

Whitwick St. John the Baptist C.E. Primary School

Attendance Policy

Agreed by Staff: June 2023
Agreed by Governors: June 2023

Signed (Chair): _____ Date: _____

1. Aims

At Whitwick St John the Baptist CE Primary School, we are committed to meeting our obligation with regards to school attendance through our whole-school culture and ethos that values good attendance, including:

- Promoting good attendance
- Reducing absence, including persistent and severe absence
- Ensuring every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled
- Acting early to address patterns of absence
- Building strong relationships with families to ensure pupils have the support in place to attend school
- We will also promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

2. Legislation and guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the [working together to improve school attendance](#) from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on [school attendance parental responsibility measures](#). These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- Part 6 of [The Education Act 1996](#)
- Part 3 of [The Education Act 2002](#)
- Part 7 of [The Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006 \(and 2010, 2011, 2013, 2016 amendments\)](#)
- [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)

This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the school census, which explains the persistent absence threshold.

3. Roles and responsibilities

3.1 The governing board

The governing board is responsible for:

- Promoting the importance of school attendance across the school's policies and ethos
- Making sure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties
- Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data
- Monitoring attendance figures for the whole school
- Making sure staff receive adequate training on attendance
- Holding the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy
- There is a link governor for attendance. Their details can be found on the school website.

3.2 The headteacher

The headteacher, Mrs Noon, is responsible for:

- Implementation of this policy at the school
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors

- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils
- Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies
- Referring families to the Attendance Team at County Hall

3.3 The designated senior leader responsible for attendance

The designated senior leader is responsible for:

- Leading attendance across the school
- Offering a clear vision for attendance improvement
- Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes
- Having an oversight of data analysis
- Devising specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data
- Arranging calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues
- Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families

The designated senior leader responsible for attendance is Mrs Noon and can be contacted via the school office on 01530 832116

3.4 The attendance officer

The school attendance officer is responsible for:

- Monitoring and analysing attendance data (see section 7)
- Benchmarking attendance data to identify areas of focus for improvement
- Providing regular attendance reports to school staff and reporting concerns about attendance to the designated senior leader responsible for attendance and the headteacher
- Working with education attendance officers to tackle persistent absence

The attendance officer is Mrs Deborah Stephens and can be contacted via the school office on 01530 832116

3.5 Class teachers

Class teachers are responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis, and submitting this information to the school office on the same day.

3.6 School office staff

School office staff will:

- Take calls from parents about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the school system
- Transfer calls from parents to the attendance officer to provide them with more detailed support on attendance

3.7 Parents/carers

Parents/carers are expected to:

- Make sure their child attends every day on time. All children to be in school by 8.35am.
- Call the school to report their child's absence on the school absence line on 01530 832116 by 8.45am. and advise when they are expected to return
- Provide the school with more than 1 emergency contact number for their child
- Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day

3.8 Pupils

Pupils are expected to:

- Attend school every day on time

4. Recording attendance

4.1 Attendance register

We will keep an attendance register, and place all pupils onto this register.

We will take our attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. It will mark whether every pupil is:

- Present
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity
- Absent
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

- The original entry
- The amended entry
- The reason for the amendment
- The date on which the amendment was made
- The name and position of the person who made the amendment

See appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes.

We will also record:

- Whether the absence is authorised or not
- The nature of the activity if a pupil is attending an approved educational activity
- The nature of circumstances where a pupil is unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

The register for the first session will be taken at 8.35 am and will be kept open until 8:50am. The register for the second session will be taken at 1pm and will be kept open until 1:10pm

4.2 Unplanned absence

The pupil's parent/carer must notify the school of the reason for the absence on the first day of an unplanned absence by 8:35am or as soon as practically possible by calling the school office staff (see also section 7).

We will mark absence due to illness as authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may ask the pupil's parent/carer to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents/carers will be notified of this in advance.

