



WESTFIELD HOUSE SCHOOL

Attendance Policy

Reviewed: September 2019

Reviewed: Annually

Next Review Date: September 2020

Person(s) responsible for Review:

Headteacher & Attendance Officer

Attendance Policy

Description

This is intended to promote the importance of regular school attendance and provide a framework setting out staff roles and responsibilities in supporting excellent school attendance.

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Attendance Leader	Shona Cresey (Administrator, Attendance & Entitlement Officer)
Persons responsible	Jo Murray (Head of School)
Last Updated	June 2019
Date of next Review	September 2019

1. Introduction

1.1 Westfield House School is committed to providing an education of the highest quality for all its pupils and recognises this can only be achieved by supporting and promoting excellent school attendance for all. This is based on the belief that only by attending school regularly and punctually will children and young people be able to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them. High attainment is closely linked to good attendance.

1.2 The whole school community – pupils, parents and carers, teaching and support staff – have a responsibility for ensuring good school attendance and have important roles to play. The purpose of the policy is to clarify everyone's part in this.

1.3 The policy is based on current government and Local Authority guidance and statutory regulations.

2. School's roles and responsibilities

2.1 All staff (teaching and support) at Westfield House School have a key role to play in supporting and promoting excellent school attendance and will work to provide an environment in which all pupils are eager to learn, feel valued members of the school community and look forward to coming to school every day. Staff also have a responsibility to set a good example in matters relating to their own attendance and punctuality.

2.2 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 that the Attendance Policy is consistently applied throughout the School. The Attendance Leader will ensure that up-to-date attendance data and issues are shared with the Senior Leadership Team, are made regularly available to all staff, pupils and parents (who will regularly be reminded about the importance of good school attendance). The Attendance Leader will also ensure that attendance issues are identified at an early stage and that support is put in place to deal with any difficulties.

2.3 When a pupil leaves the school a CME1 (Children Missing Education) form will be completed and sent to the Local Authority informing them that a child has been removed from the school roll.

2.4 Registration

2.4.1 The School is required to mark the attendance register twice each day; once at the start of the morning session and once during the afternoon session. (shown overleaf).

2.4.2 The register will be marked by a member of school staff as each child arrives at the school gate. The School gates will be closed at **9:00am** and students will have to report to the reception to sign in.

2.4.3 The registers will be returned to Reception at **9:00 am** and **1:15 pm** and will be closed at **9.30 am** and at **1.30 pm**. Any pupil who arrives after the closing of the register will count as absent. Pupils who arrive before the register closes will be counted as present but will be dealt with under the School's policy on punctuality and lateness.

2.5 Categorising absence

2.5.1 A mark will be made in respect of each child during registration. Any child who is not present at this time will be marked unauthorised absence (O) unless leave has been granted by the school in advance or the reason for absence is already known and accepted by the School as legitimate. Where a reason for absence is given and accepted by the School at a later date, the register will be amended in such a way that the original entry and the amendment are distinguishable. The ultimate decision whether the absence should be authorised or unauthorised lies with the Head of School.

2.5.2 Westfield House School recognises the clear links between attendance and attainment and attendance and safeguarding children. It recognises that inappropriate authorisation of absence can be damaging to a child's education as authorised absence, will potentially send a message to parents that any reason for non-school attendance is acceptable and can render children extremely vulnerable to harm. If absence is frequent and continuous and except where a child is clearly unwell, staff at Westfield House will therefore challenge parents about the need and reasons for their child's absence and will encourage them to keep absences to a minimum. A note of explanation from a pupil's home does not mean that an absence is automatically authorised. The decision whether or not to authorise an absence will always rest with the school.

2.5.3 If no explanation about an absence is received by the School within two weeks, the absence will remain unauthorised.

2.5.4 **Absence will be authorised in the following circumstances:**

- (a) where leave has been granted by the School in advance, for example –
- a pupil is to participate in an approved performance for which a licence has been granted by the Local Authority,
 - a pupil is involved in an exceptional special occasion – in authorising such an absence the individual circumstances of the particular case and the pupil's overall pattern of attendance will be considered,
 - in exceptional circumstances, permission has been granted for a family holiday for which the parents have sought permission in advance (SEE SECTION 5 TERM TIME HOLIDAYS);
- (b) where the School is satisfied that the child is too ill to attend;
- (c) where the pupil has a medical appointment (although parents should be encouraged to make these out of school hours whenever possible, and to return their child to school immediately afterwards – or send him/her to school beforehand;
- (d) where there is unavoidable cause for absence which is beyond the family's control, e.g. extreme weather conditions;
- (e) the absence occurs on a day exclusively set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong;
- (f) the pupil lives more than three miles from the School and no suitable transport arrangements have been made by the Local Authority;
- (g) the pupil is of no fixed abode, his/her parent is engaged in a trade which required him/her to travel, the pupil has attended school as often as the nature of the trade permits and, have reached the age of six, he/she has attended 200 sessions in the previous 12 months;

(h) in other exceptional circumstances (e.g. a family bereavement) and for a very limited period.

