**WESTGATE PRIMARY SCHOOL**

**WHOLE SCHOOL ATTENDANCE POLICY**

**Rationale:**

Westgate Primary School is a successful school and your child plays their part in making it so. We recognise that attending school regularly has a positive impact on learning, progress, and therefore the best life chances for children. We will encourage excellent attendance for all pupils, by offering an environment in which pupils feel valued and part of the school community.

**Aims**

At Westgate Primary School, we aim for al pupils to have at least 95% attendance throughout the academic year. In order to achieve this we will work in partnership with children and families.

We will:

* Promote a culture across the school which identifies the importance of regular and punctual attendance.
* Make attendance and punctuality a priority for all those associated with the school; including pupils, parents, teachers and governors.
* Further develop positive and consistent communication between home and school.
* Set targets to improve individual and whole school attendance levels.

**Roles and Responsibilities**

**Pupils:**

* To do all they can to attend school regularly and punctually.
* To inform a trusted adult if there are any issues that could impact on their attendance.

**Parents/Guardians:**

* Ensure children attend regularly and punctually.
* Ensure children have correct uniform and equipment and are ready to learn.
* Provide reasons for any lateness.
* Contact school on the first day of absence to provide a reason.
* Avoid any leave in term time and in extenuating circumstances apply in advance.
* Work closely with school staff to address and resolve any obstacles to excellent attendance.
* Ensure school has up to date contact details so school can contact parents/guardians when necessary.

**Headteacher:**

* Ensure there are designated staff with day-today responsibility for attendance monitoring.
* Take overall responsibility for ensuring the school confirms to all statutory requirements in terms of attendance.
* Consider each request for leave meets exceptional circumstances, and notify parents of the decision.
* Where there may be ambiguity regarding absence, make the decision on whether the absence will be authorised or not.
* Make the final decision on proceeding with legal action and fixed penalty notices in relation to unauthorised absence

**Pastoral Manager:**

* Have overall responsibility for monitoring attendance and punctuality.
* Oversee Attendance Monitor on a daily basis and provide support with specific attendance issues.
* Implement appropriate strategies to improve attendance and punctuality.
* Meet half termly with Attendance Monitor to identify children with emerging attendance concerns.
* Engage with families of children with attendance concerns and work in partnership to address specific barriers.
* To carry out home visits with Attendance Monitor where there are attendance concerns.
* Make referrals to Pupil Attendance Support Team (PAST) for extra support with interventions for individual families and to assist in whole school approaches where appropriate.
* Liaise with Headteacher regarding attendance data and specific attendance issues, and produce reports where necessary.
* Meet termly with School Attendance Consultant for North Lancashire Area 1 to analyse attendance data and set and review targets.

**Attendance Monitor:**

* To monitor registers daily, collecting letters of absence and recording unauthorised absences.
* To make first day absence calls, texts or visits, where a child is absence without a reason.
* To input attendance data on SIMS.
* Meet half termly with Pastoral Manager to identify children with emerging attendance issues.
* Maintain a daily presence in the school reception to record late children.
* Liaise with teaching staff in relation to absences and daily attendance matters.

**Teaching Staff:**

* Provide a welcoming and safe learning environment where children can thrive.
* Complete registers clearly in pencil, ensuring no missing marks.
* Inform the Attendance Monitor of any known reasons for absence that have arisen from parental discussion or absence letters.
* To see attendance as the responsibility of **all** school staff.

**Procedures:**

**Registration:**

**Registration is between 8:55am and 9:00am**

Each morning, the class teacher, or nominated representative is responsible for marking children present in the register at the morning and afternoon registration. The registers must be completely clearly and promptly to avoid any discrepancies. After the register has been completed, the teacher must ensure it is returned to the school office for no later than 9:10am.

**Late Registration**:

Pupils requiring admittance after 8:55am must go to the main school entrance and request entry through the school office. For health and safety reasons, any child in Key Stage One **must** be accompanied by an adult.

For any child which is late, a reason will be expected to explain why, and this will be recorded. If no reason is provided by an adult for any child to explain lateness, the child will be asked, and the reason recorded.

