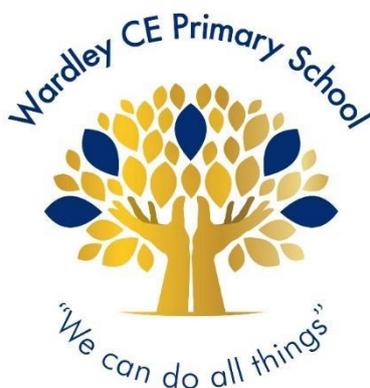


# Wardley CE Primary School Attendance Policy



Name of Reviewer	Mark Foster
Date of Approval of Governing Body	May 2020
Signature of Chair	<i>John Storey</i>
Signature of Head	<i>Mark Foster</i>
Date Due for Review	May 2021

## **EQUALITY STATEMENT**

As a school we welcome our duties under the Equality Act 2010. The general duties are to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation
- advance equality of opportunity
- foster good relations

We review all policies and procedures we operate to ensure there are no negative equality impacts based on the following protected characteristics: age, disability, ethnicity & race, gender (sex), gender identity & reassignment, pregnancy & maternity, sexual orientation religion & belief and non-belief as outlined in the Equality Act 2010. If you feel, on reading this policy that there may be a negative equality impact, please tell us about this. Please also let us know if you need to access this policy in a different format. You can do this by contacting the school office.

## **1. PRINCIPLES**

This is a successful school and your child plays their part in making it so. We aim for an environment which enables and encourages all members of the community to reach out for excellence. For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and your child should be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. It is very important therefore that you make sure that your child attends regularly and this Policy sets out how together we will achieve this.

## **2. PARENT & CARER RESPONSIBILITIES**

- Make sure your children have the best possible attendance– our school attendance target this year is 96.1%
- Make sure your children arrive to school on time – the school day starts at 8.50am.
- Inform school on the first day of absence and secure prior authority for authorised absences
- Co-operate with school and the Education Welfare Service if there are attendance problems
- Avoid booking holidays during term time. These will not be authorised unless special circumstances have been highlighted
- Where possible avoid booking medical appointments during school time. Evidence will need to be provided.
- The Y2 & Y6 SATs in May are of great importance and should not be missed
- To make sure that your child has had a good night's sleep - children need to be wide-awake to learn.

## **3. WARDLEY CE PRIMARY SCHOOL'S RESPONSIBILITIES**

- To ensure that staff complete registers accurately and efficiently in the morning and afternoon
- To ensure that attendance data is accurately entered on SIMS and to seek clarity from the attendance lead if needed
- To inform the Education Welfare Service about continued/regular absence or habitual lateness
- Regularly report attendance levels and any particular problems to the governing body
- Report to parents/carers each term on how your child is performing in school, what their attendance and punctuality rate is and how this relates to their attainments. A 'traffic light' letter is sent home at the end of each half-term to inform parents about the attendance levels of their children since the start of the school year. A 'gold' certificate is given to those children who have a 100% attendance; a 'green' certificate for those children is 96% or above; an 'amber' letter is given if the attendance is over 90% but less than 96% and a 'red' letter for those children whose attendance is under 90%. This is to celebrate good attendance and to ensure parents/carers are aware of their child's attendance details and given the opportunity to seek support with attendance if it is needed.

- Celebrate good attendance by displaying individual and class achievements. This will also be shared on the school website and newsletter
- Reward good or improving attendance through certificates and rewards
- Liaise with outside agencies including Social Services and provide attendance updates/reports/concerns
- All children with an attendance figure for the academic year that is 96% or above are part of the 'Attendance Stars Club.' They receive a prize for being in this club each half-term.

### 3.1. Rewarding Good Attendance

- **The Attendance Stars Prize Draw:** At the end of each half-term all the children who have reached or exceeded a figure of 96% attendance over the half-term will be put into a prize draw. The winner of this draw will get a special prize – such as family tickets to the cinema.
- **The 100 Club:** The aim is to reward the children who achieve a 100% attendance over a half-term. All the children in school start of as members of the 100 club at the beginning of each half-term. They stay in the club as long as they have a 100% attendance for that half-term. At the end of the half-term all the children in the 100 Club will get a prize.
- **Certificates:** These are presented at the end of each half-term for good attendance. These recognise attendance over 96% (green certificate) and 100% (gold certificate).
- **Best Class:** Each week in the Friday Thanks-giving assembly the class with the best attendance will receive the school's attendance mascot to keep for the week. Details on class attendance are published in the school newsletter each week.

