

Weston Park Primary School



Attendance Policy

Date of last review: October 2017

Date of next review: October 2019

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Vision

Within the schools of the Edwin Jones Partnership regular school attendance is recognised as key to good pupil outcomes. The links between regular attendance, reaching potential attainment and future life opportunities are well researched. For this reason the schools will encourage good attendance and be robust in monitoring attendance and take action when attendance fails.

Absence can be a symptom of:

- ❖ Wider safeguarding issues - domestic violence, hidden harm etc
- ❖ Low aspirations and/or disaffection
- ❖ Generational trends
- ❖ Economic climate
- ❖ Health or medical needs
- ❖ Lack of regard of the importance of regular attendance

Aims

- To maximise our attendance rates across schools in the Edwin Jones Partnership by encouraging, recognising and rewarding good attendance.
- To investigate individual absences and ensure that pupils and parents are clear that unauthorised absences are not acceptable.
- To work closely with pupils and parents, along with other professional agencies, to help them overcome problems which may prevent pupils from attending regularly.

The Legal Framework

Parents are responsible for ensuring that children attend and stay at school. It is the responsibility of the school to support attendance and to support any issues which may lead to non-attendance.

Penalty Notices may be issued under the Local Authority's (LA) Code of Conduct for the use of Penalty Notices in Cases of Non-Attendance at School. A copy of this Code of Conduct can be obtained from the school's Attendance Officer or the Education Welfare Service.

Monitoring Pupil Attendance in the Edwin Jones Partnership

Attendance is monitored on a twice daily basis. Parents of pupils who are absent without explanation will be contacted mid-morning via the school's text messaging service or by telephone. We operate a 'first day contact policy' in relation to pupil's absence. Parents should expect to be contacted on the first day of their child's absence.

Upon return to school, parents must provide a letter of explanation for the absence if a satisfactory reason has not already been discussed with the School Office. Those pupils whose attendance is causing concern may be asked to provide medical notes for absence; this could be by means of a prescription or doctor appointment confirmation and the school nurse may be contacted.

The authorisation of any absence is at the Headteacher's discretion. If a pupil is regularly absent due to illness, the school reserves the right not to authorise the absence and to request parents to provide medical evidence. With parents' permission, the school may also contact the pupil's GP.

In the case of those pupils whose level of attendance is causing concern, the Attendance Officer will send home letters and a copy of the child's attendance to date. In some cases, the school may choose to meet with parents or conduct a home visit. If there is no improvement the pupil will be referred to the Family Support Worker who visits the school on a regular basis to monitor pupil attendance.

All unauthorised absence will put parents at risk of being issued with a Fixed Penalty Notice, or of legal proceedings being instigated for failing to ensure their child's attendance at school.

Strategies to Encourage Good Attendance

We believe that pupils who achieve good attendance should be recognised and rewarded; thus providing them with positive reinforcement and providing other pupils with further incentives to improve their attendance.

Rewards are issued for excellent attendance weekly and half termly, both for individuals and class groups. Recognition can be made through:

- Personal congratulations from the Attendance Officer or members of the Senior Leadership Team.
- Letters home.
- Prizes for the best class attendance in each year group, awarded half termly and termly.
- Individual awards for good attendance, awarded half termly, termly and for the year.

Positive messages about good attendance are shared in class time, assemblies and meetings with parents. Up-to-date attendance data is always available from the school office.

Parents' Responsibilities

- Parents have a legal responsibility to send their children to school regularly. In June 2017 the Supreme Court delivered judgement in relation to the Isle of Wight Council's appeal which sought clarification on what is meant by "fails to attend regularly" in the context of a prosecution for unauthorised non-attendance at school. The Supreme Court said that "regular" means "in accordance with the rules published by the school" and rejected the view that regular meant "sufficiently frequently". The rules of the school can be viewed in our School Attendance Matters Leaflet: A Guide to Attendance at School.
- It is the parents' responsibility to inform the school of the reason for a child's absence as soon as possible, ideally before 8:45am.
- Parental contact should be made by telephone on the first day of absence.
- Unless agreed in advance with a member of staff parents should contact the school on each day of absence.
- Parents should arrange non-emergency medical appointments outside of school hours.
- On return from the absence, a letter should be provided explaining the absence or parents should personally contact the School Office
- Parents should resolve any in-school problems with the appropriate member of staff without any adverse effect on attendance.

