



Attendance and Punctuality Policy

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Attendance and Punctuality Policy

1. Introduction and Background

White Meadows Primary Academy recognises that good attendance and punctuality are central to raising standards and pupil attainment. Our target for attendance is 96%.

This policy is written with the above statement in mind and underpins our school ethos to:

- promote children's welfare and safeguarding
- ensure every pupil has access to the full time education to which they are entitled
- ensure that pupils succeed whilst at school
- ensure that pupils have access to the widest possible range of opportunities when they leave school.

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.

Legal framework

The Education Act 1996 states that:

- The parent/carer of every child of compulsory school age shall cause them to receive efficient full-time education suitable
 - a) to their age, ability and aptitude, and
 - b) to any special educational needs they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.
- A person begins to be of compulsory school age
 - a) when they attain the age of five, if they attain that age on a prescribed day, and
 - b) otherwise at the beginning of the prescribed day next following their attaining that age.
- A person ceases to be of compulsory school age at the end of the day which is the school leaving date for any calendar year.
 - a) if they attain the age of 16 after that day but before the beginning of the school year next following,
 - b) if they attain that age on that day, or
 - c) (unless paragraph (a) applies) if that day is the school leaving date next following their attaining that age.

White Meadows Academy is dedicated to complying with attendance laws set out by the legal framework and has set out this attendance and punctuality policy accordingly.

2. Promoting Regular Attendance

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

| Attendance | Description | Approx. days lost per year | Approx. weeks lost per year |
|------------|--------------------|---|-----------------------------|
| 98-100% | Excellent | 0-4 | Less than 1 |
| 96-98% | Good | 5-9 | 1-2 |
| 93-96% | Satisfactory | 10-13 | 2-3 |
| 90-93% | Unsatisfactory | 14-18 | 3-4 |
| Below 90% | Persistent Absence | More than 19 Equivalent to 38 sessions | More than 4 |

To help us all to focus on this we will:

- Give parents/carers details on attendance and punctuality in our newsletters
- Report to parents annually on their child's attendance and punctuality with the annual school report
- Contact parents 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, badges and events including a termly/end of year prize draw.

There are **190** days in a school year which leaves **175** days to spend on family time, shopping, appointments and other things.



3. Understanding types of absence

Every half-day 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 cause of any absence is always required.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason like illness, medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable cause.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no authorisation has been given:

- 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 after the registers have closed
- shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- day trips and holidays in term time which have not been authorised

Illness

Most cases of absence due to illness are short term, but parents/carers will need to make a phone call to alert the school on each day of absence. In some cases the school will require medical evidence such as a note from the child's doctor, an appointment card or a prescription paper.

Additionally the school may wish to refer to the school nursing service where there are health concerns or if there is a view that illness is being used to cover other reasons for absence. The school may also wish to seek the advice of the family GP, having first discussed the matter with parents/carer to seek their permission to do this.

Medical or dental appointments

Parents/carers should make every effort to ensure these appointments are made outside of school hours. Where it cannot be avoided, children should attend school for as much of the appointment day as possible.

Religious observance

White Meadows Academy recognises that there may be times where children of different faiths observe religious festivals that fall outside of school holidays and weekends, and will allow authorised absence for these times. Parent/carers will be aware of these dates and should give the school written notification in advance.

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, Parental Support Adviser, Family Link Worker, or on occasion Social Care may be involved.

4. Persistent Absenteeism:

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 persistent absence mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority and we will inform the parents/carers immediately. Information on children's attendance when it drops below 96% will be provided half-termly, through letters sent home.

Persistent Absence pupils are tracked and monitored carefully. We also combine this with academic tracking where absence affects attainment.

We recognise that there are children in the school with diagnosed medical needs or disabilities, which can on occasion affect their attendance. We will work with parents/carers to ensure that any absences connected to a diagnosed medical condition or disability, are affectively managed and appropriate support put in place to limit the impact on the child's attendance, academic attainment and emotional and general wellbeing.

The school have recently purchased a school minibus, which is used to collect the pupils who have the most challenging rates of attendance. For these individual pupils, dramatic improvements can be seen. Families will be offered the minibus service by a member of the Attendance Team, based on specific criteria regarding attendance and need.

