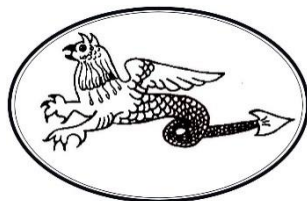


WHERWELL PRIMARY SCHOOL



ATTENDANCE POLICY

“At Wherwell we offer a curriculum designed to equip the children with the resilience, confidence, knowledge, skills and experiences to enable them to thrive at school and in the future”.

Approved by	Approved on	Review Date	Headteacher
FGB	17 February 2022	February 2023	Mary Collins
FGB	1 February 2023	February 2024	Mandy Ovenden

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Section 1: Rationale

At Wherwell Primary School we believe that regular and punctual attendance is a prerequisite to developing well-motivated pupils with a positive attitude towards their learning and who take a pride in their school. Our school has an ethos that demonstrates to children, parents/carers and the wider community how much we value good attendance. For our children to take full advantage of the educational opportunities we offer, it is vital that children arrive at school on time every day unless the reason for the absence or lateness is unavoidable.

Every child has a right to access the education to which he/she is entitled. Parents and teacher share the responsibility for supporting and promoting excellent school attendance and punctuality for all. It is our duty to consistently strive to achieve a goal of 100% attendance for all children.

The purpose of this policy is to ensure good attendance and punctuality for all pupils. It sets out the school's procedures for managing, recording and monitoring attendance,

including details of how we will work in partnership with parents/carers and relevant support agencies.

The routines children develop around attendance and punctuality at school are the same as the expectations of any future employer in the world of work. High attainment, confidence with peers and staff, and future aspirations depend on good attendance.

Good attendance is important because:

- statistics show a direct link between under-achievement and attendance below 95%
- children who attend regularly:
 - ~ make better progress, both socially and academically
 - ~ find school routines, school work and friendships easier to cope with
 - ~ find learning more satisfying
 - ~ are more successful in transferring between primary school, secondary school, and higher education, employment or training.

Section 2: Operating the policy

At Wherwell Primary School, we are committed to providing an education of the highest quality for all our children. We pride ourselves on the fact that the lessons are engaging and pitched appropriately to make a difference and to enable our children to become the 'best version of themselves'. Parents and pupils play a part in making our school successful. Every child has a right to access the education to which he/she is entitled and parents and teacher share the responsibility for supporting and promoting excellent school attendance and punctuality for all.

2.1 Promoting good attendance

The foundation for good attendance is a strong partnership between the school, parents and the child. The Home School Agreement will contain details of how we will work with parents and our expectations of what parents will need to do to ensure their child achieves good attendance. To help us all to focus on this we will:

Provide information on all matters related to attendance in our fortnightly newsletter, report to you on how your child is performing in school, what their attendance and punctuality rate is and how this relates to their attainment.

2.2 Roles and responsibilities

Responsibilities of the school's attendance leaders

A member of the senior leadership team will oversee, direct and co-ordinate the school's work in promoting regular and improved attendance and will ensure the attendance policy is consistently applied throughout the school. This person will also ensure that attendance is both recorded accurately and analysed. He/she will ensure that attendance issues are identified at an early stage and that support is put in place to deal with any difficulties.

If absence is frequent or continuous, except where a child is clearly unwell, staff will discuss with parents/carers the need and reasons for their child's absence and will encourage them to keep absences to a minimum. A note or explanation from a pupil's home does not mean an absence becomes authorised. The decision whether or not to authorise an absence will always rest with the school.

School responsibility for attendance

In order to achieve the aims above, the school will:

- Raise awareness of the importance of good attendance through regular updates on attendance in the newsletter (at least once a half term).
- Promote a welcoming and positive atmosphere in school, where children feel safe and that their presence is valued.
- Enable parents to feel that their support of this Policy is recognised by the school as a vital contribution towards their child's education.
- Create attitudes towards high standards of punctuality and attendance, which pupils should retain throughout life.
- Ensure that attendance is maintained effectively and absences are followed up promptly.
- Meet legal requirements, with particular reference to identifying authorised absence.
- Check registers regularly, to note absences and identify patterns of absence and lateness, if they are occurring.
- If absence/punctuality becomes a matter for concern, use agreed strategies in order to raise parental awareness of the importance of attendance and punctuality, so that they will make more effort to ensure that their child attends school punctually and regularly.
- Involve other agencies when difficulties arise, and the school needs extra support or help as appropriate eg the Education Welfare Service, Education Psychology Service, Social Services.
- Ensure information on attendance/punctuality is available for Governors, as required.
- Ensure all staff are aware of school policy and deal consistently with absence and punctuality.
- Ensure good liaison when a change of school occurs.