4.3 Planned absence

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the pupil's parent/carer notifies the school in advance of the appointment.

Parents / Carers should complete the form on WEDUC to inform the office of the appointment.

However, we encourage parents / carers to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

The pupil's parent / carer must also apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence. Go to section 5 to find out which term-time absences the school can authorise.

4.4 Lateness and punctuality

A pupil who arrives late:

- Before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code
- After the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code

4.5 Following up unexplained absence

Where any pupil we expect to attend school does not attend, or stops attending, without reason, the school will:

- Call the pupil's parent/carer on the morning of the first day of unexplained absence to ascertain the reason. If the school cannot reach any of the pupils' emergency contacts, the school will undertake a home visit in line with our Safeguarding Policy.
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not
- Identify the correct attendance code to use and input it as soon as the reason for absence is ascertained – this will be no later than 5 working days after the session
- Call the parent/carer on each day that the absence continues without explanation to ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary. If absence continues, the school will consider involving an education attendance officer

4.6 Reporting to parents/carers

The school will regularly inform parents about their child's attendance and absence levels. This will be done at Parents' Evening and through the annual report. Additional information may be shared with parents if attendance is causing concern.

5. Authorised and unauthorised absence

5.1 Approval for term-time absence

The headteacher will only grant a leave of absence to a pupil during term time if they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'. A leave of absence is granted at the headteacher's discretion, including the length of time the pupil is authorised to be absent for.

We define 'exceptional circumstances' as observance of a religious holiday or event, a death in the immediate family or a family emergency.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request.

Any request should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated. The headteacher may require evidence to support any request for leave of absence.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments (see sections 4.2 and 4.3 for more detail)

- Traveller pupils travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh gypsies, Irish and Scottish travellers, showmen (fairground people) and circus people, bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and new travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school, but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision

Holidays in Term Time

- Parents have no entitlement to take their child on a holiday during term time. All requests for absence during term time must be made in advance and will be considered on an individual basis.
- In the first instance, parents/carers must complete an absence request form. These are available from the school office or within the forms section on WEDUC.
- Parents/carers will be then contacted by the Attendance Officer to discuss the nature of the absence.
- We will then confirm the outcome of this discussion in writing.
- We have an obligation to review all requests and, should the absence still take place where permission has not been granted, the appropriate action may result in a fine.

5.2 Legal sanctions

- The local authority can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age.
- If issued with a fine, or penalty notice, each parent must pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the local authority.

6. Strategies for promoting attendance

- Please communicate regularly with school if you are finding things difficult. All our staff, including our Attendance Officer (Mrs Deborah Stephens), ELSA (Mrs Debbie Prime), Family Link Worker (Mrs Lindsey Woodward) and School Counsellor (Mrs Verna Hill) are here to help and support you.
- Wraparound Care is available for Breakfast Club (7.30am until 8.30am) and After School Club (3.15 pm until 5.45pm).

Establishing a good routine can help:

- Regular bedtimes so children aren't tired in the morning and are up on time.
- Help your children to get into a regular routine by using an alarm set at the same time every day.
- Ensure that children eat breakfast before they leave the house.
- Help your child to become independent by encouraging them to get everything ready the night before.

7. Attendance monitoring

7.1 Monitoring attendance

Whitwick St John the Baptist CE Primary School will:

- Monitor attendance and absence data half-termly, termly and yearly across the school and at an individual pupil level
- Identify whether or not there are particular groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern

Pupil-level absence data will be collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. The school will compare attendance data to the national average and share this with the governing board.

7.2 Analysing attendance

Whitwick St John the Baptist CE Primary School will:

- Analyse attendance and absence data regularly to identify pupils or cohorts that need additional support with their attendance, and use this analysis to provide targeted support to these pupils and their families
- Look at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence, and then develop strategies to address these patterns

7.3 Using data to improve attendance

Whitwick St John the Baptist CE Primary School will:

- Provide regular attendance reports to, and other school leaders, to facilitate discussions with pupils and families
- Use data to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place in order to modify them and inform future strategies

7.4 Reducing persistent and severe absence

Persistent absence is where a pupil misses 10% or more of school, and severe absence is where a pupil misses 50% or more of school.