5. Absence Procedures:

It is the responsibility of the Headteacher to authorise any child's absence from school. Therefore, absences will be treated as unauthorised unless a satisfactory explanation is given to the school.

Parents/carers cannot authorise absences and should be aware that either calling the school or providing a note for an absence does not automatically mean it will be authorised. Staff will make it clear on the school register when recording attendance whether a child's absence is authorised or unauthorised.

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 8.45am. The school has an answer phone available to leave a message if nobody is available to take the call.
- Or call into the school office and report the absence to the office staff.

If your child is absent we will:

- Telephone or text you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you.

- On the first day of your child's absence you will receive a phone call from your child's class teacher, to touch base, as a duty of care.
- Invite you in to discuss the situation with our Attendance Officer - Mrs N Parkin or members of the Senior Leadership Team.
- Refer the matter to the Education Welfare Officer if attendance continues to be at an unacceptable level.

6. Roles and Responsibilities

Governing Body

As part of the whole school approach to maintaining high attendance, the Governing Body will:

- Ensure that attendance is given a high priority and will annually review the school's Attendance Policy.
- Ensure that all legislation regarding attendance is complied with and that up-to-date information is provided to families.
- Agree with the school, the appropriate and accurate attendance figures and also agree the targets that will be submitted to the borough.
- Once a term, at governor's meetings allow the time to discuss attendance issues and ways that they can support the school as necessary.

School Leadership Team

As part of our whole school approach to maintaining high attendance, the School Leadership Team will:

- Ensure that attendance is given the highest priority and ensure that each Year Leadership Team will be active in their approach to promoting good attendance with their students and parents/carers.
- Build links with each year group which will ensure that school policy is administered, and that the school's systems to promote good attendance are adhered to and are consistently done.
- Ensure that the data is analysed to identify whole school year group and student issues as soon as possible and implement the appropriate interventions and support.
- Provide the data for the governing body once a term.
- Nominate or appoint a senior manager to take the responsibility of overseeing and monitoring attendance provision and that this person has sufficient time and resources to give to this job.
- Ensure that systems to record and report attendance data are in place and working effectively.
- Develop multi-agency relationships to help with poor attendance and support families who are having difficulties getting their pupil to attend.
- Work closely with families of children with a diagnosed medical need or disability on an individual basis, to support them regarding their child's attendance.
- Document any specific interventions or steps taken to work with families to improve their pupil's attendance in case of future legal proceedings.
- Ensure that all staff are up to date with the school's attendance policy and government legislation, and that staff are fully trained to recognise and deal with attendance issues.

Teachers and Support staff

As part of our whole school approach to maintaining high attendance, the school's teachers and support staff will:

- Be active in their approach to promoting good attendance to pupils and their parents/carers, which includes forming positive relationships with families.
- Ensure that the school's teaching and learning experiences encourage regular attendance and that pupils are taught the value of high attendance for their own personal progression and achievement.
- Ensure that they are fully aware and up to date with the school's attendance policy and government legislation and that they will speak to another member of staff or seek support if they are unsure how to deal with an attendance issue.
- Ensure that they are following the correct systems for recording attendance and that attendance is taken daily.
- Contribute to strategy meetings and interventions where they are needed.
- Work with external agencies to support pupils and their families who are struggling with regular attendance.

Parents

As part of our whole-school approach to maintaining high attendance, we request that parents/carers:

- Notify the school by telephone on the first day that their child is unavailable to attend school.
- Avoid making medical/dental appointments during the school day.
- Do not take their child on holiday in term time and in the case of exceptional circumstances permission must be granted by the Head teacher. The Leave of Absence in Term Time application form is on the school website and applications must be made four weeks before the intended date of absence.
- Promote the value of excellent attendance at home and follow the procedures set by the school.
- Advise the school of any difficulties the child may be having so that the school can support as appropriate.
- Are aware that Section 444 of the Education Act states, *'If a pupil of compulsory school age who is a registered pupil fails to attend school regularly, his/her parent is guilty of an offence.'*

Pupils

As part of our whole-school approach to maintaining high attendance, we request that pupils:

- Ensure they are punctual, and regular attendance is maintained at the highest level.
- Attend all their lessons on time and be ready to learn.
- Inform their class teacher if they are experiencing difficulties with their attendance in the first instance, who will inform their Head of Year, who will decide on the appropriate support.

