Attendance Policy

West Rainton

Primary School

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Attendance Key Contacts

Please find the details of those with overall responsibility for attendance, attendance support and attendance improvement within our school below.

Name	Role	Contact details
Alison McDonough	Head Teacher / Principal	westrainton@durhamlearning.net
Alison McDonough	Senior Attendance Champion	westrainton@durhamlearning.net
Susan Firth	Other senior leaders with responsibility for attendance	westrainton@durhamlearning.net
Christine Charlton	Governor with responsibility for attendance	westrainton@durhamlearning.net

If a pupil is going to be absent from school the person who should be informed is: Mrs K McGowan- School Business Manager- 0191 5843805

If a pupil, parent or family is having difficulty with attending school and requires advice, help or support then they can contact:

Name	Role / type of help	Contact details
Alison McDonough	Senior Attendance Champion	westrainton@durhamlearning.net
Fiona Wright	School Business Manager	westrainton@durhamlearning.net
Susan Firth	SENDCo and Inclusion lead	westrainton@durhamlearning.net

Help & Support

Where help or support is needed with attendance the sooner school know about this, the quicker people can work together to support with this. Where needed this can involve other services to make sure that pupils and their families get the right support, at the right time from the right people.

Children Missing from Education

If pupils' whereabouts are not known following enquiries schools can legally remove pupils from the admission register (the school roll) after 20 school days of unauthorised absence. It is **vital that parents keep school informed of any change of details** and regularly update them if details change. Pupils place in schools are at risk if whereabouts are not known. Children Missing from Education must be reported to the Local Authority and the matter may be treat as a safeguarding issue.

Introduction to our school attendance vision and ethos

West Rainton Primary School seeks to ensure that all of its pupils receive an education which maximises opportunities for each pupil to realise his/her true potential. The school will strive to provide a calm, orderly, safe, and supportive environment where all pupils want to be and are keen and ready to learn within a culture that promotes the benefits of high attendance.

Regular school attendance plays a vital role in children's wellbeing and their education, ensuring that their current learning needs are being met but also building their future ability to learn.

As attendance is the essential foundation to positive outcomes for all pupils', improving attendance is everyone's business, a concerted effort across all teaching and nonteaching staff in school, the trust or governing body, the local authority, and other local partners.

Some pupils find it harder than others to attend school and therefore at all stages of improving attendance, the school and partners will work with pupils and parents to remove any barriers to attendance by building strong and trusting relationships and working together to put the right support in place.

Specific roles and responsibilities have been published in the Working Together to improve school attendance statutory guidance.

We recognise the link between regular attendance and the well-being, development and achievement of our students / pupils. We expect everyone to attend every session they are able to, to benefit from the learning and pastoral opportunities and support we offer.

Communication is vital to ensure we are able to work with our parents and pupils and support attendance.

We ask that parents check the contact details, address and emergency contact information held by the school are up-to-date are communicated to school as soon as possible as it is extremely important school can contact parents in an emergency, keep parents informed of events and progress or discuss any concerns at the earliest opportunity.

The school day

The school day is from 8:30am until 3:10pm

Our doors open at 8:30am for a very relaxed and flexible start. This allows pupils to have a 'soft-landing' in school, catch up with staff and friends and access a morning task that gives children the time to adjust before lessons begin.

Registration is 8:40am. The register will close at 9am. Pupils must be in school to be marked present, otherwise another appropriate code will be used (Attendance codes appended).

Pupils arriving late for registration, but before the register has closed will be recorded as late (L code).

In line with government guidance the registers will close at 9am.

Pupils who are not present before the register closes but attend during the session will be recorded as a U code unless the reason means another code is more appropriate. The U code is an unauthorised absence.

Arriving late to school can be disruptive and unsettling to the child and the rest of their class. Parents should contact Alison McDonough or Fiona Wright on 0191 5843805 if there are any issues which are affecting a pupils' ability to attend school on time.

If your child is late for school:

All children arriving late at school will be asked the reason for their lateness and this will be recorded within our registration system on SIMS.

If a child is late (after registers close) for school on a number of occasions

The school will first speak to parents/carers face to face to see if there are any barriers to punctuality that we can support with.

If the school continues to have concerns about a child's punctuality
There are many steps school can take to address this including breakfast club offers, meet and greets for support or possible referral to the local authority for action if unauthorised.

Term dates and planned Inset days
Parents/carers can find term dates, including any planned teacher training days, on our school website calendar (home page) and on every half-termly paper newsletter. These dates are also regularly communicated upon on Class Dojo and via the school text system.

Leave of Absence in Term Time
Head teachers are expected to restrict leave of absence in term-time to the specific circumstances in regulation 11 of the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024. There is discretion to consider exceptional circumstances based on the individual facts, circumstances and background behind the request. Permission must be requested in advance by a parent/carer the pupil normally lives with completing the form. These forms can be requested via the main office.

