



# Attendance Policy

September 2017

## Our Values

- We value every child's individuality
- We value the development of the whole child-academically, physically, emotionally, socially and spiritually.
- We value a broad and rich experience, alongside academic success.
- We value a happy, caring, sustainable, and safe environment.
- We value the contribution we make to, and receive from, parents and the wider community.
- We value the development of all staff to achieve their full potential.
- We value dynamic leadership and management.

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## **1. Introduction**

Wanborough Primary School is committed to providing an education of the highest quality for all pupils and recognises this can only be achieved by supporting and promoting excellent school attendance for all. Children are expected to attend school on time every day. If a child is absent from school without leave or unavoidable cause, they will be committing an offence, and enforcement action may be taken against the parent.

The whole school community - pupils, parents and carers, teaching and support staff and school governors - have a responsibility for ensuring good school attendance and have important roles to play. The purpose of the policy is to clarify everyone's part in this.

The policy is based on current government and Local Authority guidance and statutory regulations. The school will ensure that all members of the community know of the policy and have access to it.

## **2. School's Roles and Responsibilities**

All staff (teaching and support) at Wanborough Primary School have a key role to play in supporting and promoting excellent school attendance and will work to provide an environment in which all our pupils are eager to learn, feel valued and look forward to coming to school every day. Staff also have a responsibility to set a good example in matters relating to their own attendance and punctuality.

### **Attendance Leader**

At Wanborough Primary School, the Headteacher (as Attendance Leader), will oversee, direct and co-ordinate the school's work in ensuring children are in school every day and on time and will ensure that the Attendance Policy is consistently applied throughout the school. He will also ensure that up-to-date attendance data and issues are shared with relevant personnel; pupils and parents are regularly reminded about the importance of good school attendance and data may be used to reinforce this. Attendance figures will be reported to the governing body on a termly basis. He will ensure that attendance issues are identified at an early stage and that support is put in place to deal with any difficulties.

### **Registration**

The school is required to mark the attendance register twice each day; once at the start of the school day and once at the start of the afternoon session. Classroom teachers are responsible for completing the attendance registers; administrative staff add prescribed codes for absence.

The register will be called promptly at 8.30 a.m. and 1.00 p.m. for Years 1-6 and 8.45 a.m. for reception by each class teacher and a mark will be made in respect of each child. The registers will close at 8.45 a.m for Years 1-6 and 9.00am for Reception. In the afternoon all classes registers will close at 1.05 p.m. Any pupil who arrives after the closing of the register will count as absent. Pupils who arrive late but before the register closes will be counted as present but will be dealt with under the school's policy on punctuality and lateness.

### **Categorising Absences**

A mark will be made in respect of each child during registration. Any child who is not present at this time will be marked as having unauthorised absence, unless leave has been granted by the school in advance, or the reason for the absence is already known and accepted by the school as legitimate. Where a reason for absence is given and accepted by the school at a later stage, the register will be amended in such a way that the original entry and the amendment/correction are distinguishable. The decision about whether the absence should be authorised or unauthorised rests with the Head teacher.

Wanborough Primary School recognises the clear links between attendance and attainment, and attendance and safeguarding children. It recognises that inappropriate authorisation of absence can be as damaging to a child's education as un-authorised absence, potentially sending a message to parents that any reason for non-school attendance is acceptable and that this could render children extremely vulnerable to harm. If absence is frequent or continuous, and except where a child is clearly unwell, staff at Wanborough Primary School will then challenge parents about the need and reasons for their child's absence and will encourage them to keep absences to a minimum. A note or explanation from a pupil's home does not mean an absence becomes authorised. The decision whether or not to authorise an absence will always rest with the school.

If no explanation about an absence is received by the school within 2 weeks, the absence will remain unauthorised;

Absence will be authorised in the following circumstances:

a) Where leave has been granted by the school in advance, for example -

- A pupil is to participate in an approved performance for which a licence has been granted by the Local Authority,
- A pupil is involved in an exceptional special occasion - in authorising such an absence, the individual circumstances of the particular case will be considered,
- In exceptional circumstances, permission has been granted for a family holiday, for which the parents have sought permission in advance.

b) Where the school is satisfied that the child is too ill to attend.

c) Where the pupil had a medical appointment (although parents should be encouraged to make these out of school hours wherever possible, and to return their child to school immediately afterwards - or send him/her to school beforehand);

d) Where there is an unavoidable cause for the absence which is beyond the family's control, e.g. extreme weather conditions;

e) The absence occurs on a day exclusively set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong;

f) the pupil is of no fixed abode, his/her parent is engaged in a trade which required him/her to travel, the pupil/student has attended school as often as the nature of the trade permits and, having reached the age of six, he/she has attended 200 sessions in the preceding 12 months;

g) In other exceptional circumstances (e.g. family bereavement) and for a very limited period.

