



# **WESTWOOD PRIMARY SCHOOL AND GROVE PRIMARY SCHOOL ATTENDANCE POLICY**

Date Written: September 2021

Review Date: September 2022

Approved by LGB: 4<sup>th</sup> November 2021

### **Purpose**

Westwood Primary School and Grove Primary School are committed to providing an education of the highest quality for all its pupils and recognises this can only be achieved by supporting and promoting excellent school attendance for all. It is our fundamental aim for all children that they will attend school every day that is available to them; this will ensure children are able to take full advantage of all educational opportunities planned for them.

The whole school community has a responsibility for promoting excellent attendance; parents, pupils and all school staff. Both Schools acknowledge the clear links between attendance and attainment, and attendance and safeguarding children.

### **Parent's Responsibilities**

The Education Act 1996 states that all children should attend school regularly and punctually. The Act states, "If a child of compulsory school age who is registered at a school fails to attend regularly at the school, his/her parent is guilty of an offence".

We ask parents to work with us to ensure good attendance by:

- ensuring your child arrives on time every day;
- promoting a good attitude to learning by ensuring your child attends school in the correct uniform and with the basic equipment required for lessons;
- notifying the school as soon as possible on the first day of an absence (by phone, ParentMail or in person);
- providing reasons for the absence (if insufficient information is given the absence may be unauthorised);
- providing medical information/evidence when requested;
- returning your child to school as soon as possible following an illness;
- making medical/dental appointments outside of school hours wherever possible;
- not taking holidays during term time.

If a child is feeling unwell due to a 'headache' or 'stomach ache' they should be encouraged to attend school; the school will contact parents if their condition worsens and they need to go home.

If a child is absent from school for a prolonged period of time, or has a recurrent medical problem, parents should send supporting documentation to the school office; this will be photocopied and returned to the parent.

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### **School Responsibilities**

All staff at Westwood Primary School and Grove Primary School 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 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.

The Executive Headteacher will lead attendance and will oversee, direct and co-ordinate both schools' work in promoting regular and improved attendance and will ensure the Attendance Policy is consistently applied throughout the schools. She will also ensure that up-to-date attendance data and issues are shared with the Senior Leadership Team, are made regularly available to all staff, pupils and parents and included in the termly report prepared for the Local Governing Body. The Executive Headteacher will ensure that attendance issues are identified at an early stage and that support is put in place to deal with any difficulties.

Both Schools are responsible for ensuring that children have good attendance by:

- Providing a welcoming and safe environment, which encourages attendance and promotes the best performance from children.
- Providing a curriculum that is engaging and meets the needs of all learners.
- Ensuring that attendance registers are kept accurately, using all necessary register codes.
- Differentiating appropriately between authorised and unauthorised absence (a letter from a parent does not authorise an absence, only the school can decide if the reason justifies authorising the absence).
- Contacting parents when there is concern about a child's absence (if attendance falls below 95%) either by phone or letter.
- Phoning parents on the first day of absence if a reason for absence has not been received.
- Working with pupils and their families where attendance is a concern, identifying barriers to good attendance and working to overcome these.
- Consulting with the Education Welfare Service with concerns around pupil's attendance or possible missing child.
- Making a referral to the Education Welfare Service where necessary and adopting the Penalty Notice Protocol.
- Acknowledging and rewarding good attendance of pupils and/or classes.
- Giving pupil attendance updates through our website, parent interviews and half termly newsletters.
- Issuing termly letters to parents advising them of their child's attendance to date.
- Pupil's attendance rates will be included in the annual reports sent to parents.
- Continuing to undertake regular attendance audits in line with Suffolk County Council's Policy.

### **Local Governing Body Responsibilities**

Governors recognise the importance of attendance in learning, attainment and raising aspirations. The Local Governing Body and Active Learning Trust will appoint one of their members to be the Attendance Link Governor.

The Attendance Link Governor is responsible for:

- Ensuring the school is regularly monitoring attendance;
- Meeting with the school attendance lead to review attendance data and plans for improving attendance e.g. rewards for good attendance;
- Reviewing the level of persistent absenteeism (where attendance is 90% or less) and the actions being taken to address it;
- Reporting to the Local Governing Body termly on attendance matters.

### **Schools Times and Registration**

Both Schools are required to mark the attendance register twice each day; once at the start of the day and once during the afternoon session. Classroom teachers are responsible for completing the attendance registers using the prescribed codes (Appendix 1).

The school is open to children from 8.30 am. The register will be taken promptly at 8:45 am and 1.00 pm by each class teacher and a mark will be made during the registration period in respect of each child. Morning Nursery opens at 8.45am and Afternoon Nursery is from 12.30pm.

The registers will close at 9.05 am and 1.10 pm. Any pupil who arrives after the closing of the register will count as absent. Pupils who arrive before the register closes will be counted as present.

### **Absence**

Both Schools will authorise absence in the following circumstances:

1. Where the school is satisfied that the child is too ill to attend. Medical verification should be sought wherever possible; this may include a doctor's appointment card, prescription, and photograph of any medication prescribed.
2. Where the pupil has an essential medical appointment. Parents are encouraged to make these outside of school hours wherever possible, and to return their child to school immediately afterwards, or send them beforehand. Verification of appointments should be provided upon return to school.
3. Where the absence occurs on a day exclusively set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the child's parent/carer belongs.
4. Where there are extenuating family circumstances that may necessitate term time absence, e.g. bereavement, funeral or terminal illness.

