



Waltham St Lawrence Primary School

Attendance Policy

Introduction

Waltham St Lawrence Primary School recognises the importance of good attendance and aims to ensure high levels of attendance and punctuality for all pupils.

We recommend that this document be read in its entirety so that a full understanding of our Attendance Policy can be gained.

We expect all children on roll to attend every day, when the school is in session, as long as they are fit and healthy enough to do so. As a school we do all we can to encourage the children to attend, and to put in place appropriate procedures. We believe that the most important factor in promoting good attendance is the development of positive attitudes towards school. To this end we strive to make our school a happy and rewarding experience for all children. We will also make the best provision we can for those children who, for whatever reason, are prevented from coming to school.

Under the *Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006* the governing body is 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.

Definitions

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.

Only the headteacher can make an absence authorised. Parents do not have this authority. Consequently not all absences supported by parents will be classified as authorised. The following table gives examples of authorised absence:

Reason for Absence	Remarks
Illness, medical and dental appointments	If a child is ill and unable to attend school, parents should let the school know by telephone, email or in person.
Leave of absence i.e. Family holidays during term time	Head teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. Parents must complete a Term Time Absence Request form at least one month before the requested leave.
Family bereavements or serious illness of a family member	Absence under these circumstances would be authorised.
Special occasions	Only exceptional occasions warrant leave of absence, for example attending the wedding of a family member. A day's absence for a birthday or a shopping trip in school hours would not be authorised. A Term Time Absence Request form must be completed.
Public performances	Participation as agreed with the Head Teacher is treated as an authorised absence.

Unauthorised absence

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

Reason for Absence	Remarks
Family holidays during term time	If the school does not agree absence and the pupil goes on holiday the absence is unauthorised.

	Parents must complete a Term Time Absence Request form at least one month before the requested leave.
Special occasions	A day's absence for a birthday or a shopping trip in school hours would not be authorised. A Term Time Absence Request form must be completed.

Exceptional Circumstances

Parents should not take their children on holidays in term time – it can be disruptive to both the child's learning and the school. The Head Teacher will not authorise term time leave unless there are exceptional circumstances. In making a decision the school will consider the circumstances of each application individually.

Any period of leave taken without the agreement of the school, or in excess of that agreed, will be classed as unauthorised and may attract sanctions such as a Penalty Notice.

Parents/carers may not authorise their child's absence. It is entirely the school's decision and is not a parental right. Only the school can do this on the basis of the explanation provided by the parent/carer. Waltham St Lawrence Primary School uses absence coding in line with the Local Authority (LA) guidance. Should parents/carers fail to provide a satisfactory reason for their child's absence the school will record such absence as unauthorised.

The amendments made in 2013 to the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 make it clear that headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances.

Under the regulations it is for the Head Teacher to determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted. Amendments to the 2006 regulations remove references to family holiday and extended leave as well as the statutory threshold of ten school days.

If a child is absent:

When a child is absent unexpectedly, the class teacher will record the absence in the register, and will inform staff in the school office, who will endeavour to contact a parent or carer.

Parents or carers should ensure that if a child is to be absent from school for any unavoidable reason such as sickness they should contact the school on the first morning of absence before 10:00 am by phone, email or in person. This should be followed up with a letter explaining his/her absence on the child's return to school. Parents/carers should keep the school informed if the child remains absent for more than one day.

A note may be sent to the school prior to the day of absence, for example, if a child has a medical appointment.

If there is any doubt about the whereabouts of a child, the class teacher should take immediate action by notifying the school office. The school will then be in contact straight away with the parent or carer, in order to check on the safety of the child.

Long-term absence

When children have an illness that means they will be away from school for over five days, the school will do all it can to send material where appropriate to the child's home, so that if they are able, they can keep up with their school work.

If the absence is likely to continue for an extended period, or be a repetitive absence, the school will contact RBWM educational support services, so that arrangements can be made for the child to be given some tuition whilst absent from school.

Repeated unauthorised absences

The school will contact the parent or carer of any child who has an unauthorised absence. If a child has a repeated number of unauthorised absences, the parents or carers will be asked to visit the school and discuss the problem. If the situation does not improve, the school will then contact the LA support services, who will visit the home and seek to ensure that the parents or carers understand the seriousness of the situation. The Education Welfare Officer (EWO) is always made aware of any concerns regarding repeated absences.

The Governors, supported by the LA, reserve the right to consider taking legal action against any parents or carers who repeatedly fail to accept their responsibility for sending their children to school on a regular basis.

There will be **PENALTY NOTICES** issued by RBWM for 10 or more consecutive sessions of unauthorised absence (a session is a morning or afternoon) i.e. 5 consecutive days or more (holidays in term time) or 10 or more unauthorised absences i.e. 5 unauthorised days in an academic year. A Penalty Notice currently requires payment of £60 per parent/carer per child within 21 days or £120 between 22 and 28 days and will result in prosecution for unauthorised absence if not paid.

Lateness

Registration is at 8:50 am and at 1:00pm. Children who arrive after registration but before 9:30 will be marked as 'late' in the register (L). Children arriving after 9:30 are entered as 'unregistered' (U). Parents must sign in their children into the late arrival book in reception. This is for both administrative and health and safety reasons. Staff will monitor children who are persistently late and will talk to parents to address the situation, and ask for the support of the EWO if required.

Persistent Absenteeism (PA):

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 15% or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we need the fullest support and co-operation from parents to tackle this. We monitor all absence thoroughly.

Did you know?

- 90% attendance – 10% absence – is the equivalent of missing half a day per week every week of the year
- Arriving 10 minutes late every day is the equivalent to almost a whole hour of lessons missed each week for your child, which over the year adds up to nearly 2 weeks of learning.

Attendance targets

The school sets attendance targets each year. These are agreed by the senior staff and Governors at an annual target-setting meeting. The targets are challenging yet realistic, and based on attendance figures achieved in previous years. The school considers carefully the attendance figures for other similar schools when setting its own targets.

Monitoring and review

The school will record and monitor attendance in accordance both with the statutory requirements and with the principle that regular, uninterrupted attendance is vital to a child's educational progress. All absence is monitored regularly by the Headteacher, and school's Education Welfare Officer (EWO).

Class teachers will be responsible for monitoring attendance in their class and for following up absences in the appropriate way. If there is concern about a child's absence, they will contact the School Office immediately. If there is a longer-term general worry about the attendance of a particular child, this will be reported to the Headteacher and EWO. Contact with parents will be made if there is a case of persistent absence or lateness. Action will be taken for persistent lateness and/or absence.

Unauthorised absence figures will be brought to the attention of the EWO and this allows them to act with authority. In extreme cases this will mean penalty notices and prosecutions.

The Headteacher will regularly review attendance data and report to the Full Governing Body 3 times a year in the Headteacher's Report.

The school keeps accurate attendance records on file for a minimum period of three years.

This policy will be reviewed every two years or earlier if considered necessary.

Date of Policy:	November 2011
Date of Review:	November 2013
Date of Update:	April 2014 (Information about the introduction of Penalty Notices)
Date of Review:	March 2016