



Attendance Policy

Introduction

St. Michael's Woolmer Green Primary School recognises that positive behaviour and good attendance are central to raising standards and pupil attainment.

For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any pupil's absence or later arrival disrupts teaching routines and so may affect the learning of others in the same class.

Ensuring a child's regular attendance at school is a parental responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

Principles aims and objectives

This policy is written with the above statement in mind and this policy underpins our school vision to provide a broad and balanced curriculum accessible to all pupils. This will be delivered in a secure, caring and stimulating environment to achieve high standards. Our children will develop intellectually, spiritually and culturally through the promotion of Christian Values.

Policy implementation

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility – parents, pupils, Governors and all members of school staff.

To help us all to focus on this we will:

- Give parents/carers details on attendance in our newsletter
- Report to parents/carers annually on their child's attendance with the annual school report
- Contact parents/carers should their child's attendance fall below the school's target for attendance
- Celebrate good attendance by displaying individual and class achievements
- Reward good or improving attendance through certificates.

Understanding types of absence

Every absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by the parents), as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the reason for any absence is always required.

Authorised absences are absences away from school for a good reason like illness, medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable cause. School may request proof of your appointment. If proof is not received, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which “no leave” has been given. This type of absence can lead to the Authority using sanctions and/or legal proceedings. This includes:

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily
- Truancy before or during the school day
- Absences which have never been properly explained
- Children who arrive at school too late to get a mark
- Shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- Day trips and holidays in term time which have not been agreed.

Whilst any child may be off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents and the child. If a parent thinks their child is reluctant to attend school then we will work with that family to understand the root problem. We can use outside agencies to help with this such as the School Nurse or the Parental Support Adviser.

Persistent Absenteeism (PA)

A pupil becomes a “persistent absentee” when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child’s education and we need parent’s fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

We monitor all absence and the reasons given thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority and we will inform the parents/carers immediately.

PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully we also combine this with academic tracking where absence affects attainment.

All our PA pupils and their parents are subject to an Action Plan and the plan may include: allocation of additional support through the School Nurse, Parent Support Adviser or Education Welfare Officer. We may also use circle time, individual incentive programmes, individual targets and participation in group activities around raising attendance.

Absence Procedures

If your child is absent the parent/carer must follow the following procedures:

- Contact us as soon as possible on the first day of absence before 9.20am. The school has an answer phone available to leave a message if nobody is available to take the call
- Or they can call into school and report to reception.

If your child is absent we will:

- Telephone you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you
- Invite you in to discuss the situation with our Head, if absences persist
- Refer the matter to the Attendance Improvement Officer if attendance moves below 87% or there is persistent lateness.

The Attendance Improvement Officer (AIO)

Parents are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any problems together. If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, the school will receive support from the Attendance Improvement Officer from the Local Authority.

He/She will also try to resolve the situation by agreement but, if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed and unauthorised absences persist, these Officers can use sanctions such as Penalty Notices or prosecutions in the Magistrates Court. Full details of the options open to enforce attendance at school are available from the school or local authority.

Alternatively, parents or children may wish to contact the AIO themselves to ask for help or information. They are independent of the school and will give impartial advice. Their telephone number is available from the school office or by contacting the Local Authority.

Lateness

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If a child misses the start of the day they can miss work and do not spend time with their class teacher getting vital information and news for the day. Late arriving pupils also disrupt lessons, can be embarrassing for the child and can also encourage absence. Good time keeping is a vital life skill which will help our children as they progress through their school life and out into the wider world.

How we manage lateness:

The school day starts at 9.00am and we expect our children to be in school by then. Doors open from 8.50am when children may enter the class. Registers are marked at 9.00am and your child will receive a late mark if they are not in by that time. At 9.15am the registers will be closed.

In accordance with the Regulations, if your child arrives after that time they will receive a mark that show them to be on site, but this will not count as a present mark and it will mean they have an unauthorised absence. This may mean that you could face the possibility of a Penalty Notice if the problem persists.

If your child has a persistent late record you will be asked to meet with the head teacher to resolve the problem, but you can approach us at any time if you are having problems getting your child to school on time.

We will encourage good punctuality by being good role models to our children and celebrate good class punctuality.

Special or exceptional circumstances in term time

There is no automatic entitlement in law to time off in school time to go on holiday or have time off during term time.

All applications for leave must be made in advance, using the school forms.

Requests which promote children's educational opportunities, and which may be judged "special or exceptional" will be considered. In order to make the process as transparent and fair as possible, all requests relating to the promotion of children's educational opportunities, or "special or exceptional" circumstances, will be considered by a panel consisting of up to three Governors and the Head teacher.

In order to ensure absolute fairness, the Governors who sit on this panel will not be a Parent.

As part of their decision, Governors will be asked to consider:

- The nature of the request and the benefit to the child
- The attendance record of the child
- Whether the child has been through a rigorous selection process for the activity
- Whether the child is involved with a professional or highly regarded organisation
- Whether the parent has paid for the service for which the parent is requesting the absence.

(This list is for guidance and is not exhaustive. The panel may find it necessary take other information into consideration).

The Head teacher will write to parents in each case, making sure that reasons for any decision are made clear. Any period of leave taken without the agreement of the school, or in excess of that agreed, will be classed as unauthorised and may attract sanctions such as a Penalty Notice. Targets for the school and for classes will be displayed in the school to encourage participation by all in reaching these.

We will keep parents updated regularly on their child's progress.

Through the school year we monitor absences and punctuality to show us where improvements need to be made.

Summary

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents and to promote attendance. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend. All school staff are committed to working with parents and pupils as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible.

Fixed Penalty

For the academic year 2015-16 the fixed penalty will be £60 per term. This is charged if a child is absent for more than 21 sessions in any one term. Two sessions equate to one full day. The fine will be collected by Herts County Council.