The school will:

- Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence
- Communicate concerns with parents through letters. (See Appendix 2)
- Hold regular meetings with the parents of pupils who the school (and/or local authority) considers to be vulnerable, or are persistently or severely absent, to discuss attendance and engagement at school
- Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance

8. Monitoring arrangements

- This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the local authority or DfE is updated annually. At every review, the policy will be approved by the full governing board.

9. Links with other policies

This policy links to the following policies:

- Child protection and safeguarding policy
- Behaviour policy

Appendix 1: attendance codes

The following codes are taken from the DfE's guidance on school attendance.

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	Pupil is present at morning registration
\	Present (pm)	Pupil is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Pupil arrives late before register has closed
B	Off-site educational activity	Pupil is at a supervised off-site educational activity approved by the school
D	Dual registered	Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
P	Sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
V	Educational trip or visit	Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised, or approved, by the school

Code	Definition	Scenario
Authorised absence		
C	Authorised leave of absence	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
E	Excluded	Pupil has been excluded but no alternative provision has been made
H	Authorised holiday	Pupil has been allowed to go on holiday due to exceptional circumstances
I	Illness	School has been notified that a pupil will be absent due to illness
M	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment
R	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance
T	Gypsy, Roma and traveller absence	Pupil from a traveller community is travelling, as agreed with the school
Unauthorised absence		

G	Unauthorised holiday	Pupil is on a holiday that was not approved by the school
N	Reason not provided	Pupil is absent for an unknown reason (this code should be amended when the reason emerges, or replaced with code O if no reason for absence has been provided after a reasonable amount of time)
O	Unauthorised absence	School is not satisfied with reason for pupil's absence
U	Arrival after registration	Pupil arrived at school after the register closed

Code	Definition	Scenario
X	Not required to be in school	Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
Y	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances	School site is closed, there is disruption to travel as a result of a local/national emergency, or pupil is in custody
Z	Pupil not on admission register	Register set up but pupil has not yet joined the school

HOLIDAY REQUEST RESPONSE

THE PARENT/CARER OF:

Dear parent/carer

RE: FORMAL WARNING IN RELATION TO YOUR FAMILY HOLIDAY REQUEST

I write in response to your recent request to be permitted to **** on a family holiday during term-time from xxxxx to xxxx

Government guidelines, which came into effect on 1st September 2013, prevent Head teachers from granting any leave of absence during term time, unless there are exceptional circumstances. A family holiday during term-time does not fall under the category of 'exceptional circumstances' and I am therefore unable to grant leave of absence for your family holiday request.

As a result, I must inform you that, should you disregard my decision and **** have absences recorded as a result of an unauthorised family holiday, Leicestershire County Council may be advised of this matter and may be requested to issue Penalty Notices in line with their policy.

The parent(s) of any child who has absences recorded as a result of an (unauthorised family holiday/persistence absence) will each be fined £60 which must be paid within a 21-day period. Failure to pay the fine(s) within this timescale, will result in the fines being doubled to £120 which will need to be paid within 28 days of the original fine being issued. If the fine(s) remain unpaid after the full period of 28 days has expired, parents may face legal action under section 444 of the Education Act 1996. If found guilty of an offence under this Act, parents will receive a criminal record and could be fined up to £1000.

It is hoped that you will take serious consideration of the information outlined above and reconsider your plans to take a family holiday during school term-time.

