



Whitehall
Park School
LEARN ENJOY SUCCEED

Attendance Policy for Whitehall Park School

Signed:	
Chair of LGB:	Paul Domjan
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- 1.0 Bellevue Place Education Trust – Our Commitment**
Learn. Enjoy. Succeed.

Three words that mean the world to us.

Three words that have been with us from the day we started Whitehall Park School.

Three words that govern all that we do.

As a parent you can expect excellence, both in how we teach and nurture your child. We foster a positive attitude to life, encouraging a 'be interested and be interesting' attitude by providing a rich learning environment full of arts, drama, sport, music and academic rigour.

Whitehall Park children are happy, confident, successful 'all rounders' who expect to win and achieve in an inclusive setting where children, parents and school staff work together to provide the best. Our commitment to you and your child is that we will teach them to learn, enjoy and succeed both in their school career and beyond.

2.0 Introduction

The Trust, staff and Governors at Whitehall Park, in partnership with parents and pupils are committed to building a school which will serve the community and of which the community is proud.

At Whitehall Park we firmly believe that all pupils benefit from regular school attendance. To this end, we will do all we can to encourage parents and carers to ensure that the pupils in our care achieve maximum possible attendance and that any problems that prevent full attendance are identified and promptly resolved.

Whitehall Park School uses Arbor to log pupil attendance, monitoring where attendance dips below an acceptable level. Parents can expect to be questioned and challenged by our attendance officer, if this occurs. We will set an annual attendance target for our school, which will usually be above national average.

Research demonstrates that regular attendance is important for several reasons:

- It leads to better academic progress
- statistics show a direct link between under-achievement and absence below 95%
- It leads to greater confidence and security for our children, which leads to better social progress
- It gives greater continuity to the learning process
- It makes the transfer to secondary school easier
- Developing good habits of attendance and punctuality are key life skills.
- Pupils who miss school risk failing to achieve what they are capable of.
- Figures have shown that 90% of persistent, poor or non-attenders fail to achieve five or more good grades at GCSE and approximately one third achieve no GCSEs at all.

It is vital for parents and carers to remember that poor attendance means lost learning time:-

- **90%** attendance = **½ day missed** every week!
- Over one school year this is 4 weeks of learning lost!
- Over the 5 years at your secondary school you will have missed half a year!
- **What impact might this have on your child's future ...?**
- **17 missed schools days** means that in secondary school a child is likely to **drop a whole GCSE grade**.

The greater the attendance, the greater the potential achievement.

3.0 Legal framework

The Education Act 1996 states that:

The parent/carer of every child of compulsory school age shall cause them to receive efficient full-time education suitable –

- to their age, ability and aptitude, and
- to any special educational needs they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

A person begins to be of compulsory school age-

- when they attain the age of five, if they attain that age on a prescribed day, and
- otherwise at the beginning of the prescribed day next following their attaining that age.
- A person ceases to be of compulsory school age at the end of the day which is the school leaving date for any calendar year-
- if they attain the age of 16 after that day but before the beginning of the school year next following,
- If they attain the age on that day, or
- (Unless paragraph (a) applies) if that day is the school leaving date next following their attaining that age.

It is a legal obligation of all parents/carers to ensure their child attends school regularly. By law all children of compulsory school age (5–17) must get a proper full time education.

- Parents are responsible for ensuring children attend school regularly in a condition to learn.
- Children should be at school by 9.00am each morning.
- Parents should contact the school as soon as possible if a child is going to be absent or late for any reason e.g. doctor, dentist and provide an appointment card. The school has a dedicated phone line for reporting absence.
- Parents should send a written note into school with the child on their return, giving reasons for the absence. Parents may be required to provide medical evidence to substantiate that their child's illness required them to be absent from school, i.e. some form of medical verification.

Whitehall Park School is dedicated to complying with attendance laws and has set this attendance policy out accordingly.

