



# WIMBLEDON PARK PRIMARY SCHOOL

## Attendance Policy

Approved: Chair of Governors

Headteacher

Date:

Date

Next revision: July 2024

This policy outlines the obligations of parents and carers and the school in relation to pupil attendance, and provides details of the approach the school takes to fulfilling its statutory obligations.

Regular school attendance is essential if children are to make the most of the educational opportunities available to them. Irregular school attendance can lead to educational disadvantage and can place young people at risk. Children with poor attendance have increasing and repeated gaps in their knowledge and understanding which leads to poor academic achievement throughout their education.

This policy has links with other policies required by statute, including the school's Child Protection Policy.

### **Statutory Duty of parents and carers**

The Education Act 1996 requires parents and carers to ensure their children receive efficient, full-time education, suitable to their age ability aptitude and any special needs they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise. This means the pupil must be registered at a school, and the law requires that a child attends every day that the school is open except in a very small set of allowable circumstances such as being too ill to attend. For educational purposes the term parent is used to include those that have parental responsibility and/or those that have the day to day care of the child.

### **School Procedures**

The school is required by law to maintain an attendance register. An entry must be made in the attendance register for all pupils of Compulsory School Age who are on the school's admission roll. The attendance register is taken twice a day, at the start of the morning session and once during the afternoon session. The register must show whether the pupil is present or absent.

Computerised records of attendance and registers are safely stored, in accordance with the School's policies relating to management information. Administrative access to electronic registers is carefully controlled to ensure that the correct personnel in the School, with requisite access privileges, can deal effectively with all aspects of registration, attendance and absence entry and monitoring.

Any child who is absent from school at the morning or afternoon registration period must have their absence recorded as being authorised, unauthorised or as an approved educational activity.

Only the Headteacher or a member of staff acting on their behalf can authorise absence. If there is no known reason for the absence at registration, then the absence will be recorded as 'no reason given' and a phone call made to the parents, followed by email if a reason is still not obtained. If the school still does not receive a reason for absence, the absence will be recorded as 'unauthorised'.

On the first day of absence, parents are expected to telephone the school to inform them why their child is unable to attend and how long they are expected to be absent. The school is then able to mark the register appropriately. The decision to authorise or to consider as absence as unauthorised rests with the school.

If a student of compulsory school age is absent, the register must show whether the absence was authorised or unauthorised.

- Authorised absence is where the school has given approval in advance for a student of compulsory school age to be away, or has accepted an explanation offered afterwards as a satisfactory justification for the absence.
- All other absences must be treated as unauthorised.

The school has discretion to authorise leave of absence in exceptional circumstances, covered under the heading "Leave of Absence" below.

The school is required to report the details of its attendance register to the Merton Local Authority on a regular basis.

Wimbledon Park Primary School monitors the attendance of all pupils regularly, and particularly those pupils whose attendance has been poor in previous years. The school promotes early support and help for parents when their children's attendance starts to cause concern.

### **Lateness**

School starts at 8:40 for all pupils, and morning registration is at 8:40 for Nursery and 8:55 for pupils in Reception to Year 6 (with any pupil arriving after this time being marked as late).

If pupils arrive after 9.30 without an acceptable reason, they will be marked as having an absence. Pupils who arrive late following an early morning appointment should bring evidence of this, e.g. an appointment card.

Afternoon registers are taken at the following times:

Afternoon nursery	12:30
Reception	12:30
Year 1 and Year 2	12:45
Year 3, 4, 5 and 6	13:30

### **Recurring Absence**

Registers are monitored regularly by the head, deputy head, admin officer and Education Welfare Officer to identify any emerging attendance concerns. In cases where a pupil begins to develop a pattern of absences, the school will try to resolve the problem, depending on severity, using strategies such as:

- Headteacher talking to parent/child
- A letter from the Headteacher
- A meeting with the Headteacher
- A referral to the Education Welfare Officer

Any pupil who is absent without an explanation for 10 days in a term will be notified to the Local Authority, by submitting a referral to the Education Welfare Officer. The school will include details of the action that they have taken.

Where attendance falls below 90% mainly due to medical reasons, the school may request medical evidence (and provide parents with guidance on acceptable examples of medical evidence) for all future illness absences.

The school will also refer the child to the School Nurse or the Specialist nurse in the Education Welfare Service if there is a high level of absence for medical reasons. If medical evidence as requested is not provided, the absence will be marked as unauthorised. For pupils with appropriately evidenced illness, the school will follow appropriate protocols to offer support.

