



## **WESTGATE PRIMARY SCHOOL ATTENDANCE POLICY**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The Westgate Attendance Policy intends:-

- to raise attainment and achievement levels by having high expectations of attendance;
- to work effectively with parents and other partners to maintain high attendance levels
- maintain high expectations in relation to attendance; all children should be aware that every day counts and that their attendance is important;
- to encourage and celebrate good attendance through our reward systems.

We believe that a child's attainment and achievement depends on regular presence in school. Any absence leads to missed learning and may cause difficulties with social relationships. This in turn can encourage an increased pattern of non-attendance. Encouraging good attendance is the shared responsibility of the school including governors, the parent and Children Leeds.

- The school agrees an attendance policy and ensures parents are provided with the information they require to ensure their child attends school regularly,
- Parents have a responsibility to see that their children receive an appropriate education.
- The local authority is responsible, through its School Attendance Service, to ensure that pupils have access to an appropriate education and that the law is followed.

Any incidents of unexplained absence will be followed up to ensure any safeguarding concerns are explored and school will liaise with Children Missing in Education team (CME).

### **Safeguarding**

A child may be at risk of harm if they do not attend school regularly. Safeguarding the interests of each child is everyone's responsibility and within the context of this school, promoting the welfare and life opportunities for your child encompasses: Attendance; Behaviour Management; Health and Safety; Access to the Curriculum; Anti-bullying.

A pupil failing to attend Westgate on a regular basis will be considered as a safeguarding matter.

### **1 REGISTRATION AND PUNCTUALITY**

- Registration takes place between 8.55 and 9:05 (08:45 and 09:00 in Nursery). Registers are completed on SIMS in the classroom on a PC, or on SIMS Teacher app on a staff iPad.
- During COVID-19 arrangements, when the school day is subject to staggered starts and breaks, the register will usually be taken in the first 10 minutes of the school day, whenever that might be.
- Parents of any child absent without a reason will receive a standard absence text by 09:30 sent by school office staff. Y6 and Y5 will be texted first as they are allowed to walk to school unaccompanied, and this will usually be by 09:15.
- Children arriving after registration will need to come in at the school office a late mark placed in the register in SIMS, along with a reason for their lateness. Time of arrival of

children who arrive late persistently (more than three sessions ***in a week***) will be monitored and their parents contacted, initially by the Learning Mentor or class teacher.

- If there is no improvement in punctuality, parents will then be contacted by the Head teacher.
- Registers close at 09:30 and any child arriving after this time will be marked as late after the registers closed and this is classed as an unauthorised absence.

## **2 USE OF DATA**

- We believe that the efficient and speedy collection of the data is essential to the development of effective strategies for action. Class teachers and office staff ensure that individual absence and lateness at school is logged electronically in a timely fashion.
- The learning mentor monitors the registers on a weekly basis. Concerns are then shared with the head teacher who will take appropriate action, including phoning or writing to the family. The accurate collection means that data can be interrogated and patterns of lateness and absence and trends by Year Groups, seasonal patterns and the pattern and nature of unauthorised absence identified, supporting school and families to tackle underlying issues.
- Letters home for children falling below the nationally defined attendance threshold for persistent absenteeism are used to inform parents and raise awareness of issues with attendance, in the Spring term and Summer term (see appendix 1). The threshold is currently 90% ('Persistent absenteeism') Follow up letters are sent when an improvement is achieved (see appendix 2).
- Governors receive an update on overall school attendance data at each full governing body meeting as part of the head teacher's report.
- Parents receive a full attendance summary for their child as part of their annual report at the end of the Summer term. This includes information about punctuality, authorised and unauthorised.

## **3 AUTHORISED ABSENCE**

- Authorised absence is where the school accepts there is good reason for absence. An authorised absence requires a written or telephone communication from the parent/carer. A child's own word cannot be taken as reason for absence. Virtually all parents telephone the school and inform staff of reasons for pupil absence. Email should not be used to communicate absence as these messages may not be picked up at the start of the day.
- If this is not the case, the school office will send a text on the first day of absence asking parents to provide a reason for absence and request that parents keep school informed should the absence continue. It is important that parents/ carers are aware of absences and lateness and of their responsibility to account for all such events.

## **4 UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE**

Unauthorised absence is any absence which does not fall into the following categories:

- a) Absence caused by illness or other unavoidable cause. If a child has higher than average absence rate parents should be asked to provide medical information.
- b) An approved absence for religious observance by the religious body to which the parent belongs.
- c) Special circumstances approved by the Head teacher.
- d) For information concerning extended leave see section below.

## **5 EXCEPTIONAL LEAVE OF ABSENCE**

- Each school expects that parents will take their holidays during the approved school breaks. It should be noted that there are 175 days each year when a child is on holiday from school.