## 4. THE LAW RELATING TO ATTENDANCE

Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 states that 'the parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him / her to receive efficient full time education suitable:

- (a) to age, ability and aptitude and
- (b) to any special educational needs he/ she may have Either by regular attendance at school or otherwise'

All children of compulsory school age (Reception to Year 6) are required to receive an education. As parents/carers you are responsible for ensuring your child receives an education. You risk criminal prosecution if your child fails to attend regularly, and punctually, at the school where s/he is registered. Prosecutions may result in fines of up to £2,500 and/or the possibility of a three months imprisonment.

## 5. 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, preferably in writing. 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 "leave" has been given. This type of absence can lead to the school using sanctions and/or legal proceedings. This includes:

- 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 to get a mark
- shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- day trips and holidays in term time which have not been agreed.

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 your child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and usually make things worse.

## **6. PERSISTENT ABSENTEEISM (PA)**

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason. This means missing 38 or more sessions (equivalent to 19 or more days) a year through absence. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we need parents' fullest support and co-operation to tackle this. We monitor all absence thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority and you will be informed of this immediately. PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully through our pastoral system and we also combine this with academic mentoring where absence affects attainment. All PA cases are also automatically made known to the school's educational welfare officer.

If the child's attendance does not improve then the next step is to ask for medical evidence to be provided for any absence to be authorised. Any period of leave taken without the agreement of the school will be classed as unauthorised and may attract sanctions such as a Penalty Notice/fine.

## **7. ABSENCE PROCEDURES**

If your child is absent you must:

- Contact us as soon as possible on the first day of absence
- Send a note in on the first day they return with an explanation of the absence – you must do this even if you have already telephoned us

If your child is absent we will:

- Text the main contact numbers on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you
- Telephone the main contact numbers on the second day of absence if we have still not heard from you
- Telephone all the contact numbers on the third day of absence and if we still have not heard from you we will contact the school's education welfare officer

- If there are concerns over attendance then we will invite you in to discuss the situation with our education welfare officer/ Headteacher.

## **8. TELEPHONE NUMBERS**

There are times when we need to contact parents about lots of things, including absence, so we need to have your contact numbers at all times. So help us to help you and your child by making sure we always have an up to date number – if we don't then something important may be missed. There will be regular checks on telephone numbers throughout the year.

## **9. THE SCHOOLS' EDUCATION WELFARE OFFICER (EWO)**

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 School Education Welfare Officer from the Salford Local Authority. He/she will also try to resolve the situation by agreement but, if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed and unauthorised absences persist, these Officers can use sanctions such as Penalty Notices or prosecutions in the Magistrates Court. Alternatively, parents or children may wish to contact the EWO themselves to ask for help or information. They are independent of the school and will give impartial advice.

## **10. LATENESS/POOR PUNCTUALITY**

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If your 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. Please be advised that lateness is recorded and specific codes attached depending to how late the child is.

The school day normally starts at 8.50am and we expect your child to be in class at that time. With the current staggered start times there is a change to normal routine with Rec, Y2, Y3 & Y5 starting from 8.40am. All the school doors are open from 8.40am and the children can go straight into class to start their work. The main gates are open from 8.30am. If your child comes into the school via main reception (after the main gates have been locked) – this indicates that your child is late and will be recorded as late on the register.

At 9.20am the registers will be closed. In accordance with the Regulations, if your child arrives after that time they 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 you will be asked to meet with the Headteacher and/or Attendance Officer to resolve the problem, but you can approach us at any time if you are having problems getting your child to school on time.

## **11. LEAVE DUE TO EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES**

There is clear evidence in educational research that lack of attendance at school, for whatever reason, can significantly reduce the potential attainment and achievement levels of the young people concerned.