4.0 Expectations

We expect that all pupils will:	We expect that all parents/ carers who have day to day responsibility for children will:	We expect that school staff will:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attend school regularly • Attend school punctually • Attend school appropriately prepared • Speak to their class teacher or another member of staff if they are experiencing difficulties at school or at home which may impact on their attendance and punctuality. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sign and agree to our home school agreement • Engage with their children’s education - support their learning and take an interest in what they have been doing at school; • Promote the value of good education and the importance of regular school attendance at home; • Encourage and support their children’s aspirations; • Follow the set school procedure for reporting the absence of their child from school, and include an expected date of return; • Do everything they can to prevent unnecessary school absences, such as by making medical and dental appointments outside of school hours; • Enforce a regular routine at home in terms of homework, bedtime, etc. So that the child is used to consistency and the school day becomes part of that routine. It is vital that the child receives the same message at home as they do at the academy about the importance of attendance and punctuality; • Encourage regular school attendance, aspiring to meet the school target of 96.5% and be aware of their legal responsibilities • Ensure that the child (ren) in their care arrives at school punctually, prepared for the school day • Ensure that they contact the school whenever their child is unable to attend school • Contact the school on the first day of absence and send a note on their return to school • Contact the school promptly whenever any problem occurs that may keep their child away from school • Do not take their children out of school during term time • Provide a note of explanation for all absences from school • Ensure that they follow the correct school procedure if they arrive late. This also vital for health and safety in the event of a school evacuation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep regular and accurate records of attendance for all pupils, at least twice daily • Monitor every pupil’s attendance • Contact parents/ carers if a pupil fails to attend school and where no message has been received • Follow up all unexplained absences to obtain notes authorising the absence • Encourage good attendance • Provide a safe learning environment • Provide a sympathetic response to any pupil’s concerns • Make initial enquiries to parents/carers of pupils who are not attending regularly, express their concern and clarify the school’s and the Trust’s expectations with regard to regular school attendance • Refer irregular or unjustified patterns of attendance to the Education Welfare Service • Meet, where possible, the requirements of the UN convention – The Rights of the Child, by ensuring that they are consulted in all decisions that relate to them • Be active in their approach to promoting good attendance and punctuality to pupils and their parents/carers, which includes forming positive relationships with families; • Ensure that they are fully aware and up to date with the attendance policy and government legislation and that they will speak to another member of staff or seek support if they are unsure how to deal with an attendance and punctuality issue;

5.0 Holidays

The school holiday schedule will be published at least one term in advance (both as an email and on the school's website). In determining the holiday pattern, the Headteacher will take account of the holiday patterns of other local schools to enable parents to most effectively provide childcare arrangements.

Our school takes a clear position that it expects parents/carers to book all holidays during official school holidays. We are always concerned when pupils miss school time as a result of holidays. If for a specific reason, an absence during term time is unavoidable, a holiday request form must be completed and approved prior to the holiday being booked. These can be obtained from the relevant school office and school website. Headteachers will only be allowed to grant leave of absence if exceptional circumstances exist.

Reasons that might constitute 'exceptional circumstances' could include but are not limited to:

- Service personnel returning from a tour of duty abroad where it is evidenced the individual will not be in receipt of any leave in the near future that coincides with school holidays
- Visiting a parent/carer who is imprisoned
- Where an absence is recommended by a health professional as part of a parent or child's rehabilitation from a medical or emotional issue

Suitable supporting evidence would be required in each case.

The Headteacher will decide whether or not to authorise a requested absence. The Headteacher, on behalf of the Governing Body, can grant leave at their discretion for up to 10 days in any school year. Any time off beyond ten school days will be coded as 'unauthorised'. No parent/carer can demand leave of absence for their pupil as a right. No person other than the Headteacher can authorise term-time absence. If pupils miss extended periods of time, it is difficult for them to catch up. Proper understanding of schoolwork only takes place when the pupil is regularly in the classroom.