- Parents should discuss any problems with the school at the earliest opportunity so that a joint effort can be made to address them.
- The School Prospectus, website, newsletters and attendance leaflet provide the parents with details of our expectations.

Interventions to Address Poor Attendance

The Edwin Jones Partnership employs a range of strategies to address the problems of pupils who have unacceptably low levels of attendance. Staff work across the Edwin Jones Partnership to identify those at risk. The Pastoral Team and Attendance Officers in each school, who are responsible for attendance, keep detailed records of concerns and regularly analyse the data in order to target resources. Records show the routes of intervention, progressing from the Teacher, to Year Leader and finally the Headteacher. Early intervention is the key. Strategies include telephone calls and letters home, meetings with the student and parents in school and/or home and visits by Attendance Support Officers. Parents will automatically be contacted by the school if their child's attendance starts to fall.

Following these initial interventions and if the problem has still not been successfully dealt with, the pupil's case will be referred to the Family Support Worker. Schools work closely with their Family Support Worker to support the pupil and parents/guardians in discussing a suitable action plan to get the pupil back into full time education. Through the referral the Family Support Worker would be best placed to make an assessment of the issues presented.

As a final measure, where the non-attendance of a pupil is not solved by the Edwin Jones Partnership we will refer to the Local Authority (LA) who will seek legal advice and may pursue legal action to enforce attendance through the courts.

Where there have been issues of long-term absence we also work closely with the Family Support Worker and parents to ensure the pupil is re-integrated back into school.

The Local Authority convenes annual attendance conferences and network meetings and is working closely with the Health Service professionals to improve attendance across the city.

Fixed Penalty Notices

Fixed Penalty Notices were introduced by Southampton City Council in September 2005 as an alternative to prosecution. All students who have 10 sessions of unauthorised attendance (i.e. 5 days) may be liable for a fixed penalty notice.

A full copy of the Local Authority's Code of Conduct for the use of Penalty Notices in Cases of Non-Attendance at School can be obtained from the school.

The Importance of Registration

All schools must keep an attendance register in which, at the beginning of each morning and afternoon session, students are marked present or absent. Children arriving more than 5 minutes after the school door has closed will be indicated with an 'L'. Absence must also be denoted as authorised or unauthorised. Class teachers should only enter a pupil as present '/' or absent 'N' code.

It is essential that the registers are accurate and secure.

Registration and Punctuality

In order to receive a present mark, pupils should arrive in time to attend registration.

Pupils arriving within 5 minutes of the school door closing, will be marked as present but must be signed into school in the office.

The registers will remain open for 35 minutes after the school door closes. Pupils arriving between 5 and 35 minutes after door closure will be indicated with an 'L' code and the number of minutes late will be recorded.

Registers will remain open for 35 minutes. Pupils who arrive after this time, must also sign in at the school office. The late arrival will be marked present with a 'U' and statistically this code counts as an unauthorised absence for the whole morning session.

Persistent lateness will result in strategies to address the lateness; consequently persistent lateness also places parents at risk of a Penalty Notice being issued.

Leave of absence

All schools within the Edwin Jones Partnership will not automatically authorise requests for leave of absence. **There is not an automatic entitlement for any family holidays or leave of absence during term time.**

The Head Teacher will consider each request on its merits **but will usually only agree to leave in exceptional circumstances.** The most important considerations are:

- Whether the absence could be taken during periods of normal school holidays.
- Whether the student is subject to any assessments during the academic year concerned and achievement may be adversely affected.
- Whether due consideration has been given to the timing of the leave of absence e.g. at the start of a new term.
- The pupil's current level of attendance.
- No authorised absence will be given during KS1 or KS2 SATs periods; this will include all siblings within the family.

