



# West Thornton Primary Academy

## **Attendance Policy**

**Date Created: October 2019**

**Date to be Reviewed: October 2020**

## **INCLUSION AND SAFEGUARDING STATEMENT:**

We are committed to building futures in a welcoming and supportive learning environment, in which all pupils feel valued and challenged to be resilient thinkers, active learners with transferable skills and have an appetite for world learning.

At West Thornton Academy all pupils are valued inspired and respected within our happy, welcoming academy community.

We set high expectations for all our pupils. Practitioners give every pupil the opportunity to experience success in their learning, by providing a relevant and challenging curriculum with an emphasis on personalised learning.

All children have unique experiences to share. At West Thornton we celebrate this diversity by valuing the contribution of all pupils and providing an environment that encourages interdependence and autonomy in their learning.

Our academy is committed to safeguarding and promoting welfare of children and expects staff to share this commitment.

## ATTENDANCE POLICY

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The aim at West Thornton Primary Academy is to actively encourage and promote regular and sustained attendance amongst all pupils.

Regular attendance is vital. If children are to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them they need to attend school regularly.

Without this commitment pupils are at a distinct disadvantage in terms of realising their full potential. Poor attendance can greatly affect future life chances.

Our policy on attendance is written incorporating LA policies and guidelines on attendance.

Parents/carers are primarily responsible for ensuring that children attend school and are punctual. Maximising attendance is one of the schools major tasks. We take seriously problems which lead to poor attendance.

We are committed to working with parents to overcome obstacles to good attendance.

### **Absence**

Where children of compulsory age are registered at a school, the law states that they should attend regularly. Where such a child is absent, the school register must indicate whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised.

**An authorised absence** is one where the school has either given approval in advance, or an explanation offered afterward has been accepted as a satisfactory justification for the absence.

Satisfactory justification at West Thornton Primary Academy is described as –

- Illness
- Medical/Dental Appointments
- Days for religious observance
- Interviews for secondary
- School Entrance examinations

- Dual Registration
- Absence with leave
- Family Bereavement
- Traveller Child in process of travelling
- Family emergency (at the discretion of headteacher)

### **All other absences are deemed unauthorised**

The term 'authorised' refers to authorisation given by the school, not the parent/carer. The school is not obliged to accept explanations such as looking after other children, preparing for secondary school entrance examinations, shopping, birthday treats, illness of a sibling etc. In these instances the absence must be deemed unauthorised.

The same applies to situations where no explanation for absence is offered.

It is the parent/carer's responsibility to inform the school of the reason for a child's absence.

At West Thornton Primary Academy the first day of an absence should be covered by a telephone call to the school with details of the nature of the illness and, when this can be predicted, the date the child is expected to return. On each subsequent day of absence, a parent must contact the school with a reason for absence.

The school will phone the homes of absent children where a phone message has not been received on the morning of the first day of absence.

Where a child has been absent for more than 2 consecutive school days due to illness, medical evidence supporting the reasons given for absence must be supplied. This can come in the form of: Appointment card with child's name and appointment time stated; GP's letter or certificate stating child's name and diagnosis; Prescription made out to the child, dated; Medicine brought in and shown to the Office, with prescription label stating your child's name, dated.

If the school is unable to ascertain a reason for absence on the first day of absence, a letter will be sent to the parent(s) requesting an explanation. Where an explanation has not been supplied within 2 weeks of the first day of absence, the absence will be marked as unauthorised. Home visits are also carried out by the Attendance Officer and EWO (Education Welfare Officer).

### **Registers**

School attendance registers are legal documents. They are required, by law, to be called twice a day at the start of each session. Our registers are completed electronically and then transmitted to the school office by 9.05am.

They are then printed and kept for fire safety procedures. Staff must complete the register by inserting a diagonal line across the relevant box for pupils present.

Absent pupils must be recorded as "N". No other codes should be used by the teacher.

Children arriving after the start of school but before the official close of register (9.05am) are marked late by the school office as 'L'. A note of the time of arrival is made using the electronic register system.

Children arriving after the official close of register, at 9.30am, are marked late-absent by placing a 'U' on the electronic register. In this way their presence is noted to meet fire-regulations but their lateness is treated as an unauthorised absence for the session.

It is the Attendance Officer's responsibility, in the first instance, to seek an explanation for a child's absence.

Any letters or verbal explanations for absence given to the teacher are passed to the school office where the appropriate code is logged.

### **Legal Requirements**

All schools are required by law to report to the LA continual pupil absence or irregular attendance. The Education Welfare Service is the attendance enforcement arm of the LA. The officers are able to bring to the assistance of schools, a wide range of skills and knowledge. Through their home visiting they may be well placed to assess a non-attender's problems in the wider family context.