Responsibilities of classroom staff

In order to achieve the aims above, the classroom staff will:

- Ensure that all students are registered accurately.
- Promote and reward good attendance with students at all appropriate opportunities.
- Liaise with the attendance leader on matters of attendance and punctuality.
- Communicate any concerns or underlying problems that may account for a child's absence.
- Support pupils with absence to engage with their learning once they are back in school.

Responsibilities of children

In order to achieve the aims above, children will be expected to:

- Attend every day unless they are ill or have an authorised absence.
- Arrive in school on time.
- Go to their classroom on time.
- Take responsibility for registering at the reception desk if they are late.

Responsibilities of parents/carers

Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is a parent/carer's legal responsibility (Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act) and permitting absence from school that is not authorised by the school creates an offence in law.

Parents will:

- inform the school on the first day of absence
- discuss with the headteacher any planned absences well in advance
- support the school with their child in aiming for 100% attendance each year
- make sure that any absence is clearly accounted for by telephone or text on the first and subsequent days of absence, or by letter or email if a phone is unavailable
- avoid taking their child out of school for non-urgent medical or dental appointments
- only request leave of absence if it is for an exceptional circumstance.

Section 3 – Recording, Punctuality, Reporting an absence

3.1 Recording attendance

Legally the register must be marked twice daily. This is once at the start of the school day, 8.45am (closes at 9:00 a.m.) and again for the afternoon session at 1pm.

3.2 Lateness/punctuality

It is important to be on time at the start of the morning and afternoon school sessions and to lessons. The start of school is used to give out instructions or organise work. If your child is late they can miss work time with their class teacher getting vital information, cause disruption to the lesson for others, and it can be embarrassing leading to possible further absence.

School begins at 08:45 however pupils can arrive at school from 08:35 where there will be an adult on duty on the playground. No child should be on the playground, unsupervised before this time neither should they be dropped at the school office before this time where they would also be unsupervised.

If children arrive at school before 08:35, they will join Breakfast club which incurs the fee of £5 per session. This ensures that we know they are with an adult and being safely supervised. Children arriving after 09:00 should report to the school office to order their lunch. They are required to be signed in as late; the registers will have closed at this point.

The attendance is recorded on Arbor (our Information Management System from which the Department for Education extract attendance data) and the dinners register will be completed separately.

The complete list of codes is available on Arbor. However, here are some of the most commonly used ones

- **C** Other authorised circumstances
- **I** Illness
- **L** Late (before reg closed)
- **H** Annual family holiday (approved)
- **G** Annual family holiday (not approved)
- **M** Medical/dental
- **U** Late (after register closed) with reason
- **B** Educated off site

By 9.30am (and by 9am for children who travel to school on the school bus) the Admin Officer will be calling parents of children that have not yet given a reason for absence.

All lateness is recorded daily and attendance data is shared with the Department for Education each day. This information will be required by the courts, should a prosecution for non-attendance or lateness be necessary.

Arrival after the close of registration will be marked as unauthorised absence and coded **U** in line with Hampshire County Council and Department for Education guidance. This mark shows them to be on site, but is legally recorded as an absence.

If a pupil is late due to a medical appointment, they will receive an authorised absence, coded **M**. Please be advised that, where possible, doctors and dentists appointments are to be made outside of school hours or during school holidays.

Pupils who are consistently late are disrupting not only their own education but also that of the other pupils. Ongoing and repeated lateness is considered as **unauthorised absence and will be subject to legal action**. Parents, guardians or carers of pupils who have patterns of lateness will be contacted to discuss the importance of good time keeping and how this might be achieved. If lateness persists parents, guardians or carers will be invited to attend the school and discuss the problem and support offered.

If support is not appropriate or is declined and a child has 10 or more sessions of unauthorised absence due to lateness recorded in any 10 week period, Hampshire County Council will be required to issue parents with a Penalty Notice in accordance with Hampshire County Council's *Code of conduct: issuing Penalty Notices for unauthorised absence from schools* (<https://www.hants.gov.uk/educationandlearning/legalintervention/measures#step-3>)

3.3 What to do if my child is absent?

A child not attending school is considered a **safeguarding** matter. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required.