**It is not a parental right for a child to be absent from school on holiday during term-time.**

- There are very few circumstances in which leave of absence can be granted, according to DfE and local policy. If a parent/ carer takes their child out of school when leave of absence has **NOT** been granted, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised absence.
- If a child has 10 or more consecutive or non-consecutive sessions which have been recorded as unauthorised absence, this will be referred to the attendance team for a fixed penalty notice, in line with local authority guidance. This has been agreed by governors and is reflected in all documentation provided for new and existing children. The expectations are regularly publicised to parents through the school newsletter. (See appendix 3 for the absence request form.)
- When a child has been reported as absent due to illness but the school has reasonable grounds to suspect that they were in fact on holiday, the head teacher will first approach the parent/ carer about the issue. If the matter is not resolved, school will ask for proof of absence due to illness and the case will be referred for a penalty notice if none is forthcoming.

## **6 PERSISTENT ABSENTEEISM DEFINITION**

- The school follows the Department for Education definition for Persistent Absenteeism which is an attendance rate of 90% or less.

## **7 ACTION**

The following procedures will be followed:

1. Child's unexplained absence: First day text by 09:30 (09:15 for Y5/6)
2. Continued absence of three days or more: Follow-up call
3. A pattern of absence or absence falling below 90% over a term: Letter to parent/ carer (appendix 1).
4. Failure to improve attendance over a period of weeks: Parental Agreement, which can lead to the involvement of the Attendance Adviser
5. Persistent lateness: letter to family, followed by meeting then referral to Attendance Adviser when meeting with the family has proved ineffective
6. Persistent infringements: referral to the Attendance Adviser which could lead to fixed penalty notices or ultimately court proceedings which could lead to fines or parenting orders.

The key leaders in the implementation of this policy are:

- The Head teacher who will set school attendance target, monitor data contact parents formally in writing or by telephone to raise concerns over attendance or punctuality
- The Learning Mentor who will monitor attendance on a daily basis, support individual children to improve their punctuality and attendance, make initial contact with a family for any unexplained absence and share concerns with the Head Teacher.
- The Class Teacher will ensure the register is completed promptly and accurately, and that the Learning Mentor/ Head Teacher are alerted promptly of any concerns.
- The admin assistant who will collate all data accurately and promote consistency throughout the school.

- The senior administrator and admin assistant who manage absence texts.

## **8 REWARDS**

- The importance of good attendance is regularly promoted during lessons and assemblies. A variety of rewards are given for consistently high attendance. School also participates in the Children Leeds/ Radio Aire Attendance Campaign when it runs, which rewards 100% attendance in specified months.
- Certificates are awarded to children at the end of each term for 100% attendance in that term, and medals at the end of each year for 100% attendance for the whole academic year.
- During the COVID-19 pandemic, attendance certificates will not be awarded in recognition of the disproportionate effect the restrictions have on attendance, even when they are well.

## **9 NURSERY ATTENDANCE**

Attendance at Nursery is not compulsory and so absence will not be unauthorised. However, attendance is monitored and reported on in exactly the same way as for the rest of school and parents are encouraged to value good attendance in Nursery so as to develop good habits and attitudes for Reception and beyond.

## **10 SCHOOL RESPONSIBILITIES**

Parents have a responsibility for ensuring their child attends school regularly and punctually.

School therefore ensures that parents are provided in advance of a child starting with the necessary information from the school which would enable them to meet their obligations. This includes:

- the times of the school day;
- school dates and holidays;
- school procedures relating to attendance and punctuality;
- school expectations regarding lateness;
- prompt communication of matters causing concern;
- making the leave of absence policy clear.

**This policy was updated in Autumn 2020 and will be reviewed in Autumn 2023, or earlier if legislation or government policy changes.**

**Signed :**

**Head teacher**

**Signed:**

**(on behalf of the governing body)**

**Date:** 19/10/2020

## Appendix 1 Letter regarding attendance



We're working towards Artsmark  
Awarded by Arts Council England

Scarborough Road, Otley, West Yorkshire LS21 3JS

Tel: 01943 462349

Headteacher: Ms H.R. Carpenter • email: info@westgateprimary.co.uk



Date

Address

## ABSENCES MATTER AND YOU CAN HELP

Dear [Parent name],

[Pupil Name] has missed more school than their classmates.

[Pupil Name] has been absent for X day(s) so far this school year.

Children fall behind when they miss school – whether they are absent for authorised or unauthorised reasons.

You can have a big effect on [Pupil Name]'s absences this term and we appreciate the help and support.

Should [Pupil Name]'s attendance not improve in the next half term then you may requested to attend a meeting to discuss this further.

