

West Ashtead Primary School



Policy for Attendance

Governors' committee responsible	FGB
Person responsible for updating policy	Headteacher
Reviewed	Autumn 22
Next Review	Autumn 23

Curious, Creative, Motivated

West Ashtead Primary School is committed to providing a happy, stimulating and supportive learning environment underpinned by our values of respect, equality, aspiration and perseverance.

This policy uses these principles to support its aims, objectives and procedures.

Introduction

Children need to attend school regularly and punctually. This policy makes you aware of the school's procedures and expectations as far as attendance is concerned.

Why regular attendance is important

The curriculum at West Ashtead is very carefully planned and any absence means that your child will have a 'gap' that it may not be possible to fill. Absence includes late arrival and early departure as well as non-attendance. Research clearly demonstrates the link between regular attendance and educational progress and attainment.

Promoting Regular Attendance

All members of the school community need to work together in order to ensure a high level of attendance.

The school undertakes to:

- Publish this policy on our website
- Remind all regularly about attendance in school newsletter
- Discuss attendance termly at Governors meetings
- Inform parents of any concerns promptly
- Give parent an update on their child's attendance annually
- Provide a safe learning environment
- Keep regular and accurate records of AM and PM attendance and punctuality
- Monitor individual student's attendance and punctuality
- Contact parents when a student fails to attend and where no message has been received to explain the absence
- Follow up all unexplained absences to obtain explanations from parents. Although parents may offer a reason, only the school can authorise the absence. In the case of long term or frequent absence due to medical conditions, verifications from a professional or other relevant body may be requested
- Refer irregular or unjustified patterns of attendance to the Inclusion Officer. Failure by the family to comply with the planned support set by the Inclusion Officer may result in further actions eg a Penalty Notice, parental prosecution or an application for an Education Supervision order

Parents undertake to:

- Encourage regular school attendance and be aware of their legal responsibilities
- Ensure that their child arrives at school punctually and prepared for the school day
- Ensure that they contact the school on each day of absence or if known in advance, whenever their child is unable to attend school
- Contact school promptly whenever any problem occurs that may keep their child away from school
- Notify the school immediately of any change of contact details
- Notify the school of any home circumstances that might affect the behaviour and learning of the child

More details on absence

Every half day absence from school has to be classified by the school as either **authorised** or **unauthorised**. This is why we always need to have an absence confirmed in writing.

Authorised absences are morning or afternoons away from school for a good reason such as illness, unavoidable medical/dental appointments that fall in school time, family bereavement, religious observance, emergencies or other unavoidable causes.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no 'leave' has been given. This type of absence may lead to the school using sanctions and/or legal proceedings. Examples of such types are:

- Birthdays
- Looking after others at home
- Visiting relatives
- Taking long weekends
- Shopping trips
- Special treats
- Going on holiday – teachers will not provide work for children
- Viewing sporting events (as opposed to taking part in pre-agreed sporting events)

School may authorise up to five days per year for stage auditions/advertisement filming. Permission for these must be requested in advance via the Headteacher along with evidence from the organising body.

If your child is reluctant to attend school for any reason, you should contact the school as soon as possible so that, between us, we can address the problem.

Medical/dental appointments during school hours

These should be notified in advance to the Headteacher via absence@west-ashtead.surrey.sch.uk and class teacher. Where possible (emergencies being the exception) such appointments should be kept to a minimum as many doctors and dentists offer surgeries outside of school times. A copy of the appointment letter or screen shot of appointment confirmation will be requested. However, if appointments have to be made during school hours it is expected that the pupil will return promptly after the appointment.

Early Collection – before the end of the school day

If in an emergency a child needs to be collected from school before the end of the day and you have not already requested the time from the Headteacher, please do not attempt to leave a message at Reception – all absence must be authorised by the Headteacher.

Entrance Exams / Assessment Sessions

We appreciate that some pupils may need time to sit entrance exams or assessment sessions. A request for absence should be made in advance for each exam/assessment to the Headteacher and class teacher with a copy of the appointment letter. It is expected that the pupil will return to school promptly after the session.

