

Introduction

Westley is committed to providing an education of the highest quality for all its pupils / students and recognises this can only be achieved by supporting and promoting excellent school attendance for all. This is based on the belief that only by attending school regularly and punctually will children and young people be able to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them. High attainment depends on good attendance.

The whole school community – pupils / students, parents and carers, teaching and support staff and school governors – have a responsibility for ensuring good school attendance and have important roles to play. The purpose of the policy is to clarify everyone's part in this.

The policy has been drawn up after consultation with the whole community and is based on current government and Local Authority guidance and statutory Regulations. The school will ensure that all members of the community know of the policy and have access to it.

School's roles and responsibilities

All staff (teaching and support) at Westley have a key role to play in supporting and promoting excellent school attendance and will work to provide an environment in which all our pupils / students are eager to learn, feel valued members of the school community and look forward to coming to school every day. Staff also have a responsibility to set a good example in matters relating to their own attendance and punctuality.

Attendance Leader

A member of the Senior Leadership Team will oversee, direct and co-ordinate the school's work in promoting regular and improved attendance and will ensure the Attendance Policy is consistently applied throughout the school. This person, known as the Attendance Leader, will also ensure that up-to-date attendance data and issues are shared weekly with the Senior Leadership Team, are made regularly available to all staff, pupils / students and parents (who will regularly be reminded about the importance of good school attendance) and that a report is prepared for the governing body half termly. (S)he will ensure that attendance issues are identified at an early stage and that support is put in place to deal with any difficulties. Westley Middle School's attendance target will be set at the beginning of each academic year.

Registration

The school is required to mark the attendance register twice each day: once at the start of the day and once during the afternoon session. Classroom teachers / form tutors are responsible for the completing the attendance registers using the prescribed codes (shown below).

REGISTER CODES

CODE	DESCRIPTION	MEANING
/	Present (AM)	Present
\	Present (PM)	Present
B	Educated off site (NOT Dual registration)	Approved Education Activity
C	Other Authorised Circumstances (not covered by another appropriate code/description)	Authorised absence
D	Dual registration (i.e. pupil attending other establishment)	Approved Education Activity
E	Excluded (no alternative provision made)	Authorised absence

F	Extended family holiday (agreed)	Authorised absence
G	Family holiday (NOT agreed <u>or</u> days in excess of agreement)	Unauthorised absence
H	Family holiday (agreed)	Authorised absence
I	Illness (NOT medical or dental etc. appointments)	Authorised absence
J	Interview	Approved Education Activity
L	Late (before registers closed)	Present
M	Medical/Dental appointments	Authorised absence
N	No reason yet provided for absence	Unauthorised absence
O	Unauthorised absence (not covered by any other code/description)	Unauthorised absence
P	Approved sporting activity	Approved Education Activity
R	Religious observance	Authorised absence
S	Study leave	Authorised absence
T	Traveller absence	Authorised absence
U	Late (after registers closed)	Unauthorised absence
V	Educational visit or trip	Approved Education Activity
W	Work experience	Approved Education Activity
X	Non-compulsory school age absence	Not counted in possible attendances
Y	Enforced closure	Not counted in possible attendances
Z	Pupil not yet on roll	Not counted in possible attendances
#	School closed to pupils	Not counted in possible attendances

The register will be called promptly at **8.45 am** and **1.35 pm** by each class teacher and a mark will be made during the registration period in respect of each child.

The registers will close at **8:50am** and **1:45pm**. Any pupil / student who arrives **after** the closing of the register will count as **absent**. Pupils / students who arrive before the register closes will be counted **present** but will be dealt with under the school's policy on punctuality and lateness.

Categorising absence

A mark will be made in respect of each child during registration. Any child who is not present at this time will be marked unauthorised absent unless leave has been granted by the school in advance or the reason for absence is already known and accepted by the school as legitimate. Where a reason for absence is given and accepted by the school at a later stage, the register will be amended in such a way that the original entry and the amendment / correction are distinguishable. The decision about whether the absence should be authorised or unauthorised rests with the classroom teacher / form tutor.

Westley recognises the clear links between attendance and attainment, and attendance and safeguarding children. It recognises that inappropriate authorisation of absence can be as damaging to a child's education as authorised absence, will potentially send a message to parents that any reason for non-school attendance is acceptable and can render children extremely vulnerable to harm. If absence is frequent or continuous, and except where a child is clearly unwell, staff at Westley will therefore challenge parents about the need and reasons for their children's absence and will encourage them to keep absences to a minimum. A note or explanation from a pupil's home does not mean an absence becomes authorised. The decision whether or not to authorise an absence **will always rest with the school**.

If no explanation about an absence is received by the school **within 2 weeks**, the absence will remain unauthorised.

