



Attendance Policy

**West Cornforth
Primary School**

2023/2024

Headteacher: Mrs K Costello

Chair of Governors: Mr Dennis Ramsey

Policy reviewed and ratified

West Cornforth Primary School

Attendance Policy

West Cornforth Primary School seeks to ensure that all of its pupils receive an education which maximises opportunities for each pupil to realise his/her true potential. The school will strive to provide a welcoming, caring environment, whereby each member of the school community feels wanted and secure.

We believe that all students benefit from the education we provide, and therefore from regular attendance. Regular school attendance plays a vital role in children's wellbeing and their education, ensuring that their current learning needs are being met but also building their future ability to learn.

As attendance is the essential foundation to positive outcomes for all pupils', improving attendance is everyone's business, a concerted effort across all teaching and non-teaching staff in school, the governing body, the local authority, and other local partners.

Some pupils find it harder than others to attend school and therefore at all stages of improving attendance, the school and partners will work with pupils and parents to remove any barriers to attendance by building strong and trusting relationships and working together to put the right support in place.

It is a parent's legal duty to ensure their children attend school **regularly and on time**. As a school we will work pupils and their families to support parents to meet these legal duties and to ensure children can benefit from attending school regularly.

The school has established an effective system of incentives and rewards which acknowledges the efforts of pupils to improve their attendance and timekeeping and will challenge the behaviour of those pupils and parents who give low priority to attendance and punctuality.

This policy has been reviewed and rewritten in line with the DfE 'School attendance Departmental advice for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities' (October 2014), 'School attendance parental responsibility measures' (January 2015) and DfE 'Guidance for full opening of school' 31 July 2020.

This policy is supported by our policies on safeguarding, bullying, behaviour and inclusive learning.

The school and all partners will work together to:

EXPECT

Aspire to high standards of attendance from all pupils and parents and build a culture where all can, and want to, be in school and ready to learn by prioritising attendance improvement across the school.



MONITOR

Rigorously use attendance data to identify patterns of poor attendance (at individual and cohort level) as soon as possible so all parties can work together to resolve them before they become entrenched.



LISTEN AND UNDERSTAND

When a pattern is spotted, discuss with pupils and parents to listen to understand barriers to attendance and agree how all partners can work together to resolve them.



FACILITATE SUPPORT

Remove barriers in school and help pupils and parents to access the support they need to overcome the barriers outside of school. This might include an early help or whole family plan where absence is a symptom of wider issues.



FORMALISE SUPPORT

Where absence persists and voluntary support is not working or not being engaged with, partners should work together to explain the consequences clearly and ensure support is also in place to enable families to respond. Depending on the circumstances this may include formalising support through a parenting contract or education supervision order.



ENFORCE

Where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or not being engaged with, enforce attendance through statutory intervention or prosecution to protect the pupil's right to an education.

1. Attendance and Attainment

We recognise that the relationship between attendance and achievement of our students is inextricably linked.

Regular school attendance is crucial to maximise pupil progress and enjoyment of learning, and for this reason the school is dedicated to ensuring its attendance policy is adhered to.

We will ensure that:

- All students have an equal right, and access to, an education in accordance with the national curriculum, or agreed alternative.
- Attendance is a priority across the school
- Students will not be deprived of their education opportunities by, either their own absence or lateness, or that of students.
- Action is taken where necessary to secure an improvement in attendance.

2. The Law

You need to make sure your child attends school regularly and on time. Because parents are responsible for this duty in law, you will be **breaking the law** if you do not do this and there are no good reasons for missing school.

The School and Local Authority **want to help you if you have a problem.** If attendance does not get better or you do not accept help and support offered, the Council may issue you with a warning notice, Penalty Notice or ask you to attend an interview to ask you questions about whether you have broken the law.

If you go to court and are found guilty of an offence, you could be fined up to £1,000 for a less serious offence or up to £2,500 if the law breaking is more serious. **In very serious cases, the court may involve the probation service or consider up to 3 months in prison.**

3. Attendance data

The school target for attendance is 96%. We use data on a daily / weekly / monthly basis to improvement efforts to the pupils or pupil cohorts who need it most. We will identify patterns of poor attendance (at individual and cohort level) as soon as possible so all parties can work together to resolve them before they become entrenched.

4. Listening to and understanding barriers to attendance

The school will discuss attendance with pupils and parents to listen to and understand barriers to attendance and make a plan / otherwise agree how all partners can work together to resolve them. The school will use a range of methods to support attendance.

5. Facilitate support

The school will strive to remove barriers in school and help pupils and parents to access the support they need to overcome the barriers outside of school and

that this might include an early help or whole family plan where there are wider issues affecting attendance. The school will work closely with families and pupils to reduce persistent and severe absence, including accessing wider support services and using a more formalised in conjunction with the local authority. Each case is different and will be dealt with on the individual circumstances.

