



# **School Attendance and Punctuality Policy**

Policy agreed: November 2020

Policy review date: November 2023

Approved by: Headteacher and Policy Governor 3.11.20

Our school values high attendance and punctuality and makes its importance clear to all stakeholders. It is imperative for children not to miss lessons if they are to achieve their academic potential at school. This commitment to high attendance and punctuality is covered in our school's prospectus and on the school website.

As a school, we aim to achieve an overall attendance rate higher than 97% and have been consistently successful in this over the past few years.

Children achieving 100% attendance are celebrated in assembly by the Spring half term (half way through the year) and at the end of the Summer term, when special gold stickers and/or certificates are given out.

### Parents/Carers

- All parents/carers will be notified in writing of their child's attendance and punctuality levels at the parents' evening in February. An attendance registration certificate for the year is sent home with every child's End of Year Report in July.
- The school follows the Birmingham Local Authority guidance for authorising absence during term time and this has been communicated to parents via the school newsletter and in the Welcome to Year 3 meeting. The Headteacher will only consider written requests and may give authorisation in extenuating circumstances. Unless agreed with the Headteacher, all holidays in term time will be unauthorised.
- We ask parents/carers to support the school by not taking their children out of school during term time. Absence due to exceptional circumstances must be applied for by completing an Exceptional Circumstances Absence Form, and submitting this to the Headteacher well in advance of the required dates. Any holiday requests during term time will not be authorised.
- If a child is absent due to illness, we request parents/carers to contact the School Office by 9.30a.m. on the first day of absence. We then ask for notification of the reasons for absence in writing upon their return to school.
- The parents/carers of any child who is absent and not accounted for will be contacted by school office staff as soon as possible in order to ascertain the reason why.
- If a child has a medical appointment, we request that the school is informed in advance. If possible, such appointments should be outside the school day whenever possible. School office staff will record all messages relating to absence (incl. medical appointments) in their mark book and diary.

### Dealing with Low Attendance

- We employ the services of an Attendance Officer from Walsall City Council. Their support includes six half termly visits, including home visits where necessary.
- The Deputy Headteacher responsible for attendance will monitor it regularly and identify those children falling below the expected threshold. Any child with a low attendance rate will be investigated and their individual Attendance Record will be studied for patterns or blocks of absence. In order to prevent this, the (lower phase) Deputy Headteacher monitors all those children whose attendance drops below 92% and meets with the Attendance Officer regularly to discuss ongoing issues.

- Parents/carers will be contacted whenever necessary in order to raise concerns about any persistent absence and discuss the reasons for it. If possible, appropriate support can be provided to help improve this.
- If necessary, a referral to the School Nurse team may be made to highlight any specific medical issues that may need addressing. Other agencies could also be contacted as appropriate.
- The Attendance Officer could be asked to make a home visit, telephone the parent(s) or send a letter, or invite them to attend a meeting in school, in order to investigate the reasons for a child's poor attendance. The aim would be to improve the child's attendance in school by offering support and guidance.
- If necessary, parents/carers will be reminded about the statutory requirement for their child to attend school regularly. If the situation does not improve, a referral would be made to the Education Welfare Service.
- If a child is absent from school for more than five days without authorisation and no communication regarding the reasons for this, the office staff will alert the DSL and a referral will be made to the 'Missing Children from Education' department. (Tel: 0121 303 4983).

### Lateness

- The Headteacher and/or Deputy Headteachers stand by the school gate from 8.40 a.m. until 9.00 a.m. in the morning, which allows them to monitor children arriving late and remind pupils of the need to be on time.
- The playground bell is rung at 8.55 a.m. and the school gate closes automatically at 9.00 a.m. Children arriving after this are deemed to be 'late' and their names are taken by a member of the school office.
- Arrivals between 9.00 and 9.30 a.m. will be given an 'L' code on the register. After 9.30 a.m. the code will become a 'U' (unauthorised absence).
- If a child is regularly late, a letter (and the individual Attendance Record) will be sent home and/or the parents will be contacted by phone to discuss the reasons for this. Support and advice will be offered if appropriate. The Attendance Officer could also be involved if needed.

### Senior Leadership Team

- The Deputy Headteacher responsible for attendance obtains regular reports to monitor attendance rates and punctuality, and takes action accordingly.
- Staff will be reminded to report any concerns they may have to the SLT regarding children who have time off school.
- The Headteacher reports on the school's attendance and punctuality to Governors in his termly report.
- There is a named Governor, Patricia Colden, who monitors the school attendance record as part of her Safeguarding role.

## COVID-19 Global Pandemic

The coronavirus pandemic had a drastic impact upon school attendance in 2020. However, in line with national guidance, we produced a full risk assessment and a range of measures were put in place to make WJS as safe as possible. Parents were encouraged to bring their children to school in September and over 96% did so.

We agree with the Government that *“Returning to school is vital for children’s education and for their wellbeing. ... the balance of risk is now overwhelmingly in favour of children returning to school. For the vast majority of children, the benefits of being back in school far outweigh the very low risk from coronavirus.”* We will continue to promote the importance of school attendance with our stakeholders and take all necessary steps to keep attendance levels high.