



**Westbury**  
**Church of England**  
**Junior School**

**Attendance Policy**

Reviewed: April 2020

### **Policy Statement:**

We believe there are two main reasons why we should strive for maximum attendance and punctuality:

1. Every lesson in school is important in ensuring that our children achieve their potential
2. Attendance and punctuality are valuable life skills

At Westbury CE Junior Primary School, we are committed to providing high quality, engaging experiences and learning opportunities which enable all pupils, no matter what their strengths, to achieve their potential. In every lesson, every day, we aim to develop pupils' skills and understanding, carefully building on their prior knowledge and giving them the tools to succeed.

Absence from any one of these lessons or experiences can cause anxiety for the child, as they feel that they have fallen behind, and may have an impact on a child's ability to succeed in the task that has been set. Frequent absence, or absence for blocks of time, will have a long lasting effect through the learning 'gaps' that are created in a child's understanding.

Furthermore, at our school we believe that attendance and punctuality are life skills which demonstrate an individual to be reliable, responsible and organised. It is the responsibility of the school and parents in partnership to prepare our children for the future and we believe that attitudes to attendance and punctuality developed at school will resonate throughout our children's life and chosen careers. The school is committed to equality of opportunity for all its pupils and will work alongside pupils and parents to enable all children to maximise their attendance and their access to the curriculum.

### **Aims of this policy**

- To ensure that children and young people make the best use of their educational opportunities by attending school regularly, punctually and in a state of readiness for learning.
- To set out the legal framework and to explain the roles and responsibilities of the Local Authority (LA) and the Education Welfare Service (EWS)
- To ensure that everyone within the school community understands their responsibilities in promoting excellent attendance and punctuality.
- To outline procedures for parents when absence is unavoidable.
- To outline procedures for parents when requesting an 'authorised absence'.
- To outline procedures for the school when absence is not explained.

- To outline procedures for the school when a child's attendance / lateness is a cause for concern.

### **The Legal Framework**

- This policy is written in the light of guidance from the DfE 'School Attendance: Guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities' (November 2016) which in turn is informed by national legislation and therefore reflects the school's statutory duties. It also reflects the guidance contained in the Wiltshire LA Attendance Policy (Revised June 2017)
- The school recognises the responsibilities of the Educational Welfare Service and supports them in the discharging of the statutory duty of the Local Authority in respect of non-attendance at school.
- Under section 7 of the Education Act 1996, parents must ensure their children are educated. For most parents/carers this means registering their child at a school and ensuring their regular attendance. Failure to do so can result in the issue of a Penalty Notice or being prosecuted.
- To take an attendance register twice a day: at the start of the morning session and once during the afternoon.
- To report to the LA pupils who fail to attend regularly or who are absent for ten school days or more without known reason.
- By law the attendance register must show for every session, whether a pupil is present, absent, attending approved educational activity or unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.
- Authorised absence is where the school has given approval in advance for a pupil of compulsory school age to be away, or has accepted an explanation offered afterwards as a satisfactory justification for the absence. All other absences are unauthorised.

### **Roles and responsibilities**

#### **Parent Responsibilities**

Under Section 7 of the Education Act 1996, parents/carers who have chosen to have their child educated at school have a legal responsibility to ensure their child's regular attendance.

This means:

- to work in partnership with the school to take an active interest in their child's school career, to reinforce school policies/arrangements on homework, behaviour and approach to learning, to attend parents' evening and other meetings where necessary

- ensuring that their child arrives at school on time (not before 8:35am and not after 8:45am) and that they are collected on time at the end of the school day at 3:05pm
- ensuring that their child arrives appropriately dressed and in a 'condition to learn' (i.e. not too tired or too hungry)
- where there are problems with attendance and punctuality, parents/carers are expected to work in partnership with the school, and any other agencies (as appropriate) to help to resolve the problems relating to non-attendance and
- to acknowledge receipt of the school's Attendance Policy.

**Procedures for reporting absences:**

- In the event of illness or any other reason for absence, parents/carers will telephone the school office before 8.45am on the first day of the absence.
- Parents/carers should provide an explanation for the absence, which should then be confirmed in writing when the child returns to school.
- If the absence is to continue for more than one day, parents/carers should telephone the school on subsequent days, again before 8.45am, unless they are able to give an exact length of time on the first day of absence. There is a dedicated telephone line to report absences that can be accessed 24 hours a day by calling 01373 822695 and selecting the absence line.
- Parents/carers need to inform the school if a child's absence is due to some traumatic event which the school needs to deal with sensitively so that the school can respond appropriately to the emotional needs of the child on their return to school.
- Where the school has not been notified of a child's absence, parents/carers will be telephoned to confirm that a child is absent and the reasons for that absence.
  - If the authenticity of illness is in doubt, the school can request parents to provide medical evidence to support the illness. The school can record the absence as unauthorised if not satisfied of the authenticity of the illness but should advise parents of their intention. Medical evidence can take the form of prescriptions, appointment cards, etc. rather than doctors' notes.
- Where the school has not been notified and it is not possible to contact parents/carers to establish the reason for absence, the school is obliged to mark the child's absence as 'unauthorised'.

- Parents/carers should ensure that they sign their child in or out if they arrive at school outside normal hours or are taken out of school before the normal end of the day, giving the reason for lateness or early withdrawal from school. This book is kept in the main school office.
- Parents are asked to ensure that their child is fully aware of the procedures they must follow in the event that they are late for school

### **Procedures for requesting 'authorised absence' from school**

☒ Parents/carers must seek permission from the Head Teacher (or authorised representative) by submitting a written application, detailing the 'exceptional circumstances' for the request, in advance of any request for leave of absence. Each request will be considered individually and should meet the circumstances of being 'exceptional'.

☒ Leave of absence is made by completing the 'Leave of Absence Request Form' which can be obtained from the school office. Please note that family holidays will not count as a reason to authorise absence in term time, with the exception of the children of the armed forces personnel on leave from active service. Leave of absence requests must be made at least 5 days in advance.

### **'Exceptional Circumstances' Criteria**

- ☒ Exceptional family circumstances, such as bereavement/religious observance/wedding of an immediate family member/family emergency;
- ☒ Unavoidable medical/dental appointment (although it is the school's expectation that every effort should be made to secure routine doctor/dentist appointments out of school hours or during the holidays);
- ☒ Absence, within reason, for an external exam such as ballet and music and to attend elite events (e.g. National Youth Orchestra or a representative sporting event).