Education Welfare Officers should be consulted where schools are experiencing difficulty in determining whether absences are justified.

An education supervision order is used where a child is registered at a school but is not attending regularly or at all.

In consultation with the EWO, the school will issue fixed penalty notices (FPN) for poor attendance.

A parent can also be prosecuted for the irregular attendance of their child at school.

### **EWO and the School**

The school's attendance officer and a member of the SLT meet with the appointed Education Welfare Officer (EWO) weekly. A computerised report of all those children whose attendance has fallen below 95% and 90% is generated. Discussion is held over the next course of action in each of these cases.

As a school we may decide to:

- Continue to monitor future attendance
- Ask class teacher to raise the issue with parents/carers
- Make a phone call to the parents
- Send out a letter expressing concern/ asking for explanation for absence
- Send a second letter
- Send a letter inviting parents to a meeting in school
- Arrange a meeting in school with the EWO present
- Make an official referral to the EWO
- Make a home visit

A record of this discussion and decisions taken is kept. A note of all phone calls made by the office is kept in a log. Copies of letters/ referrals sent are copied to the child's file and to our attendance file.

### **Lateness**

At West Thornton Primary Academy we discourage late arrival. A pupil arriving late may seriously disrupt not only his/her continuity of learning, but also that of others.

In recognition of local circumstances, (bad weather, public transport problems) schools may keep their registers open for a reasonable period (maximum 30 minutes). At West Thornton Primary Academy registers are closed at 9.05a.m

For registration to mean anything a firm line must be taken on late arrivals.

The academy operates a "soft start" where pupils are able to arrive between 08.45 and 08.55AM. Doors are closed at 8.55am. All children must then enter via the office where their names and time of arrival can be noted. For late arrivals before 9.30a.m an 'L' is placed in the absence circle. Arrival after 9.30 leads to a 'U' in the circle to denote arrival after the close of registers.

Registers are checked weekly. Attention is paid to patterns of lateness emerging.

- 2 lates in any one week, or one in the case of a 'U' causes a letter to be sent to parents/carers reminding them of their obligation to get their children to school on time.
- A second letter requests that parents supply an explanation for a series of lateness.
- Persistent lateness will lead to a meeting being requested with the parent to ascertain the problem.

'Late Gates' are held, without notice, throughout the year, in conjunction with the EWO. Letters from the EWO will be issued to those late.

Families with persistent issues surrounding lateness may be referred to the EWO. The school will consider the use of a Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN) in these circumstances.

### **Children left at the end of the day**

Classes are dismissed and lead to the playground at 3.15pm. If the parent/carer has not arrived by 3:30pm they should be taken to the late room and the child's name entered into the log book by the staff member responsible for the supervision of the children in the late room. If no one has collected the child by 3.30pm a phone call is made to their home and any other contact numbers. Parents/carers incur a £5.00 fine for every 15 minutes they are late to collect their child from 3.30pm.

If we have been unable to contact anyone by 4.30pm, the duty social worker may need to be called.

The school acknowledges that on very rare occasions parents may be delayed for reasons beyond their control. On these occasions we would normally expect a phone call before 3.15p.m explaining why they will be late and what time the child will be collected and by whom.

Late collection is defined as an occurrence where a child is not collected by 3:30pm.

Families who persistently fail to collect their children on time will be referred to the EWO.

### **Leave during Term Time under Exceptional Circumstances**

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 make clear that the Headteacher may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional

circumstances. The Headteacher should determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted.

Leave during term time is actively discouraged. Anyone requesting one or more days leave during term time must do so in writing to the Headteacher. In all but exceptional circumstances this request is likely to be refused.

Parents are warned if they still take their child from school; it will be counted as an un-authorised absence and may result in the issuing of a £60 Fixed Penalty Notice.

### **Positive Encouragement**

At West Thornton Primary Academy we have a number of measures in place to encourage good attendance and impress the importance of it on our pupils.

There is an end of year prize for a pupil with 100% attendance throughout the academic year.

### **Monitoring and Evaluation**

On a half termly basis, the Attendance Officer will give each class teacher a report detailing the percentage attendance of each pupils in their registration group thus enabling the class teacher to monitor the attendance of the class. The Attendance Officer will also pick up attendance issues, as well as monitor the completion of registers etc, in their weekly review and in their meetings with the EWO.

The effectiveness of this policy will be reviewed in our annual target setting process each Autumn.

The 2019-20 target for attendance is 96.5%