**.

Repeated unauthorised absences

When school recognises a pattern of a child having a repeated number of unauthorised absences, the parents or carers will be asked to visit the school and discuss the problem and ascertain whether an Early Help Intervention would benefit the family. If the situation does not improve, the school will continue to forewarn the parents of a potential EPN fine, should it meet the criteria.(Below)

EDUCATION PENALTY NOTICES

Section 23 of the Anti Social Behaviour Act 2003 empowers Local Authorities and other designated bodies the power to issue penalty notices in cases of unauthorised absences from school. The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2004 came in to force on 27th February 2004. Recent review (May 2018) of Wigan's policy now states that:

A Penalty Notice may be issued following an Education Penalty Notice warning being sent by the school to the parents.

School will complete an Education Penalty Notice request form if a child falls within one or more of these categories within a 12 week period;

- 10 sessions (5 days) of unauthorised absence with under 90% attendance
- 20 sessions (10 days) of unauthorised absence
- Persistent late arrival at school

The Local Authority will consider issuing a Penalty Notice to each responsible parent.

The use of Penalty Notices shall be restricted to one per pupil, per parent in any single academic year.

The payment of an Education Penalty Notice will be £60 if paid within 21 days, increasing to £120 to be paid within 28 days.

If payment is not received within 28 days, the Local Authority will consider prosecution for the unauthorised absence to which the Education Penalty Notice relates.

Non – payment of an Education Penalty Notice may result in legal action being taken by the Local Authority. These actions will be considered where a significant improvement of school attendance is not apparent.

The instigation of legal proceedings for unauthorised absence from school under Section 444(1) of the Education Act 1996, may also be considered where deemed appropriate.

LATENESS

School begins at 8.55 am and all pupils are expected to be in school for registration at this time. Any child arriving later than 8.55 am should enter via the main entrance, reporting to the school office. Parents must sign their child/ children in using the InVentry system. A record of children who are late is kept by the Deputy Headteacher/ Pastoral Manager. A child arriving after this time may be recorded as an unauthorised late. Persistent unauthorised lates will result in an Education Penalty Notice being issued.

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If your child misses the start of the day, they can miss work along with vital information from their class teacher. Late arrivals disrupt lessons and can be embarrassing for the child. This in itself can encourage absence.

If a pupil has been late for school on several occasions, letters will be sent home to parents/ carers requesting an improvement and offering support. Parents/ carers may be invited into school to meet with the Deputy Headteacher if no improvement is seen to discuss what support can be offered.

HOLIDAYS IN TERM TIME

From 1st September 2013, the new law gives NO entitlement to parents to take their child on holiday during term time. We believe that children need to be in school for all sessions in order for them to achieve their maximum potential. We strongly discourage parents and carers from arranging any holiday or absence during term time as they are not in the best interests of the child. Any application for leave must only be in exceptional circumstances and the Headteacher must be satisfied that the circumstances are exceptional and warrant the granting of leave.

From the 8th January 2019, Wood Fold Primary school will introduce a 'Leave of Absence Request' form which is required to be completed 6 weeks prior to any requests for holidays/absences from school. Wood Fold no longer accepts a letter or an email request. This form is available from the school office and on our website.

Headteachers would not be expected to class any term time holiday as exceptional. Parents will be fined by the Local Authority for taking their child on holiday during term time without the consent of the school if it meets the criteria of either 10 sessions (5 days) of unauthorised absence with under 90% attendance or 20 sessions (10 days) of unauthorised absence.

RESPONSE TO ABSENCE

The set procedure for informing the school of a child's absence is as follows:

- If you know in advance that your child is going to be absent for any reason e.g. medical treatment please inform the classteacher or school office of the date(s) in writing before the absence begins.
- In cases of unforeseen circumstances, e.g. sickness, please inform the school by telephone (or email) on the first day of absence before 9.30 am, and by means of a brief explanatory letter on the child's return to school.

- If the school has not been informed of an absence we will contact you (on the morning of absence) to ascertain why your child is not in school.
- If the school has not been informed of an absence, or been unable to contact the family within 3 days, a letter will be sent requesting reason for absence.
- If after 5 days no contact has been made with the school, the Local Authority will be informed.

If, after the child returns to school no explanation of absence is given by the parents / carers the school will aim to make contact again. The absence will be recorded as unauthorised if no explanation can be obtained.

Regular register checks are carried out by the Pastoral Manager, Deputy Head and Headteacher. If attendance falls below 90% a letter will be sent home by the Head requesting an improvement and offering support. If attendance rate does not improve the Head will liaise with the Local Authority and the Attendance Enforcement Team who may contact parents / carers by letter, do a home visit or invite parents / carers to a formal meeting. Unauthorised absence which falls below 90% will automatically generate a referral to social services.

PERSISTENT ABSENCE

A child who is persistently absent (defined in legislation as 10% or more absences) is at risk of failing to achieve their full potential within the school environment. In such instances authority support will be sought, however continued unauthorised absence may result in legal action being taken by the Local Authority (LA) attendance enforcement team.