Absences will be authorised in the following circumstances:

- where leave has been granted by the school in advance, for example –
- a pupil is to participate in an approved performance for which a licence has been granted by the Local Authority,
- a pupil is involved in an **exceptional** special occasion – in authorising such an absence the individual circumstances of the particular case and the pupil's / student's overall pattern of attendance will be considered,
- in **exceptional** circumstances, permission has been granted for a family holiday for which the parents have sought permission in advance (see Page for the school's policy on term-time holidays);
- where the school is satisfied that the child is too ill to attend;
- where the pupil / student has a medical appointment (although parents should be encouraged to make these out of school hours wherever possible, and to return their child to school immediately afterwards – or send him/her to school beforehand);
- where there is an unavoidable cause for the absence which is beyond the family's control, e.g. extreme weather conditions;
- the absence occurs on a day exclusively set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's / student's parent belongs;
- the pupil / student lives more than two miles (if he/she is under eight) or three miles (if he/she has reached eight) and no suitable transport arrangements have been made by the Local Authority;
- the pupil / student is of no fixed abode, his/her parent is engaged in a trade which requires him/her to travel, the pupil / student has attended school as often as the nature of the trade permits **and**, having reached the age of six, he/she has attended 200 sessions in the preceding 12 months;
- in other **exceptional circumstances** (e.g. a family bereavement) and **for a very limited period**.

Except in the circumstances described above, absences will be unauthorised. Some examples of reasons for **not** authorising absence would be:

- no explanation has been given by the parent;
- the school is not satisfied with the explanation;
- the pupil / student is staying at home to mind the house;
- the pupil / student is shopping during school hours;
- the pupil / student is absent for **unexceptional** reasons, e.g. a birthday;
- the pupil / student is absent from school on a family holiday without prior permission;
- the pupil / student has been stopped during a truancy sweep and is unable (or the parent is unable) to give a satisfactory reason for the absence

Approved educational activity

Where a student is engaged in off-site approved educational activities, the school will check his/her attendance on a daily basis before entering the appropriate code in the register.

Class registers

In order to track pupils' / students' whereabouts throughout the day, deal with any truancy that occurs after morning or afternoon registration and to ensure the safety of pupils / students, subject teachers will take a register at the beginning of every lesson to record absence and lateness. Any sudden absences that occur during the day will be picked up immediately by the school office and measures taken to locate the pupil / student.

Staff training

The School Attendance Leader will ensure that all staff responsible for taking registers, including any temporary or supply staff, receive sufficient training to enable them to perform the task accurately.

Collection and analysis of data

The Attendance Leader will ensure that attendance data is complete, accurate, analysed and reported to the senior leadership team, parents and the governing body. (See para. above). The report should include commentary on the trajectory and the school target. The data will inform the school's future practice to improve attendance and prevent disaffection.

Attendance is monitored by year group, tutor group, at subject level and by reasons for absence. It is also analysed by gender, ethnicity, pupils / students with special educational needs and those who are vulnerable to poor attendance.

Accurate attendance returns are made to the DfES within the stipulated time frame.

Systems and strategies for managing and improving attendance

Attendance has a very high profile at Westley and is regularly discussed at assemblies and in tutor groups. Parents are regularly reminded in newsletters and school meetings about the importance of good attendance and its links to attainment, and weekly attendance figures are displayed prominently in school.

Westley has procedures for dealing with unexplained absences within a week. Letters are sent home at the end of each week requesting a reason for the absence.

First-day calling

Westley has in place a system of first-day calling. This means that parents will be telephoned on the first day a pupil / student is absent without explanation to establish a reason for the absence. This helps to identify at an early stage pupils / students who do not have a good reason for absence or who may be absent without their parents' knowledge. Where it is not possible to make contact with parents on the first day of absence, the school will send a letter to them by first class post.

School Strategies to Tackle Absence

The Attendance Leader is responsible for the school management of attendance, policy and systems to ensure that Westley intervenes in non-attendance at an early stage.

Where there is an emerging pattern of a pupil's / student's absence the school will invite parents to a meeting to discuss the reasons for the absences. Plans should be put in place with the parents and pupil / student to resolve any difficulties and improve the attendance within a specified time limit. It will be explained to parents that any future absences will be unauthorised unless there is clear evidence of a good reason for them.

Westley will organise Attendance / Governor Panels to intervene in levels of non-attendance when parents will be invited to discuss the issues of the attendance.

Referral to the Education Attendance Service

If there continues to be unauthorised absences by the end of the specified time (or sooner if the pupil / student is failing to attend school at all), the matter will be referred to the Education Attendance Service). Regulations (Education Pupil Regulations 2006) require schools to inform the LA of every pupil who has been continuously absent without a good reason (i.e. the absence is unauthorised) for 10 school days or more. Schools must also inform the LA of every pupil who fails to attend regularly which is interpreted to mean those pupils who have patterns of unauthorised absence without amassing 10 continuous absences.

