Walter Infant School

ATTENDANCE POLICY

DOCUMENT HISTORY

Version	Action	By	Date
1	Approved	Full Governing Body	10th July 2017

Next review date: **Spring 2020**

WALTER INFANT SCHOOL ATTENDANCE POLICY

This policy was agreed by all the Head Teachers in the Wokingham Town West Cluster to ensure parity across all schools in the cluster group.

This school's Attendance Policy is based upon the requirements contained within the following:

- **The Education Act 1996;**
- **The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, as amended by The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013;**
- **The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007, as amended by The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2012 and The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013; and**
- **Department for Education Guidance as from time to time issued in respect of school attendance matters.**

Introduction

The Education Act 1996 requires parents /carers to ensure their child receives an efficient full-time education, suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and any special needs they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise. The Supreme Court has determined that 'regular' attendance means that which is *"in accordance with the rules prescribed by the school"* (Isle of Wight Council v Platt) (6th April 2017). Regular for our school means attending school on every day that the school is open.

Commitment to Attendance

Along with the other schools in the Wokingham Town West Cluster (Bearwood Primary, Emmbrook Infant, Emmbrook Junior, The Hawthorns Primary, St. Paul's CofE Junior, Walter Infant School and Winnersh Primary) we recognise the clear connection between regular attendance and achievement and will, therefore, work in partnership with parents/carers, the school's governing body and the Local Authority to ensure that pupils achieve maximum attendance.

Expectations

We expect that all pupils will:

- Attend school every day for the entire duration of the academic year unless there are good reasons for their absence;
- Arrive at school on time;
- Be appropriately prepared for the day;

We expect that all parents/carers will ensure:

- they are fully aware of the school's attendance policy, their legal responsibilities with regard to their child's education and the requirement to ensure their child's regular attendance at school;
- their child attends school every day throughout the academic year unless school has approved the leave of absence;
- their child arrives punctually and prepared for the school day;

and that they:

- Contact the school each day if their child is unable to attend due to illness or any other unavoidable circumstance;
- Avoid, wherever possible making medical, dental or other appointments during the school day;
- Notify school of any issues that may affect their child's attendance; and
- Advise school immediately of any changes to contact details.

School staff will:

- Ensure Registers are taken promptly by 9 a.m. and again at the start of the afternoon session;
- Contact parents/carers by telephone when a pupil has failed to arrive at school and where no message explaining absence has been received by 10 a.m.;
- Send a written request to parents/carers where a pupil's absence is unexplained – *see note below on Authorised and Unauthorised Absence;*
- Provide parents/carers with their child's percentage attendance at regular intervals;
- Work with parents/carers when there are concerns over a pupil's lack of regular attendance;
- Notify the Education Welfare Service when a pupil fails to attend school regularly or when a pupil has missed 10 school days or more without permission: this being a legal requirement; and
- Where absences persist then a formal referral should be made to the Education Welfare Service which may result in the issue of a Penalty Notice or prosecution in the Magistrates' Court.

Authorised and Unauthorised Absence

Authorised absence is when the school accepts the explanation offered as satisfactory justification for the absence OR when the school considers the circumstances to be highly exceptional and has given approval in advance.

Unauthorised absence is when school does not accept an explanation as being reasonable justification for the absence, OR when no explanation has been provided despite a written request being sent to parents/carers, OR when the Headteacher has not approved a parent's/carer's request for leave of absence.

Parents/carers should be aware that it is the Headteacher's decision whether to authorise an absence on not. In the case of long term or frequent absences due to illness or a medical condition, supporting medical evidence may be requested. This could be in the form of a date stamped compliment slip from a doctor's surgery or a copy of a prescription. (Please note that the school is not asking any parent to incur a charge for such information and will not be liable for any cost.)

Punctuality/Lateness

It is crucial that pupils arrive at school on time for registration at the beginning of the day. Lateness into school causes disruption to that individual's learning and to that of other pupils in the class. It is paramount, therefore, that all pupils arrive at school on time. The school site is open from 7.30 a.m. and the school building opens at 8.40 a.m. for Key Stage 1 and 8:45 am for Foundation Stage 2.

The morning session for Robin (Foundation 1) starts at 8:30 am. Exceptions to this would be for morning clubs and Rise and Shine Club who can enter the school through the main school door from 7:30 am.

Registration takes place at 8:50 – 9:00 a.m. and pupils who arrive after that time will be recorded as late to school.
Registers close at 9.30 a.m. and after this lateness is recorded as an unauthorised absence (This could lead to formal legal action by the local authority if the problem persists).
Persistent lateness by a pupil will initially be followed up by school staff and, if not resolved, will be referred to the Education Welfare Service.
A letter will be issued to parents following four late entries in the register.

Pupils Leaving During the School Day

Pupils are not allowed to leave the premises without prior permission from the school.
Parents/carers should arrange medical, dental and other appointments outside of school time unless it is an emergency. Parents/carers are requested to confirm in writing the reason for any planned absence, the time of leaving and the expected return time.
Pupils must be signed out at the School Office on leaving the school and signed back in on their return.
When a pupil is being collected from school, parents/carers are requested to report to the School Office before the pupil is allowed to leave the site.
If a pupil leaves the school site without permission their parents/carers will be contacted. Should the school be unable to make contact with the family it may be appropriate, in certain circumstances, to contact the Police and register the pupil as a missing person or contact Social Services.