If your child is absent you must contact us as soon as possible on the first day of absence.

➤ **First day of absence**

If your child is absent from school and we have had no prior notification of absence we will:

- telephone, email or text you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you – this is because we have a duty to ensure your child's safety as well as their regular school attendance
- invite you in to discuss the situation with the headteacher if absences persist
- refer the matter to the Hampshire County Council's Attendance Legal Panels if absence is unauthorised and attendance falls below 90%

➤ **Three days' absence**

If your child is not seen and contact has not been established with any of the named parents/carers, after three days of absence the school is required to start 'Child Missing in Education' procedures as set down by Hampshire County Council guidance. We will make all reasonable enquiries to establish contact with parents/carers and the child, including making enquiries to known friends, wider family.

➤ **Ten days' absence**

We have a legal duty to report the absence of any pupil who is absent without an explanation for 10 consecutive days. If the child is not seen and contact has not been established with the named parent/carer then the local authority is notified that the child is at risk of being missing. Children's Services staff will visit the last known address and alert key services to locate the child.

Please help us to help you and your child by making sure we always have at least 2 up-to-date contact number (in some cases we aim to have 4 numbers). There will be regular checks on telephone numbers throughout the year.

➤ **Continued or ongoing absence**

If your child misses 10% (three weeks/sessions) or more schooling across the school year, for whatever reason, they are defined as persistent absentees. Absence for whatever reason disadvantages a child by creating gaps in his or her learning. Research shows these gaps affect attainment when attendance falls below 95%. As such, we monitor all absence thoroughly and all attendance data is shared with the local authority and the Department for Education. If your child has had absence and their attendance level is falling towards 90% we will contact you and, depending on the reasons for the absence, may instigate a home school contract or attendance plan.

Section 4: Request for Leave of Absence

Amendments to school attendance regulations were updated and enforced from September 2013: The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations state that headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances.

It is important to note that headteachers can determine the length of the authorised absence as well as whether absence is authorised at all. The fundamental principles for defining exceptional are rare, significant, or unavoidable, which means the event could not reasonably be scheduled at another time. There are no rules on this as circumstances vary from school to school and family to family. There is, however, no legal entitlement for time off in school term time to go on holiday and in the majority of cases holiday will not be authorised. Parents/carers wishing to apply for leave of absence need to fill in an application form from the school Admin Officer, in advance and before making any travel arrangements. If term-time leave is taken without prior permission from the school, the absence will be unauthorised and if the number of sessions absent hits the thresholds set down in Hampshire County Council's Code of Conduct, parents/carers will be issued with a fixed-penalty fine or other legal action in accordance with the code (see Section 6 for detail). Taking holidays in term time will affect your child's schooling as much as any other absence and we expect parents to help us by not taking children out during school time.

Section 5: Understanding types of absence

Pupils are expected to attend school every day for the entire duration of the academic year, unless there is an exceptional reason for the absence. There are two main categories of absences:

- **authorised absence:** is when the school has accepted the explanation offered as satisfactory justification for the absence or given approval in advance for such an absence. If no explanation is received, absences cannot be authorised
- **unauthorised absence:** Unauthorised absence is where no explanation has been given for the child's absence or where the explanation offered is considered by the school to be unacceptable. Parents will be made aware that the school has the right to authorise or refuse to authorise absences and that the ultimate responsibility to authorise absence rests with the Headteacher.

A school can, if needed, change an authorised absence to an unauthorised absence and vice versa if new information is presented. Any changes will be communicated to parents/carers. An example of this would be where a parent states a child is unwell but on return to school there is evidence they have been on holiday.

Taking holidays in term time will affect your child's schooling as much as any other absence and we expect parents to help us by not taking children out during school time.

Section 6: Penalty Notices for non-attendance and other legal measures

This is Statutory information laid out by Hampshire County Council

In education law, parents/carers are committing an offence if they fail to ensure the regular attendance of their child of compulsory school age at the school at which the child is registered, unless the absence has been authorised by the school.