The Headteacher will decide whether or not to authorise the absence having considered:

- The pupil's attendance record
- Whether the holiday exceeds the maximum of 5 school days in any one year (unless it is felt that the experience would be of beneficial educational value or it is an exceptional circumstance)
- The dates of the holiday, ensuring that it would not prevent the pupil from taking important examinations/assessments

Factors included in determining whether attendance will be approved:

- No absence will be approved for pupils between January and external examination dates (until completed) unless there are exceptional circumstances.
- If a pupil's attendance is 85% or below, absence will not normally be authorised unless it is for medical reasons.
- If a pupil's attendance is 90%, absence will only be authorised in exceptional circumstances.
- If a pupil's attendance is below 95%, an absence may be authorised if there are specific reasons that prevent the absence being during school holidays or out of school hours.
- If a pupil's attendance is over 95%, an absence will be authorised unless there is a specific reason not to.

- If there is heavy snow, an absence will only be authorised if the family lives more than a mile from school and/or there are specific reasons why an adult could not walk with the pupil to school.

Families will be informed in writing in due course of the outcome of their request; you may be required to meet with the Headteacher. If permission is not granted, but the child is still absent, the absence is classed as unauthorised and parents/carers may be issued with a penalty notice by the Access to Engagement Team at London Borough of Islington. Retrospective applications will not be considered and this time will be processed as unauthorised absence. Government guidance allows Whitehall Park School to remove a child's name from the school roll if following unauthorised term time absence of 10 school days (the days do not necessarily need to be consecutive) , unless the child is sick or any unavoidable cause. In these circumstances supporting evidence is again required.

Penalty Notices

The law gives powers to the Local Authority and other designated bodies to issue Penalty Notices where a parent/ carer is considered able but unwilling to ensure their child's school attendance. Reducing absences from school is a key priority nationally and locally because missing school damages a pupil's attainment levels, disrupts school routines and the learning of others.

Parents/carers commit an offence if a child fails to attend school regularly and those absences are classed as unauthorised. Where parents are unwilling to fulfil their legal responsibility a Penalty Notice will be issued, via London Borough of Islington. Penalty notices are issued per parent per child at £120. However, if paid within 21 days the cost is £60.

In every case a pupil must have had a minimum of 5 school days lost to unauthorised absence during the current term or 10 school days lost to unauthorised absence in 2 consecutive terms before a Penalty Notice is issued. In cases of unauthorised absence, parents/carers will receive a written warning of the possibility of a Penalty Notice being issued. This will state the extent of the child's absences and give parents/carers 15 days to bring about an improvement. In that time, the child should have no unauthorised absences from school. In cases of unauthorised holidays, warnings will be issued where sufficient notice of the intended absence has been given. This means that in some cases, Penalty Notices may be issued without a warning.

6.0 Unauthorised and Authorised Absences

- The Law allows some absences in exceptional circumstances - for example, when a child is ill or there is a crisis such as bereavement in the family.
- Occasionally, there are other reasons or particular problems at home. We encourage parents/carers to let us know, so that we can deal with these sympathetically.
- Appointments during school time should be kept to an absolute minimum. It is unsettling for pupils to miss part of the school day. If parents/carers need to take their child out of school during the day, they must be collected from school. They cannot be allowed go to the bus stop or surgery unaccompanied.
- Reasons such as a child's birthday, sleeping in late, having a haircut, buying a new pair of shoes, holidays abroad or shopping are not permitted.

Unauthorised absence: is when the school has not received a reason for absence or has not approved a child's leave of absence from school after a parent's request. This includes: parents giving their children permission to be off school unnecessarily, such as for shopping, birthdays, to look after siblings, truancy before or during the school day, term time holidays and absences which have not

been explained. All unauthorised absence is logged and kept on a child's school record. It is the parents' responsibility to contact the school on the first day their child is absent. This is a safeguarding matter so that all parties know that your child is safe.

7.0 Other Absences

7.1 Absence through child participation in public performances, including theatre, film or television work and modelling

- Parents/carers of a child performer can seek leave of absence from school for their child to take part in a performance.
- Parents/carers must contact the Head Teacher to discuss the nature and frequency of the work, whether the child has a valid performance licence and whether education will be provided by the employer during any future leave of absence. It is, however, down to the Head Teacher's discretion as to whether to authorise this and they should discuss with the parent/carer the nature and frequency of the absence and how learning will continue if absence occurs.
- Where a child's attendance has fallen to below 90%, leave of absence is unlikely to be approved unless there are arrangements for the provision of an education tutor.
- Any absence recorded as part of a child's participation in a public performance is recorded as C, an authorised absence.