Term Time Leave of Absence

In keeping with the schools in the Wokingham Town West Cluster we actively discourage term time absence. Our purpose is to ensure pupils achieve their innate potential and there is a clear link between poor attendance and underachievement.

However, we also recognise that there may be occasions when a parent/carer considers there are extenuating or compassionate reasons for such absence. The law has removed the right for schools to grant up to 10 days' leave of absence in special circumstances for the purposes of a family holiday and there is no automatic right to take any leave or holiday in term time. As outlined in the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013, the Headteacher can only grant leave of absence if the circumstances are considered 'exceptional' in which case the pupil's absence will be authorised. The Headteachers of the Wokingham Town West Cluster recognise that siblings from the same family may not attend the same school and will therefore work in close partnership to ensure a consistent and fair approach to authorising absence.

The school holiday dates, INSET days and other important dates are published on the school's website and parents/carers are asked to note these when planning holidays and family events. If there are exceptional reasons for requesting leave of absence during term time, the following procedures will apply:

- The parent/s or carer/s with whom the pupil normally resides must complete and submit a Leave of Absence form at least one month in advance of the requested absence. Forms are available from the School Office and can be downloaded from the school website. The Headteacher (or person authorised to do so on the Headteacher's behalf) will consider the application, and will decide whether or not the application can be granted on the basis of 'exceptional' circumstances. Each application will be considered on a case-by-case basis depending upon the specific circumstances of the particular application. School will endeavour to respond within 5 working days to the parent/s or carer/s who submitted the application.
- Where leave of absence is granted, the pupil's absence will be authorised.
- Supporting evidence may be asked for when considering 'exceptional' circumstances (Celebration invitations, letters from employers restricting the employees annual leave, travel itineraries and bookings from the travel operator, written confirmation on headed paper of interviews/assessments etc)
- A one-off period of irregular attendance, such as an unauthorised period of leave in term time, can result in a referral being made to the Education Welfare Service and this may result in the issuing of a Penalty Notice in accordance with Wokingham Borough Council's Code of Conduct.
- The amount payable on issue of a Penalty Notice is £60 per parent/carer, per child if paid within 21 days of receipt of the Notice, rising to £120 if paid between 22 and 28 days (Figures correct as of 01.09.17).
- If a Penalty Notice remains unpaid after 28 days the matter may result in each parent/carer being liable for prosecution in the Magistrates Court for failure to ensure their child's regular attendance at school contrary to Section 444 of the Education Act 1996.

Addressing Attendance Concerns

Walter Infant School collects attendance and absence data daily and weekly from the registers. This information is forwarded to the Local Authority and the Department for Education. This data collection also enables us to identify those

pupils whose attendance is giving cause for concern. Should this apply to your child, the Headteacher will write to you to make you aware of the concern. If your child's attendance does not show an improvement you will be invited to attend a meeting with the Headteacher to agree an Attendance Action Plan.

The Education Welfare Service

If your child's Attendance Action Plan fails to bring about the required improvement in attendance, we will consider making a formal referral to the Education Welfare Service which works to support schools, parents and pupils to promote and ensure good school attendance and punctuality. However, the Service also has a statutory responsibility to pursue non-school attendance and persistent lateness.

When a pupil is referred to the Education Welfare Service there are various actions that can be taken to address attendance concerns. In certain circumstances, and in accordance with Wokingham Borough Council's Code of Conduct, Penalty Notices may be used to bring about an improvement in a pupil's attendance. Before a Penalty Notice is issued, parents will be warned of their liability to receive such a notice.

The Fast Track Intervention may also be offered as an early intervention measure designed to ensure that appropriate action is taken to address school attendance concerns. Fast Track involves engaging parents and identifying what improvements and actions need to be achieved over a fixed time frame (usually 8 or 12 weeks).

Parents have a legal responsibility for ensuring their child attends school regularly. Where a parent fails in this responsibility and no improvement is brought about within the specified time frame, legal proceedings are initiated in the Magistrates' Court.

Changing Schools

It is important that if parents/carers decide to send their child to a different school that they inform Walter Infant School in writing as soon as possible. A pupil will not be removed from our school roll until the following information has been received and investigated:

- The date the pupil will be leaving the school and starting the next;
- The address of the new school; and
- A new home address if appropriate is supplied.

The pupil's school records will then be sent to the new school. In the event that the school has not been informed of the above information, the family will be referred to the Education Welfare Service and after four weeks the pupil will be registered on the S2S website as a Pupil Missing Education.

Elective Home Education

Parents/carers have a duty to ensure that their child receives a suitable full-time education either by regular attendance at school or otherwise. The law allows

parents/carers to choose to educate children at home instead of sending them to school. This is known as Elective Home Education.

Should parents/carers wish to follow this route, they need to put this in writing to the Headteacher with a request that their child is removed from the school roll. School will then inform the Education Welfare Service and arrangements will be made to monitor the education put in place at home.

Governors

It is the Governors' legal responsibility to monitor and evaluate attendance at Walter Infant School and our figures are presented to the Governing Body on a termly basis. The Chair of Governors has specific responsibility for overseeing attendance matters in our school.

Management of this policy

This is a model policy provided by the Local Authority.

This policy was agreed and adopted at a Governors' meeting on: 10th July 2018

This policy will be formally reviewed by: The Full Governing Body of Walter Infant School

Supporting documents for schools are located on the Wokingham Hub/Education Welfare.