

Attendance Policy

**Attendance Policy**

**Mission Statement**

**‘At West Oaks School we work with consideration, commitment and co-operation to ensure our school community will develop the capacity to enjoy life and succeed. ’**

The vision for our pupils in their time at West Oaks School is to ensure that they are taught the skills and attitudes to enable them to become as independent as they can be. We aim for them to have an enriched and stimulating curriculum to give them every opportunity to reach their full potential regardless of their gender, race, learning disability or physical disability.

The staff of West Oaks School. School are committed, in partnerships with the parents, pupils, governors, the Local Authority, to building a school which serves the community commendably, and of which the community is proud.

The school staff, alongside the LA, firmly believe that all pupils benefit from regular school attendance. To this end we will do all we can to encourage parents/carers to ensure that the children in their care achieve maximum possible attendance and that any problems that prevent full attendance are identified and acted on promptly.

The vast majority of our pupils attend school regularly and on time. Due to their special educational needs, some of our pupils may be however be anxious about attending school, or may have complex medical needs which may impact on their attendance, and parents/carers are provided with support to help their children overcome these barriers.

In order for the school’s Attendance Policy to be successful, every member of staff must make attendance a high priority and convey this to the pupils (where appropriate). Parents/carers need to support these views in the home to ensure that children are receiving corresponding message about the value of education.

**Expectations**

We expect that **all pupils** will:

* Attend school regularly;
* Attend school punctually;
* Attend school appropriately prepared for the day;

We expect that **all parents/carers/persons who have day to day responsibility** for the children and young people will:

* Encourage regular school attendance and be aware of their legal responsibilities;
* Ensure that the child/children in their care arrive at school punctually, prepared for the school day;
* Ensure that they contact the school directly whenever the child/children is unable to attend school;
* Contact the school promptly whenever any problem occurs that may keep the child away from school.

We expect that **school staff** will:

* Keep regular and accurate records of attendance for all pupils, at least twice daily;
* Monitor every pupil’s attendance;
* Contact parents as soon as possible when a pupil fails to attend where no message has been received to explain the absence;
* Follow up all unexplained absences to obtain reasons for the absence;
* Encourage good attendance;
* Provide a welcoming and supportive environment;
* Provide a safe learning environment;
* Provide a sympathetic response to any pupil’s concerns;
* Make initial enquires with parents/carers of pupils who are not attending regularly, express their concern and clarify the school’s and the LA’s expectations with regard to regular school attendance;
* Refer irregular or unjustified patterns of attendance to the school’s senior leadership team for further monitoring and intervention
* Meet, where possible, the requirements of the UN convention – The Rights of The Child, by ensuring that children are consulted in all decisions that relate to them.

We expect that **the Principal, Governors and designated member of school staff** with overall responsibility for attendance will:

* Adopt the whole policy and ensure that attendance is prioritised within the school community;
* Ensure that the registration procedures are carried out efficiently and that appropriate resources are provided;
* Initiate a scheme for contacting parents on the first day of absence;
* Ensure that key staff have time-tabled periods for liaison and follow-up work with the Local Authority as required and appropriate access to attendance data;
* Consult and liaise closely with the Local Authority as appropriate to the individual circumstances of each case, and take responsibility for ensuring appropriate pupils are identified and referred to without delay;
* Set aspirational annual attendance and absence targets
* To regularly monitor progress towards attendance targets set – (in-school and half termly/termly Department for Education returns). Any child with below 90% attendance is a persistent absentee whether absence authorised or unauthorised and appropriate measures should be taken to support improved attendance.
* Monitor and evaluate attendance.
* Participate in city wide attendance initiative (e.g. Attendance Champions).
* Review the attendance policy regularly with pupils, parents, staff, and governors.