Where a leave of absence is granted, the head teacher will determine the number of days a pupil can be away from school.

A leave of absence is granted entirely at the head teacher's discretion. If an application is not made for leave then the absence will be recorded as unauthorised regardless of circumstances.

The DfE have stated that generally they do not consider the need or desire for a holiday or other absence for leisure or recreation to be an exceptional circumstance.

On the first day of absence
If a pupil is to be absent for any reason, parents or carers are asked to contact the School via telephone on 01915843805 providing a reason for the absence. If a pupil is absent from school and there is no contact from parents/carers then school will contact home to find out why the pupil is not in school via phonecall and/or text message. Parents/carers should not use Class Dojo to communicate absence information as this is not always monitored.

Appointments should be made outside of school time where possible. If this is not possible, your child should miss the minimum amount of school time necessary. If they are well enough to come back to school following the appointment they should do.

Periods of extended absence

When reporting an absence due to illness or medical reasons, school will inform parents/carers how frequently they need to stay in touch. For example, if it is a stomach upset then the protocol would be to inform us on the first day of absence and then re-inform if the absence goes beyond the recommended 48 hours. Similarly, if medical advice is being sought, school may ask parents/carers to re-inform us with any additional advice they've been given by medical professionals.

No reason for absence provided

If the school do not receive a reason for any absence it will be recorded as unauthorised. Regular absence and unauthorised absences could result in more formal action. If there are any 3 unauthorised absences, in a 3-week period, this will initiate a closer monitoring and intervention stage to ensure we address and reverse these habits early.

If there has been no contact made with parents/carers, the school may have to follow-up the absence with home visits or by trying to gain contact through wider nominated contacts on file, particularly if there are welfare or safeguarding concerns.

Where 10 or more unauthorised absences are recorded in any 10 school week period the school must consider whether a penalty notice may be appropriate and, if so, will refer the matter to the local authority.

Absence authorisation

The High Court has confirmed that the school's Head Teacher authorises absences. In some circumstances, the school may request that parents/carers provide medical evidence to support absences.

We want to support all of our pupils to ensure they can access their education and will take a support first approach. This will sometimes require communications and conversations to better understand the circumstances which may lead to absence.

Promoting good attendance and punctuality

The school promotes and incentivises good attendance through, quite simply, being such an exciting, vibrant and welcoming place that pupils don't want to miss out.

We also:

- Submit a daily attendance return to the Department of Education, in line with the legal expectations placed on all schools;
- Build strong relationships and work jointly with families;
- Give parents/carers details on attendance in our newsletters, website, letters home and via Class Dojo

- Promote the benefits of high attendance to pupils by weekly games and rewards such as Classopoly, attendance raffle tickets, class of the week, scores on the doors and whole-school congas.
- Accurately complete admission and attendance registers and have effective day to day processes in place to follow-up absences
- Celebrate excellent attendance by displaying and reporting individual and class achievements;
- Reward good or improving attendance;

Attendance data

We will use data we have such as whole school, year group, form/class and individual pupil level to analyse for patterns of absence which may require some support to improve.

We will also consider different pupil cohorts such as all pupils, those who have free school meals, those with special educational needs or disabilities, pupil premium, children who have a social worker or are in care, children who have a responsibility as a young carer etc to identify where additional support may be required.

We will use the information to inform what we do to support and aid discussions between staff, pupils and families.

We will monitor the data to understand the impact of what we do.

We will communicate information to any relevant professionals involved in supporting the child, along with parents/carers. This could include but is not limited to: social workers, family workers, early help professionals, medical professionals, attendance improvement officers etc where we deem it in the best interests of the child.

Absence concerns

Parents may identify concerns about school attendance early if there is a change in their child's attitude to school or in their willingness to attend. If this is the case, concerns should be shared with school so people can work together to ensure that school attendance does not decline. The earlier concerns are identified and shared, the quicker they may be resolved.

Persistent absence

Pupils who miss 10% or more of their sessions at school are persistently absent

Our daily monitoring of attendance identifies very early, who may be at risk of falling into this category and we act quickly to prevent this from happening including gaining support from wider available services where appropriate.

Severe absence

Pupils who miss 50% or more of their sessions at school are severely absent

In the very rare occurrence that a pupil may be deemed at risk of falling into a category of severe absence, the school will have done everything possible to intervene long before that threshold is reached. Pupils falling below 80% attendance, without reason, will become more closely monitored and the school will gather parents/carers and partner agencies to provide additional support through a more formally documented and targeted approach, with regular meetings held to establish a joint pathway to improvement.

