

## **Westfield Primary School**

### **Attendance Policy**

#### **Introduction**

We aim to work together with parents and carers to ensure that all children achieve excellent levels of attendance and punctuality. Regular attendance is important, not just because the law requires it but because it is the best way of ensuring that children make the most of the educational opportunities which are available to them. Good attendance is an essential and crucial prerequisite to effective learning.

#### **The main points of this policy are:**

- Good attendance and punctuality are essential life skills and essential to the achievement of high standards. Regular school attendance is necessary to achieve the school mission statements and aims.
- The school will establish clear procedures and expectations (detailed below) to record and monitor attendance.
  - If attendance is below 90% a letter will be sent home to parents.
  - If a pattern is identified in relation to unauthorised absences, the Headteacher will arrange a meeting to discuss concerns and support. A review will then be held fortnightly to monitor progress. If no improvements are seen then a referral to the Children Missing Education Officer (CMEO) will be considered at this stage.
  - Pupils with frequent time off for illness and/or recurring illnesses will be supported through a Medical Absence Plan, which will be monitored termly.
- The school will liaise with parents to establish clear expectations about attendance, and with the local authority service for *children missing education* for guidance and support. Attendance is monitored every term.
- Children and parents will not be treated differently because of differences of gender, ethnicity, cultural and religious backgrounds, disabilities and special needs.
- For a child registered at a school the parents have the primary responsibility for ensuring that their child attends regularly. Schools and the LA have a duty to support parents to carry out these responsibilities.

#### **Parents must:**

- Legally parents are responsible and must ensure their children attend regularly punctually and remain through the school day.
- Provide the school with up to date information about point of contact and those with parental responsibility.
- Inform the school of their child's absence on the first day of absence by 9.00 am and ensure that a note explaining the reason for the child's absence is sent to the school when the child returns.
- Inform the school of any relevant factors that could affect their child's attendance of behaviour.
- Full details of the policy can be found on the school website: [www.westfieldprimary.com](http://www.westfieldprimary.com)

**Parents should** avoid wherever possible taking family leave during term times, and follow the correct procedure requesting leave of absence. Requests for leave of absence in term time cannot be granted except under exceptional circumstances.

## **Procedures**

Attendance at school is recorded using a computer database. When pupils are registered to join the school, their personal details and contact details are recorded securely on the system. A weekly register is produced for teachers to manually record each pupil's attendance during morning registration (8.45 am to 8.50 am), and during afternoon registration (1.00 p.m. to 1.05 p.m.) Any child who is not present at registration is marked as absent. After completion at each session, the register is sent to the office for use in the event of an emergency. Parents should contact the school if their child is absent on the first day of their absence. If this does not happen then the parents or carers will be contacted to be asked for a reason. When the child returns to school they should bring with them a note to confirm the reasons for the absence.

## **Authorised Absence**

Children are expected to attend school for the full 190 days of the academic year, unless there is a good reason for absence.

There are two types of absence:

- Authorised: this is when the school approves pupil absence.
- Unauthorised: this is when the school will not approve an absence or no reason has been given for an absence.

There may be occasions when a child has to miss school, for example if he or she has a specific illness and has made an appointment with the G.P. Any other absence should be kept to an absolute minimum. In particular, parents and carers should avoid taking their children out of school during term time in order to go on holiday. Every half day absence from school is recorded as either authorised or unauthorised which is why information about the reason for each absence is always required. If a child is ill, parents and carers are asked to inform the school by 9.00 a.m. on each morning of the absence.

The Headteacher will decide when an absence is authorised. These include:

- Unavoidable medical or dental appointments.
- Days of religious observance.
- Exceptional family circumstances such as bereavement.
- Approved educational activity (e.g. examinations, school trips, visiting new school).

## **Lateness**

Registration begins at 8.45 a.m. and closes at 8.50 a.m. All pupils are expected to be in school for registration at this time. Pupils arriving between 8.50 and 9.00 a.m. will be marked as late (L). If arriving after the close of register, 9.00 a.m., pupils must enter school via the main entrance and report to the School Office. If accompanied, a parent or carer should give a reason for the lateness, which will be recorded in the register. The child will then be sent to their classroom. The absence will only be authorised if a satisfactory explanation for the late arrival can be provided otherwise it be unauthorised (U).

## **Unauthorised Absence**

An absence is **unauthorised** if the pupil's reason for absence cannot be established at the time when the register is taken. The absence remains unauthorised if:

- No explanation is forthcoming from the parent.

- The school is dissatisfied with the explanation.
- The pupil is staying at home to mind the house or to look after siblings.
- The pupil is absent for unacceptable special occasions – e.g. pupil's birthday.
- The pupil is absent for family leave for longer than agreed by the school.
- The pupil is on a family holiday without permission obtained in advance.
- The pupil is late (see below).

### **Medical Appointments**

If a doctor or dentist's appointment is unavoidable during school time then a medical leave of absence form must be completed at least 48 hours beforehand which are available on the school's website to download. These are available from the school office. Proof of the appointment may be requested.

### **Family Leave during term time**

Parents and carers should avoid booking family leave during term time. Under policy guidance provided by the Local Authority request for leave of absence in term time cannot be granted except under exceptional circumstances. The details of the absence criteria are explained in the following statement.

Absence during term time interrupts continuity of teaching and learning, disrupts the educational progress of individual children and creates disruption in schools.

Family Leave requests will be refused, unless there are 'exceptional circumstances'. For permission to be granted under these criteria, attendance has to be over 95%. Please refer to agreed criteria drawn up by all Norton Radstock schools. This can be found on the school website or is available from the school office.

### **Exceptional circumstances will be at the Head's discretion and could include:**

- A family member is seriously or terminally ill and the leave proposed is likely to be the last such holiday.
- There has been a death or significant trauma in the family and a holiday may help the child cope with the situation.
- The leave of absence is a unique, one-off, never to be repeated occasion that is time limited.
- The 'financial advantages' and 'family commitments' reason for a request would not be accepted under these criteria for permission.

If parents or carers may wish to make a request for authorisation of term time leave because they feel it is exceptional circumstances they are asked to fill in a Family Leave Form, available on the school's website to download, stating the reasons why they need to take their child out of school. This form is available on request from the school office and must be completed a minimum of 2 weeks in advance.

In considering whether or not to authorise leave for a family, the school will consider each case individually, taking into account a child's overall attendance and the reason for the leave.

Leave will not be granted if:

- A child's attendance record over the previous calendar year is under 95%, even if any previous absence was due to unavoidable illness.
- The period of leave coincides with the start of term, or is near to, or coincides with, significant events in the school calendar.

Should any request for authorising absence be refused, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised in the school register. Families who persistently take their children out of school for unauthorised absence will be referred to the Children Missing Education Officer (CMEO).

**The Children Missing Education Officer (CMEO)**

The CMEO monitors attendance of all pupils in school. The school is required to refer poor attendance to the CMEO, who will then work with the families concerned to support good attendance. Persistently poor attendance may lead to legal action being taken by the local authority.

**Monitoring and Review**

The review and monitoring of this policy is carried out by the Governors' School Welfare Committee.

Signed

Dated: September 2017

Review: