



# **Weetwood Primary School Attendance and Punctuality**

Ratified by governors: November 2023  
Review date: November 2024

At Weetwood Primary School we believe that good school attendance and punctuality is very important for the following reasons:

- making sure that children make good progress and attain at the highest levels
- ensuring children feel comfortable and confident in school and enjoy the social aspects of their education
- making sure that children benefit from the quality and range of learning opportunities on offer at school
- keeping children safe
- fostering good habits of resilience and commitment that will help children throughout their lives

School also has a statutory duty to promote good attendance and to record and report absences and lates. Parents/carers and school need to work in partnership to make sure that children attend school every day, on time, as far as is possible. Where there are considerable barriers, we may work with other agencies and partners (such as the Extended Schools Cluster) to improve things.

### Our day to day procedures:

Thank you to everyone who makes sure that their child comes to school every day that they can and helps them to get to school on time. It really helps children to have a good, calm start to the day and not miss out on any learning.

- The school gates open at 8.45am.
- Pupils are greeted by staff members and make their way into the classroom. Gates close at 9am, after this time your child will be marked as late.
- Children who are too **late** to come into school with their class should come in via the **office**. If registration is closed, a **late mark** is given.
- If your child will not be in school please **ring us as soon as possible** before 9am to tell us why.
- If they are off a second or further day, please **ring each day** of their absence unless the first phone call gave a clear reason for more than one day off (e.g. a doctor has specified an amount of time off school).
- If we have not heard from you, we will ring you. This is to **safeguard** the children in case a child is not in school without you knowing. Please do answer our phone call to reassure us.

Ideally children will be in school every single day, but we know that children do get ill and so having above **96%** attendance is considered a reasonable target for all children who do not have complex medical needs. Don't worry – we will phone you if your child is genuinely not well enough to be in school but we know that often getting up, out and joining their friends can be a the best medicine for many slightly peaky children. (You can always let us know to keep an extra eye on your child.)

- If your child needs to miss school for a **medical appointment** please show us proof of the appointment (this can be an appointment card, prescription, text reminder or note from the receptionist). This applies at any point in the school day, including early pick-ups.
- Children **not picked up on time** at the end of the day are brought to the school office. It helps us to reassure the children if you **phone to let us know** why you have been unavoidably delayed.

We monitor all of these aspects of attendance and punctuality to make sure children are getting the education they need. If we notice that a pattern is emerging or a child is in danger of being classed as '**persistently absent**' we will write to you to make sure you are aware.

We want to help families to get into the **good habits** that make good attendance and punctuality easier.

### **Authorised and unauthorised absence**

Authorised absence is where the school accepts there is good reason for absence. An authorised absence requires a written or telephone communication from the parent/carer. A child's own word cannot be taken as reason for absence. Unauthorised absence is any absence that does not fall into the following categories:

- Absence caused by illness or other unavoidable cause. If your child has higher than average absence through illness then you may be asked to obtain medical advice or proof of medical appointments.
- An approved absence for religious observance (this is not usually more than one day's duration for the festival itself and will not be more than two days in any school year)
- Special circumstances approved by the Headteacher

### **Requesting time off in term time (leave of absence)**

Government guidelines now strongly discourage schools from approving days off in term time, except for the most exceptional of circumstances (see appendices). There are 175 days with no school a year, and it is expected that families will arrange their holidays during these times. At Weetwood we will listen sympathetically to requests for leave where a child's attendance is good (generally 96% or above) and will approve them if they are truly exceptional – this would typically not be more than once in a child's time at our school and would not exceed 10 days. In order to request leave of absence in term-time, parents/carers should complete a request form (see appendices) and speak to the headteacher. School would very rarely grant leave in the first two weeks of term in September as it is very important that children make a good transition to their new class, understand the expectations for the year and feel comfortable and confident for the year ahead. School does have the legal ability to apply a fixed penalty notice (fine) to parents for taking unauthorised leave in term time. At Weetwood, however, we do not feel that this is usually the best way to work with parents to achieve good attendance and to foster relationships of trust and openness. It is very important to us that children know they should always tell the truth in school. We will not, therefore, apply for a fine unless:

- there are already attendance concerns that are not being addressed by the parent and communicated about with school
- this is a repeat occurrence and a warning has been given
- parents misinform school about the nature of the absence
- the absence is during a period of statutory tests or examinations

If children are off school for longer than twenty days (or if we are concerned that we do not know where a child is) we reserve the right to refer the children to the CME (Children Missing in Education) team and remove the child from roll.

### **Recording, reporting and monitoring attendance and punctuality**

Class staff take the register at the start of each session (morning and afternoon) using an online system called Arbor. Office staff and class teachers will include any reasons given by parents/carers for absence or lateness. Having this information stored electronically means we can interrogate it to make sure we are supporting families, challenging poor attendance, identifying patterns of poor attendance or punctuality and can provide it to the Department for Education, as required.

Children whose attendance falls below 90% are classed as being **persistently absent**. School takes this very seriously as it can be an indicator for underachievement or a family needing more support. We monitor persistent absence specifically to make sure we are doing all we can to support and challenge a family to improve the situation.

Children's individual attendance reports are attached to the annual reports to parents along with this explanation:

## **Attendance**

Attached to this report is your child's attendance record.

Good = 96%+

Cause for Concern = 94% - 96%

Poor = 90.1% - 93.9%

Persistent Absence = 90% or less

Punctuality

Good = less than 3 lates

Cause for Concern = 3 – 9 lates

Poor = 10 or more lates

Attendance is reported regularly to the governing body. School compares its attendance to the national averages and strives to make sure we understand our attendance data fully.

All school staff have a role to play in making sure they record attendance accurately (e.g. class staff taking registers) and in making sure school is a happy, safe and engaging place to learn that children want to come to. They must also make sure that designated staff are aware of any concerns about children's attendance and of any information that would help to understand a child's pattern of absence or lateness. This is a clear duty for all staff under their safeguarding responsibilities.

### **Support and Challenge in the case of poor attendance**

Usually at Weetwood we enjoy good communication with parents and carers and informal support and encouragement is all that is needed to get attendance back on track, or to understand the legitimate reasons for recent poor attendance. (Poor attendance is where children are (or are at risk of) becoming persistently absent or where an unacceptable pattern of attendance is emerging.) Sometimes a little more support is needed, or a family may need to be challenged to acknowledge the attendance issues and the impact on their child/ren. Here are some of the strategies we use:

- Letters alerting parents to a level of absence or lateness that is a concern.
- Texts to parents of older children who arrive late when coming to school independently
- Work with a member of the SLT to identify barriers, help speak to the children and offer strategies and suggestions that have worked for other families
- Home visits to check children are safe and offer robust support
- Meetings with the headteacher
- Early Help Plans (previously called CAFS)
- Referral to the Attendance Improvement Officer based in our local cluster (INW Hub). This can result in:
  - Individual casework
  - Attendance Panel (constituted of governors, Attendance Improvement Officer, school staff and other relevant agencies)
  - Fixed penalty notice
  - Fast track penalties
  - Referral to court
  - Parenting orders
- Referral to social care (this is rare and would usually be as a last resort or where there were additional safeguarding concerns)

**Appendices (school will always use the most up to date of these forms and guidance. We update our letters from time to time to maintain their effectiveness.)**

Term time leave request form (pages 1 and 2)

Term time leave response letter

Attendance concern letters

Punctuality concern letters

Exceptional leave guidance from LCC

Inner North West Hub Cluster Attendance Flowchart

Fast Track Flowchart

DfE advice on attendance, including the reporting codes used in SIMS:

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/518586/Advice\\_on\\_school\\_attendance.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/518586/Advice_on_school_attendance.pdf)

### **Additional Information related to COVID**

Our current morning routines are slightly modified as children enter in to the classrooms directly from the playground on arrival and sanitise their hands. Registers are still completed in the usual way.

We are tracking attendance and using the government codes for recording absence related to COVID (e.g. waiting for test results when symptomatic, isolation due to class closure or Track and Trace, quarantining after foreign travel or before family medical procedures, etc.)



**NORTH WEST  
LEEDS SCHOOLS**  
APPLICATION FOR  
EXCEPTIONAL LEAVE  
OF ABSENCE DURING  
TERM TIME

Name of School: <b>WEETWOOD PRIMARY SCHOOL</b>		DfE Number: 2421	
<p>Parents, you <b>do not</b> have the right to take your child out of school during term time. By law you must ask permission for your child to miss school. If you fail to gain the school's permission you risk receiving a fixed penalty fine. The penalty is £120 and applies to each child for which permission has been refused. All schools in the north-west area of Leeds have agreed to follow a common policy on absence during term time. Good attendance leads to improved outcomes for your child.</p> <p>If you would like to apply for permission for your child to be absent from school you must complete this form and return it to the school for authorisation at least 10 school days in advance of the proposed leave.</p>			
PARENTS SECTION (to be completed first)			
Surname of child		First name	
Date of birth		Year Group	
Surname of parent/carer		First name	
Address of child			
Postcode		Telephone number	
<p>Parents must seek approval to withdraw their child from school in term-time. Please state the <b>exceptional circumstances</b> that require you to apply to take your child out of school during term time instead of <b>making arrangements</b> for the proposed activity to take place during the school holidays. The cost, convenience or availability of a particular holiday will not be taken into consideration.</p>		Please give information on page 3	
Would (s)he <b>miss</b> any national tests or examinations?		Yes	No
Is her/his attendance already below 92% or a previously agreed individual target?		Yes	No
Is the requested absence during the month of September?		Yes	No
Would (s)he be absent for more than ten school days?		Yes	No
Has (s)he already had leave during term time this year?		Yes	No
If your child has had absence during term time approved during this school <u>year</u> please state the number of days previously agreed.		Days	
Does your child have any siblings for which you are requesting absence in term time in other schools?		Yes	No
If you have answered yes to the previous <b>question</b> please state which schools your other child(ren) attend.			
Length of absence (school days)	Days	From (date)	To (date)
Emergency telephone contact in the Leeds district			
Parent/Carer signature			
Headteacher's comment			
SECTION BELOW TO BE RETAINED BY THE SCHOOL			
For school use only – The cost, convenience or availability of a holiday must not be taken into consideration			
Does the absence requested occur in September?		Yes	No
Does the absence occur during a period of national tests or exams?		Yes	No
Is the child's attendance below 92% or an individually agreed target?		Yes	No
If this request is approved will the child's absence exceed 10 days in this school year?		Yes	No
Has the child had 2 days absence this year for religious observance?		Yes	No
Has the child got siblings in another school for which an absence has been requested?		Yes	No
Other school contacted?		Yes	No
Signed:		Name (Print)	Designation
			ABSENCE APPROVED
		No	Yes



## Schools in North West Leeds have agreed a policy about giving permission for family requested absence from school

- Children must attend school regularly to achieve their potential.
- Children who miss out on school can feel vulnerable and left behind.
- Family requested absence in term-time is very disruptive and can seriously affect your child's education.
- On average, children who miss 17 or more days in a school year lose one full grade in their GCSEs.
- Unauthorised absence can lead to prosecution.

### The Law

By law, you must ask permission for your child to miss school. If you don't, you risk a £120 penalty notice per child. When a school doesn't give permission, absence is unauthorised and counted as truancy.

### Our policy

Parents do not have the right to remove their children from school in term-time. The Headteacher will decide whether or not an absence should be authorised. Headteachers will only authorise absence in term time when there are exceptional reasons for a child to miss school.

Absence in term-time will not be authorised under the following circumstances:

- during national or school tests or examinations;
- when a child's attendance is below 92%, or lower than their previously agreed individual target;
- during the month of September; and
- for more than 10 days during term-time in any school year.

Absence in term-time will only be authorised if parents or carers make a request to the school in advance on the appropriate form and can show that there are exceptional reasons why the absence has to be in term-time. The cost, convenience or availability of a particular holiday will not be taken into consideration.

If an absence has not been authorised by the Headteacher and parents or carers remove their child from school, their child's absence will be recorded as unauthorised in the class register.

**Absence for religious observance may be agreed by the Headteacher but will not exceed 2 days in any school year.**

**Parents or carers who repeatedly take their children out of school without permission may be issued with a fixed penalty fine. The penalty is £120 and applies to each child for which permission has been refused.**

Date

Dear

Thank you for completing a term time absence form. As you know the guidance from the Department for Education has recently changed and we now only have the discretion to grant leave in **exceptional circumstances**. We recognise that there may be times when families need to take a child out of school for a short while and so we encourage parents and carers to fill in a leave form, even when it is unlikely to be authorised. In this way we make sure children know that they can tell school the truth about where they have been and we can make sure there are no safeguarding concerns that may have arisen from unexplained absences.

With reference to the recent application you made for your child to be absent from school I am writing to note that your child is **under statutory school age**.

With reference to the recent application you made for your child to be absent from school I am writing to say that your request has been **approved** in this instance.

With reference to the recent application you made for your child to be absent from school I am writing to say that your request has **not been approved** in this instance.

With reference to the recent application you made for your child to be absent from school I am writing to say that your request has **not been approved** in this instance and meets the criteria for referral to Leeds City Council attendance officers who may issue a fine.

Explanation and notes

We believe it is important to make sure children understand that this absence is for a special reason and not a regular event. It is also important that they keep practising their key skills and that they understand school is still important for them. For that reason we ask parents and carers' cooperation with carrying out some simple learning tasks whilst on leave (if longer than one day).

We suggest:

- Take reading (or other) books and read regularly whilst away
- Keep a diary of the trip or experience. Depending on the age and ability of the children this can be a mixture of writing and drawing. Children often enjoy making a scrapbook type diary, with stuck in tickets, postcards, etc.
- Do some regular practice of maths skills, e.g. Maths Passport targets. Older children can read travel timetables and convert currency. Younger children can count and add up coins, etc.

Please speak to your child's class teacher for other ideas on supporting their learning at home and away.

Yours sincerely



Date

Dear Parent/Carer

I am writing to inform you that your child's attendance has now dropped below 90%. I have enclosed their attendance certificate for your information.

We will continue to monitor your child's attendance over the next few weeks.

Please do not hesitate to contact me regarding this letter.

Kind Regards

Day Date Month Year

Dear

I am writing to you because I am concerned about Name's attendance this term. S/he also has a number of unauthorised absences (delete if not appropriate).

I have enclosed his/her attendance report for your information. It may not seem that your child has been away from school that much, but currently the average school attendance is higher than 96% so you can see that this is below average. We know that children who do not attend school regularly can experience difficulties in making good progress. They can also suffer socially and start worrying about friendships and coming to school.

We want to help you with this and would really like to talk to you as a matter of urgency – please contact me or Hilary Whitehead (Learning Mentor) to arrange a time to meet. You can talk to us in the playground if you are bringing Name to school, or make an appointment to see us if not. If it is impossible to get to school in the next few days then we could have a telephone conversation to see how we will go forward.

Unfortunately if there is no improvement in Name's attendance (particularly if you are not working with us to improve it), I will have no choice but to refer the case to the Attendance Improvement Officer.

I look forward to hearing from you because I know you are very supportive of Name's education.

Yours sincerely

Dear

I am concerned at the number of times that «forename» has been late for school. So far this school year «forename» has been late on «total\_lates\_both» occasions.

«forename» frequently arrives in school after registration has ended and when lessons have started. This will obviously disrupt other pupils and teaching staff as parts of the lesson may have to be repeated to enable «forename» to catch up. It may also be upsetting for «forename» to have to go into class knowing that the lesson has already started.

If there are any difficulties preventing «forename» from getting to school on time, could you please contact me on 01133230450 to arrange an appointment for us to discuss the situation. Otherwise, could I ask you to ensure that «forename» arrives in school at the correct time each day, which is 8.50am.

Yours sincerely

Headteacher

Day Date Month Year

Dear

We recently sent you a copy of our standard letter that goes to children who have 5 or more lates in a given period. I am now writing to you personally because NAME's punctuality does not seem to have improved and I am concerned.

Name has been late ?? times so far this year. I know it can seem like a few minutes don't make a lot of difference, but our experience is that it can have more of an effect than just the minutes of school they miss. Children who routinely have to walk in late to assembly or class discussions can be embarrassed and will either then become shy and not join in, or cover it up with poor behaviour to pretend they don't care. The start of the day sets the tone for the rest of the work to follow and is often when teachers explain what the main learning point for the day will be. Again, this disadvantages children who like to know what they're doing and can result in poor learning and poor behaviour. Finally, many of the key skills children need are practised at the start of the day – skills such as phonics and counting. Children who miss time from the start of the day can often fall behind in their learning.

I know it can be very hard to get to school on time if there are problems with transport, traffic or other members of the family. *I also know that older children who make their own way to school can dawdle or go to the shops when they are have left home in plenty of time.* We aren't writing because we want parents to feel bad but because we want to help you with this and would really like to discuss this as a matter of urgency –please contact me to arrange a time to meet. You can talk to us in the playground if you are bringing Name to school, or make an appointment to see us if not. If it is impossible to get to school in the next few days then we could have a telephone conversation to see how we will go forward.

I look forward to hearing from you because I know you are very supportive of Name's education.

Yours sincerely

## Requests for planned leave in exceptional circumstances

This guidance is to help schools manage requests from parents to take their child/ren out of school for a period of planned absence. It is also relevant for some instances of short notice day to day absences such as sudden bereavement.

The recent changes to pupil registration regulations have removed the discretionary 10 day period for headteachers to authorise a holiday in term time. They also state that **any** requests for leave during term-time can only be authorised in **exceptional circumstances**. In addition, the legislation is clear that requests for leave must be made to the school in advance of the leave being taken. It is also at the headteacher's discretion as to how long to authorise, if they decide to do so.

This guidance aims to help headteachers, governing bodies, and parents and carers understand what could be deemed as an exceptional circumstance, and ensure that, as far as possible, a clear and consistent approach to holidays in term-time is adopted in Leeds.

Many schools are already working collaboratively in existing partnerships – whether those be clusters, families of schools or areas – to agree their expectations and communicate those to parents.

Please find below some guidance which we hope will form the basis of your school's policy. You may have different views or feel that your own school's unique context has a dimension that isn't covered here – ultimately the headteacher and governing body are responsible for determining their own school's policy, so please adopt and/or adapt to suit.

The most important thing is to ensure fairness in the application of the policy. Our advice is to give the governing body, cluster or other partnership a moderation role in reviewing decisions that are challenged and ensuring that all parents and carers have received the same treatment. This is something that children's services need to have evidence of when applying sanctions such as issuing a penalty notice.

In considering any request for leave, the DfE advise that the following considerations are made to help inform decisions and policy. These should be communicated to parents and carers.

*Only exceptional circumstances warrant an authorised leave of absence. Schools should consider each request individually taking into account the circumstances, such as: the nature of the event for which leave is sought; the frequency of the request; whether the parent gave advance notice; and the pupil's attainment, attendance and ability to catch up on missed schooling.*

In Leeds, we also advise schools to consider the timing of the leave in the school calendar and that a planned request for leave during key transitions or exam periods should always be declined.

Other categories of absence that should **never** be considered exceptional are:

- Availability of cheaper holidays
- Birthdays
- Trips to see sporting or musical events
- Day trip
- Shopping or visit to hairdresser
- Over-sleeping
- Taking a long weekend
- Taking the rest of the day off before or after a dental or medical appointment
- Family celebration

It's important that schools can distinguish between parents who are only able to take holidays at fixed times and those that want to take advantage of a cheaper price.

### **Other considerations for exceptional leave**

Certain pupils/parents might make exceptional leave requests that would be authorised.

#### **Child entertainers**

We want to celebrate and showcase our talented children and young people, and many of them perform regularly on tv, film and stage. It is at school's discretion as to how much of this type of leave they are willing to authorise.

#### **Child athletes**

Many children in Leeds are also talented athletes, representing their city, region or country and we want those children to have the opportunity to compete at all levels. Schools should apply the usual considerations as specified above, but this could be deemed exceptional.

#### **Compassionate leave**

A bereavement, relationship breakdown or serious illness can be distressing to a young person and their family. The relationship that the school has with the family, and the child's level of attainment and attendance will help to determine how much time off headteachers would be prepared to authorise under these circumstances.

#### **Young carers**

Advice provided from Willow Young Carers states that one of their aims is that children do not miss school because of their caring responsibilities. Absences should only be authorised in a crisis such as when a parent is dying.

#### **Shift patterns**

Some industries and smaller businesses continue to utilise staggered, fixed leave periods for employees to avoid interfering with production etc. This is an issue for parents to raise with their employers, and for headteachers to consider on an individual basis.

#### **Armed forces children**

Consideration should be given to children whose parents are actively serving in the armed forces. We expect further guidance following an event later this term.



### Inner North West Hub Cluster Attendance Flowchart





# FAST TRACK FLOW CHART





