



Outcomes  
First Group

# School Attendance Policy

**Waterloo Lodge School**

## **Introduction**

Regular and punctual school attendance is important. Pupils need to attend school regularly if they are to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them by law. At Waterloo Lodge School we recognise that attending school regularly has a positive impact on learning, progress and therefore the best life chances for pupils. We will encourage good attendance for all pupils, by offering an environment in which they feel valued and part of the school community.

This policy has been written to adhere to the relevant Children Acts, Education Acts, Regulations and Guidance from the Department for Education in addition to guidance from the Local Authority.

Although parents and carers have the legal responsibility for ensuring their child has good attendance, the Executive Head Teacher and Governors work together with other professionals and agencies to ensure that all children and young people are encouraged and supported to develop good attendance habits. Procedures in this policy are followed to ensure this happens.

Department for Education (DfE) guidance states that all schools should have effective systems and procedures for encouraging regular school attendance and investigating the underlying causes of poor attendance which should be set out in an attendance policy. These systems should be reviewed regularly and modified where necessary to reflect the circumstances of the school.

We will:

- Make attendance a priority for all those associated with the school, including pupils, parents, teachers and governors.
- Further, develop positive and consistent communication between home and school.
- Set targets to improve individual and whole school attendance levels.

Through this Policy we aim to:

- Improve pupils' achievement by ensuring high levels of attendance and punctuality.
- Achieve a minimum of 95% attendance for all pupils, apart from those with chronic health issues
- Create an ethos in which good attendance and punctuality are recognised as the norm and seen to be valued by the school.
- Raise awareness of parents, carers and pupils of the importance of uninterrupted attendance and punctuality at every stage of their education.
- Work in partnership with pupils, parents or carers, staff and the Local Authority Education Welfare Service so that all pupils realise their potential, unhindered by unnecessary absence.
- Promote a positive and welcoming atmosphere in which pupils feel safe, secure, and valued, and encourage in pupils' sense of their own responsibility.
- Establish a pattern of monitoring attendance and ensure consistency in recognising achievement and dealing with difficulties.
- Recognise the key role of all staff, but especially class teachers, in promoting good attendance.

## **Rights, Roles and Responsibilities**

Children and young people who are persistently late or absent soon fall behind with their learning. Those who are absent from school frequently develop large gaps in their learning which will impact on their progress and their ability to meet age related learning expectations. A pupils' whose attendance drops to 90% each year will, over their time at school, have missed two whole terms of learning, therefore having potential impact on their learning.

### **Executive Head Teacher**

- Overall monitoring of school attendance
- Trends in authorised and unauthorised absence

- Ensure families are contacted where concerns are raised about absence including arranging meetings to discuss attendance issues
- Monitoring individual attendance where concerns have been raised
- Making referrals to Local Authority Educational Welfare Service
- Providing reports and background information to inform discussion with the Local Authorities Educational Welfare Services
- Liaising with other professionals to determine potential sources of difficulties and reasons for absence.

#### **Parents and Carers**

- Ensuring that their child attends school regularly and punctually unless prevented from doing so by illness or attendance at a medical appointment (which should be made out of school hours where possible).
- Contact the school office in the event of absence due to illness or other unplanned absence as soon as possible and **no later than 9.00am** on the day.
- Informing the school in advance of any medical appointments in school time. For the absence to be recorded as a medical absence we do require evidence from the doctor or dentist. (Appointment card/letter)
- Making requests for authorised absence in Term time, only if absolutely necessary and using the Leave Request Form available on the school web site and submitted to school prior to the proposed date.
- If the leave is being requested for a holiday, approval should be obtained prior to making any bookings as these are not automatically authorised.
- Talking to the school as soon as possible about any reluctance to come to school so that problems can be quickly identified and dealt with.

#### **Registers**

Registers **MUST** be completed each day for all children in school. Any absences should be recorded with an explanation. If an unexplained absence occurs this should be reported to the Administrator to follow up.

#### **The Family Liaison Officer is responsible for:**

- Keeping an overview of individual attendance looking particularly for either poor overall attendance, anomalies in patterns of attendance and/or unusual explanations for attendance offered by pupils' and their parents/ carers
- Informing the Senior Leadership Team where there are concerns and acting upon them
- Providing background information to support referrals
- Monitoring follow-up once actions have been taken to correct attendance concerns
- Following up absences with immediate requests for explanation which should be noted in the register
- Discussing attendance issues at parent or carer consultation meetings where necessary.
- Conducting home visits as necessary, to work with parents and carers to improve attendance and ensure any absent pupil is fully safeguarded
- Constructing action plans and setting targets for individual pupils' attendance. Monitoring and analysing these action plans and targets and reporting back to SLT on their impact
- Liaising with Local Authorities, Social Care as necessary to ensure all stakeholders are fully informed and are working in collaboration to improve attendance.
- Making any referrals where safeguarding issues are a concern, including referrals to Early Help and EDT.

