

St Werburgh's Primary School

Attendance Policy



Contents

1. Attendance Policy	2
1.1. Aims	2
1.2. What is Regular Attendance?	2
1.3. Promoting Regular Attendance	2
1.4. Impact on Learning of poor attendance.....	3
1.5. What action we will take.....	3
1.6. Penalty Notices and Prosecutions.....	3
2. Types of Absence	4
2.1. Illness	4
2.2. Medical Appointments.....	5
2.3. Excluded children	5
2.4. Holiday.....	5
2.5. Religious Observance.....	5
2.6. Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Absence.....	5
2.7. Exceptional Circumstances.....	5
2.8. Unauthorised absences	6
3. Applying for Term-Time Absence.....	6
4. The Law.....	7
5. Procedures for reporting absence	7
6. Lateness	8
7. Extended Absence with no contact	8

1. Attendance Policy

1.1. Aims

At St Werburgh's Primary School we are committed to providing all our children with a full-time education, which maximises opportunities for everyone to realise his or her full potential. We will do our best to provide a welcoming and caring environment, whereby each member of the school community feels secure and confident. We will work with pupils and their families to ensure each pupil attends school regularly and on time.

Regular attendance is key to enabling children to gain the greatest benefit from their education and therefore become emotionally resilient, confident and competent adults. Missing out on learning through absence leaves children vulnerable to falling behind and missing out on friendship opportunities. Regular, punctual attendance will enable children to develop into reliable and organised individuals, qualities which are valued in our society and all walks of life.

1.2. What is Regular Attendance?

At St Werburgh's, we consider that regular attendance means every child attending every day of school, unless there is a significant and unavoidable reason for them not to do so.

To help us monitor levels of attendance we have a goal for each child to attend for at least 182.5 days out of the 190 days of the school year. This is equivalent to 96% attendance. **This means that a child missing eight days of school in a year would not reach their expected attendance levels.**

We also have a target for whole school of 96%. To give some comparison, in the last academic year attendance for the school was 94.8% compared to the National Average of 96%. 10.4% of pupils were recorded as being 'Persistent Absentees' (i.e. having less than 90% attendance) compared to the National Average of 8.2%.

1.3. Promoting Regular Attendance

Promoting a pattern of regular attendance is a responsibility for all of us - parents, pupils and staff members. To help focus on good attendance, as a school we will:

- Celebrate the class with the highest attendance weekly in assembly and in the fortnightly newsletter
- Provide parents with a detailed breakdown of their child's attendance for the year in their end of year report
- Write to parents to inform them of any concerns the school has about their child's attendance or punctuality
- Provide clear and detailed information for teachers on the attendance of all children in their class to support them to discuss concerns with parents
- Regularly monitor the attendance of children who are, or who are at risk of becoming, 'persistent absentees'
- Liaise with the Education Welfare Service at Bristol City Council where a child's absence levels are a concern
- Update parents via the school newsletter on the current level of whole school attendance

1.4. Impact on Learning of poor attendance

Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. As can be seen in the table below, even missing half-a-day a week (one day a fortnight) on a regular basis can soon add up to a significant amount of learning lost over the course of a child's primary school career.

	Days lost in a week	Weeks lost in a year	Learning lost over the 7 years in Primary School
100% Attendance	No days lost	No weeks lost	No learning lost at all
90% Attendance	½ day	Almost 4 weeks	Over 4 terms
80% Attendance	1 day	Over 7 weeks	1 School Year and 2 terms
70% Attendance	1 ½ days	11 weeks	More than 2 years
60% Attendance	2 days	Over 15 weeks	2 years and 4 terms
50% Attendance	2 ½ days	Almost 20 weeks	3 ½ years

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason. Absence at this level does considerable damage to any child's educational prospects.

1.5. What action we will take

We understand that there will be times when a child is unavoidably absent from school. However, should a child's attendance drop below 90%, regardless of the reasons, we will write to the parents/carers to highlight this.

Where there are genuine reasons for the absences, we will do all we can to support that child and their family, while continuing to monitor and review attendance for the rest of the academic year and the start of the next.

Where there are no genuine reasons for the absences, parents/carers will be asked to meet with the Headteacher, Learning Mentor or Education Welfare Officer to discuss our concerns. In some cases, this may result in a formal action plan being produced in the form of an Attendance Contract.

Where the school has serious concerns about a child's attendance or punctuality a formal referral to the Education Welfare Service may be made for further support and intervention.

1.6. Penalty Notices and Prosecutions

If the action outlined above does not improve a child's attendance, we will consider the use of a Penalty Notice. Penalty Notices can be issued to parents/carers by Bristol City Council, on behalf of the school, for any unauthorised absences of eight or more consecutive or non-consecutive sessions in any 10 week period (equivalent to 4 days of unauthorised absence over 10 weeks, excluding school holidays.) This includes absences for term-time holidays, sporadic unauthorised absences or illness where we have asked for medical evidence, but it has not been supplied. (More detail about types of absence can be found on page 4below.)