6. Formalise support

Where absence persists and voluntary support is not working or not being engaged with, partners will work together to explain the consequences clearly and ensure support is also in place to enable families to respond. This may be formalised through a parent contract, half termly meetings, enforcement by the Local Authority.

7. Enforce

Where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or not being engaged with, attendance may be enforced where necessary through statutory intervention or prosecution to protect the pupil's right to an education.

8. Attendance Procedures and Absence Processes

a) On the first day off

If a child is absent for any reason, parents or carers are asked to phone the school office giving a reason for the child's absence. If a child is absent from school and there is no phone call from home then school will phone home to inform parents that the child is not in school and enquire about a reason why. If we still do not get a reason for absence, staff may make a home visit.

Doctors and dentist appointments should be made outside of school time. If this is not possible, your child should miss the minimum amount of school time necessary. If they are well enough to come back to school following the appointment they need to.

b) Periods of extended absence

If a child's absence continues beyond three days then parents are requested to notify the school to update them. If a phone call is not received then the school will contact home to verify the absence and take any relevant action in relation to assuring itself of the child's welfare.

If the school receives no reason for any absence then an unauthorised absence will be recorded. Continued absenteeism and unauthorised absences could result in further action such as referral to the Attendance Improvement Team to consider enforcement action and possibly a fixed penalty notice (this includes unauthorised absences accrued through leave of absence taken during term time).

c) Absence authorisation

The High Court has confirmed that the school's Head Teacher authorises absences. In some circumstances, the school may request that parent's provide medical evidence

to support absences.

We are committed to supporting your child effectively, to ensure that they get the very best education possible and therefore have the best life chances. All challenges made concerning persistent absences, will be handled sensitively and in confidence.

d) Help & Support:

If you need help with attendance, it is important that you contact school about the issues as soon as possible. The quicker we know what the problem is, the quicker that we can work together to solve it, and put a plan together which will meet your child's needs and ensure your child can benefit from all that school has to offer. Where needed we can also involve other services to make sure that your child and your family gets the right support, at the right time from the right people.

e) Communication:

We are asking all parents to please remember to report and explain the reasons for absence and to make sure your contact and emergency contact details are up to date.

It is vital, that school can contact parents if their child becomes unwell during the school day or in order to discuss the reasons for absence.

The school will analyse absence across the school. As a result of this, some families will receive letters to inform them if their child's absence is lower than it should be if no prior discussion has taken place (unless this is due to coronavirus/frequent hospital appointments and/or long term medical needs). If we have concerns regarding your child's attendance then we may contact you by phone, letter, invite you to a meeting or make a visit to your home.

As a parent you may identify concerns about school attendance early on if you have seen a change in your child's attitude to school or in their willingness to attend. If this is the case, please share your concerns with us and we can work together to ensure that school attendance doesn't ever need to decline. The quicker that concerns are shared, the quicker they can be resolved.

The school will work with you to discuss ways that we can offer support in finding a way to improve attendance.

f) Enforcement Action:

If, following the schools attempts to intervene there is no significant improvement and no good reasons for absences (i.e. absences are not supported by relevant evidence), or you have not co-operated with the school's attempts to improve the situation the school are required to consider referring the matter to the Local Authority for enforcement action.

We are committed to supporting your child effectively, to ensure that they get the very best education possible and therefore have the best life chances. All challenges made concerning persistent absences, will be handled sensitively and in confidence.

g) Punctuality:

Registration time is at **9.00am** and **1.00pm** for all pupils. It is so important for all children to be on time, as missing the first few minutes of any lesson can be disruptive and unsettling, both for children and for the rest of the class. If a child arrives in school up to 15 minutes after this time then a late mark will be recorded in the register (L). Registers will be closed at this point and any children arriving more than 15 minutes late will be recorded as (U) which is a late after registers close mark and this is classed as an unauthorised absence (a number of these marks can also contribute to a fixed penalty notice being issued).

If your child is late for school:

All children arriving late at school will be asked the reason for their lateness and this will be recorded on the school's attendance data base (SIMs).

1. If a child is late (after registers close) for school on a number of occasions; A

letter will be sent home from school to parents to say their child's punctuality is causing some concern. An appointment with the head teacher will be offered to discuss ways that the school can offer support in finding a way improve this. Incentives to improve punctuality may also be offered to pupils.

2. If lateness becomes persistent with no identifiable reason –

A letter will be sent home from school with a specific appointment given to meet with head teacher or deputy head for a 'planning meeting'. This will aim to address any issues which may be behind this pattern of poor punctuality.