#### **Administration Staff**

- Collating and recording registration and attendance information.
- Taking and recording messages from parents regarding absence
- Ensuring the Absence/Late register is completed, keeping iSams updated and current at all times

- Contacting parents of absent pupils where no contact has been made, referring to SLT and the Family Liaison Offer as necessary
- Recording details of pupils who arrive late or go home
- Keeping an overview of individual attendance looking particularly for poor overall attendance, anomalies in patterns of attendance and/or unusual explanations for attendance offered by pupils and their parents or carers and reporting concerns to the Executive Head Teacher and or SLT
- Sending out standard letters regarding attendance
- Ensuring that any pupil on off site visits the attendance registers and logs are completed and up to date, ensuring all pupils are accounted for at all times
- Maintaining the attendance register for pupils on alternative provisions, and liaising with alternative provisions on matters of attendance, where applicable

## **Registration**

Registration begins at 8.40am and ends at 9.00am. Registers are initially completed on paper registers, then uploaded onto iSams. Attendance registers are **legal documents**, and these must be kept secure and preserved for a period of three years after the date they were last used.

## **Authorised Absence**

### **Definition:**

- 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 carer. For example, if a child has been unwell and the parent telephones the school to explain the absence.
- Only the school can make an absence authorised. Parents do not have this authority. Consequently, not all absences supported by parents will be classified as authorised.

### **Examples of authorised absences**

- Short term emergency
- Certain days for religious observation
- Bereavement
- Dentist or doctors' appointment (try to make appointments outside school time)
- Hospital treatment
- Medical Needs

If possible, notify the school of any issues that may affect your child's attendance before the absence occurs.

## **Unauthorised Absence**

### **Definition:**

An absence is classified as unauthorised when a pupil is away from school without the permission of the school. Therefore, the absence is unauthorised if a pupil is away from school without good reason, even with the support of a parent.

Unacceptable reasons for absence include.

- Shopping
- Holidays in Term time which are not authorised by school
- Hair cut
- Truancy
- Airport visits
- Birthday treats
- Days out and trips

- Non-urgent medical or dental appointments
- Oversleeping
- Working

Please note that the decision to authorise absences rests with schools and not parents.

### **Leave of Absence**

With effect from September 2013, the Government abolished the right of Head Teachers to authorise absence specifically for holidays of up to 10 days per year if special circumstances exist. Instead, they will only be allowed to grant leave of absence if they are satisfied exceptional circumstances exist.

Leave of absence **SHALL NOT** be granted unless:

- a request for leave has been made in advance, by a parent with whom the pupil normally resides, and
- The attendance lead considers that leave of absence should be granted due to the **EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES** relating to the request.

### **Medical Absence**

It is recognised at Waterloo Lodge School that our pupils may have medical needs, and this is taken into consideration when recording absences.

### **Illness**

When a pupil has an illness that means they will be away from school long term, the school will do all it can to send material home, so that they can keep up with their schoolwork

### **Religious Absence**

The school will authorise one day of absence per religious festival, e.g. Eid, (i.e. the day set aside by the religious body of which the parent is a member) and this will be marked as 'R' in the register. Parents must request any additional leave in advance, and this can only be authorised if it is felt that exceptional circumstances apply (this would be marked in the register as 'C').

### **Monitoring, Analysis, Action Planning**

Waterloo Lodge School will use electronic systems for monitoring attendance at both individual pupils' and whole school levels. We will analyse patterns and trends of non-attendance to inform future action planning and target setting in respect of whole school attendance matters.

### **The school expects attendance of at least 95%.**

It is the responsibility of the Executive Head Teacher and the Governors to support good attendance and to identify and address attendance concerns promptly. In school we rely upon parents or carers to ensure their child attends school regularly and punctually and therefore where there are concerns regarding attendance, parents or carers are always informed of our concerns. Initially concerns about attendance are raised with parents. There will be opportunities for the parent or carer to discuss reasons for absence and support to be given by the school with the aim of improving attendance. Where a pupil's attendance record does not improve over a period of time then the school has a responsibility to make a referral to the Local Authorities Educational Welfare Services.

The Education Welfare Service (EWS) will issue penalty notices to parents where there has been a referral to EWS from the school as part of the school's processes to address poor attendance patterns.

Local Authorities Educational Welfare Services contact Waterloo Lodge School regularly to check and monitor attendance. They carry out regular register checks to identify pupils with low attendance (usually below 85%). They then work with the school to improve attendance and may issue fixed penalty fines if attendance support meetings held by the school do not improve attendance.

## **Systems for dealing with absence**

### **Persistent Absence**

The minimum attendance level which is expected at our school is **95%**. It is when attendance falls below this level that the school will consider whether it is appropriate to offer support in order to improve the situation. Schools, local authorities and central government pay particular attention to reducing the number of pupils who fall into the persistent absence category (PA). From September 2016 pupils become a persistent absentee when their attendance falls **below 90%** at any point during the school year, whether the absences are authorised or unauthorised. When attendance nears this level, pupils' misses significant amounts of schooling, meaning that their educational progress is put at risk. We need parents' full support in ensuring that attendance does not reach this level.

### **Systems for monitoring whole school attendance and action planning**

If for any reason a pupil's attendance does fall into this category parents will be asked to do all they can improve the situation with support from school where necessary.

Furthermore, absence data for individual pupils who are classed as persistent absentees are reported to local authorities.

### **Review of Whole School Attendance Policy**

Waterloo Lodge School will review this policy and the associated procedural framework annually.