Yours sincerely,

Ms Helen Carpenter

Head Teacher

### **[Pupil Name] HAS MISSED MORE SCHOOL THAN HIS/ HER CLASSMATES:**

Number of days absent from school																										
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	+
[Pupil Name]	<div></div>																									
Class average	<div></div>																									

## Appendix 2 Improvement Letter



We're working  
towards Artsmark  
Awarded by Arts  
Council England

Scarborough Road, Otley, West Yorkshire LS21 3JS

Tel: 01943 462349

Headteacher: Ms H.R. Carpenter • email: [info@westgateprimary.co.uk](mailto:info@westgateprimary.co.uk)

Date

Address



## ABSENCES MATTER AND YOU HAVE HELPED

Dear [Parent Name],

When I last wrote to you about [Pupil's Name]'s absence from school, his/ her attendance had fallen 90% or below.

Children fall behind when they miss school – whether they are absent for authorised or unauthorised reasons.

I am pleased to note that your child's attendance has now improved to more than 90%. Thank you for your partnership and support in this matter. This will be beneficial for your child's continued academic progress and emotional wellbeing in school. Please don't hesitate to speak to school staff if you have any further issues or concerns about [Pupil Name]'s attendance in the future.

Yours sincerely,

Ms Helen Carpenter  
Head Teacher

## Appendix 3 Request for absence



extended services  
Inner North West Hub  
Opening up opportunities for families and communities



open  
bixs



NORTH WEST  
LEEDS SCHOOLS  
APPLICATION FOR  
EXCEPTIONAL LEAVE  
OF ABSENCE DURING  
TERM TIME

Name of School:				DfE Number:	
<p>Parents, you <b>do not</b> have the right to take your child out of school during term time. By law you must ask permission for your child to miss school. If you fail to gain the school's permission you risk receiving a fixed penalty fine. <b>The penalty is £120 and applies to each child for which permission has been refused.</b> All schools in the north-west area of Leeds have agreed to follow a common policy on absence during term time. It is important to understand that good attendance leads to improved outcomes for your child.</p> <p>If you feel that your <b>only option</b> is to apply for permission for your child to be absent from school you must complete this form and return it to the school for authorisation <b>at least 10 school days in advance of the proposed leave.</b></p>					
PARENTS SECTION (to be completed first)					
Surname of child		First name			
Date of birth		Year Group			
Surname of parent/carer		First name			
Address of child					
Postcode		Telephone number			
<p>Parents must seek approval to withdraw their child from school in term-time. Please state the <b>exceptional circumstances</b> that require you to apply to take your child out of school during term time instead of making arrangements for the proposed activity to take place during the school holidays.</p>					
If your child has had a request for absence during term time approved during this school year please state the number of days previously agreed.					Days
Does your child have any siblings for which you are requesting absence in term time in other schools?					Yes No
If you have answered yes to the previous question please state which schools your other child(ren) attend.					
Length of absence (school days)	Days	From (date)	To (date)		
Emergency telephone contact in the Leeds district					
Parent/Carer signature					
SECTION BELOW TO BE COMPLETED BY THE SCHOOL					
Child's First Name:		Surname:		Form:	Date:
Has the child got siblings in another school for which an absence has been requested?		Yes	No	Head teacher's comment:	
Other school contacted?		Yes	No		
Name (Print)	Signed:			Request approved	YES NO



## Schools in North West Leeds have agreed a policy about giving permission for family requested absence from school

- Children must attend school regularly to achieve their potential.
- Children who miss out on school can feel vulnerable and left behind.
- Family requested absence in term-time is very disruptive and can seriously affect your child's education.
- On average, children who miss 17 or more days in a school year lose one full grade in their GCSEs.
- Unauthorised absence can lead to prosecution.

### The Law

By law, you must ask permission for your child to miss school. If you don't, you risk a £120 penalty notice per child. When a school doesn't give permission, absence is unauthorised and counted as truancy.

### Our policy

Parents **do not** have the right to remove their children from school in term-time. The Headteacher will decide whether or not an absence should be authorised. Headteachers will only authorise absence in term time when there are **exceptional** reasons for a child to miss school.

Absence in term-time will only be authorised if parents or carers make a request to the school in advance on the appropriate form and can show that there are exceptional reasons why the absence has to be in term-time. **The cost, convenience or availability of a particular holiday will not be taken into consideration.**

If an absence has not been authorised by the Headteacher and parents or carers remove their child from school, their child's absence will be recorded as unauthorised in the class register.

**Absence for religious observance may be agreed by the Headteacher but will not exceed 2 days in any school year.**

**Parents or carers who repeatedly take their children out of school without permission may be issued with a fixed penalty fine. The penalty is £120 and applies to each child for which permission has been refused.**