

Trusting in God; Growing in Wisdom



Attendance and Punctuality Policy

Date: January 2023

Review Date: January 2025

We are a church school with Jesus at the centre of all that we do. The values of love, joy and peace are at the heart of our learning and teaching. We believe that if we trust in God, and not solely on our own understanding, the children at Whitegate C of E Primary School will have the best possible start to their lives.

With thankful hearts, we trust in God as we grow in his love which shines through us. We aim to live our faith and grow in wisdom.

Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show it by his good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom. (James 3:13)

But the wisdom from above is pure first of all; it is also peaceful, gentle, and friendly; it is full of compassion and produces a harvest of good deeds; it is free from prejudice and hypocrisy. (James 3:17)

Our school vision enables the flourishing of all pupils, gives pupils a sense of their own dignity and ensures that our school is inclusive. We believe that children can reach their full potential only by receiving full-time education, through regular and structured attendance. We expect all pupils to arrive and leave school punctually and we emphasise this to parents.

Statement of Intent:

We believe that all people are made in the image of God and are unconditionally loved by God. As such, we are committed to providing a warm, caring and safe environment for all our children. All staff are concerned for the children's welfare and happiness and everyone plays a part in promoting regular attendance and punctuality among the pupils. We expect all children on roll to attend every day and on time, when the school is in session, as long as they are fit and healthy enough to do so. We do all we can to encourage the children to attend, and to put in place appropriate procedures. We believe that the most important factor in promoting good attendance and punctuality is development of positive attitudes towards school. We will make the best provision we can for those children who, for whatever reason, are prevented from coming to school.

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Aims and Objectives of this Policy:

The aim of this policy is to promote good attendance and punctuality by:

- ◆ fostering a climate where regular attendance and punctuality are valued by the school community – teachers, parents and pupils;
- ◆ providing a framework, with agreed roles and responsibilities;
- ◆ providing support and guidance for parents and pupils;
- ◆ developing positive and consistent communication between home and school, including set procedures for attendance information;
- ◆ develop a systematic approach for gathering and analysing data;
- ◆ improving the overall attendance of pupils at school and reduce unauthorised absence;
- ◆ promoting effective partnership with external agencies when appropriate.

Legal Responsibilities Relating to School Attendance

Under Section 7 of the 1996 Education Act, a parent is responsible for ensuring that a child of compulsory school age receives an efficient full time education that is suitable to the child's age, aptitude and ability and any special educational needs a child might have.

From 1st September 2013 the ~~new~~ law by the DfE does not give any entitlement to allow parents to take their child on holiday during term time. A request for holidays in term time is not believed, by current government, to be an 'exceptional circumstance'. Please refer to www.dfe.gov.uk.

Government guidelines state that a child's attendance at school should be at least 96% if they are to achieve their full potential.

Authorised absence

An absence is classified as authorised when a child has been away from school for a legitimate reason and the school has received notification from a parent or guardian. For example, if a child has been unwell, the parent messages through Parentmail to explain the absence. In some circumstances, especially when there are concerns regarding a child's attendance, evidence will need to be provided so that an absence due to illness can be authorised.

Only the school can make an absence authorised. Parents and carers do not have this authority. Consequently, not all absences supported by parents and carers will be classified as authorised.

When a child is unwell, it can sometimes be hard deciding whether to send them to school. The NHS has developed some simple [guidelines](#) to help parents and carers. Medical or dental appointments must be made outside of school time.

Providing an explanation is received staff may consider authorising the following absences:

- Illness
- Family bereavement

Unauthorised absence

An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of both the school and a parent. Therefore, the absence is unauthorised if a child is away from school without good reason, even with the support of a parent.

The governors, supported by the LA, reserve the right to consider taking legal action against any parents or guardians who repeatedly fail to accept their responsibility for sending their children to school on a regular basis.

The following explanations will not be deemed legitimate:

- Additional days for a funeral following the actual day (G code)
 - Looking after siblings.
 - Shopping trips.
 - Unexceptional special occasions, e.g. birthdays.
 - Family days out e.g. to the beach or a theme park
 - Family holidays
 - Parental illness
 - Visiting relatives
- (This list is not conclusive)

Requests for leave of absence

We believe that children need to be in school for all sessions, so that they can make the most progress possible. However, we do understand that there are circumstances under which a parent may legitimately request leave of absence for a child to attend, e.g. a special event. We ask that parents complete a leave of absence form at least two weeks prior to the leave.

The following absences must be requested in advance and may or may not be authorised:

- One day for a close family funeral (C code)
- Dental / Medical appointments that cannot be taken out of school hours

- Day of religious observance
- Participation of approved public performance
- Exceptional family circumstances
- Special Leave of absence
- Absence due to Travelling for work or to maintain Traveller Status

Where a pupil is taken out of school for the purpose of a holiday in term time without the prior permission of the school, the parent/carer (both parents), in accordance with section 444 of the Education Act 1996, may be issued with a Fixed Penalty Notice, currently £60 per child where the amount is paid within 21 days or £120 where the amount is paid within 28 days. If the fixed penalty notice remains unpaid this could lead to prosecution in the Magistrates Court.

The school holiday dates and end of Key Stage Assessment dates are published a year in advance and leave of absence will not be authorised during these assessment periods. INSET days are published as soon as the school have agreed these, but may be subject to change.

