

## Attendance Policy

May 2021



### Principles

West Lea School seeks to ensure that all its pupils receive a full-time education which offers them the maximum opportunity to realise their potential. The school will strive to provide a welcoming, caring environment whereby each member of the school community feels wanted and safe. All school staff will work with pupils and their families to remove or address any barriers to regular and punctual attendance. The school will establish an effective system of incentives and rewards which recognises high levels of school attendance, acknowledges the efforts of pupils to improve their attendance and timekeeping, and will challenge the behaviour of those pupils and parent/carers who do not prioritise this key area.

As a school catering for pupils with complex needs we understand that there can be circumstances that mean a child will be absent; we will endeavour to ensure that the impact of lost time is minimised by offering other routes of learning and engagement wherever possible.

The Education Act 1996 states that all children should attend their registered school regularly and punctually and that parent/carers are responsible for ensuring this happens. Legal action can be taken by the Local Authority in circumstances where excessive absence appears to be condoned or accepted. We wish to work with families to ensure good communication to foster excellent attendance so this route may be avoided.

Guidance states that children should be at school, on time, every day possible unless the absence is unavoidable. Unavoidable reasons may include illness, religious observance, or for a requested day's leave agreed by the Head of School (for example for a funeral, or a hospital appointment that cannot be offered at any other time). Dental and medical appointments should be arranged outside of school hours wherever possible.

The expectation is that parent/carers will contact the school by ringing and leaving a message on the dedicated absence line before 8.30am on the morning of the first and any subsequent days of a child's absence (unless there is agreement otherwise). School staff will record the absence in the register with an appropriate authorised or unauthorised code depending on the individual circumstances. Please note that whilst information is required to ensure that school knows all children are safe and being looked after, **absence can only be authorised by school.**

Unacceptable reasons for absence include shopping trips, helping to look after siblings, translating for others, birthdays, truancy, arriving too late for registration and days of leave/holiday in term time unless previously agreed in writing by the Head of School.

If parent/carers fail to notify the school why their child has not arrived on any given day, in line with Department for Education guidance and internal safeguarding procedures school staff will call them and if they are unable to speak to a parent/carer, may call emergency contacts also, and will take follow up action they feel to be commensurate to the situation should they be concerned about the welfare or safety of the pupil.

## **Commitments**

- To improve the overall attendance percentage of pupils at school and reduce persistent absence (PA) to the lowest level possible. Persistent absence is defined by the DfE as attendance of 90% or less
- To develop a framework which defines agreed roles and responsibilities
- To further develop positive and consistent communication between home and school
- To implement a fair and consistent system promoting good attendance and recognising both ongoing good attendees and those who have shown improvement
- To recognise the needs of the individual pupil when planning reintegration following significant periods of absence and provide a welcoming environment on return
- To be sensitive to the individual needs and circumstances of returning pupils and ensure that appropriate staff are involved and informed of reasons on a need-to-know basis to make the transition back as easy as possible for the pupil
- Involve parent/carers as far as is possible.
- Include parent/carers, pupils, tutors, Heads of School and support staff in the re-integration process as necessary, and external Education Welfare Service (where applicable).

## **Procedures**

**To make attendance and punctuality a priority for all associated with the school including parents/carers we will:**

- Make clear the role and expectations of all parent/carers regarding attendance and punctuality
- Relay any relevant updated information via the Parent newsletter and other media
- Share expectations with all pupils during assemblies.
- Ask parent/carers to state in writing why their child was absent after any days off (though the decision whether or not to authorize the absence remains with school)
- Ask that parent/carers inform us of any pre-booked medical appointments by bringing letters/appointment cards in to school to be copied where possible or inform us themselves in writing in advance of the appointment
- Ensure parents/carers are aware that they should telephone the school and leave a message on the dedicated Attendance line at the earliest opportunity on the morning of any unexpected absence (and by 8.30am at the latest), and supply a letter/note advising of the reason for absence on their child's return to school
- If there is no message/ letter regarding absence, telephone home on the first day of absence and also use emergency contact numbers if unable to speak to a parent/carer
- Make clear that DfE guidance states that holidays in term time are not acceptable and that Heads of School should not grant a leave of absence unless circumstances are exceptional; if parent/carers wish to request leave of absence they must apply in writing in advance. Agreement to time off, and the number of days deemed to be acceptable, is entirely at the Head of School's discretion
- Discuss attendance issues with the Parent Support Advisor, and refer to the Local Authority's Education Welfare Service if no improvements are made/concerns continue after their intervention. The EWS has the statutory responsibility for attendance and may in due course proceed toward prosecution of parent/carers or seek Education Supervision Orders on children. Prosecution can result in a fine of up to £2500 and/or 3 months imprisonment. However, the Headteacher also has responsibility for attendance and can after warning seek to issue a Penalty Notice. Further information around obligation and statutory process is available on the L. A's website

