



ATTENDANCE & PUNCTUALITY POLICY

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REVIEW: OCTOBER 2021

1. Introduction

Waterside Primary Academy is committed to creating a learning environment which encourages and supports high levels of achievement for all pupils. An essential part of striving for excellence is achieved through regular attendance and punctuality. In addition to learning valuable life skills, pupils absent from school miss out on important teaching and learning that can never be retrieved. Therefore, we expect the highest attendance and punctuality from all pupils, at all times. We support pupils and their families to ensure that excellent attendance is achieved and are proactive in challenging poor attendance and punctuality.

2. Department for Education (DfE) Guidance

‘Central to raising standards in education and ensuring all pupils can fulfil their potential is an assumption so widely understood that it is insufficiently stated – pupils need to attend school regularly to benefit from their education. Missing school leaves children vulnerable to falling behind. Children with poor attendance tend to achieve less in both primary and secondary school’.

The government expects schools and local authorities to:

- Promote good attendance and reduce absence, including persistent absence;
- Ensure every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled; and,
- act early to address patterns of absence.

The government expects parents and guardians to:

- To perform their legal duty by ensuring their children of compulsory school age who are registered at school attend regularly.
- All pupils to be punctual to their lessons.

School Attendance: Statutory guidance and departmental advice, DfE July 2019

3. Our Expectations

All members of our school community must strive to create a culture in which students come to school every day (without question), to enjoy their schooling and leave with a sense of achievement.

At Waterside, our minimum expectations are:

- Attendance is 97.5%
- Punctuality 97.5%

However, we are continuously working towards our goal of 100% attendance and punctuality for all pupils.

4. Aims of policy

- To ensure that every child is safeguarded and their right to education is protected.
- To ensure the school attendance target is achieved through rewards and incentives for good attendance and punctuality.
- To raise standards and ensure every child reaches their full educational potential, through a high level of school attendance and punctuality.
- To ensure all the stakeholders, governors, parents, pupils and staff receive regular communication about the importance of good attendance and punctuality.
- To keep accurate, up-to-date records and have a robust and rigorous system for analysing attendance.

- To identify causes of low attendance/punctuality with individuals, classes and groups of pupils and address them.

5. Rights & Responsibilities for Attendance

There are legal obligations on:

- Parents to secure education for their child(ren) and to send them to school.
- The School to register attendance and notify the Local Authority of absence from school.

5.1 Headteacher

The role of the Headteacher is:

- To be responsible for the overall management and implementation of this policy.
- To deal with parental requests for extended leave in line with Buckinghamshire County Council's policies and procedures.
- To consider the use of Penalty Notices, in line with Buckinghamshire County Council's policies and procedures.

5.2 Deputy Headteacher

The role of the Deputy Headteacher is:

- To take responsibility for attendance and punctuality, on a day-to-day basis, including liaising with/responding to parental enquiries.
- To oversee the analysis of half-termly/termly/yearly data and respond to findings.
- To liaise with external agencies such as Buckinghamshire County Council's Attendance Team and make referrals, where necessary.
- To write to parents to inform them when their child's attendance is below 96%.
- To ensure that rewards and incentives for attendance and punctuality are being used.
- To work with the teachers to plan for the reintegration of pupils after long-term absence.
- To revise and amend this policy, as required.

5.3 Office Staff:

The role of the Office Staff is:

- To record the precise reasons for absence and update class registers on SIMs, when informed.
- To check the school phone and take messages from parents/carers about pupil absence.
- To promptly inform the DHT, if there are any concerns relating to attendance/punctuality.
- To implement the daily checking of registers after morning and afternoon registration, including contacting parents when the registers close at 9.10am and no reason has been given for absence.
- To report concerns to the Local Authority, as requested by DHT.
- To oversee the admission and induction of new pupils.

5.4 Class teachers & Learning Support Assistants:

The role of the class teachers and learning support assistants is:

- To take a formal register of all pupils twice a day. This is done on SIMs at 8.55am and 1pm for EYFS and KS1 classes, and 8.55am and 1.30pm for KS2 classes.
- To keep accurate and up-to-date daily records of pupil attendance/punctuality through SIMs.
- To follow up on pupil absence by ensuring reasons for absence are obtained and filed in the school office.
- To provide a welcoming and safe environment, which encourages attendance and promotes the best performance from children.
- To establish good and effective communication links with parents/carers and work collaboratively in meeting the child's needs.
- If required, to work collaboratively with other agencies to assist them in fulfilling their statutory duties.
- Along with the DHT, work with pupils and their families when attendance is a concern and work to overcome barriers to good attendance.
- To promptly inform the DHT of pupils who persist with poor attendance/punctuality.
- To feedback to parents about pupil attendance and punctuality concerns at Parents' Consultations & in yearly reports.

5.5 Parents/Guardians:

The role of the parents/guardians is:

- To ensure their child attends school and arrives on time every day.
- To promote a good attitude to learning by ensuring their children attend school in the correct uniform.
- Wherever possible, avoid medical and dental appointments in school time.
- Inform the school on each day of their child's absence. We may call you to ask for additional information.
- Provide a written explanation of absence, including dates of absence and appropriate evidence as soon as their child returns to school.

6. Minor Illness

If a child has a minor illness (e.g. mild headache, stomach aches etc.), parents should bring them in to school and inform the school office who will pass on the information to the relevant staff to monitor during the day. Children should only be kept at home if they have a serious illness or injury. If this is the case, parents must do the following:

1. Contact the school first thing in the morning (and any subsequent mornings) and state the exact reason why. This should be done by calling 01494 786608.
2. Upon return to school, send in a letter to cover all absences, again explaining precise reason for absence. This must be dated and signed and include any relevant evidence (including medical).

