



Whitefield
Academy Trust

**Policy
Document**

Attendance Policy

Category: Management

Key Elements

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1. Aims

- To keep children and young people healthy and safe through regular school attendance.
- To maximise children and young people's achievement by ensuring high levels of attendance and punctuality.
- To increase the overall attendance rate and to reduce the persistent absence rate.
- To raise awareness of the importance of regular school attendance.
- To meet national expectations regarding attendance and persistent absence.

2. Promoting good attendance

Children and young people are motivated to attend school when the lessons are enjoyable, they experience success and their health and emotional needs are well met. The importance of this to our community is shown by the Trust's core principles of 'Enjoyment, Achievement and Wellbeing for all'.

Regular school attendance reinforces the experience of 'Enjoyment, achievement and well-being for all' and so the Trust's procedures are rigorously followed. A whole school approach is taken with the child or young person's needs at the centre. The Trust works closely with families so that their children make the maximum possible progress and so that they can meet their legal duty in ensuring that their children receive suitable full-time education whilst of compulsory school age.

The Trust recognises that there are many and diverse reasons why children or young people may struggle to achieve good attendance. The Trust strives to work in partnership with parents to overcome any barriers. The class teacher is the main point of contact with families and will take the lead in discussing attendance with the family and child as appropriate and in supporting them to minimise absence.

Relationships with families are supported in many ways, for example through: employing family support officers, encouraging regular communication through home/school books or the family's preferred method, holding twice-yearly individual review meetings and through fun family events or parent workshops at school. Families are invited to contact the school's family support officers at any time.

The Trust employs family support officers and buys into the local authority's Early Help Service to reach out to and support families in difficult circumstances. The Trust also benefits from the support of the nursing team.

The Trust employs an independent Education Welfare Officer to advise the school and provide support to families who are struggling to ensure improved and regular attendance.

The Trust recognises that its children and young people have a higher number than average of medical appointments. Wherever possible, the Trust works with health professionals to enable them to hold their clinics on site. As well as supporting good attendance this approach promotes communication and joint working between Health, Education and families.

The Attendance Officers monitor attendance weekly and consider any further action required. They present termly reports that are scrutinised at the Directors' Safeguarding Sub-Committee and then presented to the full Board.

The Trust considers that in most cases it would be ineffective and counterproductive to fine or take legal action against families of children and young people regarding their attendance. The Trust prefers to work with families work to seek improvement.

3. Absences

Families must telephone the school before 9.00 am to inform them if their child is unable to attend.

The school follows up attendance regularly – for some this will mean daily phone calls home. The school asks for two or three contact numbers for each child so that it can get in touch, initially by phone or text, in an emergency; or if there has been no contact in relation to a child's absence. The school may arrange for a visit to the child's home, contact social services or the Police if they have not heard from the family of an absent child to be sure that they are safe, or if they have serious concerns.



All children and young people receive a warm welcome when they return to school following an absence and the class teacher ensures support to catch up on missed work as appropriate.

4. Authorised Absences

It is sometimes necessary for a child or young person to miss school, for example, due to a family funeral or medical appointment. Families are expected to do all they can to make medical appointments in the school holidays or at a time to minimise absence from school.

When the school gives permission for a child to miss school then the absence is classed as an authorised absence.

Families are expected to check the term dates carefully, as they may differ from their siblings. They are expected [to](#) take their vacations during the school holidays. The school will not normally authorise an absence for family holidays. If in exceptional circumstances, for example a bereavement, this is agreed the school will ask to see proof of return tickets.

The school will give permission for one day's holiday to enable the child or young person to observe a religious festival on the recognised day for celebration of that festival within their religious community.

Where an exceptional circumstance arises that means the child or young person will be absent, the family must request permission **in advance** from the Principal or Headteacher. The Principal or Headteacher will then make the decision as to whether to authorise the absence. Exceptional circumstances are defined as rare, significant and unavoidable. Each case will be considered individually taking into account the specific facts and circumstances and relevant background. The law does not allow the school to give retrospective permission.

