

Emmbrook Junior School



Attendance Policy

Responsibility of: Pupil Outcomes, Parental Communication and Curriculum Committee (POPC)

Date of Policy: March 2020

Date of Review: January 2022

2020 Mission Statement

We provide an inclusive, positive environment in which we nurture and empower our children to develop life-long learning skills. This enables them to grow into reflective, successful, well-rounded individuals in our global community.

This school's Attendance Policy is based upon the requirements contained within the following:

- The Education Act 1996;
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, as amended by The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2016;
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007, as amended by The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2012 and The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013; and
- Department for Education Guidance as from time to time issued in respect of school attendance matters.

Introduction

The Education Act 1996 requires parents /carers to ensure their child receives an efficient full-time education, suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and any special needs they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise. The Supreme Court has determined that 'regular' attendance means that which is ***“in accordance with the rules prescribed by the school”*** (Isle of Wight Council v Platt) (6th April 2017). Regular attendance for our school means attending school on every day that the school is open.

Commitment to Attendance

Along with the other schools in the Wokingham Town West Cluster (Bearwood Primary, Emmbrook Infant, Emmbrook Junior, Hawthorns Primary, St Paul's CofE Junior, Walter Infant and Winnersh Primary) we recognise the clear connection between regular attendance and achievement and will, therefore, work in partnership with parents/carers, the school's governing body and the Local Authority to ensure that pupils achieve maximum attendance.

Expectations

We expect that all pupils will:

- Attend school every day for the entire duration of the academic year unless there are good reasons for their absence;
- Arrive at school on time;
- Be appropriately prepared for the day; and
- Notify their class teacher of any issues that may affect their school attendance.

We expect that all parents/carers will ensure:

- They are fully aware of the school's attendance policy, their legal responsibilities; with regard to their child's education and the requirement to ensure their child's regular attendance at school;
- Their child attends school every day throughout the academic year unless school has approved the leave of absence;
- Their child arrives punctually and prepared for the school day;
- They telephone the school each day if their child is unable to attend due to illness or any other unavoidable circumstance and give a verbal explanation for the absence providing medical evidence where requested;
- They avoid making medical, dental or other appointments during the school day;
- They notify school of any issues that may affect their child's attendance; and
- They advise school immediately of any changes to contact details.

School staff will:

- Ensure registers are taken promptly at 8.45 a.m. and again at the start of the afternoon session;
- Contact parents/carers on the morning of a day whenwhen a pupil has failed to arrive at school and where no message explaining absence has been received by our cut off time of 9.15 a.m.;
- Send a written request to parents/carers where a pupil's absence is unexplained – *see note below on Authorised and Unauthorised Absence*;
- Provide parents/carers with their child's percentage attendance at regular intervals (End of year reports);
- Work with parents/carers when there are concerns over a pupil's lack of regular attendance;
- Notify the Education Welfare Service when a when a pupil has missed 10 school days or more without permission: this being a legal requirement;

- Request that the Education Welfare Service issue a Penalty Notice when a child has 10 or more sessions absent during a 10 week period without authorisation during the school year, which may result in the issue of a Penalty Notice or prosecution in the Magistrates' Court.

Authorised and Unauthorised Absence

Authorised absence is when the school accepts the explanation offered as satisfactory justification or when the school considers the circumstances highly exceptional and has given approval in advance.

Unauthorised absence is when school does not accept an explanation as being reasonable justification for the absence, OR when no explanation has been provided despite a written request being sent to parents/carers, OR when the Head Teacher has not approved a parent's/carer's request for leave of absence.

Parents/carers should be aware that it is the Head Teacher's decision whether to authorise an absence or not. In the case of long term or frequent absences due to illness or a medical condition, supporting medical evidence may be requested. This could be in the form of a date stamped compliment slip from a doctor's surgery or a copy of a prescription. (Please note that the school is not asking any parent to incur a charge for such information and will not be liable for any cost.)

Punctuality/Lateness

It is crucial that pupils arrive at school on time for registration at the beginning of the day. Lateness into school causes disruption to that individual's learning and to that of other pupils in the class. It is paramount, therefore, that all pupils arrive at school on time. The school site is open at 8.35 a.m. and the school playground gate closes at 8.45 a.m.

- Registration takes place at 8.45 a.m. and pupils who arrive after that time will be recorded as late to school.
- Registers close at 9.15 a.m. and after this lateness it is recorded as an unauthorised absence, (This could lead to formal legal action by the local authority if the problem persists).
- Persistent lateness by a pupil will be followed up by school staff until it is resolved.
- A letter will be issued to parents following four late entries in the register in a calendar month.

Pupils Leaving During the School Day

- Pupils are not allowed to leave the premises without prior permission from the school.
- Parents/carers should arrange medical, dental and other appointments outside of school time unless it is an emergency. Parents/carers are requested to confirm in writing the reason for any planned absence, the time of leaving and the expected return time.
- Pupils must be signed out at the /School Office on leaving the school and signed back in on their return.