The Pupil Entitlement Officer

- Parents are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any problems together. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, the school may refer the child to the Pupil Entitlement Officer, formerly known as the Education Welfare Officer.
- The school can implement the issue of a Fixed Penalty Notice with a fine of £60 per pupil per parent. Leaflets are available from school but reminders in respect of Fixed Penalty Notices are frequently posted in our newsletter and weekly emails to parents.
- Alternatively, parents or children may wish to contact the PEO themselves to ask for help or information. They are independent of the school and will give impartial advice. The telephone number is available from the school office.

7. Lateness

Punctuality matters too!
missed minutes = missed learning = missed opportunities!

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 classroom doors open at **8.40am for KS2 pupils** and we expect our children to be in the playground before this time ready to line up when the doors are opened. Once the doors are closed at **8.50**, the only way to get into school is via the school office. Any pupil who comes into school this way from **8.50am** will be marked as **late** in the register. Records are kept of those pupils who are late; this is documented on the electronic register for each pupil and the pupil will be given a late slip to take to class.

The same applies for **EYFS** and **KS1** but with different times.

The school day starts at **8.45am for KS1 and EYFS pupils** and we expect our children to be waiting by the doors with their parents. Once the doors are closed at **8.55**, the only way to get into school is via the school office. Any pupil who comes into school this way from **8.55am** will be marked as **late** in the register. Records are kept of those pupils who are late; this is documented on the electronic register for each pupil and the pupil will be given a late slip to take to class.

Any child who arrives for school later than **9.20 (KS2)** and **9.25 (KS1)** will receive a mark that shows 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 (3+ days late, or 20 minutes of lost learning) you will be asked to meet with the Inclusion Support Teacher or 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.

Being frequently late for school adds up to lost learning:

- Arriving 5 minutes late every day adds up to over 3 days lost each year.
- Arriving 15 minutes late every day is the same as being absent for 2 weeks a year.
- Arriving 30 minutes late every day is the same as being absent for 19 days a year.

19 days lost a year through being late = 90% attendance = Persistent Absence.

Some strategies to support improving punctuality

Night time routines



- Encourage children to pack their school bag before going to bed, ready for the next day.
- Getting to bed earlier.
- Setting a time for a television, iPad, computer, mobile phone and other devices to be turned off.

Morning routines



- Setting the alarm for a time that allows all morning routines to be carried out without making them late for school.
- Having breakfast before leaving home, so there is no need to call in at the shop on the way to school.
- Encourage them to leave home at least five minutes earlier than they think they needs to.
- Meeting a reliable friend to walk to school with.
- Coming to school for breakfast club if available.

8. Leave of Absence in Term Time

Leave of Absence requested in term time may not automatically be authorised by the Senior Leaders or Governors.

All applications for any absence must be made on the Request for Term Time absence form found in the school office. In making a decision the school will consider the circumstances of each application individually.

We will not agree any absence during term time under the following circumstances:

- Immediately before and during assessment periods (SATS) for year 6 pupils
- Immediately before and during assessment periods (SATS) for year 2 pupils
- When a pupil's attendance record already includes any level of unauthorised absence
- Any period of leave taken without the agreement of the school (this will be classed as unauthorised and may attract sanctions such as a Fixed Penalty Notice).

Supporting evidence

Please note that where a request is made and is authorised, it will only be on the understanding that the following evidence will be requested and is provided:

- Any required trip abroad - proof of flight details, including a proposed date of return. If flights have to be changed by an airline which directly affect the return date, then proof of this will also be required.
- Funeral - a copy of an order of service.
- Attendance at an event - proof of this, either a ticket or programme that includes a list of attendees.

9. People responsible for this policy and its implementation

Headteacher and the Governing Body

10. Summary

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents and to promote attendance and punctuality. 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.

