



Whitehall
Park School
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Attendance Guidance for Whitehall Park School

Introduction

Regular and punctual school attendance is important. Pupils need to attend school regularly if they are to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them by law. At Whitehall Park School, we fully recognise our responsibility to ensure pupils are in school and on time, therefore having access to learning for the maximum number of days and hours.

Our policy applies to all children registered at our school and this policy is made available to all parents/carers via our school website.

This policy has been written to adhere to the relevant Children's Acts, Education Acts, Regulations and Guidance from the Department for Education in addition to guidance from the Local Authority.

Although parents/carers have the legal responsibility for ensuring their child's good attendance, the school works together with other professionals and agencies to ensure that all pupils are encouraged and supported to develop good attendance habits. Procedures in this policy are followed to ensure this happens. The Department for Education recommends a minimum average attendance of 96%.

Children who are persistently late or absent fall behind with their learning. Children who are absent from school frequently develop large gaps in their learning which will impact on their progress and their ability to meet age related learning expectations. A child whose attendance drops to 90% each year will, over their time at primary school, have missed two whole terms of learning.

This is a successful school and your child plays their part in making it so. We aim for an environment which enables and encourages all members of the community to reach out for excellence. For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and your child should be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

It is very important therefore that you make sure that your child attends regularly and this Guidance sets out how we will achieve this together.

Overall Aims

This attendance guidance ensures that all staff and parents in our school are fully aware of, and clear about the actions necessary to promote good attendance.

Through this guidance we aim to:

- Improve pupils' achievement by ensuring high levels of attendance and punctuality.
- Achieve a minimum of 96% attendance for all children, apart from those with chronic health issues.

- Create an ethos in which good attendance and punctuality are recognised as the norm and seen to be valued by the school.
- Raise awareness of parents/carers and pupils of the importance of uninterrupted attendance and punctuality at every stage of a child's education.
- Ensure that our guidance applies to Reception aged children in order to promote good habits at an early age.
- Work in partnership with pupils, parents/carers and whole school staff so that all pupils realise their potential, unhindered by unnecessary absence.
- Promote a positive and welcoming atmosphere in which pupils feel safe, secure, and valued, and encourage in pupils a sense of their own responsibility.
- Establish a pattern of monitoring attendance and ensure consistency in recognising achievement and dealing with difficulties.
- Recognise the key role of all staff, but especially class teachers, in promoting good attendance.

We maintain and promote good attendance and punctuality through:

- Raising awareness of attendance and punctuality issues among all staff, parents/carers and pupils.
- Ensuring that parents have an understanding of the responsibility placed on them for making sure their child attends regularly and punctually.
- Equipping children with the life skills needed to take responsibility for good school attendance and punctuality appropriate to the child's age and development.
- Maintaining effective means of communication with parents/carers, pupils and staff on school attendance matters.
- Developing and implementing procedures for identifying, reporting and reviewing cases of poor attendance and persistent lateness.
- Supporting pupils who have been experiencing any difficulties at home or at school which are preventing good attendance.
- Developing and implementing procedures to follow up non-attendance at school.

Why regular attendance is so important

Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any pupil's absence disrupts teaching routines so may affect the learning of others in the same class.

Ensuring children's regular attendance at school is parents/carers legal responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

What we expect

The Department of Education expects children to come to school every day and have a minimum average attendance of 95% however, Islington school are required to have a minimum of 96%, unless there is an exceptional reason for their absence. This is particularly important for children in Reception, so that they can develop a positive attitude to school and in the future, towards work.

Pupils should miss as little time as possible. Therefore, parents/carers are expected to:

- Ensure their child attends school and arrives on time every day.
- Promote a good attitude to learning by ensuring their children attend school in the correct uniform and with the basic equipment required for lessons.
- Not arrange medical and dental appointments in school time.
- Call or email to inform the school on the first day of absence for their child with the details of the absence – if it is due to illness, please detail the symptoms.
- If the school has not been able to make contact with parents/carers during the period of absence, parents/carers will be required to provide the school with a written or verbal explanation, including dates of absence, on the first day their child returns to school.
- Provide school with medical proof of absences of 2 days or more.
- Work in partnership with the school and other agencies in the best interests of their child; this includes actively support the work of the school, call on staff for support and informing the school about significant influences and changes in the child's life, which may impact on learning.