- Advise parents/carers that they can contact the EWO themselves to ask for help or information if they wish to do so. They are independent of the school and will give impartial advice. Their telephone number is available from the school office or by contacting the Local Education Authority. Our allocated EWO is Patrick Lemonius (020 8379 3336/7).

## **Roles and Responsibilities**

### **Teachers**

- The attendance register is a legal document; tutors are required to take the register twice a day at the start of both morning and afternoon sessions.
- Tutors are required to complete the register electronically by 9.30am. Tutors should click on the relevant present/absence box to record attendance.
- The time for registration closure is 9.30am and any child arriving after school has started but before register closure should be marked 'L'.
- Students arriving after register closure (after 9.30am) should be marked with a 'U'- this will count as an unauthorised absence unless there has been a problem with LA transport. A flag should be added to the register to make clear that the child is in school and record the time of their arrival.
- Tutors should communicate any concerns over pupil attendance and punctuality to the Attendance Officer.
- Promote the ethos of the attendance policy through registration periods and in any discussion with pupils.

### **Attendance Officer**

- Print out reports when requested.
- Ensure all electronic registers have been completed for both sessions each day. Ensure telephone calls have been made to parent/carers and where necessary other contacts of pupils with unexplained absences.
- Send letters regarding absences and lateness.
- Liaise with PSA, Attendance Lead and EWO around any attendance/punctuality concerns.

### **The Attendance Lead**

- Ensure that accurate attendance returns are made to the Department of Education within the stipulated time frame.
- Encourage a positive and proactive ethos within the school by which attendance is prioritised, promoted and embedded in school policies, plans, practices and processes.
- Ensure that the school has an attendance policy that has been agreed with key stakeholders and is revised every two years/when legislation dictates.
- Ensure that the school has a range of strategies that are applied consistently to promote whole-school attendance.
- Liaise with the Education Welfare Service whenever necessary.
- Facilitate a meeting each month to discuss attendance with the EWO and leads from each campus.
- Regularly report to governors.

## **Absence may only be authorised for**

- Pupil illness
- Unavoidable medical appointments
- Exceptional family circumstances (e.g. bereavement)
- When the absence occurred on a day set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupils parents belong
- Other circumstances specified and agreed upon in advance by the Heads of School
- Approved educational activity. e.g. visit to secondary school.
- Any other occasions on which a pupil is absent will be categorised as unauthorised absence.
- Should the school feel that absences for which notes have been provided by parents show cause for concern because of their frequency the Heads of School will not authorise and will follow the procedures for poor attendance. This will allow the involvement of the Education Welfare Officer. **Absence can only be authorised by school.**

## **Dealing with Poor Attendance**

- When attendance falls below 90% a letter is sent home to parents/carers advising them that the school will be monitoring their child's attendance. The DfE advises that all children with attendance below this level are viewed to be Persistent Absentees (PA) and this should be raised as a concern.
- Should the child's attendance remain below 90%, parents/carers will be invited to a meeting in school to discuss the matter with the Attendance Lead and Attendance Officer. The purpose of this will be address any issues impacting on attendance and for support to be put in place in the best interests of helping the pupil.
- If the above interventions fail then the school will discuss with the EWS and may subsequently make a formal referral to the Service.

## **Leave of absence**

The DfE advises that Headteachers should not grant a leave of absence unless there are exceptional circumstances. An application for leave must be made in advance and the Head of School must be satisfied that there are exceptional circumstances based on the facts presented which warrant the leave. Where leave is granted, the Head of School will determine the number of days a pupil can be away from school. Permission is given entirely at the Head of School's discretion.

