



## Whiteshill Primary School

### Attendance Policy

**Start Date: November 2019**

**Review Date: November 2020**

Whiteshill Primary School recognises that good attendance is central to ensuring uninterrupted progress and to enable children to meet their full potential. The attendance of all children in the school is monitored weekly using ScholarPack online attendance analysis. The school hopes to work pro-actively with parents to ensure children's attendance is always at a high level.

We expect all children on roll to attend school each day, as long as they are fit and healthy enough to do so unless a reason acceptable to the school is given and we are able to authorise the absence. This is what we consider regular attendance at Whiteshill Primary School. We do all we can to encourage the children to attend and to put in place appropriate measures to support this. We believe that the most important thing we can do to support children's attendance in school is to ensure that they feel happy, safe and have a positive attitude towards school and learning.

Poor attendance can seriously affect each child's:

- Attainment at school
- Relationships with other children and their ability to form lasting friendships
- Confidence and resilience when attempting new work and when working alongside others

Any absence affects the pattern of a child's learning and regular absence will seriously affect their progress over time. Learning in school is not different each day, it builds upon the day, week and month before. And therefore missing any one session will affect the lessons after this. For example, in English, if a child misses the hook for their piece of writing e.g. a story being read out loud or a video being watched, this will mean that when they return there is an effect on their writing unit over a period of days. In maths, if a day is missed, the entire unit is disrupted as each day builds on the one before e.g. if a child is learning how to add, each day they will get a step closer to mastering this skill and a session missed means that they may not have all the information they need to perform to their full potential. This means that teacher and TA time has to be used to catch them up with information that they missed and this is inevitably not possible to the degree that they would have experienced had they been present during the original lesson.

Each child's attendance is looked at in the following terms:

- 97%+ - excellent attendance. This level of attendance will ensure all aspects of your child's progress and attainment in school are not affected by their attendance. It will ensure they have a good start in life and support a positive work ethic.
- 95-97% - a good level of attendance but there is scope to make it better.
- 90-95% - absence might be affecting your child's attainment and progress in school.

- Below 90% - absence is causing SERIOUS CONCERN. It will be affecting attainment and progress and will be disrupting your child's learning. At this level, the school may work with you and the local authority to improve your child's attendance.

Permitting absence from school without a good reason is an offence by the parent. Parents are responsible for making sure that their children of compulsory school age receive a suitable full-time education. Only the school can authorise absence in line with statutory guidelines. It is very important therefore that parents/carers make sure that children attend regularly and this policy sets out how together we can achieve this.

### **Definition of a parent:**

A parent is defined in Education Law as:

- All natural parents, whether married or not
- Any person who, although not a natural parent, has parental responsibility for a child or young person.
- Any person who, although not a natural parent, has care of a child or young person.

The fact that you do not live with the child is not a defence against securing their attendance at school. The local authority and school will decide who comes within the definition of parent in respect of a particular pupil when using the legal measures.

### **The Law Relating to Attendance**

By law, all children of compulsory school age (between 5 and 16) must get a suitable, full-time education. As a parent, you are responsible for making sure this happens. Once your child is registered at a school you are responsible for making sure he or she attends regularly.

The Local Authority is responsible for making sure that parents fulfil their responsibilities. If your child fails to attend regularly - even if they miss school without you knowing - the Local Authority (LA) may take legal action against you.

We as a school are responsible by law for reporting poor attendance to the LA. Every school must make a return to the local authority of every registered pupil of compulsory school age who fails to attend school regularly; or has been absent from school, where the absence has not been authorised, for a continuous period of not less than 10-days.

As a parent, you are committing an offence if you fail to make sure that your child attends school regularly, even if they are missing school without your knowledge. You run the risk of being issued with a penalty notice or being taken to court.

If the LA decides to prosecute a parent:

- Parents can be fined up to £2,500 or imprisoned for failing to ensure that their child attends school regularly.
- Magistrates can also impose a Parenting Order, which means that the parent has to attend a counselling and guidance programme, usually a parenting class.

## Safeguarding and Attendance:

Children may be at risk of harm if they do not attend school regularly. Safeguarding the interests of each child is everyone's responsibility. *Failing to attend Whiteshill Primary School on a regular basis may be considered as a safeguarding matter.*

Parents are strongly advised to inform the school of any known leave to be taken, regardless of authorisation. If school is not aware of the reason for an absence, then welfare concerns will become paramount. As part of our Safeguarding Procedures, the school office will endeavour to contact the parent or carer and other emergency contacts if no message has been received regarding the reason for the absence to check on the safety of the child. On occasions, to safeguard the absent child, home visits and a referral to social services may be necessary.

Anyone concerned that a child is missing education (CME) must make a referral to the Education Entitlement and Inclusion Team at Gloucestershire County Council. Full information and up to date contact details are provided at:

<http://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/schoolsnet/article/114779/Children-missing-education>

**Children Missing Education (CME)** refers to 'any child of compulsory school age who is **not** registered at any formally approved education activity, e.g. school, alternative provision, elective home education, **and** has been out of education provision for at least 4 weeks'.

CME also includes those children who are **missing** (family whereabouts unknown) and are usually children who are registered on a school roll/alternative provision. This might be a child who is not at their last known address **and either**

- has not taken up an allocated school place as expected, or
- has 10 or more days of continuous absence from school without explanation, or
- left school suddenly and the destination is unknown

## Types of Absence

At Whiteshill Primary School we expect pupils to attend school every day that it is open. Absence for any reason during term time is discouraged where possible due to the impact on children's learning. Every half-day absence has to be classified by the school as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED, this is why information about the cause of each absence is always required from parents. The decision as to whether an absence is authorised or unauthorised rests solely with the school not with the parents and we adhere to the DfE statutory guidelines in authorising absence.