2.4.5 Except in some circumstances described above, absences will be unauthorised. Some examples of reasons for not authorising absence would be:

- no explanation given by the parent/carer;
- the school is not satisfied with the explanation;
- the pupil is staying at home to mind the house;
- the pupil is shopping during school hours;
- the pupil is absent for unexceptional reasons, e.g. a birthday;
- the pupil is absent from school on a family holiday or visit without prior permission;
- the pupil has been stopped during a truancy sweep and is unable (or the parent is unable) to give a satisfactory reason for the absence.

2.6 **Approved Educational Activity**

Where a pupil is engaged in off-site approved educational activities, the School will check his/her attendance on a daily basis before entering the appropriate code in the register.

2.7 **Staff Training**

The School's Attendance Leader will ensure that all staff responsible for taking registers including any temporary or supply staff receive sufficient training/information to enable them to perform the task accurately and in line with School policy.

Below is the Absence and Attendance Codes:

Code Meaning and Statistical category

/\ - Present at registration present.

L - Late but arrived before the register closed present.

B - Educated off-site (not dual registration) approved educational activity.

D - Dual registered (ie. present at another school or at a PRU) approved educational activity.

P - Approved sporting activity approved educational activity.

V - Educational visit or trip approved educational activity.

J - Interview approved educational activity.

W - Work experience (not work based training) approved educational activity.

C - Other authorised circumstances (not covered by another appropriate code/description) - authorised absence.

F - Agreed extended family holiday - authorised absence.

H - Agreed family holiday - authorised absence.

I - Illness - authorised absence.

M - Medical or dental appointment - authorised absence.

S - Study leave - authorised absence.

E - Excluded but no alternative provision made - authorised absence.

R - Day set aside exclusively for religious observance - authorised absence.

T - Traveller absence - authorised absence.

N - No reason for the absence provided yet - unauthorised absence.

O - Other unauthorised (not covered by other codes or descriptions)- unauthorised absence.

G - Family holiday (not agreed or sessions in excess of agreement) - unauthorised absence.

U - Late and arrived after the register closed - unauthorised absence.

X - Untimetabled sessions for non-compulsory school-age pupils not required to attend.

Y - Partial and forced closure not required to attend.

Z - Pupil not on roll yet not required to attend.

- School closed to all pupils not required to attend.

3. Collection and analysis of data

- 3.1 Attendance is monitored weekly and at the end of each term. Any areas of concern are highlighted to Jo Murray.

4. Systems and strategies for managing and improving attendance

- 4.1 Attendance matters have a very high profile at Westfield House School and the importance of good attendance is raised at reviews and meeting with parents. The School is always looking to find new ways of maintaining this message through other systems of communicating with parents and pupils.

- 4.2 First-day absence calling: Westfield House School has in place a system of first day calling. This means that parents/carers will be telephoned on the first day a pupil is absent without explanation to establish a reason for the absence. This helps to identify at an early stage pupils who do not have a good reason for absence or who may be absent without their parents' knowledge and thus potentially vulnerable to harm. Where it is not possible to make contact with parents/carers on the first day of absence, the School will send a letter home asking parents to contact the school as a matter of urgency.

- 4.3 Meetings with parents/carers: Where there is an emerging pattern to a pupil's absence over a three or four week period (or sooner if staff are particularly concerned), with or without explanation, the School will invite parents/carers to a meeting to discuss the reasons for these absences. Plans should be put in place with the parents and pupil to resolve any difficulties and improve attendance within a specified time limit – usually no more than six weeks. It will be explained to parents/carers that any future absences will be unauthorised unless there is clear evidence of a good reason for them.

- 4.4 Lateness and punctuality: Pupils are expected to arrive at school on time every day. It is very disruptive to their own education, and that of others in their class, if they are late. Pupils who arrive after the register closes (SEE PARAGRAPH 2.3.3) will be marked absent for a whole session (a session being a morning or an afternoon). This absence will be unauthorised unless the School is satisfied that there is a legitimate reason for the pupil to be late. Such a reason will not include things such as missing the taxi, clothes in the washing machine or lost shoes. A pupil who is persistently absent by reason of lateness will be dealt with in the same way as other pupils with an emerging pattern of absence (SEE PARAGRAPH 4.3). If the matter is not resolved quickly, it will be referred to the Education Attendance Service.

- 4.5 Pupils who arrive late for school but before the register closes will be dealt with in accordance with the School's approach to behaviour management. The Attendance Leader is responsible for this and will take into account such factors as frequency and circumstances. It is important not to punish a pupil when the lateness is not his or her fault. It may be that the fault lies with the parent/carer and as such the Attendance Leader should discuss with the Head of School and contact be made with the parent/carer.