In requesting and issuing Penalty Notices, we will follow Bristol City Council's Code of Conduct for Penalty Notices; a copy of which is available on request from the school office. Penalty Notices are issued to each parent/carer of each child. The amount of a Penalty Notice is £60 per parent/carer, per child if paid within 21 days, rising to £120 if paid between 22 and 28 days.

This means that, for example, if a two-parent family with two children are issued a Penalty Notice for taking the children on holiday in term time, the minimum fine would be £240, rising to £480 if not paid within 21 days. The fine applies to both parents whether living together or not. If the Penalty Notice remains unpaid the parent/carer may be prosecuted for the offence of failing to ensure their child's regular attendance at school.

Please note that Penalty Notices are issued as an alternative to prosecution and may not be issued if prosecution is considered a more appropriate response to your child's unauthorised absence. Prosecution could lead to fines up to £2500 and /or three months imprisonment and a criminal record.

2. Types of Absence

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by the parents) as either authorised or unauthorised.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason such as illness or medical appointments which unavoidably fall in school time.

Unauthorised absences are any absences that are not classified as authorised absences.

It is the responsibility of parents/carers to notify the school of any absences and give valid reasons for them. This notification must take place in advance, or on the first morning of an illness, otherwise the absence will be recorded as unauthorised

In addition, failure to report absences within the guidelines set out in this policy will automatically result in that absence being recorded in the register as unauthorised.

2.1. Illness

In most cases, absences for illness will be authorised unless we have a valid reason to believe that the illness is not genuine or the parent/carer has not followed the proper absence reporting procedure. In these cases, we reserve the right to record the absence as unauthorised and to request supporting medical evidence for the period of illness. This can be in the form of a medical appointment card or a prescription issued on the day of absence. Only in very rare cases will we request a letter from a GP.

In cases where we suspect that an illness absence is not genuine, we will write to the child's parents/carers to notify them that the illness absence has been recorded as unauthorised, why it has been recorded as such and what, if any, action will be taken (for example the issuing of a Penalty Notice).

Absences due to illness which have not been reported to the school by the Parent/Carer on the first day of absence will not be authorised and will be recorded in the register as an unauthorised absence. The reporting of absence due to illness remains the responsibility of the Parent/Carer.

If a child is absent for more than a day, parents/carers do not need to contact the school every day but must inform the school office of the expected return date and keep the school informed at regular intervals during the period of absence. Failure to do so may result in part or all of the absence being recorded in the register as unauthorised.

When a child is absent due to vomiting or diarrhoea, they must not return to school until 48 hours after the last episode to reduce the risk of infection to other children and adults at the school.

The procedures for reporting illness to the school is set out in section 4 of this policy.

2.2. Medical Appointments

Parents/carers should make appointments outside of school hours wherever possible. Where appointments during school time are unavoidable, the child should be absent for as short a period of time as possible by being collected from school directly before, and returned to school directly after the appointment. Missing registration due to a medical or dental appointment is counted as an authorised absence.

All absences for medical or dental appointments must be supported by providing the school office with sight of the appointment card or letter. Failure to provide the school with appropriate evidence of the appointment will result in the absence being recorded in the register as unauthorised.

2.3. Excluded children

When a child is excluded from attending school for a fixed period of time, this is counted as authorised absence. Where a child is excluded for 6 days or more, the school will make alternative provision for their education.

2.4. Holiday

Absences from school for the purposes of a term-time holiday will not be authorised.

2.5. Religious Observance

St Werburgh's Primary School acknowledges the multi-faith nature of the school community and recognises that on some occasions, religious festivals may fall outside of school holidays or weekends and this necessitates the consideration of an authorised absence for religious observance.

One day will be granted as authorised absence for religious observance of festivals such as Eid and any additional days taken may be recorded in the register as unauthorised absence.

Absences for children whose parents/carers wish them to avoid religious elements of the curriculum (for example visits to the Church at Christmas and Easter or school trips to the Hindu Temple) will not be authorised as the school makes alternative provision for those children to remain in school.

2.6. Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Absence

To help ensure continuity of education for Traveller children it is expected that the child should attend school elsewhere when their family is travelling and be dual registered at that school and the main school. Children whose families do not travel are expected to register at school and attend as normal; they are subject to the same rules as other children in terms of the requirement to attend regularly. If it is necessary for a child from a Traveller family to be absent from school because they are travelling for occupational purposes, this must be agreed by the Headteacher in advance and the absence will be appropriately recorded in the register.

2.7. Exceptional Circumstances

The Headteacher, in conjunction with the Governing Body, may, on occasion, approve absence requests for 'exceptional circumstances'. For example, a child may be granted leave for a family bereavement or funeral.

An exceptional circumstance is an absence that is rare, significant, short and unavoidable, ie an event that could not reasonably be arranged at another time.

To apply for an absence due to exceptional circumstances, parents/carers must complete a Leave of Absence Request form (available upon request from the school office) and give full details of the reason their child will be absent from school during term-time, why the absence is unavoidable, the dates of the intended absence and the reason they believe their circumstances to be exceptional. The Headteacher will then review the request, taking into account:

- The circumstances of the request and purpose of the absence
- The length of the proposed leave
- Previous term-time absences across the child's full academic career (ie across all previous years they have attended school)

We will assess each request on an individual basis. If such a request is granted, we will determine the appropriate number of school days a child can have off as authorised.