Promoting good attendance

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility - parents/carers, pupils and all members of school staff.

To help us all to focus on this we will:

- Report to you termly on your child's attendance and punctuality rate through parents evenings
- Celebrate weekly, term and annual attendance through class trophy and assemblies.
- Work collaboratively with parents/carers to remove any barriers to good attendance.
- Follow our internal absence procedures to tackle persistent absenteeism and lateness.

Good attendance defined

Attendance Rate	Level
99% - 100%	Excellent
97% - 98%	Very Good
95%* - 96%	Requires to improve
91% - 94%	Concerns
86% - 90%**	Serious concerns
85% and below	Very Serious concerns

***95%** attendance equals to 2 school weeks missed during term time in a school year.

****90%** attendance equals to nearly 4 school weeks missed during term time in a school year.

Children whose school attendance is 90% or below must produce medical evidence for their absences otherwise these will be unauthorised.

Understanding types of absence

Every half-day absence from school must be classified by the school (not by the parents/carers), as either **AUTHORISED** or **UNAUTHORISED**. Therefore, information about the cause of any absence is always required, preferably in writing.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason like illness (see Appendix 1), religious observance, hospital appointments, emergencies or other unavoidable causes.

Consequently, not all absences supported by parents will be classified as authorised.

UNAUTHORISED absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been given. This type of absence can lead to the Local Authority's Access and Engagement Service Team using sanctions and/or legal proceedings. This includes:

- parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily
- 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
- shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- exceptional leave in term time which has not been agreed
- Attendance on 90% or below and excessive illness **without** medical evidence

Whilst any child may be off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents and the child. If your child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and usually make things worse.

You can support your child by:

- Ensuring regular and early bed times
- Helping with homework
- Having uniform and equipment prepared the night before
- Providing a healthy breakfast
- Reporting any academic or social concerns promptly
- Retaining open & honest communication with your child's class teacher
- Being positive about school (even if your own experience was less than positive)
- Encouraging your child to invite friends home for play dates
- Informing school of absences immediately

A pupil becomes a '**Persistent Absentee**' when they miss 10% 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 parents/carers fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

We monitor all absence thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the **PA** mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority and you will be informed of this immediately. All **PA** cases are also automatically made known to the Safeguarding Team and if persistent, to the Access and Engagement Service Team in Islington.

Absence Procedures

If your child is absent you must:

- Contact us as soon as possible on the first day of absence (by 9.00am), by email (officeteam@whitehallparkschool.org.uk) or phonecall – leave a voicemail with all the details of absence.
- If you have not provided the school with a valid reason for your child's absence, call or send an email on the first day they return with an explanation of the absence, otherwise this absence will be unauthorised.
- For continued absence of 2 or more days, due to illness, provide the school with medical proof for the absence and **keep the school updated daily**.

If your child is absent we will:

- Telephone/or text/email you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you.
- Monitor the absences over a period of time (look for any specific patterns of absence) and write to you sharing your child's attendance % and the need for it to improve.
- Invite you in to discuss the situation with a member of Senior Leadership Team and the Attendance Officer if absences persist. An Attendance Contract with actions agreed by parents/carers and the school will be put in place, and a review meeting will be set up.
- Make a referral to the Safeguarding Team if attendance continues to fall further below 90% and if through our own internal monitoring and tracking systems an improvement with attendance has not been secured with the parent/carer (via targeted letters and meetings).
- Where over the course of an academic year, your child has repeated periods of illness, we will ask parents/carers to provide medical evidence for each future period of illness related absence. This evidence could be a Doctor's note, appointment card or copy of a prescription. We may also seek written permission from you for the school to make their own enquiries with your GP and via School Health/School Nurse.

All attendance figures are sent to the Local Authority (Islington), to the Department of Education and to Local Advisory Board. It is also recorded on your child's end of year report. In order for you to keep track of your child's attendance, we have made it possible for you to view this on the Arbor Parent Portal.

Dental/Medical appointments

Whilst we appreciate that sometimes it might be difficult to make appointments out of school hours, we encourage that wherever possible, you do so. Please inform the school about the absence and supply any medical appointment letters where possible by email (officeteam@whitehallparkschool.org.uk) in advance for authorising these absences.

Where you cannot move an appointment, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary. We advise parents to bring the child/ren before and/or after the appointment.

If this medical note is not provided, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised.

