



Waterhouses CE
Primary Academy and Nursery

Attendance Policy

Last Review Date by Committee	September 2024
Next Review Date by Committee	September 2025

‘Let your light shine!’



Make your light shine, so others will see the good you do and will praise your Father in heaven.

Matthew 5:16

Pupils need to attend school regularly to fulfil their potential and to benefit from their education. Missing out on lessons leaves children vulnerable to falling behind. Children with poor attendance tend to achieve less in both primary and secondary school. School attendance can also impact on children's physical and mental health as schools play an important role in supporting the mental health and wellbeing of children (**Department for Education (DfE), 2018**), and are well-placed to provide interventions to build resilience in children, which is essential to mental health, learning and development (**PHE, 2014**).

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/education-schooling-and-health/education-schooling-and-health-summary>

Working in partnership with the Education Welfare team at Staffordshire County Council our aim at Waterhouses is to ensure all children attend school regularly and we have processes and procedures in place to identify children whose education is being affected by their attendance.

The Government expects schools and 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
- Parents/carers to perform their legal duty by ensuring their children of compulsory school age who are registered at school attend regularly

Principles - Regular school attendance is the key to enabling children and young people to maximise the educational opportunities available to them and become emotionally resilient, confident and competent adults who are able to realise their full potential and make a positive contribution to their community.

This Policy should not be seen in isolation but is a strand that underpins all other policies related to the wellbeing of children including safeguarding, behaviour, anti-bullying, and support for children with medical needs.

Aims - Our attendance policy aims to:

- support pupils and their parents/carers in the establishment of the highest possible levels of attendance and punctuality;
- ensure that all pupils have full and equal access to the best education that we can offer in order to increase learning;
- enable pupils to progress smoothly, confidently and with continuity through the school;
- make parents/carers aware of their legal responsibilities;
- ensure attendance meets Government and Local Authority targets.

We expect our pupils to attend regularly, so that they benefit fully from all the opportunities we provide for their education, progress, achievement and to develop their mental and physical health wellbeing.

School Responsibilities

- we will promote positive behaviour and attendance through our use of curriculum and learning materials
- we will promote and encourage good attendance and punctuality by providing a warm, welcoming atmosphere where children want to learn and feel safe
- we will work with parents/carers to resolve problems which may affect a child's attendance
- we will involve representatives of other agencies that work with the school such as the School Nurse or representatives of the Local Support Team such as Education Welfare Workers, where required, in order to ensure all children can benefit from consistently good punctuality and attendance;
- we will use the Early Help Assessment process to support this;
- we will be proactive in encouraging attendance for all pupils through ensuring parents/carers and pupils receive information on the importance of good attendance and punctuality and will react swiftly to intervene to improve attendance of individual children should this become a concern;
- we will keep appropriate attendance records and data gathered will be used to inform the Governing body of attendance and punctuality trends. This information will enable Governors and senior staff to effectively target attendance and punctuality as necessary;
- we will provide parents/carers of their child's overall attendance each half term and also as part of the child's annual report in the Summer term.

Parental Responsibilities

- Ensure, as a legal requirement, that their children of compulsory school age attend school regularly;
- inform school straight away if your child cannot attend and give the reason;
- ensure the school is aware of any circumstances at home that may be likely to affect their attendance;
- talk to your child about school and let the school know if your child is worried about any issues such as difficulties with homework or friendship problems;
- do not book holidays in term time – this will only be authorised in exceptional circumstances;
- ensure school has all your up to date contact details;
- encourage your child to enjoy school and make the most of all the opportunities available to them.

Revised procedure for notifying us of a child absence

- Parents/careers will be expected to call the office on 01538 308356 between 8.30am – 9.15am and speak to a member of staff to inform them of their child's illness and expected date of return.
- Any absence where we have not been notified by 9.15am will be marked as unauthorised and a member of staff will contact to discuss the reason why your child is not in.
- Any messages left via Class Dojo or via email will not be accepted as notification of a child absence.

The importance of good attendance and its link to attainment and progress:

The Department of Education (DfE) has published research into the effect that missing time from school can have on chances of succeeding in tests and exams. The research is based on data from all schools in England going back several years. The DfE say that the results are very clear – missing even small amounts of time from school can have a significant effect on achievement.

School attendance, mental health and resilience

School attendance can also affect children's mental health. Schools play an important role in supporting the mental health and wellbeing of children (Department for Education (DfE), 2018), and are well-placed to provide interventions to build resilience in children, which is essential to mental health, learning and development (PHE, 2014).

School attendance for social development

Schools also provides a wealth of opportunities for essential social and interpersonal development.

Schools are essential to the development of effective speech and language skills. An EEF survey identified that 97% of participating primary schools' staff had concerns about children's speech and language skills as a result being absent from school due to the pandemic. **(EEF, 2020)**.

School attendance promotes social integration, civic engagement, and widens social networks **(Feinstein L, Sabates R, Anderson TM, Sorhaindo A, Hammond C, Anderson, 2006)**. Research suggests that school attendance has a wider impact on skills for future employment **(The Health Foundation, 2018)**.

