

West Winds Primary School & Nursery Unit

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| Attendance Policy | | | | |
| *Prepared by* | Name  Niall Manogue/ Claire Carson | | | Month/ Year  January 2022 |
| *Authorised by* | Name  Board of Governors | | | Month/ Year |
| *Scheduled Review*  *(Circle relevant Review cycle)* | Review Frequency (years) | | | Due Date |
|  |  | 3 |

DRAFT CONSULTATION

1. **Introduction/ Rationale**

Regular school attendance is crucial in raising standards in education and ensuring that every child can have full access to the school curriculum and reach their potential. At West Winds Primary, we will strive to promote an ethos and culture which encourages good attendance and where each pupil will feel valued and secure

**The Importance of Attendance**

* It is required by law.
* Children need to attend school regularly to keep up with their work and promote social development.
* A good education will give the child the best possible start in life and enable them to make the best of the opportunities available.
* Children need to develop good habits in readiness for later life.
* Young people who are away from school without good reason are at risk of becoming victims of crime or abuse.

1. **The Policy Context**
   1. West Winds PS

We acknowledge the promotion of good attendance is multi-faceted and relies upon and is influenced by a range of school policies including:

* Safeguarding and Child Protection
* Pastoral Care
* Positive Behaviour
* Anti-Bullying
* Teaching and Learning
* Managing Staff Attendance

Therefore, the Attendance policy should be read and interpreted in conjunction with the above policies.

* 1. The broader context

This policy reflects current our current statutory obligations, professional guidelines and examples of Best Practice. The following documents are relevant in the creation and implementation of this Attendance policy.

* School Attendance Matters: A Parent’s Guide – DENI
* ‘If you don’t attend, you can’t attain’. Part One: Attendance in Schools, ETI Good Practice Report, ETI, 2016
* ‘If you don’t attend, you can’t attain’. Part Two: Attendance in Schools – Case Studies, ETI Good Practice Report, ETI, 2016
* The Challenge of Improving Pupil Attendance at School, DENI, 2018
* Working together to improve school attendance, Department for Education (England& Wales), 2022
* DENI CIRCULAR 2022/07

1. **Aims**

It is our aim at West Winds Primary to provide a caring and supporting ethos which promotes a positive culture and encourages good attendance.

We aim:

1. To improve/maintain the overall attendance of pupils at West Winds Primary School.

2. To encourage those children with good school attendance

3. To support those parents who feel their child is reluctant to attend school

4. To achieve a minimum of 95% attendance for all children in mainstream classes (except for those who have chronic health issues)

5. To develop a framework that defines roles and responsibilities in relation to attendance.

6. To provide advice, support and guidance to parents/guardians and pupils.

7. To promote good relationships with the Education Welfare Service.

8. To raise awareness of parents, carers and pupils of the importance of uninterrupted attendance and punctuality at every stage of a child’s education.

9. To establish a pattern of monitoring attendance and ensure consistency in recognising achievement and dealing with difficulties.

10. To recognise the key role of all staff, but especially class teachers, in promoting good attendance

1. **Responsibilities**

All members of the school community have a responsibility for identifying trends in attendance and punctuality.

***The Principal and the Attendance Officer (Miss Carson) are responsible for***:

* Overall monitoring of school attendance
* In conjunction with the Senior Leadership Team, creating an annual action plan with intended outcomes and specific activities detailing interventions and approaches for promoting attendance in the upcoming school year.
* Responding to trends in authorised and unauthorised absence
* Contacting families where concerns are raised about absence including arranging meetings to discuss attendance issues
* Monitoring individual attendance where concerns have been raised
* Making referrals to the Education Welfare Service (EWS)
* Providing reports and background information to inform discussion with the school’s Education welfare Officer (EWO).
* Liaising with other professionals to determine potential sources of difficulties and reasons for absence.

***Individual class teachers are responsible for***:

* Keeping an overview of class and individual attendance looking particularly for either poor overall attendance, anomalies in patterns of attendance and/ or unusual explanations for attendance offered by children and their parents/ carers
* Following up absences with immediate requests for explanation which should be noted on SIMS
* Contacting parents of absent children where no contact has been made; communication with parents should be made after two consecutive days of absence
* Informing the Senior Leadership Team where there are concerns and acting upon them
* Monitoring follow-up, once actions have been taken to correct attendance concerns
* Providing background information to support referrals
* Monitoring compliance with children undergoing EWS intervention, following EWS guidance as required (e.g. phone call for non-attendance/ reporting to Attendance Officer, EWO etc)
* Emphasising with their class the importance of good attendance and promptness
* Discussing attendance issues at Parent / Teacher consultation meetings were necessary

