Attendance Policy

June 2019
Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 (the Act), states that the parent of a child of compulsory school age has a legal duty to ensure that they receive an efficient full-time education suitable to their child’s age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs. Therefore, in order to ensure that parents comply with this duty, and to ensure that children and young people are able to maximise the opportunities available to them via regular attendance at school, Birmingham City Council (the Local Authority) will support schools to challenge irregular school attendance using the powers outlined in the Code of Conduct.

Water Mill Primary School is committed to providing a full and efficient educational experience for all pupils. We believe that if pupils are to benefit from education, good attendance is crucial. As a School we do all that we can to ensure maximum attendance for all pupils. Any problems that prevent full attendance will be identified and addressed as speedily as possible.

It is the policy of our School to celebrate achievement and attendance. Attendance is a critical factor to a productive and successful school career. Our School will actively promote and encourage 100% attendance for all our pupils.

Our School will give a high priority to conveying to parents and pupils the importance of regular and punctual attendance. We recognise that parents have a vital role to play and that there is a need to establish strong home-school links and communication systems that can be utilised whenever there is concern about attendance.

If there are problems which affect a pupil’s attendance we will investigate, identify and strive in partnership with parents and pupils to resolve those problems as quickly and efficiently as possible. We will adopt a clearly focused approach aimed at returning the pupil to full attendance at all times.

Our aim:
- To encourage full attendance and punctuality above 96%
- To monitor attendance and apply appropriate strategies to minimise absenteeism
- To acknowledge and celebrate a successful record of attendance
- To ensure a consistent approach throughout the School
- To make attendance and punctuality a priority for those associated with the school including pupils, parents, teachers and governors
- To provide support, advice and guidance to parents and pupils
- To work effectively with other services and agencies to support these objectives

Information
This identifies the information held by the school and will be considered when dealing with attendance and punctuality issues:

- Start and finishing times of registration: our doors open at 8.45am. A child arriving after 9.10am will be marked as late. A child arriving after 9.30am will be marked as unauthorised late when the registers close at 9.30am.
- The importance of punctuality and the response to lateness (Less than 95%
attendance will be followed up).
- Daily contact between parents and School when a child is absent.
- Clear guidance to parents that Head teachers may not grant leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances.
- Referral routes with roles and responsibilities for pupils with emerging attendance problems (Parents of pupils with attendance 95% and below will be contacted).
- The inclusion of attendance information in School documentation, e.g. the website, reports, newsletters, home-school agreements.
- Annual reports to parents include a record of their child’s attendance.
- The Head teacher’s report to Governors records the attendance figures for the academic year.

Monitoring
Water Mill Primary School’s attendance systems are used to identify children at different stages of attendance. This could prompt support being offered to parents and congratulations to those with good attendance.

If a child’s attendance/punctuality is of concern, our attendance officer Zoe Lynch will contact parents and if attendance/punctuality does not improve they will be put onto the Fast-Track process.

Parents
Definition Of "Parent"
Section 576 of the Education Act 1996 defines "parent" to include:

all natural parents, whether they are married or not; and any person who, although not a natural parent, has parental responsibility for a child or young person; and any person who, although not a natural parent, has care of a child or young person.

See also parents’ information booklet that is sent out each year. Children should only be kept at home if they have a serious illness or injury. If this is the case, parents should contact the school first thing. If a child has a minor illness e.g. mild headache, stomach aches, etc. parents should inform the school and bring them in. If they don’t get any better, the school will contact parents straight away to collect them. If pupils have a dental, clinic or hospital appointment, parents should let the school know. Pupils’ should be brought back to school after appointments. Pupils should miss as little time as possible.

Therefore, parents are expected to:

- Ensure their child attends school and arrives on time every day.
- Promote a good attitude to learning by ensuring their children attend school in the correct uniform and with the basic equipment required for lessons.
- Not arrange medical and dental appointments in school time, wherever possible.
- Contact school to inform the first day of absence for their child.
- Provide a written explanation of absence, including dates of absence as soon as their child returns to school.
• Work in partnership with the school and other agencies in the best interests of their child; this includes informing the school about significant influences and changes in the child’s life, which may impact on learning.

Birmingham Local Authority
The Local Authority is expected to:

• Support the school in improving attendance, through whole school initiatives and individual pupil interventions.
• Ensure that parents are informed of their responsibilities in relation to attendance.
• Uphold and enforce the law in respect of attendance, child employment, and involvement in entertainment and child protection.

Good Practice
The school will recognise the importance of good practice by:

• Keeping and maintaining a consistent approach to marking registers accurately
• The School office contacting parent/carers if their child is absent through Groupcall texting service
• Mrs Rudd ringing families on the first day of absences, where attendance is high priority
• The Senior Leadership Team and Attendance Officer, Zoe Lynch, regularly analysing attendance data and monitoring patterns and trends over time
• Ensuring prompt follow-up action in cases of non-school attendance
• Reporting missing children to the LA
• Rewarding and celebrating good and improving attendance through newsletters, certificates and rewards.

It is essential that everyone involved in promoting attendance is clear about the important role that must be carried out in order to raise standards. Promoting good attendance is the responsibility of the whole School.