Except in the circumstances described above, absences will be unauthorised. Some examples of reasons for not authorising absence would be:

- no explanation has been given by the parent;
- the school is not satisfied with the explanation;
- the pupil is staying at home to mind the house;
- the pupil is shopping during school hours;
- the pupil is absent for unexceptional reasons, eg a birthday;
- the pupil is absent from school on a family holiday, without prior permission;
- the pupil has been stopped during a truancy sweep and is unable (or the parent is unable) to give a satisfactory reason for the absence.

#### **Approved Educational Activity**

Where a pupil is engaged in off-site approved educational activities, the school will check his/her attendance on a daily basis before entering the appropriate code in the register.

#### **Class Registers**

In order to track pupils' whereabouts through the day, deal with any truancy that occurs after morning or afternoon registration and to ensure that safety of pupils, class teachers will ensure all expected pupils attend each lesson. Any sudden absences that occur during the day will be picked up immediately by the school office and measures taken to locate the pupil.

#### **Staff Training**

The school attendance leader will ensure that all staff responsible for taking registers, including any temporary or supply staff, receive sufficient training to enable them to perform the task accurately.

### **3. Collection and Analysis of Data**

The attendance leader will ensure that attendance data is complete, accurate, analysed and reported to relevant school personnel, parents and governing body. The report should include commentary on the trajectory and the school target. The data will inform the school's future practice to improve attendance and prevent disaffection.

Attendance is monitored for each pupil; where relevant, it is analysed and discussed with all appropriate parties.

### **4. Systems and Strategies for Managing and Improving Attendance**

Attendance has a very high profile at Wanborough Primary School and is discussed at assemblies, meetings for parents and in governor meetings. Parents are regularly reminded in newsletters and school meetings about the importance of good attendance and its links to attainment.

Wanborough Primary School has procedures for dealing with unexplained absences, within the day. Attendance staff endeavour to make contact with the families concerned; if necessary a follow-up letter is written by the Headteacher and a meeting convened. Advice is sought from the Integrated Services Team when the matter cannot be resolved.

### **First-day Calling**

Wanborough Primary School has in place a system of first-day calling. This means that parents will be telephoned on the first day a pupil is absent without explanation, to establish a reason for the absence. This helps to identify at an early stage pupils who do not have a good reason for absence, or who may be absent without their parents' knowledge. Any reasons given for lateness will be entered into the SIMS database in order to help identify any trends that may occur.

### **Meetings with Parents**

Where there is an emerging pattern to a pupil's absence over 3 to 4 week period (or sooner if staff are particularly concerned), with or without permission, the school will invite parents to a meeting to discuss the reasons for the absences. Plans are put in place with the parents and pupil to resolve any difficulties and improve the attendance within a specified time limit - usually no more than 6 weeks. It is explained to parents that any future absences will be unauthorised unless there is clear evidence of a good reason for them.

### **Referral to the Integrated Assessment and Support Team**

If there continue to be unauthorised absences by the end of the specific time (or sooner if the pupil is failing to attend school at all), the matter will be referred to the Integrated Service Team. A representative from this team may also be involved in parental meetings.

### **Fixed Penalty Notices**

In some cases where attendance problems do not appear to be being addressed by Parents, the school, in conjunction with the Integrated Service Team, may find it necessary to issue a fixed penalty notice. This is a fixed fine issued by Swindon Borough Council at the schools request. Since 1<sup>st</sup> September 2013 this has been £60 if paid within 21 days. A penalty Notice can be issued to each parent for each child. Failure to pay the Penalty Notice could result in prosecution through the courts.

### **Lateness and Punctuality**

Pupils are expected to arrive at school, and be in the correct room for registration, on time every day. It is very disruptive to their own education and that of others in their class, if they are late. Pupils who arrive after the register closes will be dealt with by the School Attendance Officer. The number of minutes a child is late will be recorded in the SIMS database. A pupil who is persistently late will be dealt with in the same way as other pupils with an emerging pattern of absence. If the matter is not resolved quickly, it will be referred to the Integrated Service Team.