***Administration staff in the School Office are responsible for:***

* Collating and recording registration and attendance data for the Principal and Designated Teacher, Board of Governors and Education Welfare Officer
* Taking and recording messages from parents regarding absence and passing these messages onto the class teachers
* Keeping an overview of class and individual attendance looking particularly for either poor overall attendance, anomalies in patterns of attendance and/ or unusual explanations for attendance offered by children and their parents/ carers and reporting concerns to the principal
* Recording of information regarding punctuality on SIMS – minutes late

***Parents/Carers are responsible for***:

* Parents/guardians have a legal duty to ensure their child of compulsory school age shall receive efficient full-time education suitable to age, ability and aptitude and to any special educational needs they may have, either by regular school attendance or otherwise.
* If a child is registered in school, their parent/guardian has a legal duty to ensure that they regularly attend that school.
* It is a parent’s/guardian’s responsibility to inform the school of the reason for a pupil’s absence on the first day of absence. This should be communicated to school via one of the following:
  + a written note when the pupil returns to school
  + a message to the class teacher via the SeeSaw app
  + a phone call to the school office

If the absence is likely to be prolonged, this information should be provided to enable the school to assist with homework or any other necessary arrangements which may be required.

* Informing the school in advance of any medical appointments in school time. Where possible, appointments should be made for after school hours.
* Making requests for authorised absence in term time only if absolutely necessary as these are not automatically authorised.
* Talking to the school as soon as possible about any child’s reluctance to come to school so that problems can be quickly identified and dealt with.
* It is the responsibility of parents to ensure that their child is punctual; pupils are expected to be in school for registration and the beginning of classes. Lateness is recorded at school and on a child’s attendance record.

***The Board of Governors are responsible for***:

* Ensure that the Principal keeps a General Register of the pupils at the school and a Pupil Attendance Register and that appropriate action is taken to encourage good attendance at school.
* Provide support by reviewing school attendance figures and targets and ensuring attendance is placed as an agenda item at each meeting.

***Education Authority:***

The Education Authority, through the Education Welfare Service, have a legal responsibility to make sure that parents and carers meet their own responsibility towards their children’s education. If they do not, the Education Authority is duty bound to use the legal processes of Court action to uphold a parent's duty to make sure that the young people in their care receive an education.

***Role of Pupils***

Each pupil at West Winds Primary must attend school punctually and regularly.

1. **Action**

We recognise the importance of promoting a school culture that encourages good attendance and draws a direct correlation between attendance and attainment.

**Promoting Good Attendance**

As a school operating a positive, nurturing ethos we are keen to promote success including good or improving attendance and punctuality.

The Education and Training Inspectorate produced the ‘Attendance in Schools: ETI Good Practice Report in 2016. This identified 4 key areas for schools in promoting good attendance.

1. *Leadership*

The school will identify an ‘Attendance Officer’ who will be a senior member of staff, responsible for the implementation of the attendance action plan and the promotion of good attendance. This Attendance Officer, working with the Senior Leadership Team, will help support and secure a positive culture concerning attendance and make a strong, public link between attendance and attainment for pupils and families.

The SLT will develop an annual Attendance Action Plan, using these four areas as a guide. This action plan will be developed, reviewed, and evaluated annually, with strategies and interventions updated to make a positive impact upon attendance.

Supporting Attendance will be part of the safeguarding and child protection report and will remain as a standing item on the Board of Governors agenda, with action plans shared, information given and progress monitored and evaluated.

1. *Close educational engagement with parents*

Through the Attendance Action Plan, the school will educate parents constructively about the connection between attendance and attainment, using ‘School Attendance matters – a Parent’s guide’.

School will use different modes of communication to engage with parents to proactively support good attendance and to challenge poor attendance should it occur. This will include printed materials, online materials, SMS messages, the West Winds App and SeeSaw.

Parents will be kept informed if their child’s attendance falls below 90% with school using number of teaching days rather than percentages to communicate absence.

Attendance will be discussed as part of engagements with parents, with additional meetings set up as required to engage with individual families where poor attendance is occurring.

1. *Tailored education programmes*

As a school we recognise that our pupils may face disadvantages so we will ensure that pastoral care arrangements in place to support them. We will provide incentives for before and after school including a Breakfast Club and a selection of afterschool activities covering a wide range of interests

We will ensure that our school has a happy, positive learning ethos, where success is rewarded and where education is tailored to individual learners.

We will be ‘up front’ and positive in our discussions about attendance with the children, whilst acknowledging the individual circumstances that each child has and understanding that, in a primary school context, attendance remains a key area of responsibility for parents and carers.