A pupil becomes a persistent absentee when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason. We monitor all absence thoroughly. Parents/ carers will be informed via letter if their child is at risk of becoming a persistent absentee.

In the first instance, if attendance falls below 90%, a letter will be sent to inform parents/ carers of their child's current attendance. Parents/ carers will also be contacted in order to arrange a meeting with a member of the Senior Leadership Team to discuss their child's absence record and any support needed. If there is no improvement after the meeting, within a four-week period, then a letter will be sent home by the Headteacher requesting an improvement and offering support. If the attendance rate does not improve, the Headteacher will meet with parents/ carers again to discuss support (e.g. setting up an Early Help Plan; putting into place a Parenting Contract; contacting the School Nurse) and/ or may refer the case to Social Services who will contact the parents/carers via a home visit or invite parents/carers to a formal meeting.

MONITORING AND REVIEW

Pupil attendance will be monitored weekly by the Pastoral Manager/ Deputy Head teacher. Children at risk of falling below 90% attendance, as well as those accumulating late marks will be identified and appropriate action taken. It is the responsibility of the governors to monitor overall attendance, and they will request an annual report from the headteacher. The governing body also has the responsibility for this policy, and for seeing that it is carried out. The governors will therefore examine closely the information provided them, and seek to ensure that our attendance figures are as high as they should be.

The rates of attendance will be reported on the school weekly newsletter as well as class Twitter feeds, and in the termly Headteacher's report to the Governing Body.

Class teachers will be responsible for monitoring attendance in their class and for following up absences in the appropriate way. If there is concern about a child's absence, they will contact the school office immediately. If there is a longer-term general worry about the attendance of a particular child, this will be reported to the Headteacher, (or a member of staff acting on their behalf) who will contact the parents or carer.

This policy will be reviewed by the governing body every year, or earlier if considered necessary.

WHAT PARENTS CAN DO TO HELP

- Let the school know as soon as possible if your child is away.
- Try to make appointments outside school time.
- Do not allow your child to have time off school unless it is really necessary.

If parents / carers are worried about their child's absence they should make an appointment to talk to their child's classteacher or the Headteacher to discuss it.

REWARDS

The class with the best attendance in KS1 and KS2 each week will receive an extra 15 minutes of playtime.

THE REGISTRATION SYSTEM / ATTENDANCE SYSTEM (SIMS)

The school will use paper registers and a computerised system for keeping the school attendance records.

The following national codes will be used to record attendance information.

Key to Codes	
/	Present (AM)
\	Present (PM)
B	Educated off site (not Dual reg.)
C	Other authorised circumstances
D	Dual registration (attending other estab.)
E	Excluded (no alternative provision made)
G	Family holiday (not agreed or days in excess)
H	Family holiday (agreed)
I	Illness (not med/dental appointments)
J	Interview
L	Late (before registers closed)
M	Medical/Dental appointments
N	No reason yet provided for absence
O	Unauthorised Abs (not covered by other code)
P	Approved sporting activity
R	Religious observance
S	Study leave
T	Traveller absence
U	Late (after registers closed)
V	Educational visit or trip
W	Work Experience
#	Planned whole or partial school closure
Y	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances
X	Non-compulsory school age absence
Z	Pupil not on roll
-	All should attend / No mark recorded

On school letterhead – Appendix 1

Dear Parent,

Education Penalty Notice Warning for Non-School attendance

Under the Education Act 1996, parents and carers have a duty to make sure their children regularly attend school. If parents or carers fail to do this, they can be prosecuted.

Working within a Code of Conduct the Local Authority can issue a penalty notice to parents or carers if a child has missed a number of sessions without permission from the school.

If your child falls within one or more of these categories within a 12 week period:

- 10 sessions (5 days) of unauthorised absence with under 90% attendance
- 20 sessions (10 days) of unauthorised absence
- persistently arrives late for school after the close of registration

you could receive a Penalty Notice of £60 which will increase to £120 if not paid within 21 days. The Penalty Notice will need to be paid in full before 28 days of the notice being served. Failure to pay a penalty notice may result in prosecution (a separate penalty notice may be issued to each parent for each child). In law, an offence is committed if a parent fails to secure a child's regular attendance at school. Wigan Council Attendance Service, in conjunction with schools, will use these powers as an early deterrent to prevent patterns of unauthorised absence developing.

You may also receive a Penalty Notice for the offence of failing to secure regular school attendance under the following circumstances:

- Your child is stopped on a truancy sweep
- You fail to ensure that your child is not in a public place during the first 5 days of a fixed term or permanent exclusion.

The Local Authority and schools are committed to providing the best possible future for your child. If you have concerns about your child's attendance at school or if you are experiencing any difficulties please contact your school and ask for support.

Yours sincerely,

Headteacher