



Attendance Policy  
Wheatcroft CP School

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## 1. Statement of Intent

Wheatcroft Primary School recognises the importance of full attendance and aims to ensure that all pupils achieve and maintain high standards of attendance and punctuality.

Regular attendance and punctuality are prerequisites to a good education and are therefore a priority for the school. Wheatcroft Primary School is committed to providing a full and inclusive educational experience for all pupils.

We aim to develop pupils to their full potential; parents have a responsibility to aid the education process by ensuring that pupils attend the school regularly, on time, properly dressed and in a suitable condition to learn.

Irregular attendance is likely to place the child at an educational disadvantage. As a school therefore, we aim to pursue the goal of regular pupil attendance. In this matter the partnership between school and home is important.

We expect our parents to value Wheatcroft Primary School and their child's education and to support our school's procedures.

## 2. School Attendance - Statutory Framework

Education Act 1944 – Establishes the duty of parents to ensure regular attendance of pupils.

The Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 1997 (amended) provides the new registration categories of Approved Educational Activity (amended Regulation 3 (2), (3), (5) of the Education Regulations 1995).

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England)(Amendment) Regulations 2013, which can be obtained from the DFE website, are followed at Wheatcroft. This amendment includes the changes regarding holiday entitlement in term time.

The Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 makes provision for Penalty Notices (section 23(1)) to be issued in certain cases of unauthorised absence. The Penalty (fine) will require the parent of a child of compulsory school age, whose attendance has been unsatisfactory, to pay £60 if paid within 21 days, rising to £120 thereafter.

Parents are legally obliged that unless there is illness or some other acceptable reason for absence, children should attend school for each session during the prescribed school days of the academic year. Children are welcome to arrive on site from **8.35am** each morning when the doors to school will be opened. ***(Please note: if children are unaccompanied by an adult they should not be on site prior to this time as there is no supervision available).***

### 3. Registration

There is a legal requirement upon school to keep an attendance register on which, at the beginning of each morning and afternoon session, pupils are marked present or absent. The Education (Pupils Attendance Record) Regulations 1991 introduced a further requirement that attendance registers must show whether an absence of a pupil of compulsory school age is authorised or unauthorised.

Both staff and pupils should see the taking of registers as an integral part of the school day, as was indeed intended in law. Particular attention should be paid to accurate registration and to the preservation and security of registers.

In accordance with current legislation, each class in school has an attendance register. It is school policy that registers are completed by 8.45am in the morning and by 12.50pm for EYFS and 1.05pm for KS1 and KS2 in the afternoon, when registration data is collected via Bromcom and is electronically returned to the school office.

It is our policy to record a late mark for children who arrive at school after class registration has taken place.

We believe that pupils arriving late seriously disrupt their own work and that of others. Our policy is to encourage punctuality. 5 minutes will be allocated for registration purposes at the beginning of each session. Children will be recorded as being late once registration has taken place.

Our policy on Attendance and Punctuality is included in Appendix A.

### 4. Absence

It is the parent's responsibility to inform school of the reason for a child's absence. We would like to receive notification as soon as the child is absent from school.

#### Reporting of Absences

##### Illness

**Parents are asked to inform the school office by 8.45am each day a child is unwell and will not be attending school.**

- A child who has been given antibiotics should be kept away from school for the first 48 hours of treatment if advised by the doctor.
- A child who has been sick or who has diarrhoea should also be kept away from school until the child has been clear of the problem for 48 hours.
- Medical/dental appointments should be made out of school hours. However, where this is not possible the school will require notification prior to the absence. When a child is absent for a medical appointment, it is expected that they will return to school immediately following the appointment.

Please contact the office for further guidance on specific illnesses and required length of absence.

If parents do not contact school on the first day of their child's absence, the office staff will contact parents to ascertain reasons for the absence and offer advice and support where appropriate. The school has a text messaging system which enables us to send text messages to parents. This is used to text parents of any child who is absent from school where we do not know the reason. It is important contact with parents is made on the first day of absence to ensure they are aware their children have not arrived at school that day.

It is crucial parents adhere to this procedure to ensure all pupils are safe and their whereabouts accounted for.

It is a fact that parentally-condoned unjustified absence is a serious problem in some schools. This can be every bit as damaging as the more traditional forms of truancy. Although this is not a significant problem at Wheatcroft Primary School, staff remain vigilant to avoid it becoming a problem.