National framework for penalty notices and other legal intervention

To improve consistency of practice across the country there is a national framework for penalty notices.

At the point where there are 10 unauthorised absence sessions recorded in any 10 school-week period, schools must consider if:

- further support is appropriate.
- support is appropriate but is not being engaged with.
- support is appropriate but is not improving attendance.
- support is not needed, such as in cases of term-time leave of absence.

If support is appropriate, this should continue.

If support is appropriate but is not improving attendance or is not being engaged with, then a referral for consideration of legal intervention should be made to the local authority. This can include, but is not limited to a Notice to Improve, an application for an Education Supervision Order, Penalty Notice or Offence investigation Interview (PACE caution).

If support is not appropriate, such as where a holiday in term-time has taken place, a referral for a penalty notice will be made. (DCC - Penalty Notice Code of Conduct)

Penalty notices offer the opportunity to deal with an irregular attendance offence without the need to go to court. Penalty notices are issued at a rate of £160, reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days.

There is an escalation policy which means that if a second notice is issued within a three-year period, the second notice will only be payable at the rate of £160. Further offences will not be eligible for the offer of a penalty notice and parents may be prosecuted in court. (DCC - Penalty Notice Leaflet)

If penalty notices are not paid, then a prosecution for the original irregular attendance offence will take place.

If convicted at court under section 444 of the Education Act for failing to secure the regular attendance of a registered pupil at school, a parent may be fined up to £1000 for each offence. If there is evidence that a parent knowingly failed to secure the attendance and there is no reasonable justification for this, they can be fined up to £2500 and/or face up to 3 months in prison, be subject to probation supervision or have a curfew imposed as maximum sentences.

Pupils with specific needs

This policy will take into account the specific needs of individual pupils and pupil cohorts, This policy must be applied fairly and consistently and consider the individual needs of pupils/ families who have specific barriers to attendance.

In development and implementation of the policy, the school will always consider their statutory obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

This policy is supported by our policies on:

Safeguarding; Anti-bullying; Behaviour; Inclusion policy etc

APPENDIX A

The school and all partners will work together to:

EXPECT

Aspire to high standards of attendance from all pupils and parents and build a culture where all can, and want to, be in school and ready to learn by prioritising attendance improvement across the school.

MONITOR

Rigorously use attendance data to identify patterns of poor attendance (at individual and cohort level) as soon as possible so all parties can work together to resolve them before they become entrenched.

LISTEN AND UNDERSTAND

When a pattern is spotted, discuss with pupils and parents to listen to understand barriers to attendance and agree how all partners can work together to resolve them.

FACILITATE SUPPORT

Remove barriers in school and help pupils and parents to access the support they need to overcome the barriers outside of school. This might include an early help or whole family plan where absence is a symptom of wider issues.

FORMALISE SUPPORT

Where absence persists and voluntary support is not working or not being engaged with, partners should work together to explain the consequences clearly and ensure support is also in place to enable families to respond. Depending on the circumstances this may include formalising support through a parenting contract or education supervision order.

ENFORCE

Where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or not being engaged with, enforce attendance through statutory intervention or prosecution to protect the pupil's right to an education.

Expect

At West Rainton Primary School, the happiness and wellbeing of all of our pupils comes first. We believe when pupils feel happy, secure and valued, they will be ready to work. We all want the best for pupils and therefore champion the highest attendance possible for each individual to allow them to access the education and wider offer they are entitled to.

Monitor

Attendance data will be used to monitor, identify and support attendance to enable school to address concerns at the earliest opportunity using a support first approach.

Listening to and understanding barriers to attendance

The senior leaders take attendance very seriously and, as such, have trained all staff in the championing and support of good attendance including highlighting its intrinsic link with safeguarding. Therefore, all staff are available to listen to any attendance barriers although these are usually identified and handled by the headteacher and/or business manager. Our headteacher is our senior attendance champion and within that role, ensures all pupils, staff, governors, parents/carers and wider professionals understand that achieving high attendance is everyone's responsibility.

Facilitate support

At the earliest opportunity, the school will work with parents/carers to remove any barriers and provide any required support to improve attendance. This might include an early help or whole family plan where there are wider issues affecting attendance, identifying targeted steps towards a larger goal that we can all work on together.

Where this initial support is not impacting as positively as we would like, the school may access wider support services, such as early help teams or attendance improvement officers, to help remove the barriers to attendance. This support will be formalised and documented in conjunction with the local authority.

Formalise support

Where absence persists and voluntary support is not working or not being engaged with, partners will work together to explain the consequences clearly and ensure support is also in place to enable families to respond. Depending on the circumstances this may include formalising support through an attendance contract.

Enforce

Where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or not being engaged with, attendance may be enforced where necessary through statutory intervention or prosecution to protect the pupil's right to an education.