



Attendance and Punctuality Policy

Missing school means missing out!

Policy Rationale:

Pupils need to attend school regularly and punctually to benefit from their education.

All academies within Waterton Academy Trust are committed to providing an excellent education for all pupils. We are committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of our pupils and expect all staff and volunteers to share this commitment. We believe that if pupils are to benefit from their education, good attendance is crucial. Irregular attendance undermines the learning process and can lead to educational and social disadvantage.

Good attendance and punctuality are central to raising standards. Missing lessons and learning leaves children vulnerable to falling behind (Department for Education – Oct 2014).

The government expects schools and academies to:

- Promote good attendance and reduce absence, including persistent absence
- Ensure every pupil has access to full time education to which they are entitled
- Act early to address patterns of absence and lateness

The government expects parents to perform their legal duty by ensuring their children of compulsory school age who are registered at the academy attend regularly and are punctual.

Further Information:

- At Normanton Common Primary Academy the **attendance target is 96.5%**
- Mandy Sherrard is the Education Welfare Officer for Waterton Academy Trust
- The terms 'school' and 'academy' are interchangeable.

Abbreviations:

- EWS – Education Welfare Service
- EWO – Education Welfare Officer
- CME – Children Missing Education
- WAT – Waterton Academy Trust
- LA – Local Authority
- PN – Penalty Notice
- PA – Persistent Absence

1 INTRODUCTION

Every school day counts at Normanton Common Primary Academy. The governing body and Waterton Academy Trust Board of Directors holds firm the belief that children who miss school miss out. Lost learning through absence or poor punctuality equates to lost progress throughout school.

The 1996 Education Act states, *'If a child is registered at school, parents have the legal responsibility for ensuring that their child attends regularly'*. We therefore ask that parents and carers work with us to ensure that children attend school regularly and punctually.

While some absences are inevitable, the academy is committed to reducing absence down to the lowest possible levels. This can be achieved through a balance of rewarding good attendance and supporting families where attendance and punctuality is problematic. The academy will be proactive in addressing poor attendance and will work collaboratively with the Trust Education Welfare Officer to sanction families where support systems have failed to make significant improvements.

2 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

We aim to achieve above average attendance through:

- Raising awareness of the importance of good school attendance
- Rewarding good attendance regularly
- Celebrating 100% attendance
- Celebrating sustained improvements in attendance
- Ensuring that attendance data is shared regularly with all stakeholders

We aim to reduce absence (including persistent absence) and lateness by:

- Carrying out regular monitoring of attendance rates below 90% and poor punctuality
- Working collaboratively with the Education Welfare Service to support families where attendance falls to or below 90%
- Providing written warnings for persistent absence and lateness, followed through by legal sanctions if necessary.

3 REWARDING GOOD ATTENDANCE

Pupils at Normanton Common Primary Academy are taught about the importance of good attendance through celebrations and the curriculum.

Good attendance is rewarded by:

- The class in each phase with the highest attendance each week being recognised.
- Classes that meet or exceed the school's attendance target being recognised weekly
- Children with 100% attendance over a term being recognised.
- A special treat in the summer term for the class with the best yearly attendance.
- A special treat in the summer term for all children achieving 100% attendance for the whole school year.

Weekly attendance figures are reported to parents and carers. Information on individual class attendance as well as the whole school attendance is shared.

4 THE LEGAL POWERS AND DUTIES THAT GOVERN SCHOOL ATTENDANCE ARE CONTAINED IN:

- The Education Act 1996 – sections 434(1)(3)(4)&(6) and 458(4)&(5)
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2010
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2011
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013

Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act states that if **a child of compulsory school age** fails to attend regularly, the parent is guilty of an offence. Parents, therefore have a legal responsibility to ensure their child's attendance. Failure can lead to legal action being taken by the Local Authority in the Magistrates Court, or the need to issue Penalty Notices. Since March 2001 there has been a further offence, Section 444 (1A) where a parent **knowingly** allows their child to be absent from school. This offence can carry a custodial sentence.

The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007 also allow the Local Authority to issue Penalty Notices on behalf of schools and academies for unauthorised pupil absence from school for **children of compulsory school age**.

4.1 COMPULSORY SCHOOL AGE

Compulsory school age is set out in section 8 of the Education Act 1996 and The Education (Start of Compulsory School Age) Order 1998. A child reaches compulsory school age on the prescribed day following his/her fifth birthday (or on his/her fifth birthday if it falls on a prescribed day). The prescribed days are 31 December, 31 March and 31 August. The term 'summer born' is used to refer to children born from 1 April to 31 August. These children are not required to start school until a full school year after the point at which they could first have been admitted.

Admissions authorities are required to provide for the admission of all children in the September following their fourth birthday, but flexibilities exist for children whose parents do not feel they are ready to begin school before they reach compulsory school age.

5 THE SCHOOL DAY

The Law states that children should arrive at school on time, every day. The expectations for the school are as follows:

8:50am - The start of the school day. School opens its doors to pupils and the registration period begins.

9:00am - Registration period closes. All external classroom and cloakroom doors are locked and lessons begin.