3. If the school continues to have concerns about a child's punctuality;

Then a referral may be made to the Attendance Improvement Team to consider if enforcement action is required.

h) Leave of Absence in Term Time

Head teachers are no longer able to grant leave of absence during term time **unless there are exceptional circumstances**. The school will consider each request of absence individually; taking into account the circumstances, such as; the nature of the event for which leave is sought, the pupil's prior attendance and any important events taking place in school at that time e.g. termly tests.

An application for leave of absence must be made well in advance via a form which is available from the school website or in person from the school office. Where a leave of absence is granted, the head teacher will determine the number of days a pupil can be away from school. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the head teacher's discretion. As stated in the most recent DFE guidance on attendance, if an application for leave of absence is not made prior to the time of the required absence then the absence will be recorded as unauthorised regardless of circumstances.

Please note that absence will not be authorised under any circumstances during any period of public examinations or internal assessments.

5. Promoting good attendance and punctuality

In order to promote attendance and punctuality the school will give out a weekly trophy for the class with the best attendance. Further to this, any children who achieve 99- 100% attendance over each half term will receive a certificate and prize in assembly. Attendance percentages will be shared with parents on a weekly

basis on the school newsletter, at termly parents' meetings and also annual reports to parents will contain a record of individual pupils' attendance. Parents will be notified of their child's 100% attendance every Friday via text.

6. Children Missing from Education:

If you move from the area and your whereabouts are unknown, the school can legally remove your child from the roll after twenty school days of unauthorised absence. It is **vital that if you keep school informed of any change of details** and regularly update them if details change. Your child may be at risk of losing their school place if your whereabouts are not known.

It is also important that emergency contact information is kept up to date and that if you are leaving the area, you provide details of where and how you can be contacted. If you do not do this and the school is unable to trace your child, this would be treated as a **safeguarding matter**.

7. Roles and Responsibilities

Governing Body:

As part of our school approach to maintaining high attendance, the governing body will:

- Ensure that the importance of attendance is made clear by promoting the relevant school policies and guidance directed to parents and staff.
- Annually review the school's attendance policy and ensure that all provisions are in place to allow school staff, parents, and students to implement the policy effectively.
- Ensure regular meetings of the behaviour and attendance sub-committee take place and they will take the lead role in monitoring attendance and coordinating provision and policies for attendance. The governor's meetings will review and discuss attendance issues that have arisen in order to be fully aware and supportive of expected attendance targets for the year.
- Ensure that the school is implementing effective means of recording attendance and organising that data, including for children who are educated off site.

School Leadership Team:

As part of our school approach to maintaining high attendance, the leadership team will:

- Be active in their approach to promoting good attendance with students and their parents.
- Ensure the school's teaching and learning experiences encourage regular attendance and that students are taught the value of high attendance for their own progression and achievement.
- Coordinate with the governing body to monitor the implementation of the policy and its effectiveness, with annual review of full policy.
- Ensure that all staff are up to date with the school's attendance policy and that staff are fully trained to recognise and deal with attendance issues.
- Ensure government legislation on attendance is complied with and that the leadership team are up to date with any legislation changes and how to implement them.

- Nominate or appoint a senior manager to take responsibility for overseeing and monitoring attendance provision and that this person has sufficient time and resources to give to the job.
- Report to the appropriate sub committee meeting each term on attendance records, data and provision.
- Ensure that systems to record and report attendance data are in place and working effectively.

Teachers and support staff:

As part of our school approach to maintaining high attendance, the teachers and support staff will:

- Be active in their approach to promoting good attendance with students and their parents.
- Ensure the school's teaching and learning experiences encourage regular attendance and that students are taught the value of high attendance for their own progression and achievement.
- Ensure the senior manager responsible for overseeing attendance and any other relevant personnel are kept fully aware of and up to date with any concerns relating to students that may impact on their attendance.
- Ensure compliance with regulation and guidance on attendance.
- Work professionally with parents, carers, students and relevant agencies to secure improvements in attendance via appropriate support or enforcement measures.
- Ensure understanding and are following the correct systems for recording attendance and that attendance is taken each lesson and session.

Parents / Carers:

As part of our school approach to maintaining high attendance, we expect that parents / carers will:

- Engage with their children's education – support their learning and take an interest in what they have been doing at school.
- Promote the value of good education and the importance of regular school attendance at home.
- Follow the procedures outlined in this policy regarding absences, ill health, medical or dental appointments, leave of absence in term time and punctuality.
- Do everything they can to prevent unnecessary school absences.
- Keep the school informed of any circumstances which may affect their child's attendance and work with staff in resolving any issues that may be having an impact on their child.
- Enforce a regular routine at home in terms of homework, bedtime etc so that the child is used to consistency and the school becomes part of that routine. It is vital that the child receives the same messages at home as they do at school about the importance of attendance.