

William Hildyard Church of England Primary and Nursery School

Pupil Attendance Policy

Introduction

At William Hildyard Church of England Primary and Nursery School we believe that for our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education, it is vital that they attend regularly and be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any pupil's absence or late arrival disrupts teaching routines and so may affect the learning of others in the same class.

Ensuring a child's regular attendance at school is a parental responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

Promoting Regular Attendance

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility - parents, pupils and all members of school staff.

To help us all to focus on this we will:

- Celebrate good attendance.
- Report to parents/carers annually on their child's attendance with the annual school report.
- Contact parents/carers should their child's attendance fall below the school's expectation for an attendance of at least 90% in any of the 3 main terms.
- In extreme circumstances action may be taken before the term ends.

Understanding types of absence

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a genuine reason like illness, medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or any other unavoidable cause.

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

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily
- Absences which have never been properly explained
- Shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- Day trips and holidays in term time which have not been agreed and deemed exceptional by the school.

These types of absence can lead to Lincolnshire County Council applying sanctions and/or legal proceedings against the parents/carers of the children involved.

Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents and the child. If a parent/carer expresses to the school that they need support getting their child to school regularly and on time then we will work with that family to understand the root problem. We can use outside agencies to help with this such as the School Nurse or the Parental Support Adviser.

Persistent Absenteeism

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when their attendance is below 85% across the school year for whatever reason. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's education and we need parents' /carers' fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

We monitor all absence and the reasons given thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the trigger mark, or is at risk of moving towards that mark, is given priority and we will inform the parents/carers immediately.

Absences are tracked and monitored carefully we also combine this with academic tracking where absence affects attainment.

For pupils whose attendance falls below 85%, without links to viable reasons as agreed with the Headteacher, their parents/carers are subject to an Action Plan and the plan may include: allocation of additional support through the School Nurse, Parent Support Adviser or Education Welfare Officer. If attendance does not improve legal proceedings may follow.

Absence Procedures

If your child is absent the parent/carer must follow the following procedures:

- Contact the school office as soon as possible on the first day of absence, and each day of absence thereafter, before the start of the school day. The school has an answer phone available to leave a message if nobody is available to take the call,
or
- Call into school and report absence to the front office or class teacher.

If your child is absent we will:

- Telephone you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you by the close of registration.

The Education Welfare Officer

Parents/carers 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 Education Welfare Officer from the 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 unauthorized absences persist, these Officers can use sanctions such as Penalty Notices or prosecutions in the Magistrates Court. Full details of the options open to enforce attendance at school are available from the Local Authority. Alternatively, parents, carers may wish to contact the EWO themselves to ask for help or information. They are independent of the school and will

give impartial advice. Their telephone number is available from the school office or by contacting the Local Education Authority.

Lateness

Poor punctuality is unacceptable. If a 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. Good time keeping is a vital life skill which will help our children as they progress through their school life and out into the wider world.

How we manage lateness:

The school day starts at 8:55 a.m. Gates will open at 8.45 a.m. and be closed at 9:00 a.m., any child arriving after that will have to enter school via the office and their lateness will be registered.

Registers are marked by 9:05 a.m. and your child will receive a late mark if they are more than 15 minutes after that time.

If your child has a persistent late record you will be asked to meet with the staff to resolve the problem, but you can approach us at any time if you are having problems getting your child to school on time.

We will encourage good punctuality by being good role models to our children and celebrate good class punctuality.

Illness and medical appointments

Every effort should be made to arrange medical appointments outside school hours. If it is necessary for a child to be out of school for this reason, the child should be returned to school directly after the appointment.

Leave of Absences in Term Time

Parents/carers who wish to make a request for 'leave of absence in an exceptional circumstance' must complete the appropriate form from the front office.

Holidays in Term Time

Since the introduction of The Education (Pupil Registration – England) Regulations, schools no longer have the discretion to authorise absences during term time unless the circumstances are **exceptional**. Following government legislation there is **no** automatic entitlement in law to time off in school time to go on holiday therefore pupils are not allowed to take any holiday during the school year.

Exceptional circumstances

The following points are examples of possible exceptional circumstances:

- Close family weddings (when this is authorised, only the day of the event and travelling time will be authorised)
- Close family funerals
- Extending a child's opportunity to develop an exceptional gift or talent.

Not every circumstance is outlined above and other circumstances seen to be **EXCEPTIONAL** will be at the discretion of the Headteacher. Absences to gain

cheaper holiday prices or visiting friends abroad are not seen as exceptional circumstances and will not be authorised.

Unauthorised Absence

If a child builds up an absence of 15% (4.5 days) in any 6 week period the parents/carers are liable for a fixed penalty. The unauthorised absence is reported to the Local Authority who will then issue the legal fine. This will be £60 per child per parent/carer* If the fine is not paid within 28 days this fine will be doubled.

* the “parent” applies to (a) parent(s)/carer(s) who have parental responsibility whether the parent goes on the planned holiday or not.

Other circumstances where leave will not be authorised

We are highly unlikely to agree leave during term time under the following circumstances:

- When a pupil is just starting the school. This is very important as your child needs to settle into their new environment as quickly as possible.
- Immediately before and during assessment periods: SATS for Year 2 and 6 pupils, Phonics screening for Year 1 pupils.
- When a pupil’s attendance record already includes a high level of absence.

Children Left uncollected at school

All efforts will be made to contact parents/carer of children left at school using the contact numbers provided. In the event of not being able to contact a family member by 4:30 p.m., or within an hour of the time they are due to be collected, the following procedures will take place;

1. Contact Social Services Placements Officer on 01780 751821 before 5.00 p.m. so that an emergency placement can be held for the child. School staff must leave a telephone number where they can be contacted.
2. The Placements Officer will make arrangements for the child to be placed with local authority carers and advise school staff of their telephone number and address.
3. If between alerting the placement officer and delivering the child to the Emergency Placement, the parents can be contacted, every effort must be made by the SLT (Senior Leadership Team) to ensure the child is returned directly to their care.
4. If the parent/carer is incapacitated, refuses or is unable to collect the child, the local area officer social worker must be contacted immediately.

Numbers: Social Services, Stamford 01780 751821

Local Police: 101