5. Unauthorised absence

If a parent does not request permission in advance for absence for exceptional or other circumstances, or does not inform school of the reason for an absence, then absence will be classed as unauthorised. It will also be classed as unauthorised if the school refuses a parental request for absence.

6. Persistent Absence

Children and young people who are persistently late or absent do not make the progress they deserve or are capable of. The Trust has robust procedures in place for monitoring and following up these children and young people.

A child or young person is classed as a persistent absentee if they miss 10% or more possible sessions. The school is committed to reducing the numbers of persistently absent children and young people wherever possible.

The Trust does, however, recognise that there are children and young people who have serious, chronic, deteriorating medical or mental health needs. There are others who may be experiencing exceptional short-term personal crises. The Trust works with the family and healthcare professionals to consider what level of attendance is in the best interests of the child and what support is needed to achieve this. For example, they may consider bespoke provision, reduced or shortened days and when the child should stop attending altogether. They may also consider whether a change of provision is needed and how this can best be facilitated.

The appropriate Head of School will inform a member of the nursing team of any concerns around absence which parents say is due to illness or chronic medical conditions.

Some children and young people need time at home, for example to recover from illness or operations or to await an alternative placement. The school will then make a referral to the Home and Hospital Tuition Service.

For a small minority of pupils, it may not be possible to return to school due to their complex health needs. The school will make a referral to the Home and Hospital Tuition Service and agree on an extended support contract. This will be overseen by a member of the School team/outreach team through a weekly visit and teaching session at the pupils' home if appropriate. Individual contracts will be renewed on an annual basis or as needed.



7. Punctuality

Children and young people work best when they have a smooth transition from home to school, strong routines and clear information at the start of the school day as to their timetable, which staff and pupils are present and what is expected of them. For this reason it is important that families ensure that their children arrive promptly at the start of each session.

8. Elective Home Education

Sometimes a parent considers providing home education for their child. Family Support will arrange a meeting with the family to explore the reasons for this, whether it relates to a resolvable school concern and whether it is considered to be in the child's best interest. If the parent of a child with an Education, Health and Care Plan wishes to provide home education they must seek permission from the Local Authority and ensure the child attends school until permission is given. The local SEN Panel will ask for the school's views when making their decision.

9. Death of a Child

Any member of staff who is informed of the death of a pupil must immediately inform the Principal or Headteacher, and no-one else, whether this is inside or outside school hours. There are guidelines on what to do in this situation that the senior leadership team will follow.

The Principal or Headteacher will ensure that the Single Point of Contact within the relevant local authority is notified of the death on the Child death notification form as soon as possible that day. The death will be reviewed by the Child Death Overview Panel of the child's home local authority.



Absence Procedures

1. Roles and Responsibilities

1.1. Class teachers

The class teachers endeavour to promote high expectations in relation to punctuality and attendance. They develop positive relationships with children and young people and their families; and create a climate where any concerns or difficulties are addressed straightaway. They seek advice from school leaders if they are unsure how to deal with an issue or if the concern is serious.

Class teachers communicate regularly with parents either through the home/school books or in person.

Class teachers complete the registers at the start of the morning and afternoon sessions following the DfE's attendance codes that are set out in the front of the registers. Each morning class teachers also complete the attendance forms that indicate whether all pupils on roll are accounted for. The school does not accept information regarding absence from third parties such as transport personnel.

The registers must be sent to the Whitefield Schools' PAs by 9.30 a.m. or Reception at Joseph Clarke School by 9.15 a.m.

Once teachers have been alerted to the reasons for absence they add this to the registers at the next registration.

1.2 Whitefield Schools PA's or the Receptionist at Joseph Clarke School

The Whitefield Schools PA's or the Receptionist at Joseph Clarke School collate the attendance forms and telephone the families of any child absent who has not already made personal contact with the school. They return the attendance forms to the class teachers.

They will follow up concerns as follows:

- If a parent says their child is in school, double check urgently.
- If a pupil is on the 'causing concern' list or the reason is unacceptable alert Family Support immediately for urgent action.
- If they are unable to make contact by phone they will arrange for alternative means such as email or text; and try the alternative emergency contact number; and alert Family Support if they do not receive a response.

Family Support should be informed by 10.30 am of any pupil who remains unaccounted for (or sooner for pupils for whom there are concerns).

2. Young people who travel to school independently

Reception will alert the Whitefield Schools PAs if a young person who travels to school independently is not at school by 9.45 am. They will phone home immediately to ascertain the young person's whereabouts.

At Joseph Clarke School, Reception will telephone home at 9.35 am.

The Principal or Headteacher is to be notified immediately following these calls if the young person's whereabouts remains unknown or gives any cause for concern.



2.1 Family Support Team

The designated admin assistant collates the attendance forms to give to Family Support and the Safeguarding Team. Family Support will look at the attendance forms and decide whether the absences are authorised [or](#) not, consulting with the Principal or Headteacher as necessary.

Family Support will use their judgement as to whether the matter should be escalated and to whom, consulting with the Principal or Headteacher as necessary. This may be through a letter home, visit home, contact with the Children's Community Nurse, medical team, investigation by the schools' Education Welfare Officer, local authority social care, MASH referral or the Police. They will share such information with those who need to know.

In any case if a child has been absent for 5 days or more without an acceptable explanation a Child Missing from Education Form will be sent to the BACME team.

Family Support record all action taken on SIMS.

3. Children and Young People who Move House

Family Support will endeavour to ascertain the new address of a child or young person who moves house. They will advise the family to contact the local authority to request transport to school if they are within reasonable travelling distance and wish their child to remain on roll.

If the child moves borough, the admissions officer will contact the local and home boroughs to inform them and seek clarification from the child's home borough that they will take over financial responsibility for the placement.

If the family advise that they have moved abroad, the admissions officer will make a referral to the Behaviour and Children Missing from Education (BACME) team who will conduct the necessary checks and advise when the child may be removed from the roll.

If the school is informed the child is attending a school abroad, the school will email the school in the other country to gain confirmation. If no response is received within 5 days a Child Missing from Education (CMfE) form will be sent to the BACME Service.

4. Failure to return following school holidays

The attendance officer will arrange for the family to be phoned every day for a week and if necessary alert social services or arrange for a home visit. On day 10 of such absence a CMfE form will be emailed to BACME. If the child cannot be located after all the checks, BACME will give permission to off roll.

5. Attendance Officer

The Attendance Officers ensure attendance data and reasons for absence is accurately recorded on SIMS. They provide rolling attendance reports to class teachers and senior leadership teams weekly.

6. Monitoring absence

The Principal or Headteacher meet with Family Support to review the attendance of any pupil causing immediate concern. They take into account whether the absence is unusual for the child or young person, whether there have been safeguarding concerns, whether Domestic Violence could be a factor and whether there are serious doubts around the family's ability to manage serious health issues.



Where there are concerns two members of the school's Safeguarding Team make a decision on the next steps and on-going monitoring and follow-up.

The Principal or Headteacher meet with Family Support fortnightly to review pupils whose attendance is below 90% and agree appropriate action. They will also monitor and celebrate those with improving attendance.

Pupil attendance is discussed at Annual and Interim Person Centred Reviews.

The Principal and Headteacher provide Attendance Reports for review by the Safeguarding Sub-Committee; and to the Directors termly.

Data is reported for children and young people of compulsory school age to the Department for Education through the termly Census returns.

The London Borough Waltham Forest also provides termly attendance summaries.



Appendix 1 – Useful Contact

Hospital and Home Tuition Service

Melanie.hall@hornbemacademytrust.com

Tel: 020 8535 6694

School Nursing Team

Shirley Dunion

Shirley.dunion@nelft.nhs.uk

Tel: 07956384646

Children's community nursing team

Charlotte Lackenby

Wood Street Health Centre

6 Linford Road

Walthamstow

E17 3LA

Tel: 0208 430 7930

Fax: 0208 430 7931

Email: wfcommunitychildrens.nursing@nhs.net

Behaviour, Attendance and Children Missing in Education (BACME)

Education Welfare Officer: Femi Saka Olufemi.Saka@walthamforest.gov.uk

Tel: 020 8496 1764, 077411 60652

BACME-Referral@walthamforest.gov.uk

Tel: 020 8496 1718

Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub

MASHrequests@walthamforest.gov.uk

020 8496 2310

Early help



earlyhelp@walthamforest.gov.uk

Tel: 020 8496 5114

Child Death

<https://directory.walthamforest.gov.uk/kb5/walthamforest/directory/advice.page?id=TUhUJLshylk>

Useful documents

School Attendance, Guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities. September 2018.

Children Missing Education Statutory guidance for local authorities. September 2016

Links to other Policies

Safeguarding Children and Young People- new version for implementation September 2019

Looked After Children-new version for implementation September 2019



Appendix 2 - Whitefield Schools - Quick Reference Guide

Class Teachers

9.15 Class teacher takes the register and completes attendance form.

9.30 Registers and Attendance forms to be with the school's PA.

School's PAs

9.30 School's PA collates attendance data.

PA checks the list and prioritises telephone calls home regarding absentees whose parents have not already advised school of their absence due to illness, medical appointment or otherwise; as follows:

1. Young people who travel to school independently; after having checked with Reception that young person has not arrived subsequent to registration.
2. Families of children and young people where there are known concerns.
3. All other children and young people.

Where there is no answer the PA will have a message and send a text to the family.

If the family say the child is in school, the PA goes to the class teacher immediately to check whether the child is in class. If the child is not there the PA informs the HoS who will instigate a search.

If the child or young person is on the cause for concern list, or the reason seems unacceptable the PA will immediately inform the Family Support Team

If there is no answer to the phone call the PA will send a text or email and/or try the alternative contact number for the family. If there is still no response and the child is on the cause for concern list or an independent traveller, the PA will immediately inform Family Support.

10.30 By this time all pupils should be accounted for and any concerns sent to Family Support.

Family Support

Consider lists provided by the PAs and whether any cases should be escalated to the Principal. Family Support and the Principal make a judgement as to the appropriate next course of action.



Appendix 3 - Joseph Clarke School - Quick Reference Guide

Class Teachers

9.05 Class teacher takes the register and completes attendance form.

9.15 Registers and Attendance forms to be with Reception.

Reception

9.15 Receptionist collates attendance data.

Receptionist checks the list and priorities telephone calls home regarding absentees whose parents have not already advised school of their absence due to illness, medical appointment or otherwise; as follows:

1. Young people who travel to school independently; after having checked that the young person has not arrived subsequent to registration.
2. Families of children and young people where there are known concerns.
3. All other children and young people.

If the family say the child is in school, the Receptionist asks a member of SLT to go to the class teacher immediately to check whether the child is in class. If the child is not there the SLT member will organise an immediate search.

If the child or young person is on the cause for concern list, or the reason seems unacceptable the Receptionist will immediately inform Family Support.

If there is no answer to the phone call the Receptionist will alert Family Support who will send a text or email and/or try the alternative contact number for the family. If there is still no response and the child is on the cause for concern list or an independent traveller, Family Support will discuss next steps with the Headteacher.

10.30 By this time all pupils should be accounted for and concerns already sent to Family Support.

Family Support

Consider lists provided by the Receptionist and whether any cases should be escalated to the Headteacher. Family Support and the Headteacher make a judgement as to the appropriate next course of action.



Current National Data

Special schools

	2016/17	2017/18
Overall absence	9.7%	10.2%
Unauthorised absence	2.1%	2.2%
Persistent Absence	28.5%	29.6%



**This policy is shared
via the school website:
www.whitefield.org.uk**