



The
Westminster
School

Attendance Policy 2019/2020

Safe Happy and Learning Together
*Building foundations and providing
opportunities to create confident,
aspirational and independent members of
our community.*

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| Approved by Governing Body on: | 06.03.20 |
| Signed by Chair of Governors: | |
| Head Teacher: | C Hill BEd NPQH |
| Lead Personnel: | B Taylor |
| Date of Review: | 06/03/21 |

1. Introduction

This is a successful School and your child/children play their part in making it so. We aim for an environment which enables and encourages all members of the community to reach out for excellence. For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and your child should be at School, on time, every day the School is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

It is very important therefore that you make sure that your child attends regularly and this Policy sets out how together we will achieve this.

2. Why Regular Attendance is So Important

“Central to raising standards in education and ensuring all pupils can fulfil their potential is an assumption so widely understood that it is insufficiently stated - pupils need to attend school regularly to benefit from their education. Missing out on lessons leaves children vulnerable to falling behind. Children with poor attendance tend to achieve less in both primary and secondary school.”, School Attendance Guidance, Department for Education, November 2016.

Any absence affects the pattern of a child’s schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any pupil’s absence disrupts teaching routines so may affect the learning of others in the same classes.

Ensuring your child’s regular attendance at School is your legal responsibility and permitting absence from School without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution in line with the Education Act 1996.

Promoting Regular Attendance:

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody’s responsibility - parents/carers, pupils and all members of school staff.

To help us all to focus on this we will:

- Give you details on attendance in our regular Home - School Newsletter
- Report to you on how your child/children is/are performing in School, what their attendance is and how this relates to their attainments;
- Celebrate good attendance through rewards; weekly and termly in line with our School reward policy. Appendix 1 shows types of rewards available to students weekly;
- Inform you at the beginning of the academic year your child’s previous academic year attendance and set an achievable target for attendance for the coming year. Appendix 2 outlines the sample letter for this.

3. Understanding 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, preferably in writing.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from School for a valid reason like illness, medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in School time, emergencies or other unavoidable cause.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no “leave” has been given. This type of absence can lead to the Local Authority using sanctions and/or legal proceedings. This includes:

- Parents/carers keeping children off School unnecessarily
- Truancy before or during the School day
- Absences which have never been properly explained
- Children who arrive at School too late to get their mark
- Shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- Day trips and holiday in term time which have not been agreed

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/carers and the child. If your child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and usually make things worse. We have a support mechanism in School in order to support parents and carers appropriately.

4. Persistent Absenteeism (PA)

A pupil becomes a ‘Persistent Absentee’ (PA) when they miss 10% (19 days) or more schooling across the academic year for whatever reason. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child’s educational prospects and we need parents’/carers’ fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

We monitor all absence thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority and you will be informed of this immediately.

PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully through our pastoral system and we also combine this with academic mentoring where absence affects attainment. All our PA pupils and their parents are subject to an Action Plan and the plan may include School-based activities around raising attendance.

5. Absence Procedures

If your child is absent you must:

- Contact us as soon as possible on the first day of absence, by 9:30am, for safeguarding reasons
- Maintain regular contact if child is absent for more than one day, unless this absence has been agreed by the school in advance
- Send a note on the first day they return with an explanation of the absence - you must do this even if you have already telephoned us;
- Provide medical evidence for any medical/hospital appointments, letters or cards accepted by school
- Or, you can call into School and report to reception, who will arrange for a member of staff to speak to you.

If your child is absent we will:

- Telephone you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you;
- Invite you in to discuss the situation with our Assistant Head Teacher/SENCO, if absences persist; and agree steps forward to improve the situation.
- Refer the matter to the Attendance and Prosecution Officer if attendance does not improve.

Appendix 3 outlines the codes that may be given for your child's absence.

6. Telephone Numbers

There are times when we need to contact parents/carers about lots of things, including absence, so we need to have your contact numbers at all times. Please ensure that the School has your up-to-date contact numbers - if we don't then something important may be missed. There will be regular checks on telephone numbers throughout the year.

7. Attendance and Prosecution Officer

Parents/Carers are expected to contact School at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any problems together. This is very successful in the majority of cases. If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, the School may refer the case to the Attendance and Prosecution Officer from the Local Authority. These Officers can use sanctions such as Penalty Notices or prosecutions in the Magistrates Court. Full details of the options open to enforce attendance at School are available from the School or the Local Authority.

8. Lateness

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If your son/daughter misses the start of the day they can miss work and be unable to spend time with their class teacher getting vital information and news for the day. Late arriving pupils also disrupt lessons, can be embarrassing for the child and can also encourage absence.

