



Watermill School

Attendance, Absence and Punctuality

Links to other Policies, please see:

[Remote Learning and Pupils unable to attend School due to Health Needs \(PUTASDTHN\) Policy](#)

Policy Information		
Policy Author: Catherine Bridgeman Governing Board approval date/date policy is in effect from: September 2022		
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Date: September 2023 Name of reviewer/s: Karen Price	Added OCT no authorisation of holidays. Amended names for new staff	September 24
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Attendance, Absence and Punctuality

1.0 Introduction and Rationale

Watermill School is committed to raising the achievement and aspirations of all our pupils. Good attendance and punctuality are essential if children are to take full advantage of school, and gain the necessary skills that will prepare them for life. Parents are legally responsible for ensuring children of compulsory school age receive a suitable education. The school and the Local Authority work together to ensure that parents meet these responsibilities. Attendance issues are dealt with in the first instance by the school Attendance Officer. This may be followed by a formal referral to the Education Welfare Service, which provides an important link between schools and families. Promoting good attendance is a key part of the school's objectives.

2.0 Legislation and Guidance

This policy has been informed by the documents "Working together to improve school attendance" and "Summary table of responsibilities for school attendance". These documents can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-improve-school-attendance>

3.0 Responsibilities

3.1 School Responsibilities

- To ensure that early and appropriate contact with parents is made when a child is absent and no appropriate reason for the absence has been given. This will include first day response phone calls home to parents/carers. If we are unable to make contact, it may be necessary to carry out a home visit (safe and well check).
- Early and sensitive action to be taken to try and resolve any problems that may be affecting attendance.
- Regular, efficient and accurate recording of attendance data.
- Regular evaluation of attendance procedures and levels of attendance undertaken by the Senior Leadership Team and the Governing Body.
- Regular letters home to all pupils whose attendance has fallen below 85%.
- Attendance clinic invitations to parents/carers when there is no improvement in pupil's attendance.
- Referral to the Education Welfare Service when there is still no improvement despite interventions. Following investigation any unresolved issues could result in the parent/carer receiving a Penalty Notice or ultimately a prosecution under the Education Act 1996 s.444.

3.2 Parent/Carer Responsibilities

- Encourage and support their child/children to attend on a regular basis.
- Contact the school on the first day of absence before 8.30 am to speak to a member of the reception team. Alternatively, a clear message can be left on the answer machine or an email can be sent to our office team on office@watermill.orchardct.org.uk stating the pupil name and class,

your relationship to the pupil, the reason for absence and an expected date of return. You should contact the school each day of the absence unless agreed otherwise. If you do not supply us with this information we have a duty to contact you so that we may be sure of the child's whereabouts as this is a safeguarding measure. Pupils who are not in regular attendance may receive a visit home from our Safeguarding Team. Messages sent via the school transport staff are not acceptable.

- Ensure that children arrive on time, dressed appropriately and well prepared for the school day.
- Children should arrive in school between 8.30-8.45am. After 9.30am the pupils will be marked as late.
- Positively engage with the school and inform an appropriate member of staff of any issue that may prevent regular attendance.
- Ensure that unless absolutely necessary all medical and dental appointments etc. are made outside of school hours or during school holidays. Evidence of the appointment (letter or appointment card) must be provided for each absence. Where such appointments cannot be avoided, children should attend school prior to the appointment and return to school after the appointment. Failure to do so may result in all or part of the absence being unauthorised.
- Understand that holidays during term-time are at the discretion of the Headteacher and are unlikely to be granted. Time off must be requested by completion of the 'Leave of Absence' form which is available from the school office. If necessary, requests will be followed up by a meeting or telephone conversation.
- Co-operate with school staff and the Education Welfare Service in relation to the attendance of their child/children.
- Provide accurate and up to date contact details and update the school if the details change.

3.3 Pupil Responsibilities

- Attend school regularly and on time, dressed appropriately, and well prepared for the school day.
- Inform the school of any problems or issues that may affect their attendance at school.

4.0 Roles regarding pupils attendance

- The Headteacher will have overall responsibility for attendance.
- Day to day concerns surrounding attendance should be reported by staff to the Attendance Officer.
- Staff are responsible for marking the registers in accordance with the registration system operating in the school.
- The Attendance Officer in school shall keep the Headteacher informed about any referrals made and will also support the pupils and parents/carers in any appropriate way to improve attendance.
- The Education Welfare Service will carry out statutory duties in all respects. This may include the issuing of Penalty Notices as a means of trying to improve individual pupil attendance and/or punctuality, after appropriate consultation with the Headteacher and the Attendance Officer.

5.0 Types of Absence

5.1 Authorised absence

Some absences are allowed by law. An authorised absence is an absence with permission from the Headteacher/School Business Manager/Attendance Officer/other authorised school representative.

These can include:

- Illness, provision of medical evidence may be requested.
- Religious observance.

- Funeral of a close family member.
- Medical appointments that cannot be made before or after school or during the school holidays.

5.2 Unauthorised absence

Unauthorised absence is an absence without permission from the Headteacher/School Business Manager/Attendance Officer/other authorised representative of the school. This includes all unexplained or unjustified absences. For example:

- Not attending school whilst awaiting school transport.
- Looking after a relative or other siblings.
- Taking a day off for a birthday.
- Going to have their hair done.
- Going shopping e.g. for new shoes.
- Parents keeping children off school unnecessarily - waiting for a tradesman e.g. gas man.
- Truancy before or during the school day.
- Absences which have never been properly explained.
- Children who arrive at school too late to get a mark.
- Holidays taken without the permission of the Headteacher.
- Absences which occur on the same day of the week on a regular basis.

This list is not exhaustive. However, we appreciate that these are times when a particular problem causes your child to be absent. Please contact the Attendance Officer should you wish to discuss this further.

5.2 Leave of Absence/Holidays during term-time

Watermill School is committed to the raising of pupil's levels of attainment and it is clear that improving attendance and reducing levels of persistent absence are the most important factors in achieving this goal. As a result of this, we follow the Local Authority's Code of Conduct and guidance. From 1 March 2019 any period of unauthorised leave may result in you as a parent receiving a penalty notice fine. The Headteacher is the only person able to authorise leave in term time, but this will apply only in exceptional circumstances. The Local Authority strongly discourages parents/carers from applying for leave of absence during term time, particularly for family holidays. In line with this, it has now become our Trust policy to refuse all applications for holidays during term time. It is particularly important that students in Year 11 do not take any time off between March and the end of June since it is when exams occur.

Any leave taken which is recorded as unauthorised absence by the school may be referred by the Headteacher into the Local Authority and the following actions may be applied:

- A Penalty Notice issued.
- Prosecution under s444 Education Act 1996, where if convicted you may be fined.
- If convicted then the fine could increase, or imprisonment.

Fines and convictions may alter, please see the most up to date government legislation here, [School attendance and absence: Legal action to enforce school attendance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-attendance-and-absence-legal-action-to-enforce-school-attendance)

Guidelines in 'Keeping Children Safe in Education 2022' places high emphasis on schools being vigilant to 'children missing in education'. A child's continued absence from school, without notification, is a safeguarding concern. The school will initiate safeguarding procedures in this instance.

6.0 School Rewards System

As a school we recognise that pupils can be motivated by rewards. There is a rewards system in place in school which rewards attendance. This may be in the form of an attendance certificate, a meeting with SLT to celebrate good attendance or some other reward deemed appropriate and commensurate with the achievement.