- When a pupil is being collected from school, parents/carers are requested to report to the School Office before the pupil is allowed to leave the site.
- If a pupil leaves the school site without permission their parents/carers will be contacted. Should the school be unable to make contact with the family it may be appropriate, in certain circumstances, to contact the Police and register the pupil as a missing person or contact Social Services.

Term Time Leave of Absence

In keeping with the schools in the Wokingham Town West Cluster, we actively discourage term time absence. Our purpose is to ensure pupils achieve their full potential and there is a clear link between poor attendance and underachievement. However, we also recognise that there may be occasions when a parent/carer considers there are extenuating or compassionate reasons for such absence. The law has removed the right for schools to grant up to 10 days' leave of absence in special circumstances for the purposes of a family holiday and there is no automatic right to take any leave or holiday in term time. As outlined in the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013, the Head Teacher can only grant leave of absence if the circumstances are considered 'exceptional' in which case the pupil's absence will be authorised. The Head Teachers of Wokingham Town West recognise that siblings from the same family may not attend the same school and will therefore work in close partnership to ensure a consistent and fair approach to authorising absence.

The school holiday dates, INSET days and other important dates are published on the school's website and parents/carers are asked to note these when planning holidays and family events. If there are exceptional reasons for requesting leave of absence during term time, the following procedures will apply:

- The parent/s or carer/s with whom the pupil normally resides must complete and submit a Leave of Absence form at least one school month in advance of the requested absence. Forms are available from the School Office and our website. The Head Teacher will consider the application, and will decide whether the application can be granted because of 'exceptional' circumstances. Each application will be considered on a case-by-case basis depending upon the specific circumstances of the particular application. School will endeavour to respond within 5 working days to the parent/s or carer/s who submitted the application.
- Where leave of absence is granted, the pupil's absence will be authorised.
- Supporting evidence may be asked for when considering 'exceptional' circumstances (Celebration invitations, letters from employers, travel itineraries, written evidence from employers restricting annual leave, formal notification from travel companies confirming changes to flight times/dates, written confirmation of secondary school interviews etc.)
- The deliberate taking of a holiday in term time without/against school permission (where it can be clearly demonstrated that the parents/carers understood that permission had not/would not be given) and where this has created unauthorised absence of at least 10 sessions (5 days or more), whether consecutively or not, in a 10 week period, during the school year, can result in the school requesting that a penalty notice be issued.

- In accordance with Wokingham Borough Council's Code of Conduct, this may result in the issuing of a Penalty Notice by the Education Welfare Service. The amount payable on issue of a Penalty Notice is £60 per parent/carer, per child if paid within 21 days of receipt of the Notice, rising to £120 if paid between 22 and 28 days (Figures correct as of 01.09.17).
- If a Penalty Notice remains unpaid after 28 days, the matter may result in each parent/carer being liable for prosecution in the Magistrates Court for failure to ensure their child's regular attendance at school contrary to Section 444 of the Education Act 1996.

Addressing Attendance Concerns

We collect attendance and absence data daily, weekly and monthly from the Registers. This information is forwarded to the Local Authority and the Department for Education. This collecting of data enables us to identify those pupils whose attendance is giving cause for concern. Should this apply to your child, the Head Teacher will write to you to make you aware of the concern. If your child's attendance does not show an improvement, you will be invited to attend a meeting with the Class Teacher, Deputy Head Teacher or the Head Teacher to agree an Attendance Action Plan.

The Education Welfare Service

Should a child have 10 or more sessions absent during a 10 week period in the academic year, the child is referred to the Education Welfare Service. In certain circumstances, and in accordance with Wokingham Borough Council's Code of Conduct, Penalty Notices may be used to bring about an improvement in a pupil's attendance. Before a Penalty Notice is issued, parents will be warned of their liability to receive such a notice.

The issuing of a Penalty Notice will usually be considered appropriate in the following circumstances (these are cited as examples and are not meant to be exhaustive):

- overt truancy (including pupils caught on truancy sweeps)
- parentally-condoned absences
- unauthorised holidays in term-time – 5 days or more
- excessive delayed return from authorised extended holidays without prior school agreement – i.e. 2 days
- persistent late arrival at school (after the Register has closed) - i.e. 10 occasions in a 10 week period.
- less than 80% attendance, the absences being unauthorised; during a 4 week period
- A pupil having been excluded from a Wokingham School, being found present in a public place, during school hours, without reasonable justification.

Use of Penalty Notices will be restricted to two per pupil in any 12 month period.

The Fast Track Intervention may also be offered as an early intervention measure designed to ensure that appropriate action is taken to address school attendance concerns. Fast Track involves engaging parents and identifying what improvements and actions need to be achieved over a fixed period (usually 8 or 12 weeks).

Parents have a legal responsibility for ensuring their child attends school regularly. Where a parent fails in this responsibility and no improvement is brought about within the specified period, legal proceedings are initiated in the Magistrates' Court.

Promoting Good Attendance

- We celebrate excellent attendance throughout the year in a number of ways:
- House and class attendance figures displayed in the newsletter at the end of every term.
- Termly 'high' attendance of 97% or more included in newsletter at the end of every term.
- Letters to parents for improved attendance and punctuality.