Only the school, within the context of the law, can approve absence; not parents. The fact that a parent has offered a note or other notification (telephone call or personal contact) in relation to a particular absence does not, of itself, oblige the school to accept it if the school does not accept the explanation offered as a valid reason for absence. If, after further investigation, doubt remains about the explanation offered - or where no explanation is forthcoming at all - the absence will be treated as unauthorised. Where parentally-condoned unjustified absence appears to be a problem in relation to a particular pupil, the office staff will intervene at an early opportunity. If no improvement is noted after the Headteacher/senior staff/admin staff have intervened, we will refer to the Local Authority's Prevention Team.

An excessive amount of unauthorised absence can also seriously disrupt continuity of learning and encourage disaffection. We must be alert to emerging patterns of unauthorised absence. We may authorise absence retrospectively where we are satisfied as to the explanation offered. Absences of pupils of compulsory school age without valid reason, or for which no explanation has been provided, will be treated as unauthorised.

Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 provides that no offence is committed where a pupil of compulsory school age is prevented from attending school by reason of illness. If we are satisfied that a pupil is absent as a result of illness, the absence will be treated as authorised.

### **Long Term Absences**

Occasionally, some pupils experience health or other difficulties that prevent them from attending school for some time. School deals with each case individually, agreeing procedures for re-integrating these pupils with each family as the need arises. Please contact the Headteacher if your child would benefit from such an arrangement.

Where we have reason to doubt the validity of an explanation offered in respect of a particular absence, further information will be requested by the teacher from the child's parents. If the school continues to be dissatisfied, then the absence will be treated as unauthorised.

Where there is doubt about the authenticity attributed to illness, the school or the School Attendance Officer can refer the matter to a doctor working in the School Health Service to arrange a special medical, or to make contact with the pupil's GP.

Leave for medical and dental appointments will be given (i.e. the absence will be authorised) where confirmation has been received from the parent (either in person, in writing or by telephone call) or on production of an appointment card. To minimise absence from school, parents are requested to return children to school after medical and dental appointments if they are well enough to be at school (i.e. following dental check-ups or routine appointments). If these appointments are frequent, the school may ask for the production of an appointment card or letter before the absence is authorised.

School office staff will monitor absence through the use of Bromcom attendance reports.

## **5. Reporting of Absence Procedure**

Parents/carers are expected to telephone, email or text the School Office or send a note on the first day of their child's absence. This will allow the Office staff to interpret the category of absence. If information (or sufficient information) is not received, the office staff will contact the parent/carer to discover the cause of the absence, which may be a telephone call, home visit or letter home, as appropriate. Office staff will investigate all unauthorised absence but, on occasion, staff will have to accept that parents simply do not give responses.

Parents should complete a Leave of Absence form, which they may obtain from the School Office, if they intend to remove their child from school for any purpose. It should be completed and returned to the School Office before the absence. Once the Leave of Absence has been considered, a letter will be sent to the parents/carers to inform them of the decision.

### **Leave of Absence from School during Term Time**

The Department for Education requires Local Authorities to implement government regulations regarding the taking of Leave of Absence in term-time, which came into force on the 1st September 2013. This law gives no entitlement to parents to take their child on holiday during term time.

**Headteachers would not be expected to class any term-time holiday as exceptional. Therefore, Headteachers will only be able to grant leave of absence in exceptional circumstances and this will still be at the discretion of the Headteacher. No parent/carer can demand leave of absence as a right.**

The Education Regulations state that applications must be made in advance by a parent/carer with whom the child lives and can only be authorised by the school in exceptional circumstances. Each Leave of Absence application is considered individually by the school, taking into account any factors presented by the family. Application forms are available from the school. Headteachers will also welcome early discussion with parents/carers around potential applications.

The following are examples of the criteria for leave of absence, which may be considered as 'exceptional':

- Service personnel returning from active deployment.
- Where inflexibility of the parents' leave or working arrangement is part of the organisational or company policy. This would need to be evidenced by the production of evidence, or confirmation from, the organisation/company.
- Where leave is recommended as part of a parents' or child's rehabilitation from medical or emotional problems, evidence must be provided.
- When a family needs to spend time together to support each other during or after a crisis.

This is not an exhaustive list and Headteachers must consider the individual circumstances of each case when making a decision on this matter. Leave is only acceptable in exceptional circumstances and should not be granted on the basis of attendance record, academic performance or the 'experience' offered by being out of school.

Where a headteacher feels that there may be exceptional circumstances which do not fit the criteria, they may refer to the Local Authority for advice. The decision of the Headteacher is, however, final.

**Please note that the ability to access a reduced cost of a holiday does not constitute an exceptional circumstance.**

Where a child is taken out of school for the purpose of leave of absence in term time, without the permission of the school, the absence will be coded as unauthorised and, as such, may result in a Penalty Notice. Penalties are applied by the Local Authority and, as such, are not at the discretion of the Headteacher. If a Penalty Notice is not paid, the matter may be taken to prosecution in the Magistrates Court.

Amendments to 2007 Penalty Notice regulations will reduce the timescales for paying a Penalty Notice. Parents must, from 1st September 2013, pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. This brings Attendance Penalty Notices in line with other types of penalty notices and allows local authorities to act faster on prosecution if the fine is not paid.

**It must be noted that taking a pupil on leave during term time interrupts teaching and learning and can disrupt your child's educational progress.**

Where a pupil is present for registration but then has to attend an appointment, school need take no action beyond recording the fact that (for the purpose of emergency evacuation) the pupil, although registered, is not physically present. Similarly, the school must note the presence of a pupil (again for purposes of emergency evacuation) who was not there when the register was being taken but returns later from an appointment. Office staff will check the signing in and out book and make a note in the relevant day's column in the register as to the times the child came or left, so that there is information on the child's whereabouts in the event of emergency evacuation.

## 6. Categorising Absence

Our policy deals in general with the categories of absence and cannot cover every eventuality. It will be necessary, on occasion, to exercise reasonable discretion when investigating some absences. However, the following key points must be remembered:

- Registered pupils of compulsory school age are required by law to be in school;
- Whilst it is right that schools should recognise that individual pupils and families have problems, the aim should always be to expect regular attendance;
- Lateness should be actively discouraged;
- Where a pupil is absent without prior authorisation, an explanation is required. If one is not forthcoming (for whatever reason) or cannot be sought by office staff, the absence must be treated as unauthorised and the register completed accordingly;
- We are not obliged to accept parental notes where there is reason to doubt validity of the explanation offered;
- Explanations such as minding the house, looking after other children, or shopping trips within school hours, will not be acceptable reasons for absence;
- Even where absence is authorised, we should be alerted to emerging patterns of absence which may seriously disrupt continuity of learning.
- In promoting regular attendance, we will work in partnership with appropriate Local Authority and external agency personnel.

## 7. Registration and Lateness Procedures

A registration system is in place to record, in an accurate manner, attendance, lateness and absences. This complies with Government and Local Authority guidelines

It is our policy to actively discourage late arrival. In recognition of local circumstances (such as bad weather or occasional public transport) we may keep registers open for a reasonable period.

For registration to mean anything at all, a firm line will be taken on late arrivals. To do otherwise, undermines the whole purpose of registration and may serve to encourage other pupils to arrive late. Particular attention will be paid to emerging patterns of late arrival.

- School's official starting time is **8.40am**.
- Any child arriving after this time will therefore be registered with a late mark.
- Pupils arriving after this time should report to the School Office, as they will be required to sign in and provide a reason for the lateness.
- If a child arrives after registration closes at 8.45am, they will be marked as having an unauthorised absence for the whole morning session. ***Note: this is based on the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 and could be used as evidence against parents if legal action was to be considered by the Local Authority under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996.***

## **Procedure for Arrival at Start of School Day**

- We encourage children to come into school when the doors open at 8.30am.
- The doors will close at 8.40am, which signals the end of the registration time.
- Gates to the school will be locked at 8.40am.
- Any child arriving after this time will need to report to the School Office and follow lateness procedures. Parents MUST accompany their child to the Office to sign in unless the child is arriving independently **and** capable of signing themselves in.

**It is important that pupils are punctual and arrive prepared for the day's learning.**

Once class registers close, if a child arrives after this time, they will be marked as arriving 'late after register has closed' and will receive an unauthorised absence mark which will, in turn, affect their rate of attendance. Any child receiving more than six of these marks during the half term, will be considered to have a persistent late record and their parent/carer will then be asked to meet with the Headteacher and the School Attendance Officer to resolve the problem.

In responding to lateness, we will, of course, need to take account of the individual circumstances of each case. In some instances, enquiries may reveal that the late arrival stems from difficulties at home or other genuinely unavoidable circumstances. Senior staff will seek an early meeting with parents of those pupils who persistently fail to arrive on time without valid reason and look at ways to improve attendance and punctuality in future. If the parents do not have any valid reason for the child's persistent lateness, the Headteacher will implement a monitoring plan. If no improvement is noted as a result of the monitoring plan, the Headteacher will consult with the School Attendance Officer.

### **8. Monitoring Attendance Below 90%**

The school will monitor attendance that falls below 90% very closely. When children start to get close to this figure, or fall below it, reasons for absence will be explored and it might be decided that the parent is asked to attend a meeting to discuss attendance, with a plan put in place to help this to improve. Further meetings will be held to ascertain if the plan is working.

### **9. Role of School Attendance Officer**

The role of the designated Attendance Officer is to:

- Liaise, where appropriate, between home and the school (following school intervention).
- Investigate irregular attendance or lateness which may give rise to concerns that a child may be at risk.
- Complete a regular register check; giving feedback and advice on improving attendance.
- Enforce the law in relation to school attendance



## 10. **Referral to the Local Authority**

Referral to the Local Authority will be made in the following circumstances:

- Absence is regular and/or repeated and is therefore affecting the child's education.
- When a pupil has been absent for two consecutive weeks, and the absence is unauthorised, the child can be referred to the Local Authority as "missing" and can be removed from the school roll.
- The intervention by school has failed to secure a pupil's regular attendance.
- Holidays taken in term time that are not deemed as having met the "special circumstances" criteria.

Where bespoke support for families to improve punctuality and attendance is deemed to be required, referrals to the Early Help Team can only be made through the Headteacher.

Progress reports on referrals will be given to the school at regular intervals by the Early Help Team.

## 11. **Role of Office Staff in Monitoring/Improving Attendance**

- To promote and safeguard the welfare of the children that the office staff come into contact with.
- To contact parents/carers on the first day of absence to ascertain reasons for missing school.
- To be an integral part of schemes and initiatives in the school aimed at improving pupil attendance and improving punctuality.
- To liaise with the School Attendance Officer and Headteacher over attendance of pupils and to establish early contact with parents/carers.
- To assist in the development and evaluation of strategies aimed at resolving issues relating to non-attendance and lateness.
- To assist in the speedy and effective exchange of pupil information between schools following the transfer of a pupil.
- To assist in the induction of children into the school with regard to the general ethos of the school, rules and behaviour guidelines.
- To work in partnership with pupils, parents/carers, school staff, the Local Authority, relevant agencies and support units.
- To support and motivate parents on matters relating to attendance and behaviour.
- To prepare and present reports as necessary, to maintain appropriate records and statistics.
- To assist the Headteacher in the preparation of information relating to attendance.
- To have due regard to confidentiality, child protection procedures, health and safety issues, appropriate statutory requirements and relevant policies of the Local Authority.

## **12. Improving Punctuality/Rewarding Good Attendance**

When a child is consistently late (more than six late marks during a half term) this will be brought to the attention of the School Attendance Officer, who will arrange to send a letter to parents explaining the importance of arriving on time. If the situation does not improve, the parent will be invited to an attendance meeting to try to resolve this situation.

Attendance is celebrated weekly in assemblies and the class that has the highest attendance during the preceding week receives the award for that week.

## **13. Recording and Use of Absence Data**

When a child fails to attend school for one or more sessions, this will be recorded as an absence. Unless informed of the absence previously by a parent/guardian, the School Office will contact parents from 9am on the morning that a child is not in school. Absences will be shown as authorised or unauthorised, following Local Authority guidelines. The school determines whether an absence is authorised or unauthorised using these guidelines. When absences are unaccounted for, school will telephone, text and/or send a letter home to try to ensure all absences are explained.

Data is collected and subsequently collated. Attendance figures are published for individual pupils in their school report and/or at the end of each term. Where pupils' attendance causes concern, the parameters and procedures as shown in the Pupils Punctuality and Attendance Policy Statement will be followed (Appendix A) and shared with Educational Social Workers. Attendance information is passed on when pupils transfer to other schools.

## **14. Absences for Part of the Day**

From time to time, pupils show symptoms of illness at school. School will contact parents and other family members if a child needs to go home. School asks parents to ensure we have up to date contact names and telephone numbers for this purpose.

Guidelines for the return of recovering pupils can be found on the school website ('Guidance on infection control in schools and other childcare settings'). Alternatively, the office staff can provide advice about recommended absence periods for particular illnesses.

## **15. In the Event of School Closure**

During winter months, it occasionally becomes necessary to close the school due to adverse weather conditions. If this closure takes place at the start of the day, it will be broadcast on *BBC Radio York* and *This is the Coast* radio stations. If the weather or other conditions mean that a decision is taken to close school during the school day, parents and guardians will be texted or telephoned and asked to collect their children as soon as possible. The school staff will remain on the premises until all children have been collected.

