



## **WEST VALE PRIMARY SCHOOL**

# **ATTENDANCE POLICY**

### **Introduction:**

This is a successful primary academy and your child plays their part in making it so. We aim for an environment which enables and encourages all members of the community to reach out for excellence. For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and your child should be at school, on time, every day the academy is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

It is very important therefore that you make sure that your child attends regularly and this Policy sets out how together we will achieve this.

### **Why Regular Attendance is so important:**

Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any pupil's absence disrupts teaching routines so may affect the learning of others in the same class.

Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is your legal responsibility and permitting absence from the academy without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

### **Promoting Regular Attendance:**

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility - parents, children and all members of the academy staff.

### **To help us all to focus on this we will:**

- Give you details on attendance if your child drops below 95%;
- Report to you on how your child is performing in the academy, what their attendance and punctuality rate is and how this relates to their attainments;
- Celebrate good attendance by issuing 100% attendance awards;

### **Understanding types of absence:**

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the academy (not by the parents), as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required, preferably in writing.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason like illness, medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable cause.

Unauthorised absences are those which the academy does not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been given. This type of absence can lead to the Authority using sanctions and/or legal proceedings. This includes:

- 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 too late to get a mark
- shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- day trips and holidays in term time

### **Persistent Absenteeism (PA):**

A child becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more schooling across the academy year for whatever reason. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we need parents' fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

We monitor all absence thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA mark **or is at risk of moving towards that mark** is given priority, you will be informed immediately attendance drops below 95% and a meeting will be requested to explore ways of improving attendance.

PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully through our pastoral system and we also combine this with academic mentoring where absence affects attainment.

All PA cases are also automatically made known to the In-House Parent Support Worker.

### **Absence Procedures:**

#### **If your child is absent you must:**

- Contact us as soon as possible by telephone 01422 372804 on the first day of absence and continue to keep us informed or email: [admin@westvale.calderdale.co.uk](mailto:admin@westvale.calderdale.co.uk)
- Or, you can call into the academy and report to reception.

#### **If your child is absent and we have not heard from you, as a matter of safety we will:**

##### **Adopt our first day calling procedures:**

- 1) Children present are registered.
- 2) Late children checked against attendance registers
- 3) Absence calls listened to/attendance emails checked
- 4) First day phone call to first name on contact list within half an hour of school start time asking for response
- 5) If no response to phone call within 45 minutes of school start time, ring down contact list until reply is received, ensuring where possible that someone from outside of the family home has been contacted.

- 6) Alert Principal/DSL that this child is absent and no contact has been made within an hour of school start time
- 7) If no reply follow up phone calls for all contacts.
- 8) Home Visit made if possible/appropriate by school or other agency involved
- 9) Contact Police if all other stages have been completed and there is still no contact regarding the absent child. This should be done using the 101 number.

#### **Further intervention will include:**

- Invite you in to discuss the situation with our Senior Leaders if absences persist;
- Refer the matter to the Senior Leaders if attendance moves below 95%.

#### **Telephone numbers:**

There are times when we need to contact parents about lots of things, including absence, so we need to have your contact numbers at all times. So help us to help you and your child by making sure we always have an up to date number – if we don't then something important may be missed. There will be regular checks on telephone numbers annually.

#### **SUPPORT:**

Whilst any child may be off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the academy, the parents and the child. If your child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and usually make things worse.

Parents are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any problems together. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, the Senior Leaders may seek outside agency help. They will also try to resolve the situation by agreement but, if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed and unauthorised absences persist, sanctions such as Penalty Notices or prosecutions in the Magistrates Court can be activated.

#### **Lateness:**

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If your child misses the start of the day they can miss work and do not spend time with their class teacher getting vital information and news for the day. Late arriving children also disrupt lessons, this can be embarrassing for the child and can also encourage absence.

#### **How we manage lateness:**

The school day starts at **9.00am** with the doors open from **8.50 a.m.** We expect your child to be in class at that time.

Registers are marked by **9.05 a.m.** and your child will receive a late mark if they are not in by that time.

At **9.30 a.m.** the registers will be closed. In accordance with the Regulations, if your child arrives after that time they will receive a mark that shows them to be on site, but this will **not** count as a present mark and it will mean they have an unauthorised absence. This may mean that you could face the possibility of a Penalty Notice if the problem persists.

If your child has a persistent late record you will be asked to meet with the Senior Leadership Team to resolve the problem, but you can approach us at any time if you are having problems getting your child to school on time.

### **Holidays In Term Time:**

Taking holidays in term time will affect your child's schooling as much as any other absence and we expect parents to help us by not taking children away in school time.

From 1<sup>st</sup> September 2013 the Education Regulations changed:

'Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. Headteachers should determine the number of days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted'.

All applications for leave under exceptional circumstances must be made in advance and will be considered by a minimum of 2 governors and the Principal. In making a decision the Governors and Principal will consider the circumstances of each application individually, including any previous pattern of leave in term time.

The exceptional circumstances under which leave may be authorised include

- Illness of a close relative living at some distance
- Bereavement
- Inability of parent to take holidays because of special duties eg police/armed forces

Even when exceptional circumstances do occur we may refuse to authorise leave in term time:

- When a child is just starting the academy. This is very important as your child needs to settle into their new environment as quickly as possible.
- Immediately before and during assessment periods (SATS).
- When a child's attendance record already includes any level of unauthorised absence.
- Where a child's attendance rate is already 95% or will fall to or below that level as a result of taking holiday leave.

Any period of leave taken without the agreement of the academy, or in excess of that agreed, will be classed as unauthorised and may attract sanctions such as a Penalty Notice.

### **School targets, projects and special initiatives:**

The academy has targets to improve attendance and your child has an important part to play in meeting these targets.

The minimum level of attendance is at least **95%** attendance and we will keep you updated regularly about progress to this level and how your child's attendance compares.

Through the academy year we monitor absences and punctuality to show us where improvements need to be made.

Information on any projects or initiatives that will focus on these areas will be provided in our newsletters and we ask for your full support.

### **Those people responsible for attendance matters in this Academy**

Mrs Pam Gunter– Academy Administration  
Mrs Jayne Firth, Chief Operations Officer  
Mrs Fiona Gardiner – Principal  
Mrs Sally Scott - Deputy  
Mrs Amanda Bennett, CEO

### **Summary:**

The academy has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents and to promote attendance. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend. All academy staff are committed to working with parents and pupils as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible.

**Date of Policy /Review:**

October 18