1. *Strategic monitoring, reporting and evaluation*

We will have clear procedures for monitoring and identifying attendance and lateness patterns, ensuring that the information recorded is accurate. Through this, we will identify pupils who are vulnerable to becoming persistent absentees and have measures in place for those pupils, acknowledging that each child’s individual circumstances will differ.

Attendance and punctuality information from SIMS will be analysed every 6 weeks as part of Safeguarding team meetings, to identify trends and monitor attendance interventions.

**Rewarding Good Attendance and Punctuality**

At West Winds Primary we reward children for good behaviour, effort, academic, arts and sporting achievements There are a wide range of incentives on offer in all classes. These include stickers, reward and points, prize boxes, positive notes home and ‘West Winds Winner of the Week’ certificate. Each individual child’s circumstances will be taken into account in this process.

We also have a reward system which focuses on improved attendance and punctuality within each class. Each class’s monthly attendance is recorded and compared against the previous month’s attendance figure. The class with the most improved figure will receive an ‘in-school experience’ e.g. specialised visitors, unique forest school lesson

We will specifically draw a connection for our pupils between attendance and attainment through discussions, assemblies and publicity materials.

**Procedures for Recording Attendance**

Attendance/absence of pupils should be recorded at the beginning of the morning within SIMS registration software by class teachers. The codes contained in Appendix 2 will be used to record pupils’ attendance and absence as detailed in Circular 2022/07.

Accurate records of all pupils’ attendance or absence at school will be recorded diligently by teaching staff as this information may be required as evidence in cases of non-attendance being brought to court.

Schools are required by law to continue to hold copies of pupil attendance records and pupil registration records for not less than 10 years from the date on which the register ceased to be used. Reasons for Absence and attendance notes should be saved by class teachers throughout the year and archived centrally at the end of each academic year.

To enable our school to accurately record and monitor attendance in a consistent way we will adhere to the guidance provided in Department of Education Circulars, the most recent being 2019/14, Attendance Guidance and Absence Recording’.

**Reasonable Reasons for Absence - When can children be absent from school?**

A child registered at a school can legally miss school only in very limited circumstances.

These include when they:

• are ill.

• have an unavoidable medical or dental appointment.

• are taking part in a religious event.

• have an exceptional family circumstance

Some unacceptable reasons for absence:

• birthdays.

• visiting relatives.

• shopping.

• hair appointment.

• looking after other members of the family e.g. babysitting/ collecting younger siblings

**Term-time Holidays**

Absence from school should be avoided wherever possible as it causes disruption to the child’s education and may affect their relationships within school. If a holiday is planned during term-time the child will miss part of their education and may miss important tests or exams.

Parents should discuss this with the Principal in exceptional circumstances but at West Winds Primary we consider that all term-time holidays count as absences.

**Regular Non-Attendance**

The school expects attendance of at least 95%.

It is important for children to establish good attendance habits early on in their primary school career. It is the responsibility of the Principal and the Governors to support good attendance and to identify and address attendance concerns promptly.

**‘In School’ Interventions for poor attendance**

Once pupil attendance drops to 90% over the course of the year, the following actions will be adopted to rapidly engage with families and improve the pupil’s attendance pattern, where possible.

1. **Prompt and direct contact with individual parents**

In primary school, we rely upon parents to ensure their child attends school regularly and punctually. Non-attendance is an important issue that is treated seriously and therefore where there are concerns regarding attendance parents are always informed.

*Tier 1: in-school intervention*

Initial concerns about attendance are raised by the class teacher with parents directly via phone calls or face-to-face meetings. If attendance fails to improve over the next 4 – 6 weeks, a series of letters will be sent home from the Attendance Officer. Letter 1 and Letter 2 can be found at the end of this document.

*Tier 2: in-school intervention*

Should attendance not improve, the parent is then invited to come to meet with the Principal/ Attendance Officer and class teacher where there will be opportunities for them to discuss reasons for absence. Support will then be given by the school with the aim to improve attendance by identifying strategies that could be put in place via an action plan. Consideration is given to all factors affecting attendance before deciding what intervention strategies to apply. Each case is different, and the school acknowledges that no one standard response will be appropriate in every case.

In every case, early intervention is essential to prevent the problem from worsening. It is essential that parents keep the school fully informed of any matters that may affect their child’s attendance. It is hoped that a quick response and change in levels of absence will prevent the need for a referral to the Education Welfare Service (EWS).