**Policy Statement – Pupils’ Punctuality and Attendance**

(To be read in conjunction with DfE and NYCC policy statements)

**The highest standards of attendance and punctuality are encouraged for all pupils at all times.**

**School will endeavour to work with all parents/carers to assist them in carrying out their duties as required by the DfE.**

**Where a child’s attendance causes concern, the following parameters and actions will be considered by the Headteacher:**

**(Each case will be considered individually, based on circumstances)**

<b>Cause for Concern</b>	<b>Action(s) to be Considered</b>
94% attendance or below at any point within an academic year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Attendance will be monitored by the School and attendance history considered.</li><li>• Contact with parents/carers, if deemed necessary.</li></ul>
90% attendance or below at any point within an academic year (at end of first half of Autumn term initially)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 3 stages of communication and letters to parents/carers asking them to work with School Attendance Officer to improve attendance.</li><li>• Meeting and discussion with parents/carers to develop a plan of action.</li><li>• Referral to Early Help Services where bespoke family support is deemed to be required.</li></ul>
Repeated incidences of illness-related absence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Discussion with parents/carers.</li><li>• Referral to Healthy Child Team.</li><li>• Request that parents/carers provide proof of doctor’s involvement (appointment card with child’s name on / letter / copy of prescription etc).</li><li>• Work for the pupil might be sent home to be completed.</li></ul>
Repeated arrival at school after 8.50am	This will be marked in the class register as a LATE. <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Letter to parents/carers requesting that the matter is addressed and offering support.</li><li>• An action plan to be established.</li><li>• Consideration of request from outside agencies.</li></ul>
Repeated arrival at school after 9.30a	This will be marked in the class register as an UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE for the session. <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• An action plan to be established.</li><li>• Consideration of request from outside agencies.</li><li>• Referral to Early Help Services where bespoke family support is deemed to be required.</li></ul>

## **APPENDIX B**

### **APPLICATION FOR PUPIL LEAVE OF ABSENCE IN EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES DURING TERM TIME**

This form should be completed by the parent/carer and returned to the school as far in advance as possible and preferably at least **6 weeks** before the first date of the period of leave being requested. Parents/carers must obtain the schools permission **before making any arrangements for leave in exceptional circumstances, otherwise the absence will be recorded as unauthorised.**

**No parent/carer can demand leave of absence as of right.** The Education regulations state that applications for leave must be made in advance by a parent with whom the child lives and can only be authorised by the school in exceptional circumstances. Each application is considered individually by the school. Examples of any exceptional circumstances where leave may be granted during term time are as follows:

- If a parent is service personnel and is 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
- Where an absence from school is recommended by a health professional as part of a parent or child's rehabilitation from a medical or emotional issue
- Religious observance – The Education Act 1996 S444(3) (c), states "on any day exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which his/her parent belongs";

If a request meets the above exceptional circumstances but falls within the following times, the Headteacher must be convinced that absence from school is the only option:

- 1) The first half term of any academic year (applies to all pupils)
- 2) Year six transition day (for pupils in Year six)
- 3) Year six SATs week (for pupils in Year six)

#### **Examples of circumstances normally NOT considered as exceptional**

- Holidays abroad for the purpose of visiting a sick relative, excepting where that person is seriously ill. Medical evidence may be requested
- Holidays taken in term time due to lower cost/parental work commitments

The decision of the Head teacher is final. Parents who take a child on leave in term time without the permission of the school risk being issued with a penalty notice fine for unauthorised absences. In addition, unauthorised absence accumulated over a period of 4 months which exceeds a threshold of 10 sessions (5 days) will result in a request for a Penalty Notice to be issued.

Taking a pupil on leave during term time interrupts teaching and learning and can disrupt educational progress. Before completing this application form parent/carers are asked to consider the effect on their child's continuity of education.

APPLICATION FOR PUPIL LEAVE OF ABSENCE DURING TERM TIME IN EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES

Name of pupil(s): \_\_\_\_\_

D.o.B(s): \_\_\_\_\_ School: \_\_\_\_\_

Class(es): \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone No: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Siblings: (if different school) \_\_\_\_\_ Schools attending: \_\_\_\_\_

I request permission for my child to be absent from school

From \_\_\_\_\_ To \_\_\_\_\_ Total school days \_\_\_\_\_

**Exceptional circumstances for request:**

*(this section must be answered in full and against stated criteria)*

Signature of Parent/Carer \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

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**For school use only**

Seen by Headteacher (signature) \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Decision reached \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Date reply returned to parent (s) \_\_\_\_\_ Bromcom ☐