If you wish to request term time leave for exceptional circumstances you will need to obtain and then return a form to the School Office. The letter should be submitted 4 weeks prior to the absence and include as much detail as possible with the appropriate evidence. Following receipt of the form, you may be required to meet with a member of the Senior Leadership Team.

The Executive Headteacher will make a decision based on the emotional considerations of the child and any other extenuating factors as to whether or not the leave can be authorised. Parents and Carers will receive notification as to whether the absence has been authorized or unauthorised. Unauthorised absence may result in

1. Possible legal intervention (Fixed Penalty Notice)
2. Referral to the Local Authority

### **Penalty Notices**

Parents have a legal responsibility for ensuring their children receive a full-time and efficient education, and the Local Authority have a duty to enforce this where necessary. Local Authorities are authorised to issue Penalty Notices in cases of unauthorised absence from school. Penalty Notices are intended to be early deterrents to patterns of unauthorised behavior.

Westwood Primary School and Grove Primary School will use the criteria set in this policy and make a Penalty Notice Referral to the Local Authority as follows:

- On the eleventh session of unauthorised absence (after more than five days as each day is made up of two sessions) within the academic year.

The Local Authority (Suffolk County Council) will then issue a Penalty Notice fine per parent per child. A "parent" is defined as someone who has parental responsibility for a child or who has the care of that child.

Parents should note that fines increase if they are not paid within the specified time. If Penalty Notices are not paid in full within 28 days of issue, the County Council will start legal proceedings against parents in the Magistrate's Court for the original offence of failing to ensure their child attends school regularly.

Further information on Suffolk County Council's Penalty Notice Code of Conduct can be found on their website ([www.suffolk.gov.uk](http://www.suffolk.gov.uk)) or on the school's website (under Key Information/Policies) or call 0345 606 6172.

Westwood Primary School and Grove Primary School do not benefit in any way from Penalty Notices.

### **Referrals to the Education Attendance Service**

If the school still has concerns over a child's attendance after a Penalty Notice has been issued, the school will make a referral to the Education Attendance Service. An Educational Welfare Officer (EWO) will then contact the parents to arrange a meeting to discuss their child's attendance.

### **Children Missing in Education (CME)**

Westwood Primary School and Grove Primary School are both fully aware of the link between prolonged and unexplained absence from school and Safeguarding. Where there is concern about a child transferring between schools or an insufficient explanation for absence, we will escalate our concerns to satisfy ourselves that the child in question is safe. We will endeavor to keep clear communication between our Attendance Lead and Office staff as well as with the parents. Where concerns remain staff will seek immediate advice and a referral will be made to the Education Welfare Officer in order to ensure the child is safe.

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## **Strategies for Managing and Improving Attendance**

### **First-day calling**

Parents will be contacted on the first day a pupil is absent without explanation to establish a reason for the absence. This helps to identify at an early stage pupils 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 emergency contact numbers will be called. In the event of no contact being made, a member of staff may visit the family home. A letter will be sent to the parents if contact still cannot be made.

### **Children arriving late**

When classroom doors are closed at 9:00am, children will need to arrive through the main office. Parents are required to sign the children into school and are recorded as late after the registers close. Parents must sign them into school using our Inventory system. They must specify the reason why their child is late for school. If there are more than five late sessions recorded, parents may be sent a letter inviting them into school to discuss any concerns. Late sessions may also lead to a Fixed Penalty Notice.

### **Early Collection from school**

If you need to collect your child early from school, this needs to be communicated and authorized in advance. Only on rare occasions will children be allowed to leave school before 3.15pm. Parents and Carers will need to sign their child out of school on our Inventory system

### **Meeting with parents**

The Attendance Managers track attendance every week and produce reports for the attention of the Executive Headteacher. Attendance below 90% will be discussed with the Executive Headteacher. Parents will be asked to attend a meeting to discuss reasons for the absences. Plans will be put in place with the parents and pupil to offer the necessary support to resolve any difficulties and to improve attendance.

If attendance does not improve within a month or dips below 80% the Executive Headteacher may issue a Fixed Term Penalty Notice and refer the case to the Local Authority.

At the end of each half term, the Attendance Managers send details of each child's attendance (Registration Certificate) to parents.

### **Profile & Rewards**

Attendance has a very high profile at Westwood Primary School and Grove Primary Schools and is regularly discussed at assemblies and in classes. Each week in the Celebration Assembly the class with the best attendance receives a certificate. When three certificates have been achieved, the class receive a free breakfast of their choice. In these situations the school is very aware that some children, due to long term medical conditions, may never be able to achieve a high rate of attendance. This is taken into account when considering rewards for attendance so that classes/individuals do not feel disadvantaged in these circumstances.

Parents are regularly reminded in newsletters and school meetings about the importance of good attendance and its link to attainment.

## **Conclusion**

Regular school attendance is a necessary contributor to ensuring that children obtain the best possible outcomes in all aspects of school life. Good attendance supports children's emotional and social health and development. Good attendance is the best way to safeguard children, it builds confidence and gives children a sense of belonging which ultimately teaches them to contribute to and be responsible for the wellbeing of others.

## Appendix 1 - 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 (ie pupil attending other establishments)	Approved Education Activity
E	Excluded (no alternative provision made)	Authorised absence
F	Family holiday (agreed)	Authorised absence
G	Family holiday (NOT agreed or days in excess of agreement)	Un-authorised 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)	Authorised absence
N	No reason yet provided for absence	Un-authorised absence
O	Un-authorised absence (not covered by any other code/description)	Un-authorised 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	Not expected to attend school (e.g. non-compulsory school age or self-isolating due to Covid-19)	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