

Attendance Policy

1. Introduction and background

At West Bridgford Junior School we strive for excellence in education by providing a safe, secure, caring family environment, where all are valued and respected as individuals, enabling them to reach their full potential. We recognise that positive behaviour and good attendance are central to raising standards and pupil attainment.

Regular and punctual attendance is an essential prerequisite to effective learning. At WBJs we aim to develop an ethos which demonstrates to children, parents/carers and the wider community how much we value good attendance and punctuality.

Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any pupil's absence or later arrival disrupts teaching routines and so may affect the learning of others in the same class. Ensuring a child's regular attendance at school is a parental responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

If pupils are unable to attend school for whatever reason, we expect parents to let us know this before 9.00am at the latest by leaving a message on the answerphone, via a phone call or email to the school office. If a child does not arrive at school, we will make contact with parents via phone call or text to ensure the child is safe.

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. All school staff are committed to working with parents and pupils as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible.

2. Promoting Regular Attendance

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility - parents, pupils and all members of school staff. To help us all to focus on this we will:

- Give parents/carers details on attendance in our school information booklet, website and newsletters
- Report to parents/carers annually on their child's attendance within the annual school report.
- Contact parents/carers should their child's attendance fall below the school's target for attendance.
- Celebrate good attendance by celebrating individual and class achievements;
- Reward good or improving attendance through class competitions, certificates and events when appropriate.

3. 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**. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required. The parent/carer of a child of compulsory school age is required by law to ensure that the child regularly attends the school at which he/she is registered. Should a parent fail to ensure that his/her child attends that school regularly then the parent is guilty of an offence.

4. Authorised Absence

Authorised absence is where the school has either given approval in advance for the child to be absent or where an explanation offered afterwards has been accepted as satisfactory justification for absence. Absence may generally be authorised for the following reasons:

- Illness, medical or dental appointments; (with evidence of appointment cards)
- Days of religious observance
- Family bereavement
- 'Exceptional' occasions (the nature of such occasions will be determined by school on an individual basis)
- Exclusion

5. Unauthorised Absence

Unauthorised absence is where no explanation has been given for the child's absence or where the explanation offered is considered by the school to be unacceptable. Absence should **not** be authorised in the following circumstances:

- No explanation is offered by the parent/carer;
- The explanation offered is unsatisfactory (e.g. shopping, minding the house, I'm not well, I couldn't get him/her to school, Gran's not well, He/she had a late night, couldn't get him/her up in time etc)
- Family holidays (unless granted under 'exceptional' circumstances).

Whilst any child may be off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents and the child. If a parent thinks their child is reluctant to attend school, then we will work with that family to understand the root problem. We may use outside agencies to help with this.

6. Persistent Absenteeism (PA)

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year, whether this is authorised or unauthorised. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's education and we need parents' fullest support and co-operation to tackle this. We monitor all absence and the reasons given. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority and we will inform the parents/carers immediately. PA pupils are monitored and we combine this with academic tracking where absence affects attainment.

If the unauthorised absence is in excess of 3 days (6 sessions) over a 6 week rolling period, then the school can issue or ask the Local Authority to issue Penalty Notices to each parent for each child to whom persistent absence applies.

7. Registers and Lateness

We are required by law to call attendance registers twice daily - once at the start of the morning session and again during the afternoon session. We expect parents to ensure that children are on the school premises by **8.45am** for the morning session. The morning register closes at **9.05am**.

Pupils arriving between **8.50** and **9.05** will be marked with an **L** indicating they are late for school. Pupils arriving after **9.05am**, when the register has closed, will be registered with a **U** showing they are present in school but late enough to affect their learning. This will count as

an unauthorised absence. All late arrivals must enter via the front door and report to the school office.

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If a child misses the start of the day they can miss work and miss time with their class teacher getting vital information and news for the day. Late arriving pupils also disrupt lessons; it can be embarrassing for the child and can also encourage absence. Good time keeping is a vital life skill, which will help our children as they progress through their school life and out into the wider world.

If your child has a persistent late record you will be asked to meet with the Headteacher to resolve the problem, but you can approach us at any time if you are having problems getting your child to school on time. We will encourage good punctuality by being good role models to our children and celebrating good class punctuality.

In considering attendance levels, the class register is of paramount importance. Registers are legal documents. Should the parents/carers of a persistent non-attender be prosecuted by the Local Authority under Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act, then the information which the register contains will be the main source of evidence presented to the court. The regulatory requirements placed on schools with regard to the keeping of registers are to be found in the Education Regulations 2006.

8. Absence Procedures

If a child is absent, parents/carers must follow the following procedures:

- Contact us as soon as possible on the first day of absence before 9.00am, if at all possible. The school has an answer phone so that parents can phone before school starts. Alternatively, parents can email admin@westbridgford-jun.notts.sch.uk
- Call into school and report the absence to the reception staff

As a vigilant and caring school, we apply first-day response to pupil absence. This means making a determined and sustained effort to respond to unexplained absence on the first morning of absence. If your child is absent we will:

- Telephone you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you by 9.05am; we will aim to do this before 9.30am
- Invite you in to discuss the situation with the class teacher or headteacher if absences persist

Parents are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any problems together. This is nearly always successful. It will always be attempted to resolve the situation by agreement but, if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed and unauthorised absences persist, the Local Authority can use sanctions such as Penalty Notices or prosecutions (see below).