In accordance with current guidance, registers remain open until 9:30am. This means that any child that arrives after the registration period (8:55am-9:00am) but before the registers are closed (9:30am) will receive a late mark (L) in the register. This means that the child was present, but arrived late. Any pupil that arrives after the registers close (9:30am) will be given a ‘late after registers close’ mark (U). This mark classes as an unauthorised absence, although does show the pupil was physically present for some of the session.

The fact that the U code is classed as an unauthorised absence means that when it is used children are at risk of missing significant amounts of schooling, putting their education progress at risk. For this reason the use of this code will be considered as serious and likely to result in support being offered by the school Pastoral Team, or a referral to the Local Authority Pupil Attendance Support Team (PAST). If there is no improvement, and this code continues to be used, it is likely that the school will consider the use of legal measures.

**Authorised and Unauthorised Attendance**:

The decision to authorise any absence is based on information provided by the parents/guardians of the children. Due to the register being a legal document, it is the responsibility of the Headteacher to ensure the information recorded is accurate and is accordance with legislation, therefore it is not always sufficient for an absence to be recorded as authorised based solely on the information provided by parents/guardians. At times, additional information will be requested in the way medical appointment card, sight of prescription or similar.

The Attendance Monitor is responsible for maintaining records of reason and length of absence.

* Parents/Carers are required to contact the school office or class teacher on the first day of absence, advising of the reason for the absence and expected return date; if known
* Where information is provided to the class teacher they are responsible for passing this information to the school office
* Where a verbal message is taken by school office staff this should be noted in the register and the class teacher informed
* Where a written note is received by the class teacher this should be returned to the school office with the register
* Where the absence is for several days, the parent/carer is responsible for informing the school of the continued absence and updating them as to the reason for the absence on a regular basis
* Where the absence is for several days without explanation, or the reason provided is unsatisfactory, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and will be addressed with parents promptly. Schools have a responsibility to report such absence to the local authority after a period of 10 school days, or sooner if appropriate
* The reason for absence should be linked directly to the pupil (e.g. illness or medical appointment of/for the child). Reasons for absence relating to parents or siblings may not be authorised

If a child is absent and no contact has been made by the family, the school office will contact the family on the first day of absence, after the registers close at 9.30am. If contact cannot be made the Pastoral Manager should be informed. In this event, a home visit may take place, and every effort will be made to engage the family. In the case of prolonged or repeated absence without justification being given, the Pastoral Manager, in consultation with the Headteacher, will determine whether a referral to the Pupil Attendance Support Team should be made.

The headteacher is responsible for determining what is classed as authorised and what is classed as unauthorised absence.

Examples of authorised absence:

* Medical or dental appointments, which relate directly to the pupil and unavoidably fall during the school day
* Illness of the pupil
* Leave which has been authorised by the headteacher due to exceptional circumstances

Examples of unauthorised absence:

* 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 after the register has closed
* shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
* day trips and leave in term time which have not been agreed
* days that exceed the amount of leave agreed by the headteacher

The chosen code for the absence will be inputted by the Attendance Monitor. Any relevant notes will also be recorded to provide staff with facility to accurately monitor and manage patterns of absence.

**Signing Out:**

Any child leaving school throughout the school day must be signed out by the parents/guardians. The staff in the school office are to ensure that the signing out book is completed for the child and a reason is given. The child will only be released to a parent/guardian or adult authorised by parents/guardians. We ask that the only time a child would leave school through the day is for unavoidable appointments only.

**Leave of Absence**

Following the September 2013 amendment to The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, schools cannot authorise any leave other than in exceptional circumstances. The Headteacher is the person authorised by the 'proprietor' i.e. the governing body, to make this decision. If the leave is being requested for a holiday, approval should be obtained prior to making any bookings.

Leave of absence **SHALL NOT** be granted unless:

* a request for leave has been made in advance, by a parent with whom the pupil normally resides, and
* the Headteacher considers that leave of absence should be granted due to the **EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES** relating to the request.

**Religious Absence**

The school will authorise one day of absence per religious festival, e.g. Eid, (i.e. the day set aside by the religious body of which the parent is a member) and this will be marked as 'R' in the register.
Parents must request any additional leave in advance and this can only be authorised if it is felt that exceptional circumstances apply (this would be marked in the register as 'C').