Lateness and punctuality

Pupils / students are expected to arrive at school, and be in the correct room for registration, on time every day. It is very disruptive to their own education, and that of others in their class, if they are late. Pupils / students who arrive after the register closes will be marked absent for the whole session (a session being a morning or an

afternoon). This absence will be unauthorised unless the school is satisfied that there is a legitimate reason for the pupil / student to be late. Such a reason will not include things such as missing the bus, clothes in the washing machine or lost shoes. A pupil / student who is persistently absent by reason of lateness will be dealt with in the same way as other pupils with an emerging pattern of absence. If the matter is not resolved quickly, it will be referred to the Headteacher

For health and safety reasons it is important that the school knows who is in the building. Pupils arriving late should therefore report to the school office, **it is important that all pupils / students arriving late follow this procedure.**

For the same reason it is important that pupils leaving the premises legitimately (e.g. for a medical appointment), or returning to school later in the day by signing out at the school office.

Post-registration truancy

Post-registration truancy occurs when a pupil goes missing from school having previously registered for the session. This behaviour not only means the pupil will not be receiving a full-time education, it also potentially renders him/her vulnerable to harm. Westley takes this very seriously and will endeavour to ensure it does not happen. If, however, a pupil / student appears to have left the premises without authorisation, the school will try to make contact with his/her parents immediately and follow its 'missing pupil' policy.

Study leave

There is no requirement at Westley Middle School for pupils to take study leave.

Term-time holidays

Term-time holidays are intended for children whose parents are unable to take holiday at any other time.

Westley will consider every application individually; its policy is NOT to grant leave of absence for a holiday other than in the most exceptional circumstances; time off school for family holidays **is not a right**. An application must be made in writing, with appropriate evidence, **in advance** of the intended holiday.

Westley will consider authorising holidays for:

- service personnel and other employees who are prevented from taking holidays during term-time;
- when a family needs to spend time together to support each other during or after a crisis;
- parents who are subject to a strict and un-negotiable holiday rota and evidence is provided to this effect.

Requests for holidays for the following reasons will not be authorised:

- cheaper cost of holiday;
 - availability of the desired accommodation;
 - poor weather experienced in school holiday periods; and
 - overlap with beginning or end of term.
- Westley will respond to all requests for a leave of absence in writing giving the reasons for the decision.
- Westley will NOT authorise a holiday during periods of national tests ie: SATS examinations.

Extended leave of absence

In considering absence for extended trips overseas Westley will take account of the following:

- a visit to family overseas has a very different significance from a normal 'holiday';
- such visits may be important in terms of children's identity and self-esteem as they grow up;
- parents may feel that the reasons for their visit outweigh the importance of their child's uninterrupted attendance at school (although parents could be encouraged to use the school holiday periods for at least part of their trip);
- the reasons for wishing to make a visit is more difficult, particularly for minority ethnic families, where huge distances and high costs are involved.

Where extended leave of absence is granted there will be an expectation that the pupil undertakes some school-set work during this period.

Parents' / carers' responsibilities

The prime responsibility for ensuring children receive an appropriate and full-time education rests with parents / carers (defined by the Education Act 1996 as those with parental responsibility and those who have the care of a child), who will be supported and encouraged by Westley.

Westley expects parents / carers will:

- ensure their children attend the school regularly;
- support their children's attendance by keeping requests for absence to a minimum;
- not expect the school to automatically agree any requests for absence, and not condone unjustified absence from school.

Parents will also be expected to:

- notify Westley Middle on the first day of absence by telephone, in person or email;
- ensure their children arrive at school on time, properly dressed and with the right equipment for the day;
- work in partnership with the school, for example by attending parents' meetings and consultations, signing homework diaries when asked to do so, taking an interest in their children's work and activities;
- contact the school without delay if they are concerned about any aspects of their children's school lives. Westley will endeavour to support parents to address their concerns.

Pupils' responsibilities

All pupils should be aware of the importance of regular school attendance. If they are having difficulties that may prevent them from attending school regularly, they should speak to their class teacher or form tutor.

Pupils / students should attend all their lessons on time, ready to learn. If they have been absent from school they should give their class teacher or form tutor a note from their parents to explain the absence. Pupils / students also have a responsibility for following school procedures if they arrive late.

Governors' responsibilities

Section 175 (2)

The governing body of a maintained school shall make arrangements for ensuring that their functions relating to the conduct of the school are exercised with a view to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children who are pupils at the school

Conclusion

Regular school attendance is a necessary contributor to ensuring the outcomes of *Every Child Matters* –

- **be healthy** –
attendance at school supports children's emotional and social health and development
the school curriculum teaches children to be healthy
- **stay safe** –
 - schools and the LA have a statutory duty to promote the safety and welfare of children
 - the best way to safeguard children is to ensure they attend school regularly
- **enjoy and achieve** –
good school attendance supports children in reaching their maximum potential and enjoying the fulfilment this brings
- **make a positive contribution** –

membership of a school community builds confidence, gives children a sense of belonging and teaches them to contribute to and be responsible for the well-being of others

achieve economic well-being –

good school attendance supports engagement in further education, employment or training in the future, which in turn helps to support a prosperous and fulfilling life-style.

Reviewing the policy

The school will review this policy each year.