A high level of unauthorised absence will result in a referral to the Education Welfare Officer. Together with the school, the Educational Welfare Officer (EWO) will meet with the family to discuss the reasons for absence and difficulties that prevent regular school attendance. The schools and EWO will set out an action plan with the parents (called a Parenting Contract) to address the poor school attendance of the pupil with realistic achievable targets to be made within a reasonable time (between 3 and 12 months). Any issues raised by the parent/carer or pupil about the school also need to be addressed with specific solutions.

If the parents who sign this Parenting Contract do not follow through with what has been agreed and attendance fails to improve to the agreed level set for the child or an appropriate level (over 90% for more than 6 weeks), consideration will be needed as what further actions would now support an improvement in attendance, for example: the school may issue a Penalty Notice Warning to each parent and/or discuss whether an Education Supervision Order (ESO) is indicated in this case. The decision to apply for an ESO rests entirely with the Local Authority. A monitoring period will then follow, and if attendance does not improve within the monitoring period, a Penalty Notice will be issued which carries a fine of £120, reduced to £60 if paid within 21 days.

## **Leave of Absence**

It is not advisable to take children out of school during term time as this causes disruption to their education. Leave of absence is authorised at the discretion of the Head teacher acting on behalf of the school governing body in accordance with this policy. **Schools must follow the law in this regard and may only grant leave in exceptional circumstances.**

The Governors believe that leave of absence should be avoided if at all possible as it can have a damaging effect on a student's education and overall achievement. However, it is recognised that on occasions there may be extenuating or compassionate reasons that justify such leave. Only in exceptional circumstances, where sufficient evidence is provided to substantiate the circumstances, will any absence from school be authorised.

The school policy to leave of absence is as follows:

1. Parents must request leave in writing as far in advance as possible.
2. The request must include the reason why it is necessary to take leave in term time, including any exceptional circumstances that apply, including evidence such as a medical certificate or letter from employers.
3. The request should be made in writing using the leave of absence leave form. (Available from the school office, attached as appendix 1 to this policy) Verbal requests will be recorded in writing.

Holidays taken for the following reasons will not be authorised:

- a) Availability of cheap flights or accommodation.
- b) Availability of desired resort or accommodation.
- c) Poor weather previously experienced in school holiday period.
- d) Overlap in conjunction with the beginning or end of term.
- e) Holiday extension to a family event (e.g. wedding)
- f) Visit to family living abroad

This is not an exhaustive list of reasons for refusal and any holiday leave in term time is highly likely to be unauthorised.

On receipt of an application for leave on the appropriate form together with any supporting documentation, consideration will be given to the circumstance. The school will then provide a written response outlining its decision within 7 days.

Any leave of absence that is not authorised may result in a Penalty Notice being issued by the London Borough of Merton. The Penalty Charge Notice carries a fine of £120.

In exceptional circumstances authority can be granted to authorising an extended period of absence. However, failure to return to school on an agreed date could result in the pupil being removed from the school roll. In the event of being taken off the school roll, this would necessitate a new application for a place, which will be subject to availability.

**See Appendix 1 for Application Form for Leave of Absence.**

Governors will monitor the effectiveness of this policy through regular reports on attendance, persistent absence, any fines issued and safeguarding/educational welfare.



## Request for Leave of Absence for Exceptional Circumstances during Term Time

It is not advisable to take your child/ren on a leave of absence during term time as this causes disruption to their education. Schools must follow the law in this regard and may only grant leave in exceptional circumstances if certain criteria are fulfilled.

### The Pupil Registration Regulations (England) 2006 and the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013

- **Leave of Absence in exceptional circumstances is authorised at the discretion of the Headteacher.** (This is **not an automatic right** of parents/guardians)
- **Please do not book your leave of absence until authority is given.**
- Each request for leave of absence will be considered individually with the circumstances and supporting evidence provided.
- If the absence is approved you will be advised as to how many days have been approved for your child's absence.
- If the school does not agree the absence and you take the leave without permission or your child is absent for more than the agreed number of days the absence will be unauthorised.
- Leave of absence taken without the authorisation of the school may lead to your child(ren) being referred to the Education Welfare Service and the possibility of statutory action and a fine.

I hereby request that (name/s of pupil/s and year group):

.....

be granted leave of absence from school,

Dates of absence From:..... Return to School: ..... Total Days Absence Requested: .....

The exceptional circumstances for this request are (the school may request additional evidence)

.....

.....

Signed: .....

Date: .....

---

### Response to Request for Leave of Absence

The school **will** authorise this leave of absence as above.

The school **will not** authorise leave of absence for the following reasons/s:

.....

and therefore, please note if you take your child out of school this will appear as an unauthorised absence on their school record.

Paul Lufkin Headteacher (for the Governing Body)