Communication with families

When a child is absent from school where there is no message on ParentMail from parents/guardians or permission for absence been requested previously; the school will phone the child's parents/guardians to seek a reason of absence on the first day of absence.

The school will endeavour to ascertain a reason for all absences by speaking to families.

Where appropriate the School Business Manager or Head teacher will generate letters regarding absences and/or poor punctuality.

Pupils with outstanding absence (N or O codes) will automatically receive a phone call from the school

Pupils with repeated absence or lateness without reasons provided will be invited into school to discuss the matter with the Head Teacher.

Where appropriate the Head teacher will inform the family that future absences on health grounds will no longer be authorised without medical evidence.

Long-term absence

When children have an illness that means they will be away from school for over five days, the school will send material home, so that they can keep up with their school work.

If the absence is likely to continue for an extended period, or be a repetitive absence, the school will contact the support services, so that arrangements can be made for the child to be given some tuition outside school.

School will request medical verification where a pupil's attendance falls below 90%.

Repeated unauthorised absences/late marks

If a child has a repeated number of unauthorised absences, or late marks, the parents or guardians will be asked to visit the school and discuss the problem. If there is still no improvement, school will write to the family and advise them that proceedings will now move into more serious matters that may result in legal advice and potential prosecution.

Where a family has failed to respond to contact attempts (phone calls / invitations to attend meetings) and attendance and/or punctuality remains a cause of concern the school will make an urgent referral to the Education Welfare Officer.

Attendance targets

The school sets attendance targets each year. These are agreed by the senior staff and governors at the annual target-setting meeting. The targets are challenging yet realistic, and based on attendance figures achieved in previous years. The school considers carefully the attendance figures for other similar schools when setting its own targets.

Registers, Punctuality and Lateness

Punctuality to school is crucial. Lateness into school causes disruption to that individual's learning and to that of the other pupils in the class. It is paramount therefore that all pupils arrive at school on time.

- By law, schools must take a morning and afternoon register and record attendance or absence of every pupil.
- Morning registrations takes place at 8:50am each morning. Pupils arriving after this time will be recorded as late to school.
- Registers close at 9am and, after this, lateness is recorded as an unauthorised absence and can be subject to prosecution by the local authority.
- Persistent lateness by a pupil may be referred to Education Welfare.
- Pupil's attendance and punctuality is recorded on their report and will be passed on to future schools as necessary.

The role of the Governing Board has

- responsibility to ensure that attendance registers are kept;

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- delegated powers and responsibilities to the Head teacher to ensure all school personnel and stakeholders are aware of and comply with this policy;
- responsibility for ensuring that the school complies with all equalities legislation;
- responsibility for ensuring funding is in place to support this policy;
- responsibility for ensuring this policy and all policies are maintained and updated regularly;
- responsibility for ensuring all policies are made available to parents;
- responsibility for the effective implementation, monitoring and evaluation of this policy.

The role of the school staff

- To develop positive attitudes towards schools which encourages good attendance and punctuality;
- To ensure the attendance register is completed accurately for each child for every session;
- To communicate each pupils' attendance figures termly to parents;
- When a child is absent unexpectedly, the class teacher will record the absence in the register, and will inform the school office, which will endeavour to contact a parent;
- The School Business Manager will amend the register after 8:50am, including the inputting of late marks.
- Registers will be monitored daily by the School Business Manager.
- Where appropriate the School Business Manager or Head Teacher will generate letters or initiate conversations with parents/carers regarding absences and/or poor punctuality.
- Refer irregular or unjustified patterns of attendance to Education Welfare. Failure by the family to comply with the planned support set by Education Welfare may result in further actions, e.g. a Penalty Notice, parental prosecution or an application for an Education Supervision Order.
- Will notify the Local Education Authority (LEA) after 15 days of sickness
- Will notify EWO after 10 days unexplained absence

The role of the Parent/Guardian

- To ensure that their child attends school every day when the school is in session, as long as they are fit and healthy enough to do so;
- To ensure that their child is in school for registration which takes place at 8:50am;
- If a child is absent, it is the responsibility of the parents to send a message via ParentMail with the reason for absence;
- To complete a 'Leave of Absence' form at least two weeks prior to the leave taking place;
- To refrain from booking holidays during term time.

The role of the pupil

- To ensure that they attend school at all times, unless that they are unwell (or it is an authorised absence).
- To talk to a member of staff if there is anything which makes them feel unhappy at school and could reduce their willingness to attend.
- If dropped on the loop, to promptly enter the classroom to ensure that they are present for registration.

Monitoring and review

It is the responsibility of the governors to monitor overall attendance, and they will request an annual report from the Head teacher. The governing board also has the responsibility for this policy, and for seeing that it is carried out. The governors will therefore examine closely the information provided to them, and seek to ensure that our attendance figures are as high as they should be.

The rates of attendance will be reported in the Head teacher report at governors' meetings.

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

Date of Policy: January 2023

PERSON RESPONSIBLE FOR POLICY:	<i>CAROLINE MACKENZIE</i>
APPROVED:	<i>07.02.23</i>
SIGNED:	<i>R CHARLTON</i>
TO BE REVIEWED:	<i>JANUARY 2025</i>