**Use of Penalty Notices**

At Westgate Primary School, our main aim is to work collaboratively with children and families to ensure they are supported and excellent attendance is achievable. There is a strong pastoral team who are available to support families with any difficulties relating to attendance. However, the legal responsibility to ensure children attend school lies with the parents/guardians. Therefore, Westgate Primary School may request that the local authority issue a penalty notice for ongoing issues of unauthorised absences. This includes leave of absence which is taken without a prior request being made; and leave taken after a prior request has been made and parents have been informed that the period of absence would be classed as unauthorised but the leave is taken regardless of this advice.

**Monitoring, Analysis and Action Planning**

The Pastoral Manager, in consultation with the Headteacher, is responsible for monitoring, analysis and action planning for school attendance. The headteacher is responsible for ensuring that data is returned promptly to the local authority and DfE within deadlines. However, it is expected that the day to day implementation of this will largely rest with the class teachers and Attendance Monitor, who take the register and highlight causes for concern and the school office who are responsible for maintaining the school records on attendance and for highlighting causes for concern.

The Pastoral Manager and Attendance Monitor will review the attendance records at least once every half term to check that there are no outstanding causes for concern.

The Headteacher is required to review this whole school attendance policy and procedural framework annually and to report on attendance matters to the governors termly. The governors will also review the attendance policy at least annually to ensure that it continues to meet the needs of the school.

**Monitoring the attendance of pupils who are educated off site**

When pupils are **dual registered,** their registration status will acknowledge this. For sessions when a dual registered pupil is expected to attend Westgate Primary School the usual attendance procedures will be followed. When this pupil is expected to attend the other establishment our registers will display the D code (Dual Registration). As the Main School we retain responsibility for dual registered pupils. Therefore, the other establishment will be contacted regularly in order to ensure that this placement continues to be successful. When this is not the case, appropriate action will be taken.

**Criteria and Systems for referral to and working with the School Attendance Consultant and the Pupil Attendance Support Team**

The Pastoral Manager, in consultation with the Headteacher, is responsible for ensuring consistent referral of regular or unjustified absence. The criteria for referral are outlined in the systems below.

In addition to the above, the Headteacher or Pastoral Manager can discuss general attendance matters with the School Attendance Consultant. The purpose of such discussions would be to:

* Monitor progress towards targets, highlighting any concerns and identifying any action required
* To receive guidance on latest best practice
* To receive information about local and national trends and benchmarking
* To discuss whether current attendance policy and procedures are effective

**School System for dealing with concerns about Lateness and Absence**

The Pastoral Manager and Attendance Monitor will meet once every half term to analyse the attendance data for children with attendance figures of below 90% and below 85%. Data will also be analysed for children with more than 5 instances of being late (before registers close).

The class teacher is also responsible for raising concerns about lateness or absence of class members to the Pastoral Manager and Headteacher as issues arise.

Next steps:

* An initial letter will be sent out to all pupils with attendance less than 90%.
* The Attendance Monitor and/or Pastoral Manager will discuss the matter informally with the family (including the pupil, if age appropriate)
* Parents will be asked to attend a meeting to discuss reasons for attendance. The Pastoral Manager will host these meetings, and identify any further support for the family. An individual Action Plan/Parent Contract will be written for the family.
* If lateness/absence persists, and school procedures fail to promote the required level of improvement, the Pastoral Manager will contact the Pupil Attendance Support Team who will attend meetings with the family and Pastoral Manager as appropriate and help school determine whether any further interventions are required. These interventions will include consideration of the use of legal measures (penalty notices and prosecution)
* Attendance data will be continually monitored and award letters will be sent out to pupils who have shown improvement in attendance.
* Incentive and reward schemes will be used for individual pupils, as appropriate.

**Communicating The Attendance Policy:**

Information about attendance will be communicated to parents in the following ways:

* Attendance Policy will be available on the school website.
* Information will be sent to parents on a termly basis to indicate excellent attendance and attendance concerns.
* Attendance data will be on annual pupil reports.
* School staff available for discussion at any point for parents to enquire about attendance.
* Attendance Policy summary leaflet to be sent home to all new parents.

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Governors and Headteacher.

**Next review date: September 2023**