



Whitchurch CE Junior School

Attendance Policy

Including Attendance Guidance for Information for Parents & Carers

January 2018

Agreed by Governors on the
6th February 2018

Next review January 2020

Attendance Mission Statement

“As a school we are very keen to do everything we can to ensure that our students maintain a high level of punctuality and attendance. We will work with students and their families to ensure that any issues are addressed promptly to achieve maximum possible attendance. We will support parents/carers in meeting their legal duty to ensure that children attend school regularly.”

Principles

Staff and governors recognise the importance of regular school attendance to educational achievement, therefore expect all students to attend school and attend on time. Good attendance is important and statistics show a direct link between under-achievement and absence below 95%. Regular attenders make better progress, both socially and academically, find school routines, school work and friendships easier to cope with, find learning more satisfying and are more successful in transferring between primary school, secondary school, and higher education, employment or training.

Pupils are expected to attend school every day and will sign the Home School Agreement at the beginning of each school year, to agree to keep their attendance at, or above, **96.5%** throughout the year (including ‘authorised absences’).

- Parents/carers have a legal duty to ensure that their child attends school on a regular basis.
- Permitting unauthorised absence from school is an offence as stated in the 1996 Education Act - “The Parent of a child of compulsory school age registered at a school and failing to attend regularly is guilty of an offence punishable by law”
- Parents/carers permitting unauthorised absence from school will be reported to Shropshire’s Education Welfare Service. It is therefore crucial that parents/carers ensure that effective communication occurs with the school when there is genuine reason for absence.
- Unauthorised absence is recognised as time that a pupil is absent from school, without permission having been granted by the school.
- Authorised absence is recognised as absence from school where permission has been granted by the school.
- School staff recognise that pupils may face genuine problems attending school. Support will be provided through multi agencies and or Whitchurch CE Junior school, where a student is for whatever reason reluctant to attend. Such cases require immediate communication between parents/carers and school to allow for early intervention.
- For more serious cases of non-school attendance, Shropshire Education Welfare Service intervention will be requested.
- We define “Persistent absenteeism” as pupils attending for less than 90% across the year and we monitor this half termly.

Procedures for reporting absence

The following procedures are to be followed for all pupil absences:

- It is your responsibility as a parent/carer to inform Whitchurch CE Junior school each day if your son/daughter is absent.
- Telephone the school office (01948 662255) between 8.30am – 9.00am informing us of the reason and we will at least know that your child is safe.

School Registers and Recording Attendance

At Whitchurch CE Junior School attendance and absences are recorded on the school management information system (SIMS) electronic registers, from where reports on attendance and absence can be obtained.

- Registers are taken twice per day in the classroom by teachers at 9 am and 1 pm.
- Registers are checked by the administration team to ensure that they are completed within the first 15 minutes and to quickly identify absent pupils.
- Any staff who haven't completed the registers are contacted by the administration team straight away, and asked to complete the register.
- The administration team enters the reason for any pupil absence on the register.
- The administration team contact parents/carers immediately by text and or phone to find out why an absent pupil is not at school. This occurs where the parent/carer has not informed school that their child will not be at school on that day.

Arriving at School Late

- Pupils should arrive in their classrooms no later than 8.55 am
- Pupils entrance closes at 8.55 am
- Pupils who arrive after 8.55 am are required to sign in at the reception office and provide a reason for their lateness
- Pupils are recorded on the register as late if they arrive after 9.00 am
- Persistent lateness will be referred to the Education Welfare Service

Appointments

- As far as possible, parents/carers must attempt to book medical and dental appointments outside of school hours.
- Where this is not possible, a note and appointment card must be brought to the school office ahead of the appointment to advise us of the time of early collection or late arrival.
- If the appointment requires the pupil to arrive late to school, they must be signed in at the school office by their parent/carer.
- If the appointment requires the pupil to leave during the school day, they must be signed out at the school office by their parent/carer.
- Pupils must attend school before and after the appointment wherever possible

Unauthorised Absences

- A pupil will be recorded as having an unauthorised absence in the school register when they are marked absent by the teacher, and
 - have not provided a reason for absence
 - the reason given for absence is not on the list of allowable absences such as illness and cannot be authorised by the Headteacher

Truancy

- Truancy from school is treated very seriously.
- If a pupil is believed to be truanting from school, parents/carers will be contacted. If the pupil is deemed to be vulnerable and at risk the police may also be informed.
- Pupils who truant from school are likely to be referred to Shropshire Education Welfare Service who may take further action.