The law allows that a leave of absence is granted entirely at the Headteacher's discretion.

2.8. Unauthorised absences

Absences for unsatisfactory reasons will be recorded as unauthorised; these may include absences for reasons such as:

- Family holiday or holiday to visit relatives
- A pupil or family member's birthday
- Attending a wedding or other celebration (including weddings taking place abroad)
- Closure of a sibling's school or class (for example because of strike action)
- Illness where the child is considered well enough to attend school
- Looking after the house
- Waiting in for a delivery or workmen
- Looking after siblings or sick relatives
- Being tired or unable to get up in the morning
- Moving house

Please note that this list is not exhaustive.

Eight or more sessions (ie eight or more half days) of unauthorised absences recorded in the register within any 10 week period, including arriving late after the registers have closed, may result in a Penalty Notice being issued to the parents/carers. (Refer to section 4 for more information).

3. Applying for Term-Time Absence

It is a legal requirement that parents/carers obtain the permission of the Headteacher before removing their child from school. If a parent/carer wishes to make an application for a term-time absence for any reason, including any mentioned above, this must be done by the parent/carer with whom the child normally lives.

If you are the child's parent but do not normally live with the child, you must seek the consent of the parent with whom the child does normally live, and that person should make the request to the school on your behalf. The school can only consider requests from the parent with whom the child normally lives and reserves the right to issue Penalty Notices to both parents for the absence where appropriate.

All requests for term-time absence must be made in writing using the school's Leave of Absence Request form (available upon request from the school office). Applications must be made at least 10 school days before the absence is due to start. Upon receipt of a request

form, the Headteacher, in conjunction with the Governing Body, will make a decision as to whether to authorise the absence.

All requests for term-time leave will be responded to, in writing, by the Headteacher and the Governing Body. The letter will include details of: whether the leave has been authorised or not; if authorised, how many days will be authorised; if not authorised, whether or not a Penalty Notice will be requested from Bristol City Council if the absence is carried out.

Penalty Notices may be issued to parents/carers when their child is absent from school for the purposes of an unauthorised term-time holiday. Where a parent/carer takes their child out of school for the purposes of a term-time holiday once or more every year, the school may, in addition to requesting a Penalty Notice for each absence, refer the matter to the Education Welfare Service who may also seek to prosecute the parent/carer under the Education Act 1996 for failing to ensure that their child attends school regularly. (Also see section 1.6 above.)

4. The Law

All children of compulsory school age (5 years to 16 years old) are required to receive an education. It is a parent/carer's responsibility to ensure that their child has an education suitable to their age, ability and aptitude and any special educational needs that they may have.

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 requires schools to take an attendance register twice a day, once at the start of the morning session and once again during the afternoon session.

The Government expects schools to promote good attendance and reduce absence and act early to address patterns of absence. It expects parents/carers to perform their legal duty by ensuring their children attend school regularly and that all pupils be punctual.

On 1st September 2013 the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 came into force amending the 2006 regulations and changing the law about pupils taking leave during term-time.

The Education Act 1996, section 444(1) states that an offence is committed if a parent or guardian fails to "secure regular attendance at school" for their child or children. *"If a child of compulsory school age who is a registered pupil at a school fails to attend regularly at the school, his parent is guilty of an offence"*

In April 2017, the Supreme Court ruled in the case of R v Platt [2017] that the definition of the term "regularly" means "in accordance with the rules prescribed by the school". Following the Supreme Court ruling, the law is now clear that even a single day of missed school, if not in accordance with the school attendance policy, could mean that an offence has been committed.

5. Procedures for reporting absence

If your child is absent from school due to illness you must telephone the school before 9.30am on the first day of absence on this number:

0117 903 1466

This is important as we need to know why a child is not in school if they don't arrive. Failure to follow the absence reporting procedure may result in the absence being recorded as unauthorised. We will make every effort to contact parents/carers to ascertain reasons for absences if no contact is made, but it remains the responsibility of parents/carers to inform the school of the reason for any absences.

6. Lateness

A pupil arriving late can seriously disrupt their own learning as well as that of those around them.

School gates open at:

Silver Birch Site: 8.40am

Willow Site: 8.45am

Classes start at:

Silver Birch Site: 8.55am

Willow Site: 8.55am

Children arriving after these times will be recorded as late and must report to the School Office. Registers close at 9.05am, and any children arriving after this time will be marked in the register as having an unauthorised absence for that session.

7. Extended Absence with no contact

Where a child is absent from school and no contact has been made by the parents/carers to confirm the reason, or the expected date of return (including where children have been granted leave for Exceptional Circumstances and have failed to return on the agreed date), we may consider them to be missing. The child may be referred to the Education Welfare Service and a request made for the Education Welfare Service to commence Pupil Tracking which could result in the loss of their place at St Werburgh's Primary School.