**Holidays**

Guidance from Leeds City Council states that *“Only exceptional circumstances warrant an authorised leave of absence. Schools should consider each request individually taking into account the circumstances, such as; the nature of the event for which leave is sought; the frequency of the request; whether the parent gave advance notice; and the pupil’s attainment, attendance and ability to catch up on missed schooling”.*

*“Other categories of absence that would* ***never*** *be considered exceptional include:-*

* *Availability of cheaper holidays*
* *Birthdays*
* *Trips to see sporting or musical events*
* *Day trip*
* *Taking a long weekend*
* *Taking the rest of the day off before or after a dental or medical appointment*
* *Family celebration”*

The school holiday dates are published a year in advance and parents/carers are strongly advised to book their family holidays during the school holidays. Pupils who are taken out of school for family holidays/trips will receive an unauthorised absence mark. Parents/carers are asked not to take family holidays in term-time, unless in exceptional circumstances. In those cases, written requests must be made to the school in advance of the leave being taken.

The school does have the discretion to fine families for this type of unauthorised absence.

**Encouraging Attendance**

School encourages regular attendance in the following ways;

* By providing a caring and welcoming learning environment;
* Involving pupils in school attendance policies and practices as much as possible via the school council;
* By responding promptly to a child’s or parent’s concerns about the school or other pupils;
* By marking registers accurately and punctually during morning and afternoon registration. If pupils arrive at school after the close of register without a written explanation, the lateness will be recorded as an unauthorised absence and the pupil’s name recorded in the late book in case of a fire drill;
* By publishing and displaying attendance statistics and school attendance targets;
* By requiring pupils to regularly record their own attendance and punctuality;
* By celebrating good and improved attendance;
* By appointing an ‘Attendance Governor’ whose role is to work closely with the school and Attendance Strategy Team.
* By monitoring pupils, informing parents/carers in writing of irregular attendance, arranging meetings with them if necessary and referring the family to the Attendance Strategy Team if the irregular attendance continues.

**Responding to Non-Attendance**

When a pupil does not attend school we will respond in the following manner:

* On the first day absence, if no note or telephone call is received from the parent/carer by 11am the school will endeavour to contact them that day. If the family are not on the telephone, a letter will be sent.
* If there is no response, the school will continue to try and contact the parent/carer. If, by the end of the day, there has been no contact made, (third day if waiting for a response to a letter), the school will send a letter of concern to parents/carers or invite them into school to discuss their concerns. The school will tell parents that if the absence persists school may commence further formal action to help support and improve the pupil’s attendance.
* If a child’s attendance becomes a concern, school will work with the child’s parents/carers to discuss any barriers to attendance and set reasonable expectations for improvement, particularly if a child:
  + Is looked after or previously looked after
  + Has an unusual pattern of absence
  + Is at risk of becoming a Persistent Absentee
  + Has a number of unexplained or unauthorised absences
* Failure to comply with the expectations set by school and the Local Authority may result in further action, a fixed penalty notice (up to £100), an application for an Education Supervision Order, a court prosecution or a Parenting Order.

**Changing Schools**

It is important that if families decide to send their child/children in their care to a different school they must inform school staff as soon as possible. A pupil will not be removed from this school roll until the following information has been received and investigated:

* The date the pupil will be leaving this school and starting the next;
* The address of the new school;
* The new home address, if it is known.

The pupils’ school records will then be sent on to the new school as soon as possible. In the event that the school has not been informed of the above information, the family will be referred to the ‘Child Missing Education’ (CME) Team.

The school will complete a ‘Common Transfer File’ (CTF) for all pupils leaving the school for another school, or where the destination is unknown.

**Children Missing Education (CME)**

School follows the “Children Missing Education” protocols in line with the Local Authority’s policy and the Keeping Children Safe in Education September 2018 statutory guidance. A referral will be made to the Local Authority CME team in the following circumstances:

* A child has left the country (regardless of if a new address and/or school information has been provided)
* There is reasonable evidence to indicate a child has moved out of the Leeds area and their whereabouts are unknown
* A child is reported or believed to have moved to a different area but is not confirmed to be on a school roll in the new area
* A pupil has not returned to school for ten days after an unauthorised absence or is absent from school without authorization for twenty consecutive school days, and reasonable enquiries have failed to establish the whereabouts of the child, and the school does not have reasonable grounds to believe the pupil is unable to attend because of sickness or unavoidable cause.

It is important to note that children who are absent for twenty consecutive school days are at serious risk of losing their school place.

**Monitoring and review**

This policy has been approved by the governing body and will be reviewed every two years or in the light of new guidance from the Department for Education or Local Authority.

Signed (on behalf of the governors):\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Signed (Principal): \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_