- 4.6 For reasons of health and safety it is important to know who is in the building. Pupils arriving late should therefore report to Reception and be signed in by a member of the admin team. **It is important that all pupils arriving late follow this procedure.**
- 4.7 For the same reason it is important that pupils leaving the premises legitimately (e.g. for a medical appointment), or returning to school later in the day sign in and out at Reception. Parents/carers are expected to collect their child from Reception and take responsibility for checking that their child is signed in or out in the correct manner.

Post-registration truancy: Post-registration truancy occurs when a pupil goes missing from school having previously registered for the session. This behaviour not only means the pupil will not be receiving a full-time education, it also renders him/her vulnerable to harm. Westfield House School takes this very seriously and will endeavour to ensure it does not happen. If a member of staff or pupil reports that a pupil is missing then the class teacher and Attendance Leader should be alerted immediately. If the child has not been signed out of school senior members of staff will be contacted. The classroom, where the child should be in lesson, will be visited to check that the child has not arrived late. The teacher/TA's and pupils will be spoken to and any relevant information gathered. A search of the building will then be organised. Toilets, changing rooms and the main buildings should all be checked before looking in the School grounds. Attendance Leader must be informed immediately the pupil has been discovered. If, however, a pupil appears to have left the premises without authorisation, the School will try to make contact with his parents/carer immediately and the local police alerted.

5. Term-time Holidays

5.1 Term-time holidays are intended for children whose parents are unable to take holiday at any other time.

5.2 Westfield House School will consider every application individually; its policy is NOT to grant leave of absence for a holiday other than in the most exceptional circumstances. Time off school for family holidays **is not a right**. An application must be made in writing, with appropriate evidence, **in advance** of the intended holiday.

5.3 Westfield House School will consider authorising holidays for:

- service personnel and other employees who are prevented from taking holidays during term-time;
- those working in the holiday industry or in farming when school holidays coincide with peak times for their business;
- when a family needs to spend time together to support each other during or after a crisis:

- parents who are subject to a strict and un-negotiable holiday rota and evidence is provided to this effect.

5.4 Requests for holidays for the following reasons will not be authorised:

- cheaper cost of holiday;
- availability of desired accommodation;
- poor weather experienced in school holiday periods; and
- overlap with the beginning or end of term.

5.5 Westfield House School will respond to all requests for a leave of absence in writing giving the reasons for the decision.

5.6 All requests for holiday will be agreed with social worker and /or the Local Authority. We will also inform attendance officers if required

5.7 Westfield House School will NOT authorise a holiday during periods of national tests, i.e. SATs/GCSE's

6. Extended Leave of Absence

6.1 In considering absence for extended trips overseas Westfield House School will take account of the following:

- a visit to family overseas has a very different significance from a 'normal' holiday;
- such visits may be important in terms of children's identity and self-esteem as they grow up;
- parents/carers may feel that the reasons for their visit outweigh the importance of the child's uninterrupted attendance at school (although parents/carers could be encouraged to use the school holiday periods for at least part of the trip);
- the reasons for wishing to make a visit is more difficult, particularly for minority ethnic families, where huge distances and high costs are involved;

where extended leave of absence is granted there will be an expectation that the pupil undertakes some school-set work during this period.

7. Parents'/carers' responsibilities

7.1 The prime responsibility for ensuring children receive an appropriate and full-time education rests with parents/carers (defined by the Education Act 1996 as those with parental responsibility and those who have the care of a child), who will be supported and encouraged by Westfield House School.

7.2 Westfield House School expects parents/carers will:

- ensure their children attend the school regularly;
- support their children's attendance by keeping requests for absence to a minimum;
- not expect the School to automatically agree any requests for absence, and not condone unjustified absence from school.

7.3 Parents/carers will be expected to:

- notify Westfield House School on the first day of absence by either telephoning the school and speaking directly to a member of the Admin or Education team.
- ensure their children arrive at school on time, properly dressed and with the right equipment for the day;
- work in partnership with the school, for example by attending review meetings and consultation, taking an interest in their children's work and activities;
- contact the School without delay if they are concerned about any aspects of the children's school lives. Westfield House School will endeavour to support parents/carers to address their concerns.

8. Pupils' Responsibilities

8.1 All pupils should be aware of the importance of regular school attendance. If they are having difficulties that may prevent them from attending school regularly, they should speak to their class teacher, Key worker or other responsible adult.

8.2 Pupils should attend all their lessons on time, ready to learn. Pupils have a responsibility for following school procedures if they arrive late.

9. Conclusion

9.1 Regular school attendance is a necessary contributor to ensuring each pupil reaches their maximum academic attainment.

- attendance at school supports children's emotional and social health and development
- schools and the LA have a statutory duty to promote the safety and welfare of children, the best way to safeguard children is to ensure that they attend school regularly
- good school attendance supports children in reaching their maximum potential and enjoying the fulfilment this brings

- membership of a school community builds confidence, gives children a sense of belonging and teaches them to contribute to and be responsible for the well-being of others

- Good school attendance supports engagement in further education, employment or training in the future, which in turn helps to support a prosperous and fulfilling life-style.