



WEST BUCKLAND
PRIMARY SCHOOL
AND NURSERY

West Buckland Primary School and Nursery

Attendance Policy

In order to improve the overall attendance of pupils in school we aim to:

- Make attendance and punctuality a priority for all those associated with the school including pupils, parents, teachers, support staff, volunteers and governors.
- Develop a framework which defines agreed roles and responsibilities and promotes consistency in carrying out designated tasks.
- Develop a systematic approach to gathering and analysing attendance related data.
- Provide support, advice and guidance to parents/carers and pupils.
- Further develop positive and consistent communication between home and school.
- Develop effective partnerships with supporting services and agencies through the Local Authority.
- Recognise and address the needs of the individual pupil when planning reintegration following significant periods of absence.

Definitions:

It is the Head Teacher's discretion as to whether a child's absence is recorded as authorised or unauthorised.

Authorised absence:

- An absence is classified as authorised when a child has been away from school for a legitimate reason and the school has received notification from a parent or carer. For example, if a child has been unwell, the parent emails or telephones the school to explain the absence.
- Only the school can make an absence authorised. Parents do not have this authority. Consequently, not all absences supported by parents will be classified as authorised. Authorised absence will only be granted in exceptional circumstances.

Unauthorised absence:

- An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of both the school and a parent.
- Therefore, the absence is unauthorised if a child is away from school without good reason, even with the support of a parent.

Persistent absence (PA):

- The DfE define a 'persistent absentee' as a pupil who, at any point in the year, has accumulated absence at **10%** or more of the available sessions regardless of whether or not any of it is authorised. The PA status may change as the terms progress but these pupils are at particular risk of achieving poor outcomes at school and beyond.

Registration:

Timings:

School begins promptly at 08:50. The register is taken at 09:00.

Each class allows children time to enter the class and settle before registration; the children will be allowed into the school from 08:40.

Afternoon registration will take place when the children return from their lunch break.

Codes:

There are a series of codes which are used to denote authorised and unauthorised absence (see 'Advice on School Attendance' DfE January 2012).

It is the school's responsibility to ensure the correct codes are recorded and that patterns and trends in children's absence are analysed.

Late Pupils:

Pupils arriving after 08:50 but before 09:05 will be marked using the 'L' code. Pupils arriving after 09:05 will be marked with the 'U' code which indicates that a child arrived after the registration window and that this was unauthorised by the school.

Punctuality:

If children are regularly late to school a 'late' letter is sent to parents stressing the importance of punctuality and the offer of support from the school. If lateness persists the Headteacher will refer the family to the Educational Welfare Officer.

Medical appointments

Children will be marked as 'M' for a medical appointment.

Requests for leave of absence:

We believe that all children need to be in school for all sessions, so that they can make the most progress possible. For this reason, as a general rule, we do not authorise leave of absence (including holidays) in term time.

The Head Teacher has the discretion to make exceptions to this rule and can authorise leave of absence in exceptional circumstances, when the leave of absence is for no more than 10 days (Using Code 'H': Family Holiday Agreed). Special circumstances may include:

- Service personnel and other employees who are prevented from taking holidays outside term time if the holiday will have minimal disruption to the pupil's education.
- When a family needs to spend time together to support each other during or after a crisis.

Religious Observance:

The DCSF recommends the use of Code 'R' when children are absent from school to take part in any day set aside exclusively for religious observance by the religious body to which the parents belong, including religious festivals. Parents should be encouraged to give advance notice.

This is interpreted to mean that if the parent's religious organisation sets the day as a religious festival then the school must authorise the absence. Where necessary, schools should seek advice from the parent's religious body about whether it has set the day apart for religious observance.

If the religious body has not set the day apart there is no requirement for the school to approve the absence or grant a leave of absence. Additional holidays and days off linked to the religious festival but not "exclusively set aside for religious observance" by the religious body are not marked using Code 'R'.

Reporting:

Information regarding attendance will be included in the child's annual report. It is essential that everyone involved in promoting attendance is clear about the important role that must be carried out in order to raise standards. Responsibility to promote attendance is the responsibility of the whole school community.

When input onto the Attendance system the following codes will be used:

- L - Late (before registers closed)
- M - Medical / Dental Appointment
- I - Illness
- O - Unauthorised
- N - No reason yet provided for absence
- P - Approved sporting activity
- R - Religious observance
- S - Study Leave
- V - Educational Visit or trip
- H - Family Holiday (agreed)
- G - Family holiday (not agreed or days in excess)
- B - Education Off Site
- C - Other authorised circumstances
- E - Excluded
- U - Late after registration

Roles and responsibilities:

All members of the school community have roles and responsibilities in promoting and ensuring good attendance and punctuality.

Role of the pupils

Pupils have a responsibility to themselves and others to play a positive role in the life of the school and to make the most of the education opportunities available.

All pupils will:

- Understand the importance of attending school and see the value of education.
- Ensure that they attend school regularly and on time.
- Be aware of their own attendance.
- Be aware of the consequences of poor attendance or truancy.
- Arrive to lessons punctually.

