



# Whitehall Nursery and Infant School

## Attendance and Punctuality Policy

### **Introduction**

Children's learning is at the heart of everything we do at Whitehall Nursery and Infant School but children cannot learn if they are absent!

We expect all children, on roll, to attend school every day that we are open, and as long as they are fit and healthy to do so.

Our school is a welcoming learning environment and our teaching staff are dedicated to help the children achieve the best they can.

Our school Attendance and Punctuality Policy is therefore designed to give clear information in respect of our Attendance Management processes to parents, children, school staff, governors and the wider community.

This policy sets out our ambition for our children and recognises that there is a strong correlation between absence and underachievement. It also recognises that good punctuality is essential for a child to start the school day prepared for learning.

In line with government guidance, we aim for all our children to have an attendance of at least 95%, and we have an effective management process in place to deal with attendance that falls below this threshold.

### **The Aims of this Policy**

- To Improve Overall Attendance
- To make attendance and punctuality a priority for pupils, parents, staff and Governors
- To define agreed roles and responsibilities in carrying out specific tasks
- To provide support, advice and guidance to families
- To develop an effective Attendance Management System
- To promote multi-agency partnerships to address the needs of children with complexities related to irregular attendance
- To bring policies and procedures in line with each other and to reflect the diverse needs of the wider community

### **Attendance and Punctuality Team**

The promotion of excellent attendance and punctuality is the responsibility of EVERYONE - parents/carers and school. Here at Whitehall Nursery and Infants we are very lucky to have a dedicated team to support and ensure attendance and punctuality is a high priority in school. The team consists of:

- Mr Kilkenny (Head Teacher)
- Mrs Manhota (Senior Office Administrator and School Attendance Officer)
- Mrs Ware (Parent Support Advisor)

### **Arrival and Registration**

The register is taken twice a day (morning and afternoon attendance marks). To be marked as attending for the day a child must have a morning and afternoon attendance mark.

For KS1, the school gates open at 8.20am and close at 8.30am children are expected to be in school for 8.30am, ready for registration and the start of the school day.

Nursery and Reception gates open at 8.30am and close at 8.40am.

Children arriving after the gates are closed will be classed as late and will have to sign into school on the screen by the office. This will be the responsibility of the parent/carer dropping them off. This is essential as it ensures we have up to date information on the children in school in case of an emergency or fire drill.

The registers will close at 9.00am and any children arriving after this time are marked with a U code and this is classed as unauthorised, unless it is due to a medical appointment.

Afternoon registration for Nursery is 12.30pm, Reception is 12.30pm, Year 1 is 1.00pm and Year 2 is 1.15pm. Teacher's take responsibility for this registration.

### **Illness and Medical Appointments**

Every effort should be made to arrange medical appointments outside of school hours, but we can appreciate that this can sometimes be difficult. Children should, if possible, be at school before their appointment or return to school directly after. Please ensure children are signed in and out if they are leaving or returning to school via the school screen system.

If your child will be absent, the school office should be informed by 9.00am, and the reason for absence. This can be done by ringing in and speaking to a member of the office team, leaving a message on our dedicated absence line or completing an absence form on our website. You are also able to email our school post-box.

### **Authorised and Unauthorised Absence**

If your child is not attending school for any reason, this is classed as an absence and will be marked down on the register. This will be written as either authorised or unauthorised.

**Authorised absences** – This is when a child is away from school for a legitimate reason and the school have been notified. Absences can only be authorised by the school and if they meet the following criteria:

- The child is too unwell and parents have given details of symptoms (I code) – exception to this is if a child's attendance has dropped below 90% and then we require medical evidence in order to authorise any continued absence due to illness.
- The child has a medical appointment and the school have seen evidence of this (M code)
- The child is observing a religious festival (we only authorise 1 day for this) ( R code)

- There are specific special circumstances where a child cannot attend school and has been agreed by the Head Teacher. (C code)

**Unauthorised absence** – All other absences will be marked down as unauthorised (O code)

### **Persistent and Severe Absence**

Persistent absence is where a pupil misses 10% or more of school (equivalent to 1 or more days a fortnight across the school year).

Severe absence is where a pupil is absent from school more than they are present (those missing 50% or more of school).

Schools and local authorities are expected to work together with parents to put additional targeted support in place to remove any barriers to attendance and re-engage these pupils. These pupils may find it more difficult to be in school or face bigger barriers to attend regularly and therefore are likely to need more intensive support.

We ensure that patterns of both persistent and severe absences are a focus and identify pupils that are heading towards these criteria, so that we can work with parents to decrease the risk of reaching this stage of absence.

### **Leave of Absence during Term-time**

There is no automatic right for any absence. A child's education comes first and in Law it is the Head Teacher's decision whether an absence is authorised or not. As a school we will not authorise any holiday requests during term time.

If you do wish to take your child out of school during term time, this must be requested in writing or you can fill out a Holiday Request form, available from the school office.

The Head Teacher will then reply to you in writing, informing you of his decision.

If the leave is granted, for exceptional circumstances only, the register will be marked with a C code, demonstrating an authorised absence. If this request is denied and children are still absent, this will be marked with a G code, demonstrating an authorised absence.

If you choose to take your child on an unauthorised holiday, the school will have to refer to the Education Attendance Service and they may issue you with a penalty notice. Each parent must pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days.