9. Leave of Absence

Since 2013 there has been **no** entitlement in law to time off in school time to go on holiday. Headteachers have the discretion to grant leave, but they should only do so in exceptional circumstances. If a headteacher grants a leave request, it will be for them to determine the length of time that the child can be away from school. This leave is unlikely, however, to be granted for the purposes of a family holiday.

There is **no entitlement in law** for any leave of absence from school in term time. Any applications for leave of absence must be made in advance using the relevant forms, which

are available from the school website or the school office. Any request for leave of absence can only be authorised where school accepts there are 'exceptional circumstances'.

Leave of absence in term-time will never be authorised in these circumstances:

- During the first few weeks of any school year – this is a vital part of the school calendar for all pupils
- During an assessment/test period – eg. End of Key Stage SATs in May
- When a pupil's attendance record already includes **any** level of unauthorised absence.

10. Absence for Religious Reasons

The school will authorise one day of absence per religious festival, up to a maximum of 3 days in any one academic year, on the day specifically set aside by the Religious Body of which the parent/carer is a member. This will be marked as 'R' in the register. If parents/carers require an additional day this must be requested in advance and this can only be authorised if it is felt that exceptional circumstances apply (this would be marked in the register as 'C').

11. Penalty Notices

The law gives powers to the Local Authority and other designated bodies to issue Penalty Notices where a parent/carer is considered able but unwilling to ensure their child attends school. Reducing absences from school is a key priority nationally and locally because missing school damages a pupil's attainment levels and disrupts school routines and the learning of others.

If the unauthorised absence is in excess of 3 days (6 sessions) over a 6 week rolling period, then the school can issue or ask the Local Authority to issue Penalty Notices to each parent for each child to whom persistent absence applies. A Penalty Notice is an alternative to prosecution, as it does not require an appearance in court unless the fine is unpaid after 28 days. Full payment of the Penalty Notice means that parents/carers can avoid being prosecuted and convicted.

A child who has a record of attendance **below 95%** for the current or previous academic year, is more likely to have an application for leave of absence refused and very likely to receive a penalty notice if the amount of unauthorised absences exceeds the criteria in the paragraph above.

12. Roles & Responsibilities

All members of the school community have roles and responsibilities in promoting and ensuring good attendance and punctuality.

Role of the pupils:

- Ensure they attend school regularly and on time.
- Be aware of their current attendance record and targets.
- Be aware of the consequences of poor attendance or truancy.
- Not leave school without permission.
- Encourage friendship and a sense of belonging.
- Inform a trusted adult if they feel that they are being bullied or feel unhappy in school.

Role of parents and carers:

- Establish good attendance habits by acting as a role model and show the children that good attendance and punctuality is important.
- Praise and reward good attendance and punctuality.
- Talk regularly with their child about school and how they feel about it. Children are more likely to attend and learn if they feel supported and their anxieties are listened to.
- Contact the school by phone or e-mail as soon as possible to say why their child is absent.
- Only grant days at home for genuine illness.
- Avoid taking holidays in school time.
- Ensure that wherever possible, medical appointments are made outside of the school day.

Role of the school:

- Create a school ethos that pupils want to be a part of.
- Give a high priority to punctuality and attendance.
- Set a good example in matters of attendance and punctuality.
- Develop procedures that enable the school to identify, follow up and record unauthorised absence, patterns of absence with effective monitoring and intervention.
- Develop a range of effective strategies to follow up intermittent and long term absenteeism and promote good attendance.
- Encourage open communication channels between home and school.

Date of next review: June 2024

A Graduated Response to Concerning Absence at West Bridgford Junior School: What the school will do in any case of late/absence concerns:

	First Stage	Second Stage	Third Stage	Fourth Stage
Communication with Families	Parents will receive a phone call, text message and/or a letter and be expected to make significant improvement in the attendance of their child.	Parents will be sent a letter or phoned to arrange a meeting with the Headteacher or member of the Senior Leadership Team. At the meeting, attendance/late targets will be set and monitored.	Parents will be expected to engage in setting up an EHAF (Early Health Assessment Form) to ensure the family are supported and attendance/lateness is not deemed to be regarded as a form of neglect.	If the late/attendance concerns continue, the family will be referred to Social Care – as a form of neglect. It will also trigger referral to the Local Authority Attendance and Welfare Officer.
School Procedures	Once attendance falls below the National acceptance level of 95% an e-mail and/or letter will be sent to parents alerting them of this. The monitoring process will begin.	If attendance rates decrease further, parents will be invited in for a formal meeting with the Headteacher or member of the Senior Leadership Team.	If under close monitoring, attendance rates do not show signs of improvement, parents will be asked to engage in the EHAF process so that they can be supported with any issues at home that are stopping their child from accessing school on time and regularly.	School will refer the family to Social Care because the family are not meeting their basic requirement of ensuring their child attends on time and regularly. School will also alert the LA of the attendance /punctuality concerns.