Legal measures for tackling persistent absence or lateness

Hampshire schools and Hampshire County Council will use the full range of legal measures to secure good attendance. Legal measures will only be considered when there is unauthorised absence and :

1. the child or family do not require the support from any agency to improve the attendance
2. the child has 10 or more sessions of unauthorised absence and parents are complicit in the child's absence.

The following legal measures will be used for pupils of compulsory school age who are registered at a school:

- parenting contracts set at Education Planning Meetings
- parenting orders
- Penalty Notices
- Education Supervision Orders
- prosecution.

Where a child has unauthorised absence the Headteacher will school must enforce Hampshire County Council's Code of conduct: issuing Penalty Notices for unauthorised absence from schools or follow its guidance on other legal measures for non-attendance. The Code of conduct is a statutory document that ensures that powers for legal sanctions are applied consistently and fairly across all schools and their families within the authority. A copy is available from:

[Attendance guidance for parents/carers | Hampshire County Council \(hants.gov.uk\)](https://hants.gov.uk/attendance-guidance-for-parents-carers)

The Code of conduct states that schools or Hampshire County Council will issue a Penalty Notice for any unauthorised absence where the pupil has been:

- absent for 10 or more half-day sessions (five school days) of unauthorised absence during any 100 possible school sessions – these do not need to be consecutive
- persistently late (coded **U**) for up to 10 sessions (five days) after the register has closed
- persistently late before the close of the register (coded **L**), but the school has met with parents and has clearly communicated that they will categorise as unauthorised any further lateness (code **O**), and where the threshold of 10 sessions (five days) has been met
- absent for any public examinations of which dates are published in advance
- absent for any formal school assessments, tests or examinations where the dates have been published in advance unless the issuing of a Penalty Notice would conflict with other intervention strategies in place or other sanctions already being processed.

If a child's unauthorised absence meets any of the above criteria and the family or child do not require any agency support to improve the attendance then a Penalty Notice is issued for either:

1. 10 sessions of unauthorised absence or lateness in any 10 week school period
2. one or more sessions of unauthorised absence during a public exam, formal school assessment or testing where dates are published in advance.

This includes where a pupil has unauthorised absence due to either:

- non-approval of a parent/carer's request for leave of absence, or
- a holiday that has been taken without permission.

Parents and carers will be warned of the likelihood of a Penalty Notice being issued for unauthorised absence via a letter, through the leave of absence request form, or through the school's attendance policy and website.

The Penalty Notice is a fine that is issued to each parent/ carer who condoned (or was responsible for the child) during the period of unauthorised absence for which the fine has been issued. For each case of unauthorised absence the school or Hampshire County Council will decide whether a Penalty Notice is issued to **one or more parents/carers** for each child. For further information parents/carers should visit Hampshire County Council's website at: [Attendance guidance for parents/carers | Hampshire County Council \(hants.gov.uk\)](https://www.hants.gov.uk/attendance-guidance-for-parents-carers)

Please note: If you pay the Penalty Notice and your child has further unauthorised absences additional legal action will be taken. For example, in the event that a Penalty Notice has previously been served to you due to unauthorised holiday, should your child have any future unauthorised leave this will result in further legal action for you, such as prosecution or an Education Supervision Order. For further information for parents/carers visit Hampshire County Council's website at:

[Attendance guidance for parents/carers | Hampshire County Council \(hants.gov.uk\)](https://www.hants.gov.uk/attendance-guidance-for-parents-carers)

Wherwell Primary School should authorise absences due to illness unless there is a genuine concern about the veracity of an illness. Where this is the case the Headteacher should contact the single point of Access (SPA) for bespoke advice.

Where parents are unable to provide evidence, further enquiries should be made to the General Practitioner (GP) or other health professionals of agencies especially around mental health issues.

Appendix A: Letter 1

Dear

Re: <childname>'s attendance

As you will know, we place great value on a child's attendance at school. Looking at our attendance figures recently, we are concerned to note that <child's name>'s attendance percentage for this academic year to <date> is <>%. This figure is below the government's acceptable guidelines of <>%.

We are very concerned that <child's name> is missing chunks of their learning which will lead to gaps opening up which will be hard to close.

Regular attendance is important for <child's name>'s progress in school and your support in this matter is very much appreciated.

If you are concerned about sending your child in if they are feeling unwell, please be reassured that we will contact you during the day to update you if they take a turn for the worse or are not wholly themselves.