Changing Schools

It is important that if parents/carers decide to send their child to a different school that they inform the school in writing as soon as possible. An Emmbrook Junior School Exit Form should be completed. A pupil will not be removed from our school roll until the following information has been received and investigated:

- The date the pupil will be leaving the school and starting the next;
- The address of the new school; and
- A new home address if appropriate is supplied.

The pupil's school records will then be sent to the new school. In the event that the school has not been informed of the above information, the family will be referred to the Education Welfare Service and after four weeks, the pupil will be registered as a Pupil Missing Education.

Elective Home Education

Parents/carers have a duty to ensure that their child receives a suitable full-time education either by regular attendance at school or otherwise. The law allows parents/carers to choose to educate children at home instead of sending them to school. This is known as Elective Home Education.

Should parents/carers wish to follow this route, they need to put this in writing to the Head Teacher with a request that their child is removed from the school roll. School will then inform the Education Welfare Service and arrangements will be made to monitor the education put in place at home.

Covid-19 Addendum (Taken from DfE Guidance for full opening: Schools, August 2020)

Attendance expectations:

It is vital for all children to return to school to minimise, as far as possible, the longer-term impact of the pandemic on children's education, wellbeing and wider development.

Missing out on more time in the classroom risks pupils falling further behind. Those with higher overall absence tend to achieve less well in both primary and secondary school. School attendance will therefore be mandatory again from the beginning of the autumn term 2020. This means from that point, the usual rules on school attendance will apply, including:

- parents' duty to secure that their child attends regularly at school where the child is a registered pupil at school and they are of compulsory school age
- schools' responsibilities to record attendance and follow up absence
- the availability to issue sanctions, including fixed penalty notices in line with local authorities' codes of conduct

Pupils who are shielding or self-isolating:

Note that:

- a small number of pupils will still be unable to attend in line with public health advice because they are self-isolating and have had symptoms or a positive test result themselves, or because they are a close contact of someone who has coronavirus (COVID-19)
- shielding advice for all adults and children was paused on 1 August 2020 which means that even the small number of pupils who will remain on the shielded patient list can also return to school, as can those who have family members who were shielding - read the [current advice on shielding](#)
- if rates of the disease rise in local areas, children (or family members) from that area, and that area only, may be advised to shield during the period where rates remain high and, therefore, they may be temporarily unable to attend
- pupils no longer required to shield but who generally remain under the care of a specialist health professional are likely to discuss their care with their health professional at their next planned clinical appointment - you can find more advice from the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health at [COVID-19 - 'shielding' guidance for children and young people](#)

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

Where children are not able to attend school as parents and carers are following clinical or public health advice, for example, self-isolation or family isolation, the absence will not be penalised.

Pupils and families who are anxious about return to school:

All other pupils must attend school. We will bear in mind the potential concerns of pupils, parents and households who may be reluctant or anxious about returning and put the right support in place to address this. This may include pupils who have themselves been shielding previously but have been advised that this is no longer necessary, those living in households where someone is clinically vulnerable, or those concerned about the comparatively increased risk from coronavirus (COVID-19), including those from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) backgrounds or who have certain conditions such as obesity and diabetes.

If parents of pupils with significant risk factors are concerned, we will discuss their concerns and provide reassurance of the measures they are putting in place to reduce the risk in school. We will be clear with parents that pupils of compulsory school age must be in school unless a statutory reason applies (for example, the pupil has been granted a leave of absence, is unable to attend because of sickness, is absent for a necessary religious observance).

Key Actions:

Recording attendance will be done in accordance with the latest guidance on recording attendance at [addendum: recording attendance in relation to coronavirus \(COVID-19\) during the 2020 to 2021 academic year](#).

We will work with families to secure regular school attendance from the start of the autumn term, 2020 as this will be essential to help pupils catch up on missed education, make progress and promote their wellbeing and wider development.

We will:

1. Communicate clear and consistent expectations around school attendance to families (and any other professionals who work with the family where appropriate) throughout the summer ahead of the new school year.
2. Identify pupils who are reluctant or anxious about returning or who are at risk of disengagement and develop plans for re-engaging them. This should include disadvantaged and vulnerable children and young people, especially those who were persistently absent prior to the pandemic or who have not engaged with the school regularly during the pandemic.
3. Use the additional catch-up funding schools will receive, as well as existing pastoral and support services, attendance staff and resources and schools' pupil premium funding to put measures in place for those families who will need additional support to secure pupils' regular attendance.
4. Work closely with other professionals as appropriate to support the return to school, including continuing to notify the child's social worker, if they have one, of non-attendance.

Lateness:

Whilst Covid-19 restrictions and guidance remain in place, we will operate a 'soft' start for all pupils. They will be able to arrive at school between 8:30am and 8:50am. Any child who has arrived after the gates have closed at 8:50am will therefore be marked as late. Lateness will continue to be monitored and support offered as outlined previously in this policy.

Governors

It is the Governors' legal responsibility to monitor and evaluate attendance at our school and our figures are presented to the Governing Body on a half-termly basis. The Curriculum and Pupil Achievement committee has specific responsibility for overseeing attendance matters in our school.

Approved by:

Chair of Governors

Date:

Head Teacher

Date: