

WEST PARK ACADEMY

Attendance and Punctuality Policy



Date reviewed:

November 2023

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. Children who are persistently late or absent may soon fall behind with their learning which will impact on their progress and their ability to meet age related learning expectations and therefore their life chances.

Aims and Objectives

West Park Academy fully recognises its responsibilities in ensuring that pupils attend school and are punctual; therefore allowing pupils to access learning for the maximum number of days and hours. This policy applies to all children registered at this school and it is accessible to parents/carers of pupils who are registered at our school on the school website. Although parents/carers have the legal responsibility for ensuring their child's good attendance, the Principal and Trustees at this school work 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.

This attendance policy ensures that all staff and Trustees in this school are fully aware of and clear about the actions necessary to promote good attendance. The Aims are:

- Improve pupils' achievement by ensuring high levels of attendance and punctuality
- Create an ethos in which good attendance and punctuality are recognised as the norm and seen to be valued and rewarded 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 policy applies to Early Years children in order to promote good habits at an early age
- Work in partnership with pupils, parents, staff and the Education Welfare Service 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 that all staff play in promoting good attendance

Roles and Responsibilities

The attendance lead is responsible for the day-to-day implementation and management of the Attendance Policy and procedures of the school, and distributing these to parents.

Staff, including teachers, support staff and volunteers, are responsible for:

- Following the Attendance Policy and ensuring pupils do so too. They are also responsible for ensuring this policy is implemented fairly and consistently.
- Modelling good attendance behaviour.
- Using their professional judgement and knowledge of individual pupils to inform decisions as to whether any welfare concerns should be escalated.
- Parents are expected to take responsibility for the attendance of their child during term-time.
- Parents are expected to promote good attendance behaviour and ensure that their child attends school every day.
- Pupils are responsible for their own attendance at school and any agreed activities throughout the school year.

Punctuality and Attendance Procedures

The strategy below outlines the steps that we take to improve attendance and punctuality.

The start of the school day is 8:45am. We expect pupils to come into school, compose themselves and be ready to learn by 8:55am. Registers close at 9am. Any children arriving after this time will have to enter through the main reception. They will be marked as late along with the reason if known. If there is an unavoidable reason for the late arrival and the staff are aware this will be noted. If no reason is given then the children are marked with a U. Any children who are persistently late, will be referred to the Home School Family Co-ordinator, Louise Conroy. She will contact the parents to arrange a meeting to explore ways to support the family in improving punctuality. If a child's punctuality does not improve we will refer the family to the Family Support Team at the Local Authority and if after their involvement punctuality has still not improved, the Academy will actively seek the Local Authority to take action against the parent of the child concerned and a Penalty Notice may be issued.

It is a parent's responsibility to notify the Academy if their child is going to be absent and the reason. Parents are also responsible for:

- Providing accurate and up-to-date contact details.
- Providing the school with at least two emergency contact numbers.
- Updating the school if their details change.

1. **First Day calling** – if we do not know why a child is absent by 9.20 am, the office will text parents/guardian. If parents/guardian do not reply by 9:45 pm the office will call the parents/guardian directly.

2. **If a child's absence falls below 90%** the Home School Family Co-ordinator will ring the parents/guardian pointing out their child's absence has dropped below the national expectation and maybe impacting on their progress in school. They will offer support to the family and explore if there are any underlining reasons for the absence. If a pattern of

absence is beginning to be noted, e.g. every Monday morning or Friday afternoon, a meeting will be arranged by the Home School Family Co-ordinator to meet with the parent/guardian to discuss the reasons.

3. **Any attendance below 85%**, a letter will be issued and parents/guardian to discuss their child's attendance with the Home School Family Co-ordinator and if attendance remains below 85% this may trigger a local authority referral and multi-agency involvement and the unauthorised absence process begins including legal procedures*.

*All sickness absence, where appropriate, will require medical evidence in order to be authorised.

Medical Appointments

4. Evidence is required from parents/carers to allow children to attend a medical appointment during school hours ie doctors, dentist, hospital etc. This could be in the form of an appointment card, hospital letter, text message showing appointment details provided to the school office. As attendance is important, medical appointments should be outside of school hours where possible. This absence will only be authorised subject to the provision of satisfactory medical evidence.

Holiday Absence

5. Parents requesting a holiday in school time must complete a Holiday Absence Form (available from the school office or on the website www.westparkacademy.org.uk - click on Parents and then Forms). This form will be returned to parents indicating their child's current attendance %.

6. **All holidays taken during term time are unauthorised** and if the child's attendance falls below 85% in the term following the holiday, parents/guardian may be issued with a penalty notice from Darlington Borough Council.

7. If a parent feels there are exceptional circumstances as to why they need to take a holiday during term time they can appeal in writing stating their exceptional circumstances. The Principal will consider their request and reply within 10 working days of her decision.

Monitoring and Evaluation

A record of attendance will be presented to the Board of Trustees at each Board meeting through the Principal's report.

The Principal will monitor the attendance with the Home School Family Co-ordinator every three weeks to identify those at risk of falling below 85%, with parents being notified of their child's attendance.

Parents will be notified of their child's attendance in termly Parent's Consultation meetings.

At the end of each term, pupils with 100% attendance will have a reward.

Each week, the top three classes with the best attendance will be celebrated in our Friday assembly.

Conclusion

Although it is the duty of parents to ensure that all children of compulsory school age receive suitable full time education, the school has an important role to play in achieving this.

Attendance Target for the academic year 2023/24 is 96.5%.