1. **Early intervention of external support**

Where a child’s attendance record does not improve as a result of the In-school interventions then the school has a responsibility to make a referral to the EWS. This will be done proactively and in a timely manner

1. **Rewarding attendance and sanctions**

Pupils with poor attendance will have a personalised programme of support in order to improve their attendance at school.

**External Interventions for persistent poor attendance**

If a child is missing school without good reason, schools and the Education Authority have a number of legal powers that they can use. The Education Welfare Service receives referrals from schools when pupils’ attendance is a cause for concern or when attendance drops below 85%.

The initial response to a referral of a pupil by a school to the EWS is a home visit. This provides the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) with an opportunity to assess whether the absence is condoned by parents and if they are in a position to ensure regular attendance.

The EWS will issue penalty notices to parents where there has been a referral to EWS from the school as part of the school’s processes to address poor attendance patterns.

Article 45 of the Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1986 states that it is the duty of parents who have a child of compulsory school age to ensure their child receives efficient, full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude, ability and to any special educational needs they may have. The order also states that it is the duty of a parent of a registered pupil of a school to secure their regular attendance at school. Parents are legally responsible for making this happen.

If a child or young person who is registered at school does not attend regularly, a parent can receive a fine not exceeding £1000 in court (for each child). An Education Supervision Order (ESO) could also be made by a court under Article 55 of the Children (NI) Order 1995.

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|  |  | **Responsibilities/ Actions** | | |
|  | Providing a supportive atmosphere that encourages attendance | Promotion of good attendance messages to community  Rigorous recording of data  Supportive school culture  Connecting attendance with attainment | | |
|  |  | **Attendance Officer** | **Class Teacher** | **Administration** |
|  | Pupil absent from school |  | Record in line with DE codes | Pass on any received notifications of absence to class teacher |
|  |  |  | Seek explanation for absence upon child’s return.  Send Unexplained Absence note if no explanation has been provided | Provide monthly list of unexplained absences.  Prepare secondary reminder to be sent home – with App message/ SMS |
|  | Pupil late for school |  | Seek explanation for child’s lateness to school | Note Minutes late on SIMS |
|  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Pupil absent from school for more than 2 consecutive days |  | Make contact with family seeking explanation  Continue to monitor – move to Tier 1 if no improvement |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| Tier 1 In School Intervention | Pupil attendance falls below 90% | Discuss during termly safeguarding meeting | Inform Attendance Officer of patterns of non-attendance/ persistent lateness |  |
|  |  | Issue Letter 1/ 2 from AO and monitor attendance |  |
|  | Move to Tier 2 if no improvement |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| Tier 2 In School intervention | Pupil attendance below 90% and no improvement from Tier 1 Intervention | Discuss during termly safeguarding meeting | Inform Attendance Officer of lack of improvement in pupil attendance |  |
|  | Arrange meeting with parent to discuss attendance concerns and develop approach to improve attendance | Provide information/ attend parent meeting |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| External Intervention | Pupil attendance below 85%  No improvement as a result of Tier ½ intervention | Make referral to EWS | Provide information | Provide information |

Date:

Re: Insert Pupil Name

**Attendance Letter 1**

Dear Parent,

You are receiving this letter because we are concerned that your child’s attendance is below 90% and that he or she is missing school.

Our school records show that your child’s attendance at school this year is xx% .

A day-to-day summary of attendance detailed in the table below.

Monday xx%

Tuesday xx%

Wednesday xx%

Thursday xx%

Friday xx%

Please be aware that any pupil with attendance below 85% will be discussed with the Educational Welfare Officer. School procedures for monitoring attendance can be found in our Attendance Policy located on our website.

You are invited to make an appointment to see our Attendance Officer, Miss Carson, or myself to discuss ways in which we can help you to improve your child’s attendance.

Yours sincerely,

Mr N Manogue

Principal

Date:

Re: Insert Pupil Name

**Attendance Letter 2**

Dear Parent,

Further to Letter 1 that was sent home on **insert date**, you are receiving this letter because we are concerned that your child’s attendance has remained below 90%.

Our school records show that your child’s attendance at school this year is xx% .

A day-to-day summary of attendance detailed in the table below.

Monday xx%

Tuesday xx%

Wednesday xx%

Thursday xx%

Friday xx%

Please be aware that any pupil with attendance below 85% will be discussed with the Educational Welfare Officer. School procedures for monitoring attendance can be found in our Attendance Policy located on our website.

Can I please ask that you contact the office to make an appointment to see our Attendance Officer, Miss Carson, or myself to discuss ways in which we can help you to improve your child’s attendance.

Yours sincerely,

Mr N Manogue

Principal