Requests for leave of absence

We discourage parent/carers from taking pupils out of school during term time. We consider this action inappropriate and harmful to the education of pupils.

Absence in term-time will not be authorised under the following circumstances:

- during national or school tests and examinations
- when a child's attendance is below 96%, or lower than their previously agreed individual target
- for more than 10 days during term-time in any school year

NB: Please note there may be other factors which are taken into consideration depending on the circumstances.

Absence in term-time will only be considered if parents or carers make a request to the school in advance on the absence request form and can show that there are exceptional circumstances why the absence has to be in term-time. All absence in term time is at the discretion of the Headteacher who will personally consider each request. The cost, convenience or availability of a particular holiday is not an exceptional circumstance and therefore will not be taken into consideration.

If an absence has not been authorised by the Headteacher and parents/carers still take their child out of school, it will be an unauthorised absence and will be referred to the Education Welfare Service, which may lead to a Fixed Penalty Fine.

Parents or carers who repeatedly take their children out of school without permission face prosecution in court.

Religious observances

- The school will take advice from local religious leaders of all faiths to establish the appropriate number of days required for religious festivals.
- Parents are required to inform the school in advance if absences are required for days of religious observance.

Young carers

- The school understands the difficulties that face young carers.
- The school will endeavour to identify young carers at the earliest opportunity from enrolment at the school and throughout their time at the school.
- The school takes a caring and flexible approach to the needs of young carers and each pupil will be examined on a case-by-case basis, involving other agencies if appropriate

Attendance Monitoring

Every school, by law, has to register pupils twice in the day; first thing in the morning at the start of the school day, and again in the afternoon session. The Education Welfare Service will become involved if your child is not recorded as attending regularly.

- The Whitchurch CE Junior School attendance lead monitors attendance on a weekly basis and if a pupil's attendance falls below 96.5% parents are likely to be contacted.
- The Education Welfare Officer monitors attendance regularly and meets with the Whitchurch CE Junior School attendance lead to identify any pupil whose attendance is below 93%. Parents/Carers of these students will be contacted by the Education Welfare Officer.
- If attendance continues to fall, the Educational Welfare Service (EWO) may take further action including possible fines or prosecution.
- If the situation cannot be resolved and attendance does not improve, the EWO has the power to issue sanctions such as prosecutions or penalty notices. The EWO will arrange for meetings with parents to discuss an action plan.

Attendance Lead Actions and Liaison with Parents \Carers

The Whitchurch CE Junior School attendance lead takes the following actions where necessary;

- Contacts parents/carers by letter and or phone for any absences which we still have no reason
- Sends a 1st letter home to parents/carers for any pupil whose attendance drops below 93%
- Sends a 2nd letter home to parents/carers for any pupil whose attendance below 93% shows no improvement
- Produces a list of all students with attendance of below 93% and shares this information with teaching and administration staff to flag up pupils with lower than expected attendance
- Makes a referral to the Educational Welfare Officer for any pupil whose attendance drops below 90%
- Attends 'Fast Track' meetings with the Educational Welfare Officer. A fast track meeting is held when there are ongoing issues with a pupils' attendance to discuss actions that school and home may take to improve attendance. One example action has been where a pupil has joined breakfast club and this has led to improved attendance.
- Runs the "It's Cool To Be In School" attendance group targeting persistent absentees.

WJS Awards for Good Attendance

- An Attendance cup is awarded weekly in assembly to the class with the highest attendance during the previous week and prizes are also awarded to classes of 1st £5, 2nd £3, 3rd £2.