Pupils arriving after 9:00am enter school through the main school door and report to the school office. Parents are required to record the time of arrival and the reason for lateness. Arrivals after 9:00am but before 9:10am will be marked in the register as being **Late (L)**. This is recorded on our register but does not qualify as unauthorised absence. **Lateness** does impact on children's progress however, because it significantly disrupts learning and routine.

Arrivals after 9:10am will be recorded as **unauthorised absence (U)**. At the point of 5 U coded sessions (within a half term), a warning letter will be issued. This is notification that a Penalty Notice may be issued if persistent lateness after close of registration continues. Persistence lateness is defined as 10 U coded sessions within a term.

9:10am - 9:30am – Statutory Safeguarding Response A pupil's non-attendance at school, when no reason has been reported by parents, is a safeguarding matter. All unexplained absences will be followed up by contacting parents by telephone before 9:30am. If we cannot reach parents in this way by this time, a home visit by the Education Welfare Officer or member of pastoral team may be deemed necessary. If concerns arise, the Headteacher or other designated safeguarding professional in school may refer matters to the Education Welfare Officer, make a referral to Social Care Direct or request that the community policing team carry out a welfare check.

The attendance register is a legal document and as such is checked regularly by the Headteacher and Education Welfare Officer. Checks ensure registers are being maintained accurately and assess the reasons and incidence of any absence.

6 ABSENCE

Any absence is detrimental to a child's education; it disrupts learning, routines and progress and should be avoided wherever possible.

6.1 RESPONSIBILITIES

When a child is not going to be attending school **parents/carers are required to:**

- Inform school before 9:00am by telephone (01924 890576 / option1) or email attendance@normtoncommon.org.uk that their child will not be attending, stating
 - child's name and class
 - a detailed reason for the absence
 - when they are expected to return
 - the name and relationship to the child of the person providing the information
- Repeat this each day the child is absent from school.

The school will:

- Follow up unexplained absences by contacting parents/carers by telephone on the first day of absence between 9:10am and 9:30am.
- Where safeguarding concerns arise, make a home visit or send the Education Welfare Officer to the home address.
- Make a home visit on day 3 and day 5 of any prolonged absence. This is to maintain the link with school and to offer support.
- Refer the case to the Trust Education Welfare Officer at the point of 6 consecutive sessions of absence where no reasonable explanation is provided.
- After 20 days' absence without contact, report as *Child Missing from Education (CME)* to the Local Authority.

The school may also:

- Contact the police and ask them to carry out a Welfare Check on an absent pupil at any point during an absence if there are safeguarding concerns for the pupil.

- Ask for evidence to support any absence due to illness if the authenticity of the illness is in doubt or the pupil is off regularly with the same illness.
- Write to parents/carers stating the concerns regarding attendance/punctuality.
- Invite parents/carers to meet with the Headteacher to discuss attendance issues if there is a cause for concern.
- Refer the case to the Education Welfare Officer where there is a regular problem with attendance/punctuality.

6.2 AUTHORISED ABSENCE

Some absences are unavoidable, usually due to illness, bereavement or very difficult family circumstances and these can be classed as an Authorised Absence. The decision as to whether an absence is authorised or not lies with the Headteacher.

6.2.1 ILLNESS

Children who are reported as absent through illness are marked with an 'I' code.

6.2.2 MEDICAL APPOINTMENTS

Wherever possible we request that dental and medical appointments be made at the end of the school day or during the school holidays. Where this is not possible, parents are required to verify the appointments at the office with an appointment card/letter/text. If verification is not provided the absence will not be authorised. Pupils should only be out of school for the minimum amount of time for the appointment. Pupils who are reported as absent because they are attending a medical appointment are marked with an 'M' code. If pupils return to school during sessional time following a medical appointment, this will be recoded as present. Evidence of the medical appointment must be provided to the school office when the pupil is brought back to school.

6.2.3 RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCE

Absence due to religious observance is authorised absence. The day must be exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the parents belong. Children who are reported as absent due to religious observance are marked with an 'R' code.

6.3 UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE

Unauthorised absence is that which is not permissible in Law, e.g. birthdays, shopping trips, days out, term time holidays, and absences where no explanation has been received. The School will monitor and discuss unauthorised absence with the Education Welfare Officer and Education Welfare Service and further action may be agreed.

6.3.1 TERM TIME HOLIDAYS

In line with the Government's amendments to the Education Regulations 2006, the Headteacher will not grant leave of absence for family holidays in term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. **This applies to all pupils of compulsory school age** (see section 4.1)

In order to enforce this decision, Waterton Academy Trust Board has agreed to the issuing of Penalty Notices for parents taking their children out of school for the purposes of a family holiday. Parents are required to write to the headteacher or email to attendance@normantoncommon.org.uk requesting a leave of absence for their child no later than four weeks before the absence is due to commence. Parents are required to include the following:

- Name and class
- Dates of leave
- Date of expected return to school
- Reason for absence
- Name and relationship to the child of the person making the notification.

Parents will be notified in writing within two weeks by post of the Headteacher's decision and of the intention to issue a Penalty Notice should the unauthorised term time holiday go ahead. Pupils who are absent from school during term time because of a holiday will be marked with a 'G' code (family holiday not authorised) on the registration system.

6.3.2 EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES

Waterton Academy Trust Board recognises exceptional circumstances as:

- **Families in crisis; such as a terminal illness within the immediate family**
- **Pre and post operational leave for armed forces families.**

Should parents/carers feel that exceptional circumstance apply, they should write to request a meeting with the Headteacher to discuss the circumstances.

Decisions are at the Headteacher's discretion following Government guidelines.

7 PERSISTENT ABSENCE

Persistent absence is when a pupil misses 10% or more of school sessions **for any reason** and where attendance falls at or below 90%. The school works with the Education Welfare Officer to ensure all pupil attendance data is monitored regularly and action taken to reduce persistent absence. Where a child's absence is due to a known illness or there are exceptional circumstances it will be monitored closely in a supportive capacity.

If the absence is not for one of these two reasons, a written warning will be issued. Parents/carers will be required to show improvement within the next four school weeks.

If there is no improvement then a second letter will be issued requesting the parent/carer attend a meeting with the Learning Mentor / Trust EWO to discuss the reasons for the persistent absence. At this stage support will be offered and targets for improvement agreed against a timescale of a further four weeks. **This is an Attendance Provision Plan.**

If there is no further improvement following the implementation the Attendance Provision Plan parents/ carers will be notified that the matter has been referred to the Headteacher and Local Authority Education Welfare Service who will then follow up the case; this leaves parents/ carers at risk of legal action and/or a Penalty Notice. Persistent Absence, not resulting from a known illness or exceptional circumstances, also meets the threshold for a social care referral.

8 PENALTY NOTICE

Penalty Notices can be issued to address unauthorised absence which may include term time holidays, irregular attendance and poor punctuality. The Governing Body has agreed to the issuing of penalty notices by the Local Authority. A Penalty Notice will be issued by the Local Authority at the point which 10 sessions are recorded as unauthorised absence (U code) within any given school term. This may include unexplained absence, a term time holiday and/or poor punctuality. The cost of the penalty notice is £60 per child, per parent, if paid within 21 days of receipt of the notice. This rises to £120 per child per parent between 22 and 28 days. Failure to pay the penalty within 28 days will result in the matter being brought before the Magistrates court and could result in a criminal conviction.

9 KEEPING TRACK OF ATTENDANCE

To help parents/carers keep track of attendance the school will issues a termly attendance summary for each pupil. The summary is colour coded to indicate the following:

Outstanding attendance Blue: 100%	The very best chance of success Getting pupils off to a flying start!
Good attendance Green: 96.5% - 99.9%	
Satisfactory attendance White: 95% - 96.4%	Below the school's aspirational attendance target but above the Government's basic attendance target.
Worrying attendance Amber: 90% - 94.9%	Less chance of success because of periods of lost learning time. Makes it harder to progress as well.
Cause for Concern Red: below 90%	A significant amount of learning time is lost. Categorised as Persistently Absent (PA). Monitored by the EWO. Could result in a Penalty Notice.

10 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

WATERTON ACADEMY TRUST and SCHOOL STAFF

- Set high expectations for pupil attendance, and monitor individual and whole school attendance on a weekly basis.
- Identify causes of concern with regard to pupil attendance.
- Make initial contact with parents where there is unexplained absence.
- Invite parents/carers into school to discuss where there is no improvement.
- Work in partnership with the LA, and with EWS particularly.
- Maintain electronic registration data systems effectively and deploy them robustly to facilitate presentation of reports.
- Provide attendance data for parents.
- Promote attendance at all levels – within school, the community, the LA, regionally and nationally.
- Celebrate high and improved attendance.

PARENTS & CARERS

- Ensure pupils arrive at school on time at 8:50am every day and that routines are in place at home to support this.
- Ensure pupils arrive and are collected on time.
- Ensure school is always informed of changes to contact details.
- Contact the school as soon as possible if absence is unavoidable, and follow this up with a written explanation.
- Provide appointment cards to support medical absence.
- Avoid term time holidays, and minimise appointments during the school day.

EDUCATION WELFARE OFFICER

- The Trust EWO will work in partnership with Normanton Common Primary Academy to promote and facilitate improved attendance, at an individual level, either through a referral system or Attendance Provision Plan; and at whole school level using proactive strategies and action plans.
- The Trust EWO will work with children and families to ensure attendance and safeguarding is maintained.

- The Trust EWO and Local Authority EWS will provide advice and guidance with regards to Children Missing Education, Child Employment and Licensing.
- The Trust EWO will work in partnership with other agencies and will offer advice and signposting for referrals to appropriate organisations.
- The Trust EWO and Local Authority EWS will undertake legal action on behalf of the School.
- The Trust EWO will support the school with networking and training events and with School Audits and Action Plans.

EVALUATION AND REVIEW

The Trust will review the policy annually and update accordingly to include changes in the law and guidance on good practice. The policy will be promoted throughout the Academy community and shared with outside agencies and partners as required.

Policy Review Schedule:

- Policy reviewed January 2020
- For review January 2021