Holidays taken in term time are a significant reason for absence from school both locally and nationally.

From September 2013 pupils will no longer be granted up to 10 days leave for the purpose of a family holiday.

***“... Amendments to The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, remove references to family holiday and extended leave as well as the statutory threshold of ten school days. The amendments make it clear that headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. Headteachers should determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if leave is granted.....”***

### **11.1 Procedure**

All requests for leave of absence during term time must be put in writing. The request form is obtainable from the school office. Once completed the parent/ carer must return the form to the office.

The parents/carers will be informed by letter of any decision made regarding the request for leave of absence.

Should the request be declined by the Head Teacher and the parent / carer continue to take the holiday, the absence will be marked as unauthorised. This could lead to a request being made to the Local Authority for the implementation of a fixed penalty fine. This will be dependant on the length of absence.

In accordance with the Local Authority code of practise a fine can be implemented for 10 or more sessions of unauthorised absence in a given period (the school sees this as a term).

Penalty Notices are always issued per parent/per child and are £60.00 if paid within 21 days rising to £120.00 if paid between 21 and 28 days.

### **11.2 Policy on Exceptional Circumstances**

Wardley CE Primary School has implemented the following criteria in order to manage holidays in term time fairly and equitably across the school:

- Under normal circumstances school will not authorise any holiday unless there are exceptional circumstances.

### What are exceptional circumstances?

- **Funeral of parent, grandparent or sibling** – Head teachers should use their discretion having heard from parents about travel and funeral arrangements and taking into account the distance to be travelled
- **Sudden loss of housing** through eviction or domestic violence- up to a maximum of 3 days.
- **Serious illness of a close relative** – only if Head teacher is satisfied that the circumstances are truly exceptional
- **Out of school programmes** such as music, arts or sport operating at a high standard of achievement and agreed by the LA – as appropriate.
- **Time- off relating to Child Entertainment Performances**, subject to a license being issued by Education Social Work Service
- **Religious observance** – The Education Act 1996 S444(3) (c), states “on any day exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which his/her parent belongs”.
- **Weddings of parents and siblings** – weddings can be arranged at weekends or during school holidays; however we acknowledge that there are times when the dates are dependent on other factors, such as the needs of the couple getting married. Leave should only be authorised for this purpose when a Headteacher is satisfied that here is a persuasive reason for holding the wedding during term time. In difficult family situations the Headteacher may use his/her discretion in granting leave, for example where natural parents are separated, and in new relationships and it may cause a child further difficulties if he/she is excluded from a wedding. Each case should be addressed on its individual merits, taking into account the overall welfare of the child.

### What are not considered exceptional circumstances?

- **Holidays abroad for the purpose of visiting a sick relative**, excepting where that person is seriously ill. Medical evidence may be requested.
- **Pilgrimages by parents** (eg. Hajj). These are rare but can result in children being away from school for significant periods of time (at least 5 days). They are not regarded as exceptional as children themselves do not perform Hajj, but tend to travel with their parents when they go.
- **Holidays taken in term time due to lower cost/parental work commitments.**

Exemption to the above will be:-

- Medical evidence provided recommended holiday due to: Convalescence, Stress related illness, Family death
- These exemptions will be considered on an individual basis

### **11.3 Breach of the Policy**

Should a holiday be taken when

- No written request has been made

- A request has been made and has been denied by the Head Teacher.

A request for the implementation of a penalty notice will be made to the Local Authority.

## **12. SCHOOL TARGETS**

The school has targets to improve attendance and your child has an important part to play in meeting these targets. One of the key objectives at Wardley CE Primary School is to improve attendance. The minimum level of attendance for this school is 96.1% attendance (which is in-line with the national average for 2014) and we will keep you updated regularly about progress to this level and how your child's attendance compares. Our target is to achieve better than this however because we know that good attendance is the key to successful schooling and we believe our pupils can be amongst the best in the city. Through the school year we monitor absences and punctuality to show us where improvements need to be made.

## **13. SUMMARY**

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents and to promote attendance. 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 and that every child's welfare and life opportunities are promoted.