Persistent lateness will be followed up by a letter/meeting with those concerned and strategies suggested to improve the matter. For health and safety reasons it is important that the school knows who is in the building. Pupils arriving late should therefore report to the office. It is important that all pupils arriving late follow this procedure.

For the same reason it is important that pupils leaving the premises legitimately (e.g. for a medical appointment), or returning to school later in the day, are collected from/returned to the office. Parents do not go to the classrooms.

### **Post-Registration Truancy**

Post-registration truancy occurs when a pupil goes missing from school, having previously registered for the session. This behaviour not only means the pupil will not be receiving a full-time education, it also potentially renders him/her vulnerable to harm. School takes this very seriously and will endeavour to ensure it does not happen by taking the register and noting attendance in lessons. If, however, a pupil appears to have left the premises without authorisation, the school will try to make contact with his/her parents immediately.

## **5. Term-time Holidays**

Wanborough Primary School will consider every application individually; its policy is not to grant leave of absence for a holiday, other than in the most exceptional circumstances. Time off school for family holidays is not a right. An application must be made in writing, with appropriate evidence, in advance of the intended holiday.

Requests for holidays for the following reasons will not be authorised:

- Cheaper cost of holiday
- More convenient flight times
- Availability of the desired accommodation
- Poor weather experienced in school holiday periods
- Overlap with beginning or end of term
- Employers work/holiday constraints

Wanborough Primary School will respond to all requests for a leave of absence, giving the reasons for the decision.

Wanborough Primary School will not authorise a holiday during periods of national tests, i.e. SATS examinations.

If an unauthorised holiday is taken, the school will consider requesting a Penalty Notice from the Local Authority. A Penalty Notice can be issued to each parent for each child. Failure to pay the Penalty Notice could result in prosecution through the courts. Families who have been issued Penalty Notices previously may be prosecuted through the courts.

## **6. Extended Leave of Absence**

In considering absence for extended trips overseas, Wanborough Primary School will take account of the following:

- A visit to family overseas, (where this is their country of origin), has a very different significance from a normal 'holiday'.
- Such visits maybe important in terms of children's identity and self-esteem as they grow up.
- Parents may feel that the reasons for their visit outweigh the importance of their child's interrupted attendance at school (although parents could be encouraged to use the school holiday periods for at least part of their trip).
- Where extended leave of absence is granted, there will be an expectation that the pupil undertakes some school set work during this period.

## **7. Parents'/Carers' Responsibilities**

The prime responsibility for ensuring children receive an appropriate and full time education rests with parents/carers (defined by the Education Act 1996 as those with parental responsibility and those who have the care of a child), who will be supported and encouraged by Wanborough Primary School.

Wanborough Primary School expects parents/carers will:

- Ensure their children attend the school every day and on time
- Support their children's attendance by keeping requests for absence to a minimum
- Not expect the school to automatically agree any requests for absence, and not condone unjustified absence from school.

Parents will also be expected to:

- Notify Wanborough Primary School on the first day of absence, a telephone call is sufficient. We ask that children are not asked to relay a message about another child's absence, or reason for it.
- Ensure their children arrive at school on time, properly dressed and with the right equipment for the day.
- Work in partnership with the school, for example by attending parents' meetings and consultations, signing homework diaries when asked to do so, taking an interest in their children's work and activities.

- Contact the school without delay if they are concerned about any aspects of their children's school lives. Wanborough Primary School will endeavour to support parents to address any concerns.

### **8. Pupils' Responsibility**

All pupils should be aware of the importance of attending school every day and on time. If they are having difficulties that may prevent them from attending school they should speak to their class teacher.

Pupils should attend all their lessons on time, ready to learn. Parents may wish to confirm the reasons for any absence by sending in a letter when the child returns to school. Providing a telephone call has been made at the start of the absence, a follow up letter is not obligatory. In cases of prolonged absence, a letter may be requested, in addition to the telephone call. The school could ask for medical evidence to be provided for related prolonged absence. The Pupils also have a responsibility for following school procedures if they arrive late.

### **9. Governors' Responsibility**

The governing body of a maintained school shall make arrangement for ensuring that their functions relating to the conduct of the school are exercised with a view to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children who are pupils at the school.

**Approved (FGB):**                      **September 2017**

**Next Review:**                              **September 2018**