## **Targets**

### **The school has adopted the following attendance:**

West Lea's target is 93%

### **People responsible for attendance matters in West Lea are:**

Head of School Meridian Campus  
Head of School Haselbury Campus  
Head of School Learning for Life Campus  
Head of School Learning for Life Campus post 16

Liz Feeney

## Summary

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parent/carers and to promote attendance.

Equally, parent/carers have a duty to make sure that their children attend school. School staff are committed to working with all parties to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible.

## Attendance: COVID ADDENDUM

School attendance is once again mandatory from the beginning of the summer term 2021. This means that the usual rules on school attendance will apply; see main policy for details. These include:

- Parent/carers' duty to ensure their child attends their registered school regularly and punctually
- Schools' responsibilities to record attendance and follow up absence
- The availability to issue sanctions, including fixed Penalty Notices in line with Enfield L.A protocols

West Lea will support any students who remain anxious, reluctant or are on the shielded patient list to return to school. A meeting will be held to discuss any medical advice with parent/carers and to put in place measures to support each student, and to draft a care plan if necessary.

Where a student is unable to attend school because they are complying with clinical and/or public health advice, we will offer them access to remote education.

No one with symptoms of Covid-19 should attend West Lea for any reason. Should any of the school community test positive for the Coronavirus, the school will implement the procedures as set out in the guidance for full opening.

## Appendix One

### West Lea Attendance Process

#### Daily:

- 9.15am: Messages taken from attendance line and update SIMS.
- 9.30am: Office Managers to go through each class register, check that it's done and flag up any N marks. Note in the comments that a telephone call is being made.
- Pass names of N marks to receptionists who will make every effort to speak to parents.
- Receptionist update SIMS with outcome of telephone call.

NB: Classes who are at college or Work Experience will have their register updated by class staff slightly later than other classes, due to late start at college and calls to WEX.

#### Weekly:

- Monday mornings, Office Managers to check previous week for any N marks remaining. Chasing up absence letter sent out by receptionist, and letter uploaded to SIMS. N marks changed to O (unauthorised) until the letter is returned with the reason for absence, then correct code entered.
- Registers are reviewed for the previous week and concerns are flagged to the campus concerned

#### Monthly:

- Office Managers to run under 93% report. Go through report and highlight any that need action. Liaise with HOS / class teacher if necessary. Concerns to be flagged with school Attendance Leads if necessary
- Office Managers and Attendance Leads from each campus meet with school Attendance Leads where referrals for additional support/intervention can be made. Review of all those pupils under 93% will also take place
- EWO to visit monthly / half-termly to monitor and advise of action.

**Actions:**

If attendance is less than 93% and/or a concerning pattern of absence has been identified – for example student regularly taking off the same day of the week on a regular basis:

- First Letter of Concern to be sent
- Second letter of concern to be sent if attendance does not improve (monitoring to be weekly); letter to state that no further days off for reasons of illness can be authorised without supporting medical evidence and to remind parent/carers of legal responsibility to ensure regular and punctual attendance of their child/ren
- If no significant improvement – parent/carers to be invited in for a meeting
- If accept invitation – Parenting/Attendance Contract to be drawn up at meeting outlining what actions all parties will take to support child to improve attendance
- If no significant improvement – discussion to be had with EWO around formal referral being made
- Third letter of concern to be sent advising that school has no alternative but to make a referral to the EWS

All actions to be recorded on the Attendance Log and letters uploaded to SIMS.

<b>DOCUMENT REVISION HISTORY</b>		
<b>VERSION</b>	<b>DATE PREPARED</b>	<b>CHANGE DETAILS</b>
<b>INITIAL ISSUE</b>	28 <sup>th</sup> October 2014	Initial Draft Document
<b>REVISION 1</b>	28 <sup>th</sup> October 2014	Final Document
<b>REVISION 2</b>	May 2017	
<b>REVISION 3</b>	November 2018	Updated to reflect current practice and responsibilities
<b>REVISION 4</b>	November 2020	Updated to reflect current practice and responsibilities
<b>REVISION %</b>	May 2021	Reflect change to Covid guidance and new process