Yours sincerely

Headteacher

LETTER 1 – INITIAL CONTACT

Dear Parents / Carers,

I am writing to you to express my concern about XXXX's attendance which is currently XX%. This is a huge concern and means that out of a possible XX days, they have attended XX days. A copy of their latest attendance has been included with this letter. There is clear evidence that attendance under 96% negatively affects a child's performance and success. Their absence consists of blocks of absence / isolated days. This causes serious disruption to their learning as they often find themselves missing key lessons and concepts. This makes it harder for them to catch up when they then return to school. Their inconsistent attendance makes it difficult to ensure that XXX's needs are being met.

Their attendance will be monitored closely for the next XXX weeks. An improvement needs to be seen whereby XXX attends school at least 96% of the time. This means, they need to attend at least XX days out of the possible XX between now and XXXX.

If an improvement is not seen, then I will write to you again and invite you into school for a meeting to discuss the absences and ways to improve XXX's attendance. This may include a referral to the court team or Children and Families Wellbeing service.

If you would like to discuss the content of this letter in more detail, then please contact the school office. We appreciate that every situation is different and there may be specific issues which are making it difficult for your child to attend school. If this is the case then please contact the office and we will do all we can to support you.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs Noon

LETTER 2 – CAUSE FOR CONCERN

Further letter of concern - attendance

Dear parent / carer

Further to our recent visit/meeting/letter I am disappointed that’s attendance has not improved and is still a cause for concern. Attendance currently stands at XX? NUMBER of these absences are unauthorised / NUMBER OF these absences are for illness/medical appointments.

We are unable to authorise any further absences due to illness without medical evidence. This can be a letter from the GP or hospital, a copy of an appointment card or prescription.

Poor attendance is taken very seriously at Whitwick St John the Baptist CE Primary School and research shows a clear link between absence and poor progress in schools and colleges.

In view of these concerns, please can you telephone the school office on 01530832116 to make an appointment to discuss ways that we can work together to improve XXX’s attendance and offer any support or advice you may require.

Parents and carers are responsible by law for ensuring that their children attend school on a regular basis and are not absent without good reason. XXXX’s attendance will not be monitored daily and we hope to see a significant improvement. If there is no improvement within the next XXX weeks and we do not hear further from you, we will have no alternative but to refer this matter to the Local Authority, who will consider legal action.

We look forward to hearing from you as a matter of urgency.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Noon

LETTER 3 – WARNING NOTICE

Warning notice

Dear parent / carer

I am writing to inform you that despite the school supporting you to improve XXX's attendance, I have no option other than to refer the matter to the local authority.

Further to my previous letter DATED in which I expressed concerns regarding XXX's attendance. I am disappointed to see that XX's attendance has not improved / dropped to XXX. As you are aware, regular attendance at school is essential and should be no less than 96% each academic year.

In the absence of any contact regarding any difficulties, I will be left with no alternative but to refer XXX's attendance to the pupil services court team at Leicestershire County Council for legal action to commence under section 444 of The Education Act 1996: failure to ensure regular attendance of you child. You will receive documentation from the Local Authority in due course.

Yours sincerely

Punctuality concern – letter 1

DATE

Dear Parents / Carers,

I am writing to you to inform you that XXXX has been late XX times this academic year from XXX to XXX. We have contacted you via WEDUC to inform you of this XXX times.

I do appreciate that slow traffic and other factors can contribute to children being late for school but please do be aware it can be distressing and disruptive for children when they are late. It also has an impact on their first lesson.

Therefore, can I remind you of the importance of punctual attendance at school and request that you ensure that your child arrives at school on time in the future. Pupils are expected to be in class ready to start learning by 8:35am.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Noon

Punctuality concern - letter 2

Dear Parents / Carers,

I am writing to you to inform you that XXXX has been late XX times this academic year from XXX to XXX. I am disappointed to see that XXX's punctuality has not improved since I wrote to you on XXX.

Therefore, can I remind you of the importance of punctual attendance at school and request that you ensure that your child arrives at school on time in the future. If no improvement is made you will be invited to meet a member of the Senior Leadership Team to discuss ways we can help support you regarding punctuality.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Noon