Yours sincerely

Mandy Ovenden
Headteacher

Appendix B: Letter 2

Dear

Re: <childname>'s attendance

This letter follows up on the letter sent to you on <date>.

We are concerned to note that <child's name>'s attendance has not improved since our last letter and is currently <>% which is below the government's expectations for children in school. As highlighted before, regular attendance is important for <child's name>'s progress in school and the progress in their learning is suffering due to absences.

We would like to offer you support to improve <child's name>'s attendance, therefore, I ask you to contact me to arrange a meeting as soon as possible and before <date>.

Yours sincerely

Mandy Ovenden
Headteacher

Appendix C: Letter 3

Dear

Re: <child's name>'s persistent absence

This letter follows up on the letters sent to you on <date> and <date>.

I am writing on behalf of the Local Authority to remind you of the attendance definition imposed by the Government regarding Persistent Absence. As of September 2015, the Department for Education (DfE) announced that any student whose attendance falls below 90% will be classed as a Persistently Absent student. Therefore, if a student misses 19 or more days over an academic year, they will be classed as Persistently Absent.

Looking at our attendance figures recently, we note that <child's name>'s attendance percentage for this academic year to date is <>%. This is well below the Government's acceptable guidelines of 96% and falls into the category of Persistent Absenteeism.

The school is required to take action should a student's attendance become a cause for concern. Such action may include a penalty notice and possible prosecution by the Local Authority.

At this stage, we are obliged to bring the matter to your attention, even though we do appreciate that you are no doubt aware of the situation.

We will need to meet and draw up an action plan to improve attendance, please make contact with the school office who will arrange a meeting for us to do this within the next 5 working days.

In addition to this, all absence, even that for illness, will now be recorded as unauthorised unless accompanied by a note from a GP or consultant. If your child is under the care of a consultant, and the reason for absence relates to a medical condition they have, we will consider this during our action planning and use the DfE document 'Supporting children with medical conditions' in our targets.

Yours sincerely

Mandy Ovenden
Headteacher

Appendix D: Lateness letter

Dear

Re: <child's name>'s lateness

We have noticed that <child's name>'s attendance percentage for this academic year up to <date> is <>% which is below the Government's acceptable guidelines of 96%.

We are very concerned that your child is missing key elements of their day. It can also be detrimental to your child's confidence and self-esteem if they are frequently missing parts of their learning or walking into a classroom when everyone else is already settled and getting on.

We work in partnership with our parents and pride ourselves on this so if there is anything I or your child's class teacher can do to encourage good punctuality, please do not hesitate to say. If you feel that there are wider issues underlying the late arrivals, we would welcome a discussion on these.

At this stage, we are obliged to bring the matter to your attention even though we do appreciate that you are no doubt aware of the situation.

We expect there to be a rapid and sustained improvement in <child's name>'s punctuality within the next 5 days which continues for the remainder of this term and throughout the year.

Yours sincerely

Mandy Ovenden
Headteacher

Appendix E: Attendance Timeline

Attendance Action Timeline

Action	Who?	When?
FGB to approve the attendance policy	FGB	17 02 2022
Send out general attendance leaflet and publish policy on the website.	HT & AO	18 02 2022
Attendance letters monitored each fortnight.	HT & AO	w/c 28 02 2022

Weekly procedure thereafter

If child is absent, office advised urgently. Phone calls home if no reason given for absence. Will keep calling until contact is established and Office will record reason for absence in Arbor.	AO	Daily
If child not in school, phone home at 9.30am or 9am if a bus child	AO	Daily
Printout of overview of attendance for each class	AO	Weekly, Monday
If attendance is less than 96%, AO to send home letter 1. Logged in Arbor and CPOMS.	AO	
If attendance is less than 96% and the family sent letter 1 in a previous week, send home letter 2. Log in Arbor and CPOMS	AO	
If attendance is less than 90%, HT to send out a letter inviting parents for a meeting and outlining next steps; legal intervention etc. Log letter sent out in Arbor and CPOMS.	HT & AO	
Meeting held with parents. Logged in Arbor and CPOMS.	HT & AO	90% attendance and after letter 2
If no improvement after a fortnight, referral made to Attendance Legal Panel	HT	89.9% or lower
Local team contacted and referred for penalty notice	HT	10 sessions of continuous unauthorised absence