Persistent Absenteeism

Fortunately the vast majority of children at West Ashtead attend school regularly. If a child's attendance should fall below 90% then their absence is classed as **persistent**. You will have been informed of our concerns and remedial action will be taken. We will work with you to create an action plan to address the problem and will give you all possible support. All cases such as this are made known to the Inclusion Officer.

Absent Procedures

If your child is absent you should:

- Contact us before 9.30am on every day of absence by email absence@west-ashtead.surrey.sch.uk, telephone 01372 272082 or in person

If your child is absent we will:

- Telephone you on every day of absence if we have not heard from you by 9.30am
- Invite you in to discuss the situation with the Headteacher if attendance moves below 90%

Contact Numbers:

It is important that we have up to date contact numbers in case we need to contact you. Please ensure that you inform the school if your numbers change.

Inclusion Officer

If there should be a problem with attendance we would expect you to contact the school at an early stage and work with us to arrive at a solution. With a more persistent problem, the school may refer the child to the Inclusion Officer. If all attempts to reduce the level of absence fail, Penalty Notices can be given or prosecutions in the magistrates' court pursued.

How We Manage Lateness

Junior and Infant children are allowed onto the Junior and Infant playground from 8.30am onwards. Children must be in school by 8.50am. Registers are marked at 8.55am and your child will receive a late mark if they are not registered by 9.15am. The registers close at 9.15am, after this time your child will be marked as an unauthorised absence for the morning session. The Headteacher will contact you if your child is late persistently and the matter may be referred to the Inclusion Officer.

Penalty Notices

The Education Welfare Service, acting on behalf of Surrey County Council may issue a Penalty Notice as an alternative to the prosecution of a parent/carer for their child's unauthorised absence from school and requires the recipient to pay a fixed amount.

The amount payable on issue of a Penalty Notice is £60 if paid within 21 days of receipt of the notice, rising to £120 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days.

If the Penalty Notice is not paid within 28 days, the Local Authority must consider a prosecution for failing to ensure regular school attendance under Section 444 Education Act 1996.

Circumstances when a Penalty Notices may be issued

Pupils identified by police and education welfare officers engaged on Truancy Patrols and who have incurred unauthorised absences.

Unauthorised Holiday

The Education (Pupil Registration)(England)(Amendment) Regulations 2013, state that Head teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. The Head teacher is required to determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if leave is granted.

Where a child is taken out of school for 5 days or more and the 'leave of absence' is without the authority of the head teacher, **each parent** is liable to receive a penalty notice for **each child** who is absent. In these circumstances, a warning will not be given where it can be shown that parents had previously been warned that such absences would not be authorised and that they will be liable to receive a Penalty Notice if the leave of absence is taken.

Unauthorised Attendance

The issue of a Penalty Notice will also be considered where a pupil has incurred 7 or more unauthorised sessions during the preceding 6 school weeks. The parents' failure to engage with supportive measures proposed by the school or Education Welfare will be a factor when considering the issue of a Penalty Notice. Unauthorised absence will include late arrival after the close of registration without good reason.

With the exception of unauthorised leave of absence taken in term time, parents will be sent a formal warning of their liability to receive such a notice before it is issued.

Penalty Notice relating to Exclusions

Section 103 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 places a duty on parents to ensure that their child is not in a public place without justifiable cause during school hours when they are excluded from school. This duty applies to the first five days of each exclusion. Failure to do so will render the parent liable to a Penalty Notice. The amount payable is £60 if paid within 21 days of receipt of the Penalty Notice, rising to £120 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days. If the Penalty Notice is not paid, the recipient will be prosecuted for the offence under Section 103. Alternative education provision will be made from the sixth day of any exclusion and failure to attend such provision without good reason will be treated as unauthorised absence.

Failure to ensure Regular School Attendance

The Police Youth Intervention Officer may also issue a Penalty Notice to parent/carers who are failing to secure their child's regular school attendance and are not engaging with supportive measures to improve attendance proposed by the school or Inclusion Officers. Before a Penalty Notice is issued, parents will be warned that they are likely to receive such a notice.

Attendance Target

Our school target for attendance is 96%. We hope that you will do your best to support us in achieving this target through placing a high priority on attendance. We monitor absence regularly and will address anomalies promptly.