



Witheridge C of E Primary School

School Attendance Policy

Rationale

Regular school attendance is an essential factor in the educational process. Irregular attendance places children at risk and can result in pupils being drawn into patterns of anti-social or criminal behaviour. Parents/guardians are responsible for ensuring that children of school age attend the school at which they are registered. Parental responsibility extends beyond securing regular attendance. Parents should ensure that their children arrive on time and in a condition to learn.

Purpose

1. To maximise attendance.
2. To clarify as far as possible the difference between "authorised" and "unauthorised" absences.
3. To ensure consistency in completing attendance registers and distinguishing types of absences.
4. To indicate the responsibility of parents/guardians in ensuring regular attendance and in informing the school of the details of absences.
5. To recognise the responsibility of School Governors in reporting unauthorised absences.

Guidelines

1. Parents must be made aware of their responsibilities in ensuring regular attendance and to see themselves as partners with the school in the education of their children. Details of this policy should be included on the School website and discussed with the parents on the child's admission to school and at parents' meetings.
2. Attendance Registers should be marked in accordance with L.E.A. Policy.

Registers should be closed :-

a.m. 30 minutes after registration
p.m. immediately after registration

unreported absences will always be investigated.

3. The Head Teacher should always be informed if a pupil who was present in the morning, is not at the afternoon registration without a reason known to the class teacher. An absence of this nature must be investigated immediately – in practice the class teacher must make sure that an TA (from another class if necessary) is given the task of establishing the child's whereabouts, and reporting back as soon as possible.
4. Absences recorded in the register should indicate whether they are "authorised" or "unauthorised" in line with School Policy/L.E.A. guidelines.
5. The teacher responsible for registration must be informed of any anticipated authorised absence. A pupil leaving school for a medical appointment should be met at the school and the teacher on duty informed.
6. A pupil arriving after registration time will be marked as absent but his/her presence in school must be noted for purposes of emergency evacuation.
7. Parents/guardians should contact the school on or before the first day of absence giving the reason and expected date of return. With the agreement of the school, notification may be made by a neighbour, community worker, or an older sibling. Form S2 to be used to notify school of forthcoming absences.
8. If there are any emerging patterns of absence the parents and the School Welfare Services must be informed at an early stage.
9. Correspondence and records of telephone calls concerning unauthorised absences should be kept with the pupil's records.

Categorising Absence

- i. Authorised
- ii. Unauthorised

The parent of a child of compulsory school age registered at school and failing to attend regularly is guilty of an offence. An offence is not committed when :-

- a. the pupil is absent with leave.
- b. the pupil is ill, or prevented from attending by an unavoidable cause.
- c. religious observation or certain other circumstances involving transport, boarding, travellers.

Parental Notes

We must be aware that "parentally condoned unjustified absence" could present us with problems. If there is a problem in relation to a particular pupil the school will involve the Educational Welfare Officer at an early date.

Only the school, within the context of the law, can approve absence, not parents. The fact that the school is notified of absence by whatever means does not oblige the school to accept the explanation as a valid reason for absence. Absences of pupils without **valid** reason, or for which no explanation has been provided must be treated as **Unauthorised**.

Illness

If the school is satisfied that a pupil is absent as a result of illness the absence must be treated as authorised. Where there is doubt further information should be requested from the child's parents. Leave for dental or medical appointments may be given where confirmation has been received from parents, but these should be made after school, or in the school holidays when non-urgent.

Lateness

Our policy will be to actively discourage late arrival. In recognition of local circumstances (bad weather) a period of 30 minutes from the beginning of registration to the formal closing of the register would be considered reasonable. In responding to lateness we will take account of the individual circumstances of each case.

Minding the House/Looking after Brothers and Sisters

Explanations such as minding the house, looking after other children, or shopping trips within school hours will not be acceptable reasons for absence.

Special Occasions

Only truly exceptional occasions will be sanctioned through authorised absence. Thus a birthday would be unauthorised while a pupil attending the graduation of an older brother or sister might be granted leave of absence.

Family Bereavement

We will respond sensitively to requests for leave of absence to attend funerals or associated events. Such absences can be authorised.

Family Holidays

Under legislation there is no right for parents / carers to take children out of school during term time for a family holiday, and the School is unable to authorise such absence. Where holidays are still taken the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and will be reported to the Educational Welfare Officer who may impose a penalty notice.

Other Categories

There are a number of other categories, many of which do not affect our children in Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. If in doubt discuss individual situations with the Headteacher.

Even where absence is authorised, teachers will be alert to emerging patterns of absence which may seriously disrupt continuity of learning.

In promoting regular attendance we will work closely with our E.W.O. (Educational Welfare Officer)

Conclusion

Any absence from school disrupts the continuity of learning and encourages disaffection.

While being sensitive to exceptional circumstances, school staff and governors must look for appropriate opportunities to state their school attendance policy in order to encourage parents to ensure regular attendance. Pupils will then have the optimum chance to benefit from the education provided by this school.