Note: Both steps must be completed for the absence to be authorised.

7. Appointments

If pupils have a dental, health, clinic, secondary school or hospital appointments, parents should let the school know at least **one week in advance** in writing, including a printout of the appointment details. Without such evidence, the absence will be marked as **unauthorised**.

Parents should bring their child to school before/after appointments (as appropriate).

8. County Attendance Team

Waterside Primary Academy works in partnership with the County Attendance Team to improve attendance for individual pupils and the whole school. This includes the Headteacher and appropriate staff meeting with the attendance officer for regular meetings to discuss and review attendance. The school and the attendance officer work with identified individual pupils and their parents to improve poor attendance. When the attendance does not improve sufficiently and after discussion with the attendance officer, the school may apply for a Fixed Penalty Notice to be issued, invite parents or guardians to a meeting (see Contract Meetings below) to offer support or may make a formal referral to County Attendance Team.

9. Fixed Penalty Notices (FPN)

A penalty notice will be issued with regard to unauthorised absence if a pupil fails to attend school as required without a genuine explanation. A pupil's absence must have been unauthorised for at least **10** sessions (one session is half day either am or pm) in the previous and/or current term.

Penalty notices will involve both parents paying a fine (per child) of £60, if paid within 21 days, or £120, if paid within 28 days.

Failure to pay the fine within 28 days will result in either a prosecution for the offence to which the notice applies, or withdrawal of the notice (limited circumstances apply). Prosecution will be taken by the County Attendance Team under the Education Act 1996, section 444.

The issuing of penalty notices will comply with the code of conduct and practice as determined by the County Attendance Team.

10. Term Time Leave

In line with Buckinghamshire County Council Attendance Team's flowchart and the 2016 Amendment to the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations, leave for pupils during term time is **not authorised under any circumstances**. The school recognises that taking children out of school may constitute a safeguarding risk and will make necessary enquiries, in order to be satisfied that the child is not at risk. The school may contact outside agencies in order to ensure that a visit is legitimate and safe for the child/children.

Head teachers may now only grant leave in term time where the circumstances are exceptional, for example:

- Death of parent/carer or sibling of the pupil;
- Life threatening or critical illness of parent or sibling of the pupil; and
- Parent/carer recuperation and convalescence from critical illness or surgery (leave request to be made within 6 months of recovery and medical evidence required).

Family emergencies need careful consideration. It is not always in the best interest of the child, nor appropriate for them to miss school for family emergencies that are being dealt with by adult family members. Being at school, friendships and support from staff can provide children with stability and care during difficult times. The routine of school can provide a safe and familiar background during times of uncertainty.

If you have exceptional circumstances, which have lead you to request leave in term time for your child/ren, please complete the required form, which you can obtain from the school office. The Head Teacher will then make a decision, on whether or not the leave can be lawfully authorised and will do so only if there is a genuine, exceptional and urgent reason for a child to be absent during term time.

11. Parenting Contracts & Penalty Notice for Irregular Attendance

Fixed Penalty Notices may also be issued for irregular attendance during the school year. In order to prevent this from occurring, the school will work with parents/guardians and the County Attendance Team to draw up and agree a parenting contract to rapidly improve attendance. These contracts will be produced at a 'Parenting Contract Meeting', with a formal invite sent out at least 7 days in advance.

12. Strategies for promoting/rewarding excellent attendance:

Weekly Celebration Assemblies - Achievement Assemblies are held every week on Friday. The class with the highest attendance/punctuality receive additional 'Golden Time'.

Attendance Rewards - At the end of each half term, children who have achieved 100% attendance will receive an attendance certificate signed by the HT and DHT.

Attendance Certificate - Only pupils achieving 100% attendance and 5 lates or less for the whole school year, are eligible for the end of year reward.

All of the rewards and certificates are awarded at the discretion of the Headteacher.

Parent Consultation Evenings - This provides an opportunity for teachers to share attendance concerns and discuss barriers to good attendance. Where necessary, a target for improving attendance is set.

13. Monitoring and Recording Attendance & Punctuality

Class registers – these are recorded using SIMs. The system ensures that no children are missed and that pupil information can be shared quickly and securely. Registers are the only way of recording pupil attendance and must be completed accurately. This is the responsibility of whichever member of staff has been directed to take the register for that session.

Registers can be re-submitted in the case of a mistake or a pupil arriving after submission, but registers must be accurate and submitted at key times.

Morning Register - Class registers are open from 8:45am until 8.55am. At that point, the teacher submits their final register. After this, children must sign in at the office. Children arriving between 8.55am and 9.10am will be marked as late. If a child arrives after 9.10am, this will be marked as an unauthorised absence. Phone calls will be made to parents/guardians at 9.15am if a child is not in school by this point and the school has not been made aware of a reason for the absence. Should no contact be made by 9.30am, members of staff may visit home to ensure that the child/ren are safe and to determine the exact reason for absence.

In exceptional circumstances, the Headteacher may keep registers open for longer e.g. poor weather conditions.

Afternoon Register - Registers must be submitted by staff straight after lunch, before afternoon lessons commence. For EYFS & KS1 classes, this will be done by 1.10pm and for classes in KS2, this will be completed by 1.40pm.

14. Attendance Communication

The school will send out regular communication, including phone calls and letters, regarding attendance and punctuality. This is to ensure that everyone is kept informed about attendance and punctuality and Waterside Primary Academy, especially those whose attendance or punctuality is causing concern.

15. Monitoring and Evaluation

The implementation of this policy is monitored by the Headteacher.

The success of this policy will be evaluated by considering feedback from pupils, teachers, support staff and parents. This policy will be reviewed through consultation with staff and revised every 2 years for the Local Governing Body to approve.