7.2 Absence through competing at regional, county or national level for sport

- Parents/carers of outstanding sportsmen and women can seek leave of absence from school for their child to take part in regional, county, national and international events and competitions.
- The Head Teacher's can apply their discretion as to whether to authorise this depending on the nature of the competition and the frequency of the absence. It is obviously vital to understand how learning will continue if absence occurs.
- Permission for a child to leave early or arrive late to attend coaching and training sessions is also at the discretion of the Head Teacher, but this is not recommended to be approved if it is a regular event, unless the sports club or association is providing an education tutor as part of their coaching.

7.3 Gypsy, Roma, Traveller and Showman families

- Absence of a child from a Traveller family that has left the area may be authorised if the absence is for work purposes only and it is believed that the family intends to return.
- To ensure the continuity of learning for Traveller children, dual registration is allowed. This results in the school retaining the Traveller child on the school roll while they are travelling and records the absence as authorised through the T code.
- Distance learning packs for Traveller children are not an alternative to attendance at school.

7.4 Illness

Most cases of absence due to illness are short term, but parents/carers should alert the school office on the first day of absence. For prolonged absences due to illness, parents/carers may be asked to provide the school with medical evidence such as an appointment card, prescription or a letter from the child's doctor/specialist.

7.5 Medical or dental appointments

Parents/carers should make every effort to ensure that these appointments are made outside of school hours. Where it cannot be avoided, children should attend school for as much of that day as possible.

7.6 Authorised absences

There may be some exceptional circumstances where the school will authorise absence such as:

- Illness - High temperature/vomiting and diarrhoea, emergency medical/dental appointments which unavoidably falls in school time.
- Religious observances.
- Family bereavement.
- Visits to prospective new schools, external exams or educational assessments.
- Exclusion from school.

7.6 Exclusion

Exclusion is treated as an authorised absence. The Academy will arrange for work to be sent home in cases where children have been excluded

7.6 Religious observance

WPS recognises that there are times when children of different faiths observe religious festivals that fall within term time, and will allow authorised absences for these times in line with the LA Faith calendar which has been agreed with key faith leaders. Parents/ carers will be aware that written request should be given to WPS in advance.

8.0 Encouraging Attendance

At Whitehall Park School, we encourage attendance in the following ways:

- By providing a welcoming and safe environment
- Involving pupils in attendance through an attendance reward system
- By responding promptly to a pupil's or parent's concerns about the school or other pupils
- By marking registers accurately and punctually during morning and afternoon registration. If a pupil arrives at school after the close of register without a written explanation, the lateness will be recorded as an unauthorised absence and the pupil's name recorded in the late book in case of a fire drill
- By publishing and displaying attendance statistics and school attendance targets
- By celebrating good and improved attendance
- By monitoring pupils' attendance and informing parents/carers in writing of irregular attendance; arranging meetings with them if necessary and referring the family to the EWS if the irregular attendance continues.
- By reporting to the Board on a regular basis school attendance statistics.

9.0 Categories of absence and procedure for reporting absences

- It is the responsibility of the Headteacher to authorise any child's absence from school. Therefore, absences will be treated as unauthorised unless a satisfactory explanation is given to the school. **Parents/carers cannot authorise absences and should be aware that either calling the school or providing a note for an absence does not automatically mean it will be authorised.** Staff will make it clear on the school register when recording attendance whether a child's absence is authorised or unauthorised.

- When a child is to be absent from school without prior permission, parents/carers should inform the school office by telephone on the first day of absence and let them know when what date they expect the child to return.

10.0 Whitehall Park School Attendance Procedures

Rewards for Good Attendance

As a school, we are aiming for all our children to attend school at least 96.5% of the time. To encourage good attendance we will be presenting certificates to those children who have achieved 100% attendance since starting at Whitehall Park School for the whole of each term. Badges will be given out each term to those children who have 100% attendance and at the end of the academic year those children who have 100% attendance & punctuality.