Holiday request during term time and what happens if a child goes on holiday in term time or takes leave of absence for other reasons without permission from the school?

As a school, we will work alongside our Education Welfare Office (Keith Mellor) from Staffordshire County Council. Absences will be marked in the school register as unauthorised absences which may result in a Penalty Notice being issued by the Local Authority, in line with the changes to the law are introduced through the Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2024 and will come into effect from 19 August 2024. . In some cases, parents may be prosecuted for the offence of failure to ensure regular attendance at school.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason like illness, other unavoidable cause or exceptional circumstance.

Pupils who have any sickness or diarrhoea must not return to school until at least 48 hours after the last episode. Pupils who have tested positive for Covid 19 must stay off school for 3 days or until they feel well enough to return to school.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been given. This includes:

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily
- Parents/carers taking their children on holiday during term time
- Absences which have never been properly explained
- Children who arrive at school too late to get a mark

Lateness

The doors to the school are open between 8.45 – 9am and we expect children to arrive punctually for the start of the school day. The entrance doors will be closed promptly at 9am and any children arriving after this time may be marked late. Children arriving after 9am must report with their parents to the school office, where they may be registered and receive a late mark in their class register (Late Mark = L). Families who regularly arrive late will be contacted by the Headteacher. Education Welfare may become involved if the problem cannot be quickly resolved. This would be due to ten late marks being recorded in a 12-week period.

First Day Contact Procedure

The school will follow up any unexplained absences on the first day of absence to:

- Ascertain the reason;
- Ensure the proper safeguarding action is taken
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not; and
- Identify the correct code to use before entering it on to the schools management information system (which is used to download data to the School census). The absence and attendance codes are national codes enabling the school to record and monitor attendance and absence in a consistent way which complies with regulations.

We expect a parent/carer to have contacted the school by no later than 9.15am to advise of the reason for the child's absence.

What if my child has a medical or dental appointment?

We expect parents/carers to make medical and dental appointments for their children before or after school or during the school holidays. However, we recognise that this is not always possible. Authorisation will be given where confirmation of the appointment is received. Children are expected to attend school prior to the appointment and parents are expected to return their children to school following the appointment whenever possible.

Days of Religious Observance

Attendance at a religious observance held by a religious body will be granted as an authorised absence. The Headteacher should be consulted in advance of the event.

Leave during term time

The changes to the law are introduced through the Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2024 and will come into effect from 19 August 2024. make it clear that head teachers should only grant a leave of absence during term time if there are exceptional circumstances to justify this.

Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances.

New two penalty notice limit in a three-year period

The three-year rolling period starts for parents when the first penalty notice is issued to them after the 19th August 2024.

The first Penalty Notices for leave in term time will increase to £160 per parent per child but can be reduced to £80 per parent per child if paid within 21 days.

If a second penalty notice is issued within three years of the first penalty notice, then this will be at a fixed rate of £160 per parent per child, with no reduction for early payment. A third penalty notice cannot be issued within the three-year period; therefore, the county council will deal with any further unauthorised leave through prosecution in the Magistrates Court. If the parent is found guilty, the potential fine is up to £1000.

What are "exceptional circumstances"?

The Headteacher will consult with the Governors of the school and will deal with applications on a case-by-case basis. Taking holidays in term time for financial reasons would not be considered an exceptional circumstance. If the Headteacher is in any doubt as to whether leave should or should not be granted, advice will be sought from Staffordshire Legal Services Unit or the Educational Welfare Officer.

Circumstances where a Penalty Notice will be issued:

You can find up to date guidance regarding penalty notices from Staffordshire County Council at; <https://www.staffordshire.gov.uk/Education/Education-welfare/Attendance.aspx>

Penalty Notice for persistent lateness

Please refer to Staffordshire Local Authority Code of Conduct for issuing Penalty Notices for persistent lateness at;

<https://www.staffordshire.gov.uk/Education/Education-welfare/Attendance.aspx>

Further Information

Admissions Register:

School keeps an admission register which records the date that each child joined the school and their personal details including those of their parents and of their previous school.

All schools must keep a record of attendance register entries for at least 3 years and inform their local authority of any pupil who is going to be deleted from the admission register.

A pupil can lawfully be deleted from the admission register on the grounds prescribed in regulation 8 of the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 where they;

- have been taken out of school by their parents and are being educated outside the school system e.g. home education (see below on home educated children);
- have ceased to attend school and no longer live within reasonable distance of the school at which they are registered;
- have a medical condition certified by the school medical officer that the pupil is unlikely to be in a fit state of health to attend school;
- have been permanently excluded.

Elective Home Education:

If school receives written notification from parents that they wish to home educate their child then we will inform the Local Authority via Entrust at enquiries@entrust-ed.co.uk of the decision to remove the child's name from the admissions register. Whilst school will not seek to prevent parents from choosing to electively home educate their child, neither will they seek to encourage them to do this – particularly as a way of avoiding exclusion or due to a poor attendance record.