APPENDICES

Attendance Codes, Descriptions and Meanings

The national codes enable schools to record and monitor attendance and absence in a consistent way which complies with the regulations. They are also used for collecting statistics through the School Census System. The data helps schools, local authorities and the Government to gain a greater understanding of the level of, and the reasons for, absence.

The codes are:

| Code | Description | Meaning |
|------|--------------|--|
| / | Present (AM) | Present in school during registration. |
| \ | Present (PM) | Pupils must not be marked present if they were not in school during registration. If a pupil were to leave the school premises after registration they would still be counted as present for statistical purposes. |
| L | Late | Late before registers closed. Schools should have a policy on how long registers should be kept open. See p.7 in Attendance Policy. A pupil arriving after the register has closed should be marked absent with code U, or with another absence code if that is more appropriate. |

Approved Educational Activity¹

Attendance codes for when pupils are present at approved off-site educational activity are as follows:

| Code | Description | Meaning |
|------|---|--|
| B | Educated Off-Site (NOT Dual Registration) | This code should be used when pupils are present at an off-site educational activity that has been approved by the school. Ultimately schools are responsible for the safeguarding and welfare of pupils educated off-site. Therefore by using code B, schools are certifying that the education is supervised and measures have been taken to safeguard pupils. This code should not be used for any unsupervised educational activity or where a pupil is at home doing school work. Schools should ensure that they have in place arrangements whereby the provider of the alternative activity notifies the school of any absences by individual pupils. The school should record the pupil's absence using the relevant absence code. |

¹ An approved educational activity is where a pupil is taking part in supervised educational activity such as field trips, educational visits, work experience or alternative provision. The activity must be of an educational nature approved by the school and supervised by someone authorised by the school. The activity must take place during the session for which the mark is recorded.

| | | |
|----------|--|--|
| D | Dual Registration (i.e. pupil attending another establishment) | <p>This code is not counted as a possible attendance in the School Census. The law allows for dual registration of pupils at more than one school. This code is used to indicate that the pupil was not expected to attend the session in question because they were scheduled to attend the other school at which they are registered.</p> <p>The main examples of dual registration are pupils who are attending a pupil referral unit, a hospital school or a special school on a temporary basis. It can also be used for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children, but only when the pupil is known to be registered at another school during the session in question.</p> <p>Each school should only record the pupil's attendance and absence for those sessions that the pupil is scheduled to attend their school. Schools should ensure that they have in place arrangements whereby all unexplained and unexpected absence is followed up in a timely manner.</p> |
| P | Participating in an approved sporting activity | This code should be used to record the sessions when a pupil is taking part in a sporting activity that has been approved by the school and supervised by someone authorised by the school. |
| V | Educational visit or trip | This code should be used for attendance at an organised trip or visit, including residential trips organised by the school, or attendance at a supervised trip of a strictly educational nature arranged by an organisation approved by the school. |

Authorised Absence from School²

Absence codes when pupils are not present in school are as follows:

| Code | Description | Meaning |
|----------|---|--|
| C | Leave of Absence authorised by the school | Only exceptional circumstances warrant leave of absence. Schools should consider each request individually taking into account the circumstances, such as: the nature of the event for which leave is sought; the frequency of the request; whether the parent gave advance notice; and the pupil's attainment, attendance and ability to catch up on missed schooling. |
| E | Excluded (no alternative provision made) | If no alternative provision is made for a pupil to continue their education whilst they are excluded but still on the admission register, they should be marked absent in the attendance register using code E. Where alternative provision is made they should be marked using the appropriate attendance code. |
| H | Holiday authorised by the school | Headteachers should not grant leave of absence unless in exceptional circumstances. The application must be made in advance and the head teacher must be satisfied that there are exceptional circumstances which warrant the leave. Where a leave of absence is granted, the Headteacher will determine the number of days a pupil can be away from school. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the Headteacher's discretion. |
| I | Illness (NOT medical or dental appointments etc.) | Schools should advise parents/carers to notify the school as soon as possible when a child is ill. If the authenticity of illness is in doubt, schools can request parents/carers to provide medical evidence to support illness. Schools can record the absence as unauthorised if not satisfied of the seriousness of the illness but should advise parents of their intention. Schools are advised not to request medical certificates unnecessarily (particularly retrospective certificates), especially if the illness was not treated by a doctor at the time. Medical evidence can take the form of prescriptions, appointment cards, etc. rather than doctors' notes. |
| M | Medical / Dental appointments | Missing registration for a medical or dental appointment is counted as an authorised absence. Schools should, however, encourage parents to make appointments out of school hours. Where this is not possible, the pupil should only be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary for the appointment. |
| R | Religious observance | Schools must treat absence as authorised when it is due to religious observance. The day must be exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the parents/carers belong. Where necessary, schools should seek advice from the parent/carers' religious body about whether it has set the day apart for religious observance. |
| T | Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence | A number of different groups are covered by the generic term Traveller - Roma, English and Welsh Gypsies, Irish and Scottish Travellers, Showmen (fairground people) and Circus people, Bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and New Travellers. |