- Not leave school without permission.
- Respect themselves and others.
- Encourage friendship and a sense of belonging.
- Be happy and encourage others to feel happy
- Inform a trusted adult if they feel that they are being bullied or feel unhappy in school.

Role of parents

Parents have an essential role in ensuring their child's good attendance.

We ask parents to:

- Establish good attendance habits by acting as a role model and showing the children that good attendance and punctuality is important.
- Praise and reward good attendance, even small successes, e.g. getting ready quickly, even if resisting going to school.
- Talk regularly with their child about school and how they feel about it. Children are more likely to want to attend and learn if they feel supported and their anxieties are listened to.
- Contact the school by phone or email as soon as possible to say why their child is absent, and when they are expected to return.
- Only grant days at home for genuine illness.
- If appropriate, arrange for a friend to take a child to school if a sibling is sick.
- Avoid taking holidays in school time.
- Ensure that wherever possible, medical appointments are made outside of the school day.
- Know routines of the school day to avoid issues, e.g. ensuring children have their P.E. kits on the right days.
- Establish a good bedtime routine, so that their child can sleep well, get enough sleep and make mornings less of a struggle.

Role of the Class Teacher

We ask teachers to:

- Encourage good attendance.
- Ensure that registers are correctly and promptly marked.
- Set a good example in matters of attendance and punctuality.
- Provide a safe and secure environment in which to learn.
- Provide engaging and worthwhile learning experiences that encourage children to regularly attend lessons.
- Listen to and value children's views.
- Make initial contact with parents when concerns arise.

Role of the School

As a school we:

- Create a school ethos that pupils want to be part of.
- Give a high priority to punctuality and attendance.

- Develop procedures that enable the school to identify, follow up and record unauthorised absence, patterns of absence and parent condoned absence with effective monitoring and intervention.
- Develop a range of effective strategies to follow up intermittent and long term absenteeism and promote good attendance.
- Encourage open communication channels between home and school.
- Develop procedures leading to the formal referral to Somerset County Council.
- Adequately provide for pupils with difficulties, within the bounds of the resources available, and ensure the appropriate delivery of the curriculum.

Role of Governing Body

Under the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 1995, the governing body are responsible for making sure the school keeps an attendance register that records which pupils are present at the start of both the morning and the afternoon sessions of the school day. This register will also indicate whether an absence was authorised or unauthorised.

Role of the Local Authority

The Local Authority provides an 'Advice, Assessment and Early Intervention Service'. Somerset County Council may also support the school with legal action to tackle poor attendance where appropriate.

Intervening with Attendance Concerns:

Where we have concerns around a pupil's attendance we may intervene in one or more of the following ways:

- The Head Teacher will review the attendance of all the schools pupils on a half termly basis and any pupils identified as a cause for concern (less than 95% attendance) on a more regular basis.
- A letter may be sent to the parents of any pupil identified as having attendance problems, informing them of the school's concerns and offering support to resolve any problems that may be impeding a child from attending.
- Where patterns are identified a phone call or meeting between the Parent and the Head Teacher may take place to discuss the pattern and resolve any issues preventing attendance.
- The pupil's attendance will be closely monitored and reviewed.
- A second letter will be sent to parents if attendance does not improve.
- The school will seek support from Somerset County Council where attendance remains a concern.
- The local council have the authority to issue a fine.
- To support us with the process we will work with external agencies such as our local PCSO and the Wellington TAS network.
- Where no contact can be made, a home visit may be necessary to provide a welfare check. This will be undertaken by two senior members of school staff or one member alongside the Community Policing Team.

Formal Meetings with the Education Welfare Officer:

The aim of formal meetings with the Education Welfare Officer is to ensure that schools and Education Welfare Service deal with attendance cases quickly and in the most effective way to get the child back to school.

The formal meetings with the Education Welfare Officer framework promotes early intervention and aims to ensure that appropriate action is taken to tackle non-attendance as soon as attendance problems become apparent.

Formal meetings involve engaging the parent(s), and/or Carer(s) specifying what improvements needs to be made.

Parents and carers have the responsibility for ensuring that their child attends school regularly. (Section 444(1) of the Education Act 1996). Where a parent fails in this responsibility and no improvement is brought about within the specified time-frame, prosecution and proceedings are initiated.

Penalty Notice:

Regular and punctual attendance of pupils at school is both a legal requirement, and essential in order for students to maximise the opportunities available to them. The Somerset Education Welfare Service will continue to investigate cases of regular non-attendance from school and, following appropriate casework, instigate legal action if applicable. Penalty Notices offer a means for swift intervention which the County Council will use to combat truancy problems before they become entrenched. This code provides that the power to use Penalty Notices is applied consistently and fairly and that suitable administrative arrangements are in place.

Following the implementation of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 it is possible that certain cases of unauthorised absence can be dealt with by way of a Penalty Notice. Penalty Notices will require the parent of a child of compulsory school age, whose attendance has been unsatisfactory, to pay a fine, currently £60.00 if paid within 21 days or £120.00 if paid between 22 and 28 days. If the Penalty Notice remains unpaid, the matter is then referred to the Magistrates Court for a prosecution for non-attendance.