Term time holiday

While we appreciate all the reasons you may have for taking your children out of school during term time, taking holidays in term time will affect your child's schooling as much as any other absence and we expect parents/carers to help us by not taking children away in school time. Remember that any savings you think you may make by taking a holiday in school time are offset by the cost to your child's education.

There is **no** automatic entitlement in law to time off in school time to go on holiday.

We will not grant any leave of absence to pupils during term time unless we consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'. The school will consider each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the child's current attendance level as well as specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the headteacher's discretion.

Parents/carers are expected to fill in an absence request form accessible on the school website. Any leave taken without notification to the school will be automatically recorded as unauthorised. All unauthorised absences are referred immediately to the Safeguarding Team and to the Local Authority with a possibility for a Penalty Notice to be issued.

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. We hope that we never need to issue a Penalty Notice; at every opportunity we work with parents and carers to reduce absence. Where parents are unwilling to fulfill 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.

Lateness/Late Collection

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If your child misses the start of the day they can miss learning and do not spend time with their class teacher getting vital information and news for the day. Please ensure that your child arrives at school on time and is collected on time EVERY DAY.

Children who are brought late and collected late miss out on their learning and feel embarrassed and unsettled.

How we manage Lateness

The school gates opens from 8.45 – 8.55am and we expect your child to be in class ready for learning by 9.00am. Please note that the school gates open at 8.45am, allowing children to enter the playground. At 8.55am children will make their way to classes. Entry at 8.45am supports arrival to school on time, therefore avoiding late marks after 9.00.

Registers are marked by 9.00am (the start of the school day) and your child will receive a late mark if they are not in by that time.

At 9.00am the registers will be closed by the office. In accordance with the Regulations, if your child arrives after that time they will receive a late mark that shows them to be on site. This may mean that you could face the possibility of a Penalty Notice if the problem persists.

If your child has a persistent late record you will be asked to meet with a member of the Senior Leadership Team to resolve the problem, but you can approach us at any time if you are having problems getting your child to school on time.

Please have a look below at how just being late every day can affect your child's learning time:

Minutes Late per Day	Equivalent of Days Missed per Year	Lessons Missed per Year
5 minutes	3 school days	17 lessons
10 minutes	6.5 school days	36 lessons
15 minutes	10 school days	51 lessons
20 minutes	13 school days	69 lessons
30 minutes	19 school days	104 lessons

How we manage Late Collection

When a child is not collected at 3.30pm, the class teacher will hold onto them until the gates close and after that will take them to the school office where they will be supervised and a staff member will call home.

Please also ensure that if you are running late you contact the school, and also provide us with an estimate of how late you will be.

If the parents/carers have still not informed the school and the child has not been by 4pm, the Safeguarding Team will be notified and they might contact the Social Service, who may also discuss a potential phone call to the Police. In the interim, the school office will continue to attempt making contact with the parent/carer.

The late collection process also applies to collection from After School Clubs at 5pm and Twilight at 6pm.

If lateness and late collection persist, the Senior Leadership Team will refer the child to the Safeguarding Team and they will discuss the necessity of contacting the Social Services.

The Headteacher will review the policy statement annually and update it in consultation with key staff if she considers it necessary.

Appendix 1

Illness:

Illness	Recommendations re absence from school
Chicken Pox	Return once spots have scabbed over
Conjunctivitis	Attend school once treated
Diarrhoea and Vomiting	Return 48 hours after last episode of diarrhoea or vomiting
Flu (Influenza)	Return as soon as recovered
German Measles (Rubella)	Off school for 6 days from rash onset
Glandular fever	No need to stay off
Hand, Foot & Mouth	No need to stay off
Headlice/ Nits	Attend school once treated
Impetigo	Stay off until lesions are crusted/ healed, or 48 hours after starting antibiotic treatment
Measles	Stay off for 4 days from onset of rash
Molluscumcontagiosum	No need to stay off
Mumps	Stay off for 5 days from onset of swollen glands
Ringworm	Not usually necessary to stay off (consult doctor)
Scabies	Return after first treatment
Scarlet Fever	Return 24 hours after commencing appropriate antibiotic treatment
Slapped Cheek	None once rash has developed
Threadworms	Attend once treated
Warts and Verrucae	Attend once treated
Whooping cough	Stay home for 5 days from starting antibiotic treatment, or 21 days from onset of illness if no antibiotic treatment given