² 'Authorised absence' means that the school has either given approval in advance for a pupil of compulsory school age to be away, or has accepted an explanation offered afterwards as justification for absence.

| | |
|--|---|
| | <p><i>This code should be used when Traveller families are known to be travelling for occupational purposes and have agreed this with the school but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision. It should not be used for any other types of absence by these groups.</i></p> <p>To help ensure continuity of education for Traveller children it is expected that the child should attend school elsewhere when their family is travelling and be dual registered at that school and the main school. Children from these groups whose families do not travel are expected to register at a school and attend as normal. They are subject to the same rules as other children in terms of the requirement to attend school regularly once registered at a school.</p> |
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Unauthorised Absence from School

Unauthorised absence is where a school is not satisfied with the reasons given for the absence. Absence codes are as follows:

| Code | Description | Meaning |
|-------------|--|---|
| G | Holiday not authorised by the school or in excess of the period determined by the Headteacher. | If a school does not authorise a leave of absence and the parents/carers still take the child on holiday, or the child is kept away for longer than was agreed, the absence is unauthorised. The regulations do not allow schools to give retrospective approval. If parents/carers did not apply for the leave of absence in advance the absence must be recorded as unauthorised. |
| N | Reason not yet provided for absence | Schools should follow up all unexplained and unexpected absences in a timely manner. Every effort should be made to establish the reason for a pupil's absence. When the reason for the pupil's absence has been established the register should be amended immediately. |
| O | Absent from school without authorisation | If the school is not satisfied with the reason given for absence they should record it as unauthorised. |
| U | Arrived in school after registration closed | Schools should actively discourage late arrival, be alert to patterns of late arrival and seek an explanation from the parent. |

Attendance Interventions

| Threshold | Intervention | By whom |
|-------------------------------------|--|---|
| 100-96% | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Daily and weekly monitoring takes place (first day calling and weekly attendance figures). • Assembly is used to share and celebrate attendance figures with pupils. • Letter 1 sent out to any parents who cannot be contacted re: pupil's first day absence from school. • Annual awards for pupils that meet and exceed the school's attendance target of 96%. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Class teacher encourages/monitors attendance • Admin • Attendance Lead • SLT |
| Below 96% (preventative) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If attendance dips below 96% and is either unauthorised or the reasons provided are questionable, a letter informing parents of this is sent out, requesting an initial meeting with the Class teacher/Attendance Lead. • Four week period of monitoring takes place where an insufficient reason for absence is provided (unauthorised). • Follow up with the family. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Class teacher • Admin • Attendance Lead • SLT |
| 95-90% | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If attendance continues to drop, a letter informing parents of this is sent out, requesting a meeting with the Deputy Headteacher. • Four week period of monitoring takes place. • Other interventions to be considered here as appropriate. • Follow up with the family. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Class teacher (to be kept informed) • Admin • Attendance Lead • Deputy Headteacher |
| 90% and below | <p>Persistent Absence threshold:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting with the Headteacher to discuss and agree on a plan of action. • Four week period of monitoring takes place. • Follow up with the family. • Where there is no improvement, then a referral to the Pupil Entitlement Service for statutory action should be considered. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Class teacher (to be kept informed) • Admin • Attendance Lead • Deputy Headteacher • Headteacher • Education Welfare Service/PEO |