How we manage lateness:

Lessons start at **8.55am** and we expect your child to be in class at that time. Registers are marked by **8.55am** and your child will receive a late mark if they are not in by that time.

At **9.30am** the registers will be closed. In accordance with the Regulations, if your child arrives after that time they will receive a mark that shows them to be on site, but this will **not** count as a present mark and it will mean they have an unauthorised absence. This may mean that you could face possibility of a Penalty Notice if the problem persists.

If your child has a persistent late record you will be asked to meet with the Assistant Head Teacher for the relevant Key Stage or the SENCo to resolve the problem, but you can approach us at any time if you are having problems getting your son/daughter to School on time.

9. Leave of Absence in Term Time

Taking leave of absence in term time will affect your child's schooling as much as any other absence and we expect parents to help us by not to take children away in school time.

Remember that any savings you think you may make by taking leave in school time are offset by the cost to your child's education.

There is **no** automatic entitlement in law to time off in school time to go on holiday.

The Head Teacher will **NOT** authorise any holidays during term time, unless there are exceptional circumstances. You may be called to a meeting to discuss your request for leave of absence.

Any period of leave taken without agreement of the School, or in excess of that agreed, will be classed as unauthorised and may attract sanctions such as a Penalty Notice, in line with guidance from DfE and Government guidelines.

10. Schools Targets, Projects and Special Initiatives

The School has targets to improve attendance and your child has an important part to play in meeting these targets.

Targets for the School and for classes are displayed in the School. We will make parents and carers aware of these targets too.

The minimum level of attendance for this School is 94%; we will keep you updated regularly about progress towards this level and how your child's attendance compares.

Our aim is to exceed this target because we know that good attendance is the key to successful schooling and we believe our pupils can be amongst the best in the Local Authority.

Throughout our School year we monitor absences and punctuality to show us where improvements need to be made.

Information on any projects or initiatives that will focus on these areas will be provided in our School Newsletter and we ask for your full support.

Those People responsible for attendance matters in this School are:

B Taylor, Assistant Head Teacher, Key Stage 4 and 5

D Taylor, Family Support Worker

J Turner, Assistant Head Teacher SENCO

11. Moving to a new address/school

If a situation arises where a child is moving address or to a new school then the school will need the following information from parents

- The full name of the parent the child will be living with
- The new address
- The date where the child will commence living from this address

If a child is moving to a new school then parents will need to inform us of the new school and the proposed start date.

12. Summary

The School has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents/carers and to promote attendance. Equally, parents/carers have a duty to make sure that their children attend.

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

I have read and understand the terms and conditions of the Attendance Policy at The Westminster School.

Signed:

Child's Name:

Form:

Examples of Rewards Given for Good Attendance

Super-Here-O Scheme

Every child that attains 100% attendance in a week is entered into a draw to become the School Super-Here-O for the week. The pupil that is chosen in the random draw during our Friday Reward Peer Praise Assembly receives a bag and badges, and has their photograph displayed within School.



School Attendance

Dear Parent/Carer of

The Westminster School continues to strive for excellence for all its pupils. In order to achieve this the School takes attendance very seriously. Poor attendance can lead to poor academic performance, low self-esteem and problems interacting socially with others.

I am pleased to inform you that your child exceeded last year's target attendance mark. Below is the attendance mark for your child for the Autumn Term 2019 and the new target the school have set for your child for the Spring Term 2020. Please keep this for your records as attendance will be closely monitored throughout the year.

Attendance Mark Autumn Term 2019

Target Attendance Mark Spring Term 2020

A copy of The Westminster School Attendance Policy is available upon request.

If you would like to discuss any issues regarding attendance, please do not hesitate to contact Denise Taylor or Ben Taylor at the school.

Once again, we would like to thank you for your continued support with helping support your child in achieving good attendance.

Yours faithfully

D Taylor
Family Support Worker

B Taylor
Assistant Head Teacher 14-19

Attendance Codes, Descriptions and Meanings

| CODE | DESCRIPTION | MEANING |
|------|---|-----------------------------|
| / | Present (AM) | Present |
| \ | Present (PM) | Present |
| B | Educated off site (NOT Dual registration) | Approved Education Activity |
| C | Other Authorised Circumstances | Authorised absence |
| E | Excluded | Authorised absence |
| G | Family holiday (NOT agreed <u>or</u> days in excess of agreement) | Unauthorised absence |
| H | Family holiday (agreed) | Authorised absence |
| I | Illness | Authorised absence |
| J | Interview | Approved Education Activity |
| L | Late (before registers closed) | Present |