There is no automatic entitlement in law to time off during term time to go on holiday. **Advance permission must be sought on a 'Leave of Absence' request form obtained from the school office for all holidays and days off during term-time that are not related to illness or medical appointments.**

## Authorised Absences

An absence is classified as authorised when a child has been away from school for a legitimate reason and the school has received notification from a parent or guardian.

There may be times when your child has to miss school because they are ill. This is to be expected and when your child is unwell, you should contact the school before 9.15am on the first day of absence informing the school of the reason for that absence. If your child is absent due a sickness bug, then they should not return to school for 48 hours after the last time they are sick. This is to reduce the risk of infection to other children and adults at school.

Children may also have to attend a medical or dental appointments in school time. However, you should try to make routine appointments such as dental check-ups during the school holidays or after school hours. An appointment card/letter or verification by the doctors/dentist/ hospital may be required. 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.

There may also be exceptional circumstances when a request on a 'Leave of Absence' form may be authorised, in accordance with Section 444(1) of the Education Act 1996. The Headteacher will consider each case individually and there are a range of factors which may influence the decision e.g. length of absence, child's current attendance. Some examples of exceptional circumstances could include:

- Family bereavement
- Music examination
- Religious observance/festival

### **Unauthorised Absences**

An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without permission of the Headteacher. **The vast majority of requests for holidays or days off during term time will be refused and if the holiday is taken anyway, this will constitute unauthorised absence which can result in the issue of a penalty notice to each parent in respect of each absent child.** If an unauthorised holiday is taken for a continuous period of 10 days or more, the school is legally obliged to inform the local authority.

Examples of unauthorised absence may include:

- Pupils who arrive at school after registration has closed without explanation
- Truancy
- Parents keeping pupils off school unnecessarily
- Absences which have never been properly explained
- Day trips and holidays during term time

### **What will happen if the school is concerned about my child's attendance?**

Non-attendance is an important issue that is treated seriously. However, each case is different, and the school acknowledges that no one standard response will be appropriate in every case. Consideration is given to all factors affecting attendance before deciding what intervention strategies to apply. Prior to the engagement of external attendance support services, the school will work collaboratively with families to get the pupil back into the habit of regular attendance. It is hoped that a quick response and change in levels of absence will prevent the need for further involvement. However, if reasonable

efforts to resolve unauthorised absence do not result in improvement, the case may then be referred to the local authority.

As a school we may:

- Investigate the reasons for absence and confirm that they are unauthorised.
- Meet with parent(s)/carer(s) by off-site visit if necessary, e.g. at home or in a public place.
- Warn parents in writing at the outset of the possibility of prosecution.
- Implement strategies to remove any barriers to regular attendance e.g. bullying and behaviour
- Consider and follow the graduated pathway of need as appropriate (see Offer of Early Help).
- Hold a formal, documented Attendance Improvement Meeting (AIM) with those who have parental responsibility, as well as the child, in order to draw up a plan, setting agreed targets.
- Hold an AIM Review with all stakeholders, assessing whether or not the targets have been met and considering additional interventions that could be implemented if required.
- Discuss the case with a Local Authority education inclusion advisor.

### **Penalty Fines**

Section 444 of the Education Act gives powers to the Local Authority (LA) to issue Penalty Notices when a parent or carer is considered capable of but has failed to secure their child's regular school attendance and/or punctuality.

A Penalty Notice is a fixed fine which may be issued as an alternative to prosecution. It does not require a court appearance (if paid) and does not result in a criminal record. Payment of a Penalty Notice means you avoid the potential danger of prosecution and subsequent conviction.

A Penalty Notice may be issued if your child is absent from school, without authorisation from the Headteacher, for the purposes of a holiday. There is no requirement on a school to issue a warning notice that a Penalty Notice may be issued for unauthorised holidays.

A Penalty Notice may be issued if your child is persistently late for school after the register has closed and without authorisation from the head teacher. A warning letter would be sent by the school in these cases and it is expected that the school will have worked with you and your child in order to understand and support the reasons for the persistent lateness.

The penalty notice allows you 21 days to pay a £60 fine, per parent, per child. If you pay after the 21-day period but within 28 days, the fine increases to £120, per parent, per child. If the fine remains unpaid at this stage, the LA will usually initiate legal proceedings against you for failing to secure regular attendance for a child registered at a school. If you are convicted of this offence there are a number of possible sentences, including a fine of up to £1,000.

### **Lateness**

All children should be in the school ready to register at **08.50am**. Pupils are able to enter the playground before this time and can enter school when the bell goes at 08.45am so that they are in time for register in class at 08.50am. Morning registration ends at 09.00 a.m. If a child arrives after this registration period, they must enter school through the school office and will be marked as 'Late'. Arrival after 9.15

a.m. is recorded as **unauthorised** and will be dealt with in the same way as other unauthorised absences. The Headteacher may meet with parents/carers of children who are persistently late to see what support can be put in place to resolve the problem. The register is taken twice a day and a day counts as 2 attendances. The second register is taken at 1.15pm after lunch ready for the afternoon session.

### **Excluded Pupils**

A pupil who has been temporarily excluded remains on the school roll. The pupil is absent as a result of the school's decision to exclude them; thus the absence is authorised.

### **Promoting Regular Attendance**

To help everyone within the school community focus on creating a pattern of regular attendance, the school will:

- Report to parents/carers every term on their child's attendance record.
- Report whole school attendance as part of the school newsletter.

### **Links with Other Policies**

- Anti-Bullying
- Behaviour
- Child Protection and Safeguarding
- Offer of Early Help