



Wivelsfield Primary School

ATTENDANCE POLICY

This policy reflects the vision and aims of Wivelsfield Primary School by

- Encouraging staff, parents and children to maximise the learning experience in order that all children reach their full potential.
- Providing clear procedures for involving parents relating to school attendance.

Principles

Most parents and carers want their children to get on well in life. Children only get one chance at school, and their chance of a successful future may be affected by not attending school regularly. Poor attendees may not be able to keep up with school work or miss out on parts of the curriculum. This can affect their rate of progress and overall level of attainment. It is not only the academic work: missing out on the social side of school life can affect children's ability to make and keep friendships. Setting good attendance patterns from an early age will also help children later on at secondary school. Being on time is also vital. Arriving late at school can be very disruptive for the late child, the teacher and other children in the class.

Children should be at school, on time, every day the school is open, unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. Permitting absence from school without a good reason is an offence by the parent.

Children are sometimes reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents and the child. If a child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and may make things worse.

Every half-day absence has to be classified by the school, (not by the parents), as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of each absence is always required, preferably in writing.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a reason such as genuine illness or other unavoidable cause.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been given. This includes:

- ***parents keeping children off school unnecessarily***
- ***truancy before or during the school day***
- ***absences which have never been properly explained***
- ***children who arrive at school too late to get a mark***

Expectations

We expect that all pupils will:

- Attend school regularly.
- Attend school punctually.
- Attend school appropriately prepared for the day.

Parents are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any problems together. If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, the school may refer the child to the Education Support, Behaviour & Attendance Service from the Local Authority. The Practitioner will try to resolve the situation by agreement but, if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed, these Officers can use Legal Interventions on parents or to seek an Education Supervision Order on the child. The maximum penalty on conviction is a fine of £2500 and/or 3 months imprisonment.

The Role of Parents and Carers:

The school day begins at 8.55am and finishes at 3.15pm.

It is the responsibility of parents or carers:

- To ensure that pupils are on the school premises **prior to 8.55am** and **not before 8.40am**, unless they are attending a club. **Before 8.40am, pupils not attending a club, remain the responsibility of parents or carers.**
- To take children who are late to the school office to sign in, i.e. arriving after 8.55am in the morning or late after returning from the lunch break as stated below.
- To collect children promptly at the end of the school day, at 3.15pm. After 3.15pm, children are the responsibility of their parents or carers, unless they are attending a club.

- To collect children promptly at the end of extra-curricular activities or Kingfishers After School Club
- To ensure that the school has current parent/carers and emergency contact telephone numbers and addresses

Absence for Medical Reasons

It is the responsibility of parents or carers:

- To notify the school by 9.30am on each day of absence, unless prior notice has been given of a longer absence.
- To send a dated letter explaining the absence, when the child returns to school.
- To agree a later registration time with the head teacher if the child needs regular medical attention before coming to school. The child must always sign in on arrival.
- To inform the office **in writing and in advance**, or to provide Medical Appointment Cards, if the child needs to attend a medical appointment in school time. **Whenever possible, please try to make all appointments out of school hours.**
- To liaise with the school about specific problems which might cause absence.

Other Absences

There is no entitlement for parents to remove their child from school in term time and, as a rule, absence for holidays will not be authorised. A holiday may however be authorised in **exceptional** circumstances.

- I. The procedure for requesting absence in school time will be:
 - a) The parent or carer will obtain a "Request for Absence" form from the school office.
 - b) The parent or carer will fill in and return the form, which should include a full explanation of the request and, where relevant, explaining why a request is **exceptional**. Parents may submit a separate letter if they wish. The request must be submitted no later than 2 weeks before any holiday request date
 - c) The Headteacher will decide whether to authorise an absence in line with this policy, local guidelines and DfE guidelines which state **no absence should be authorised unless there are exceptional circumstances**.

Specific Guidelines:

These guidelines, agreed by Governors, will be used by the Head **in conjunction with DfE and locally agreed guidelines**, in deciding whether to authorize absence or not:

Examples of absence that **may** be authorised:

- An organised educational course
- An organised exam, sports competition or approved public performance
- Funerals and bereavement
- Close family weddings
- Days of religious observance
- Medical and dental appointments
- **Exceptional** circumstances for a holiday

Illness is always authorised, although if your child is regularly absent through poor health, we may invite you to discuss this with us and see if we can work together to improve their attendance. We may ask for a letter from your GP to confirm the need for your child to be absent.

Examples of absence that will **NOT** be authorised:

- Shopping trips
- Birthdays treats involving absence
- Days out
- Visiting relatives
- Extra days tagged onto weekends
- Days when a child could have come in late rather than not at all
- Holidays unless there are **exceptional** circumstances

Authorised absences, even for illness and medical appointments, still count towards your child's overall absence figure.

The role of the school:

- To register the children promptly and accurately.
- To record absence appropriately, including signing in and out during school hours.
- To record as **late**, pupils who arrive after **8.55am and before the close of registers at 9.15am.**
- To record as statistically present children who travel by taxi or school bus and arrive late.
- To record as **unauthorised absences**, pupils who arrive after the registers close at 9.15am. It is recognised that there may be occasional situations when lateness is unavoidable and a note will be made in the 'late book'.
- To check registers daily for first day absence.
- To telephone those parents who have not contacted the school by 9.30am on the first day of absence and then if appropriate inform the local authority
- To keep all letters concerning absence.
- To monitor regularly absence and lateness, to look for patterns and to take appropriate action.
- Work with **ESBAS** where there is persistent absence (attendance of 90% or less) or punctuality is an issue.
- To obtain details of telephone contacts for all pupils and to ensure that records are updated regularly by writing to parents to remind them of their responsibilities, whilst requesting current contact information. An emergency telephone number must be recorded for every pupil.

- To send reminders regarding absence and punctuality on the school's regular newsletters.
- To raise concerns regarding absence at parent consultation meetings, or sooner if necessary.
- To report levels of absence on the child's annual report.
- At the end of Terms 2,4, and 5 to inform parents if their child's attendance is a cause for concern (95% - 90% attendance) or if they are persistent absentees (attendance below 90%)
- To inform parents of their child's overall attendance at the end of the school year.
- To report levels of absence to the LA.
- To monitor and set attendance targets annually.

Legal sanctions

In some circumstances a fixed penalty notice may be issued by the Local Authority. The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice will take into account:

- The number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year
- One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission. **A fixed penalty notice may be issued by the local authority** should the holiday be 10 sessions (5 days) or more.
- Where an excluded pupil is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason

Summary

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents and to promote attendance. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend. School staff are committed to working with parents as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible.

Adopted: February 2021

Review date: February 2022