Punctuality matters too! missed minutes = missed learning = missed opportunities!

When pupils arrive late, they miss out on essential instructions given at the beginning of the lesson. This can significantly reduce achievement, regardless of academic ability. Arriving late can also be unsettling for a child and children who come into class later than their peers can often be left feeling embarrassed or upset. Furthermore, when a child arrives late, it disrupts the rest of the class which can have an impact on the other children's learning and progress.

Being frequently late for school adds up to lost learning:

- Arriving 5 minutes late every day adds up to over 3 days lost each year.
- Arriving 15 minutes late every day is the same as being absent for 2 weeks a year.
- Arriving 30 minutes late every day is the same as being absent for 19 days a year.
19 days lost a year through being late means 90% attendance.

To help your child with their attendance and punctuality:

- Make sure they arrive at school by 9am, every morning.
- Encourage your child to take part in school activities.
- Where possible please make appointments after school, at weekends or during school holidays. Remember, a morning appointment does not mean a whole day off from school. Bring your child back to school after the appointment.
- Parents should contact the school as soon as possible if a child is going to be absent or late for any reason e.g. doctor/dentist appointments and provide an appointment card, illness, etc. We have a dedicated phone line for reporting absence.
- Parents should send a written note into school with the child on their return, giving reasons for the absence. Parents may be required to provide medical evidence to substantiate that their child's illness required them to be absent from school, i.e. some form of medical verification.
- Take family holidays during school holidays only.
- Encourage your child to tell you about their day at school and to talk about any problems they may have.
- We recognise that sometimes families may need extra support with attendance and punctuality, therefore good communication is essential between us.

To promote good punctuality each Friday during assembly we will present our WPS Punctuality Bear to the class with the best punctuality percentage for that week. If more than one class has the same punctuality percentage the Bear will spend time in each class.

In keeping with our Attendance policy we monitor children's attendance and punctuality regularly and will inform you in writing of any irregular attendance and punctuality; arranging meetings with you if necessary and referring the family to the Education Welfare Service if the irregular attendance continues. A copy of our Attendance policy can be found in the office or on our website for your convenience.

11.0 Attendance Monitoring

The Attendance Leader is responsible for undertaking daily routine attendance monitoring. This involves dealing with late pupils, contacting parents about on-going attendance and punctuality issues and ensuring that agreed systems are followed.

Each half term, the Headteacher will discuss the school's overall attendance and will identify specific pupils who cause concern in relation to either attendance or punctuality.

12.0 Persistent Absenteeism (PA)

If your child misses 10% or more schooling across the school year, for whatever reason, they are defined as 'persistent absentees' under new government policy. Absence for whatever reason disadvantages a child by creating gaps in his or her learning, and also impinges on other children's learning by using additional staff time to help the child catch up on learning they have missed.

Research shows these gaps affect attainment when attendance falls below 95%. As such, we monitor all absence thoroughly and all attendance data is shared with the local authority and the Department for Education. If your child's attendance level is falling towards 90% we will invite parents/carers to a meeting with the School Attendance Leader and/or Headteacher and/or senior member of staff to discuss the reasons for poor attendance and strategies to help improve overall attendance. If persistent absence continues, parents and carers will be referred to the Access and Engagement team at London Borough of Islington and risk being issued with a fine.

13.0 Late arrival

Registration begins at 8.55am and ends at 9.00am. Pupils who arrive after this time but within the registration period will be marked as late. Pupils who arrive after this time must sign in at reception and give a reason for lateness. Any unjustifiable reason for absence will be marked as unauthorised.

It is vital that any late pupils are signed in at reception to ensure that all health and safety regulations are followed and that all pupils on site are accounted for. If assembly has already started, a parent/carer will have to wait with the child until it is finished as all staff members attend assembly and therefore your child cannot be supervised.