Parents must apply in writing to the Headteacher **at least three weeks** in advance of the requested leave of absence. An application form is available from the school office which, once considered, will be returned to the parent indicating whether or not the period of leave has been agreed. Parents may be asked to come into school to meet with members of staff before a final decision is made.

In cases where overseas travel has been booked in advance of a request, the school may request sight of travel documentation and where no return travel arrangements have been made, the pupil may be removed from the school roll on the last day of their attendance.

When a leave of absence is requested for siblings in different schools parents should be aware that schools will liaise prior to a decision being made for any leave of absence requests.

Any requests for leave of absence that have not been agreed by the school, but are subsequently taken will put parents at risk of a Penalty Notice or prosecution.

In cases where a leave of absence request is declined the school will record the absence using an "O" code in the register which denotes an unauthorised absence.

The issuing of a Penalty Notice may be considered appropriate in the following circumstances:

- Pupils identified on more than one **external Truancy Sweep** in a Public Place in an academic year, without the absence being authorised by the school and the absence being parentally condoned or pupils returned to school by the Police, having been caught truanting. By definition, an external truancy sweep is held in a public place and carried out by a member of Hampshire Constabulary and a Local Authority Officer. The school must ensure that the parent/s are fully notified regarding the exclusion
- Failure by a parent to ensure the child is not in a public place whilst being excluded from school on more than one occasion.
- **Unauthorised absence of 10 or more sessions (5 school days) a singular or combination of the following codes O, U and G during any 80 possible school sessions (8 school weeks).** These do not need to be consecutive days. Southampton City Council will review each penalty notice request but will use its discretion for each case.
- **Unauthorised Leave of Absence 10 or more consecutive school sessions (G code only) within the academic year.** In addition where a parent with whom the pupil normally resides has not made a prior application for a leave of absence and there are no exceptional circumstances that warrant the granting of a leave of absence in those particular circumstances. A Penalty Notice will not be issued unless the unauthorised leave of absence is at least 10 sessions (5 school days) consecutively. The Council will ignore any half term school holiday and any end of term school holiday in the calculation of consecutiveness so that if the unauthorised absence occurs before and after a half term or end of term, this will be regarded as consecutive.
- **Late arrival**, after the close of registration, on **10 occasions or more during any 80 possible school sessions (8 school weeks).** School registers will be closed after the registration period in accordance with the School Attendance Policy. A "U" code will then be used which denotes an unauthorised absence.

Truancy

Pupils who truant will be placed on attendance report and a letter is sent home. Pupils will be required to make up the lost time and persistent truancy will result in the student being referred to the Family Support Worker.

The Police conduct truancy sweeps throughout the city. Pupils may be brought back to school and letters sent to parents. Those conducting the sweep may visit the pupil's home if they are absent without explanation.

Pupils identified on truancy sweeps, or returned to school by the Police having been caught truanting, place their parent(s) at risk of a Penalty Notice being issued.

In cases where a parent has contacted the school and reported their child to be absent due to sickness and the absence has been authorised, but the pupil is subsequently identified on a truancy sweep, or, the pupil is returned to school by the Police, the school reserve the right to de-authorise the absence. This would then place parents at risk of a Penalty Notice being issued or legal proceedings being instigated, as the absence would be unauthorised.

If a parent has phoned their child in absent due to sickness, the parent is responsible that their child will remain at home during school hours, unless visiting the Doctor's surgery.

Family Support Worker Referrals

Schools work closely with the Attendance Officer to support pupils whose attendance is causing concern. This includes the reintegration into school of pupils with long term absence. The Family Support Worker may instigate home visits and, therefore, will be able to assess a non-attender's problems in the wider family context, offering advice and solutions where possible.

School Attendance Policy

This policy is monitored as a matter of course by those responsible for its day-to-day operation and is reviewed bi-annually.

Criteria for Success

- Attendance rate increases.
- Authorised absence rate decreases.
- Unauthorised absence rate decreases.
- Improvement in individuals' attendance.
- Good attendance has a high profile within the school community.