### **Pupils with Medical Needs and Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)**

Some pupils face greater barriers to attendance than peers. These can include pupils who suffer from long term medical conditions or have special educational needs and disabilities. Their right to an education is the same as any other pupil and therefore the attendance ambition for these pupils should be the same as they are for any other pupil. That said, in working with parents to improve attendance, we are always mindful of the barriers that our children face and put additional support in place where necessary to help them across their full-time education. Our SendCo, Mrs Mason, is here to support with sensitive conversations with the families and wider professional capacities to ensure the most appropriate reasonable adjustments are put into place.

## Roles and Responsibilities

As a school we have adopted guidance from the DFE's 'Working Together to Improve Attendance' (2022) and this is very clear on the message that Attendance is EVERYONE's responsibility. We believe that by all partners working together, we can ensure all children are accessing the education and learning that is available to them.

As a parent, you have the responsibility to:

- Fulfil your legal responsibility in ensuring your child attends school regularly.
- Ensure that your child arrives to school on time.
- Contact the school if your child will be absent and each morning for the duration of absence.
- Provide medical evidence for any illnesses if your child's attendance has fallen below 90% (persistence absence category)
- Request in writing for any leave of absence and NOT expect that holidays in term time will be authorised.
- To work in partnership and communicate with the school to address and concerns or issues that may prevent your child from regular attendance

As a school, we have the responsibility to:

- Fulfil our legal responsibility in the completion of pupil registers, ensuring the right coding is completed on registers and providing data to the appropriate body and Local Authority.
- Monitor attendance within the school, identify issues and implement procedures to support children in accessing their right to a high quality education.
- Communicate with parents regularly, informing them of their child's attendance levels and the attendance management procedures.
- Inform the Local Authority of all unauthorised holidays taken and ensure parents are notified if they are at risk of receiving a penalty notice.

## School Attendance Management Process

### **First day absence**

**Parents are expected to contact the school on the first day of absence to provide reasons and a likely return date.** However, if contact is not made with the school, Mrs Manhota will call the family and check on reasons for absence. The information will then be recorded on our database. Where no contact is made the absence will be recorded as unauthorised. Mrs Manhota will continue to contact the family throughout the duration of the absence.

### **5+ day Absences**

If a child has been absent for 3 days and no contact has been made with the family, Mrs Manhota and Mrs Ware will make a visit to the home. While the child is absent the school will continue attempting to make contact with the family. **If after 10 school days has elapsed and no contact has been made, school are obligated to report your child to Child Missing in Education Team (CME) who will then investigate further.**

## **Communication with parents**

Letters will be sent to parents every half term with their child's current attendance levels, breakdown of absence and a copy of the registers for parent/carers to view.

The registers will be reviewed fortnightly and the procedure for Attendance Management is as follows:

- Attendance below 92% - letter is sent to parents.
- Attendance below 90% - if attendance drops further from the initial letter, we then invite parents in for a meeting with Mrs Manhota. We will ask for medical evidence for any further absence due to illness.
- Attendance below 85% - if attendance drops further from the parent meeting, we then invite for a parent meeting to discuss implementing a parent contract.
- If after the above have all been implemented and no improvements have been made and further absence is still recorded, authorised or unauthorised, we will then invite in for a meeting with the Head Teacher. This can result in a referral to the Education Attendance Service who may take legal action.

Each child's circumstances are different and we will look at each case independently. We ask that you communicate with school to ensure all information is known so that every absence is recorded correctly.

**We will also send out letters to parents regarding late arrivals and the importance of punctuality.**

## **Attendance for Nursery Children**

Even though there is no legal responsibility for children who attend our Nursery to be in school, we expect them to attend regularly. At Whitehall Infants we consider regular attendance for children in Nursery to be at least 92% (Target 95%). This is because poor attendance disrupts the learning of other children. Where attendance falls below 92% parents will be notified by letter. If, after this letter, the child's attendance does not improve, a meeting will be arranged with Mrs Manhota and the class teacher. The school will then reserve the right to withdraw the child's place if attendance continues to drop. However, this action will only be done in cases where the school can demonstrate that parents have not engaged with the school to improve their child's attendance.

## **Rewards for Excellent Attendance**

- In KS1, each week, the class with the highest overall attendance is awarded in an assembly with the Attendance Cup and a certificate that is on display in their classroom.
- If the class has the highest attendance, 2 weeks consecutively, they will be rewarded by having a non-uniform day in school.
- Children in EYFS and KS1 who have 100%, in any one term, will receive a certificate and a Teddy Bear (this cuddly toy changes every half-term so that children are encouraged to collect all 6 animals), which is awarded in a special parent assembly.
- Children in EYFS and KS1 who have 100% attendance for the whole school year will receive a family cinema ticket to celebrate their achievement.

## **Monitoring and Reviewing**

The school based 'Attendance Team' communicate regularly regarding monitoring attendance and plan interventions. They pay particular attention to attendance of pupils that historically have had poor attendance or that face entrenched barriers to attendance. This will also include monitoring trends of pupils who have a social worker, are from a background or ethnicity where attendance has been historically low, have a long term medical condition, special educational needs or disability or are eligible for free school meals.

The governing body also have a responsibility to monitor overall attendance and the implementation of this policy and ensuring that it is carried out. Therefore they will examine closely the information that is provided to them, in the form of reports and attendance data, on a termly basis, as part of their Full Governing Body meeting.

This policy will be reviewed annually, or earlier, if considered necessary.

**Policy written September 2023**