Ongoing and repeated lateness is considered unauthorised absence and can be subject to legal action. Parents or carers of pupils who have patterns of lateness will be contacted to discuss the importance of good time keeping and how this might be achieved. If lateness persists, parents or

carers will be invited to attend the school to discuss the problem with a senior member of staff to offer support. If support is not appropriate or is declined and a child has 10 or more sessions of unauthorised absence due to lateness recorded in any 10 week period, Whitehall Park School will refer the family to the Access and Engagement Team at London Borough of Islington who will be required to issue parents with a Penalty Notice.

14.0 Legal action to enforce school attendance

The school expects attendance of at least 96.5%. Where a pupil's attendance falls below this level, parents/carers will be informed by letter. If there is further absence parents/carers will be invited to attend a meeting at school and a plan to improve attendance will be agreed.

If a child's attendance drops below 90% they are considered to be **persistently absent**. Persistent absentees are closely monitored by the school, local authority and Government. If parents have received a letter and had a school meeting but attendance does not improve, they may be issued with a penalty notice – minimum £60 – by the Access and Engagement Service in Islington. The school may also consider it necessary to make a referral for all persistent absentees for external support, e.g. through Families First, Social Services, Education Welfare, etc.

Where students have been away for either short or long term, the school will support that child when they re-enter school to help them catch up on learning and any work that they have missed.

The local authority may take the following legal powers to enforce school attendance.

This includes:

- Parenting Order – this requires the parent/carer to attend parenting classes. The court will mandate what the parent/carer needs to undertake to improve the child's school attendance.
- Education Supervision Order - If the local authority thinks the parent/carer need support getting their child to go to school but the parent is not co-operating, they can apply to a court for an Education Supervision Order. A supervisor will be appointed to assist the parent/carer in getting their child to school. The local authority can do this instead of prosecuting the parent/carer, or as well.
- School Attendance Order – A parent/carer can be issued with a School Attendance Order if the local council thinks the child isn't getting an education. The parent/carer has 15 days to provide evidence that they have registered their child with a school or that they are giving them [home education](#). The order will require the parent/carer to send their child to a specific school and if they don't, they are likely to be prosecuted or given a fine.
- Fine – Parents/carers are fined by the local authority, which rises if the fine is not paid within 21 days. If parents/carers don't pay the fine after 28 days they can be prosecuted for their child's absence from school.
- Prosecution – a parent/carer could get a fine of up to £2,500, a community order or a jail sentence up to 3 months. The court will also give the parent/carer a Parenting Order.

15.0 Thresholds for Intervention

Threshold	Intervention	By whom
100-96%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Weekly monitoring takes place. Assembly is used to share attendance figures with pupils and award the class with the highest attendance figure the attendance trophy. Attendance figures are posted onto the school's website and noticeboard for parents to see. Letters sent out to any parents who cannot be contacted re: pupil absence from school. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attendance Leader Class teacher liaises with parents informally and encourages/monitors children's attendance
96-93%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If attendance dips below 96% a letter informing parents of this is sent out, requesting an initial meeting with the Attendance Leader/Phase Leader/EWO. Four week period of monitoring takes place. Follow up with the family. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attendance Leader Education Welfare Officer Phase Leader encourages/monitors children's attendance
93-90%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If attendance dips below 94% a letter informing parents of this is sent out, requesting an initial meeting with our Attendance Leader and/or a member of the Senior Leadership team Four week period of monitoring takes place. Follow up with the family. If there 5 or more days of unauthorised absences you may be issued with a fine. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attendance Leader Education Welfare Officer Deputy Headteacher
90% and below	<p>PA threshold:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meeting with the Attendance Leader and a member of the Senior Leadership team to discuss and agree on a plan of action. Four week period of monitoring takes place. Follow up with the family. Where there is no improvement, then a referral to Islington's Access and Engagement Service for statutory action should be considered. If there are 5 or more days of unauthorised absence you may be issued with a fine. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attendance Leader Education Welfare Officer Headteacher Access and Engagement Service

15.0 Monitoring and Evaluation

The Headteacher will review this policy statement annually and update it in consultation with key staff, in line with current best practice as s/he considers necessary.

16.0 Approval by Whitehall Park School Governors