Rewards and Incentives
• The Head teacher is training pupils through ‘Teaching Partners’ to give children an incentive to come to school and ‘teach’ children younger than themselves on a weekly basis.
• Whole class rewards are given during Celebration Assembly on Friday. Classes receive £10.00 for achieving 100% attendance each week. They are able to save this up to buy something for their classrooms.
• Individual children receive certificates at the end of each half term for maintaining 100% attendance. Pupils also receive a raffle ticket to be placed in the box and a winner will be drawn at the end of the year – prize will be either a tablet or bike.
**School Attendance – Legal Action**

If pupils are persistently absent, the school will begin the Fast-track to attendance process. This process is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concerning levels of pupils absence either authorised or unauthorised identified</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Step One</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complete the Signs of Safety and Wellbeing form with the child – this ensure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>that the child’s voice is heard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letter to be sent to parents outlining concerns about attendance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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| At least one session of unauthorised absence                                      |
| **Step Two**                                                                     |
| Parents will be invited to a ‘School Attendance Review Meeting’ (SARM)            |

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| Further unauthorised absence adding up to 10 in total over the previous 12       |
| calendar months whether the parent attended the SARM or not                      |
| **Step Three**                                                                   |
| Each parent will individually receive ELIT 1 (Education Legal Intervention Team) |
| with an up to date attendance printout                                           |

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| At least 10 further sessions of unauthorised absence within 12 school weeks of   |
| the warning notice being issued                                                  |
| **Step Four**                                                                    |
| School to complete ELIT Fast-Track referral form                                 |

*To avoid Legal Action being taken against you for failing to ensure your children attend school regularly, you are advised of the following:*

- Ensure your child attends school every day it is open, on time, escorting them into school if necessary and handing them over to a member of staff (Please be aware your child will get an unauthorised absence mark when they arrive after registration closes at 9.30am).
- Contact school on the first day of every absence by 9.00am stating the reason for absence and the likely return date.
- Take your child to the doctor if unwell and provide the school with: medical appointment card with one appointment entered, letter from a professional, doctor’s note, medication prescribed by a doctor, copy of prescription, print screen of medical notes, as well as letters concerning hospital appointments or any other relevant evidence.
The Head teacher will not authorise medical absence without evidence.

How does your child compare?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attendance during one school year</th>
<th>Equals this number of days absent</th>
<th>Which is approximately this many weeks absent</th>
<th>Which means this number of lessons missed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>95%</td>
<td>9 days</td>
<td>2 weeks</td>
<td>50 lessons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90%</td>
<td>19 days</td>
<td>4 weeks</td>
<td>100 lessons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>85%</td>
<td>29 days</td>
<td>6 weeks</td>
<td>150 lessons</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Frequent absence can add up to a considerable amount of lost learning and can seriously disadvantage your child in adult life.
**Penalty Notices**

If a child is taken out of school without the Head Teacher’s authorisation, it will be recorded as unauthorised absence. This may lead to the issuing of a penalty notice and legal action being taken.

**Section 23(1) Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2007:**
- Penalty notices may be issued to the parent of pupils who have unauthorised absences from school – *The amount of the penalty is £60.00.*
- If this is not paid within 21 days the amount rises to £120.
- If not paid within 28 days the Local Authority will prosecute under section 444(1) unless it comes to our attention that the penalty notice had been issued in error.

**Section 444(1) Education Act 1996:**
"If you are the parent of a child of compulsory school age who fails to attend school regularly, you are guilty of an offence."
- *The court can fine each parent up to £1,000 per child, order payment of the prosecution costs and/or make a Parenting Order.*

**Section 444(1A) Education Act 1996:**
"If in the above circumstances you, the parent, know that your child is failing to attend regularly at the school and fail without reasonable justification to cause him/her to attend, you are guilty of an offence."
- *The court can fine you up to £2,500 per child and/or sentence you to a period of imprisonment of up to three months, and order payment of the prosecution costs.*

**Please note that:**
- Penalties and prosecutions are in respect of each parent for each child.
- ‘Parent’ includes any person who is not a parent of the child but who has parental responsibility for the child (and applies whether or not that person lives with the child) or who has care of him/her.

These prosecutions are criminal proceedings and could result in parents having a criminal record.

Any unauthorised absence is damaging to a child’s education as well as reflecting badly on the school. It also gives children the wrong messages about the importance of education which may lead to problems later in schooling. Good attendance and punctuality are important values for later in life.
CIRCUMSTANCES WHERE A PENALTY NOTICE MAY BE ISSUED
The issuing of a Penalty Notice is considered appropriate in the following circumstances:

1. **Attendance:** When:
   - a pupil has had a minimum of 20 sessions of unauthorised absence in the previous 12 calendar months (children attend 2 sessions per day, morning and afternoon – therefor 20 sessions would equate to 10 days);
   - a school or place of alternative educational provision has commenced the relevant Local Authority legal intervention process and
   - despite that process being followed by the school, there has been little improvement in the pupil’s attendance.

2. **Unauthorised Leave in Term Time:** When:
   - a pupil has been taken on an unauthorised “leave of absence” from school or a place of alternative educational provision for minimum of 10 school days in term time, or;
   - a pupil has had a minimum of 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in the previous 12 calendar months and has then been taken on an unauthorised leave of absence from school or a place of alternative provision for a minimum 5 school days; and
   - the school or place of alternative educational provision have followed the relevant Local Authority legal intervention process, a penalty notice may be issued.

*Parents will receive a separate Penalty Notice for each child.*