



Witton Middle School

Attendance Policy

Our Vision

At Witton Middle School we have always had strong attendance and we expect all children to have excellent attendance as part of our whole school ethos. Having an excellent record of attendance is part of preparing our pupils to go into the world and make it a better place. The links between attending school and learning are clear. Even 95% attendance implies that there has been an afternoon or a morning missing from school every fortnight, and this will seriously impede a pupil's learning. Such absence affects the pattern of learning and if this is a regular occurrence will seriously affect outcomes. Absence disrupts classroom routines and can adversely affect the learning of others.

At Witton Middle School our expectation for good attendance is 96% or over and anything below requires improvement. If your child's attendance falls to 92% or below, then their attendance requires *significant* improvement.

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

Our school targets for attendance exceed the national expectations. This policy sets out how we monitor attendance and how we work with parents/carers where pupils have difficulties meeting these high standards.

Safeguarding

Safeguarding the interests of each child is everyone's responsibility. Within the context of this school, excellent attendance is viewed as part of a whole range of practices which promote welfare and life opportunities. Others include: excellent behaviour, health and safety, and access to the full range of curriculum opportunities. Children who do not attend school regularly, may be considered as potentially at risk of harm.

Promoting regular attendance

Supporting a regular pattern of attendance is everybody's responsibility: parents/carers, pupils and all members of staff and governors.

To ensure that we all focus upon this we will:

- Give attendance updates in our newsletters.
- Report to you on attendance at least three times per year.
- Celebrate good attendance by displaying individual, class and whole school attendance.
- Praising good, and improving attendance through certificates and rewards.

The Law relating to attendance:

Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 states that: 'the parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him/her to receive efficient full-time education suitable:-

- (a) to age, ability and aptitude and
- (b) to any special educational needs he/she may have

either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.'

The Law relating to Safeguarding

Section 175 of the Education Act 2002 places a duty on local authorities and governing bodies to have regard to guidance by the Secretary of State with regard to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and students under the age of 18.

Understanding the types of absence

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by the parents), as either **authorised** or **unauthorised**. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required.

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.

Whilst a child may be off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with attendance are best sorted out between the school, 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 makes things worse.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no 'leave' has been given. This type of absence can lead to Witton Middle School using sanctions and/or legal proceedings. These include:

- 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, birthdays or looking after other children
- Day trips and holidays in term time that have not been agreed
- Failure of parents/carers to work with the school where pupils are reluctant to attend.

Persistent absenteeism (PA):

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 15% or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we need parents/carers 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, and you will be informed of this immediately. PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully by our Educational Welfare Officer (EWO).

All our PA pupils and their parents/carers are subject to an action plan and this may include allocation of additional support such as:

- Referral to specialist staff
- Participation in group activities
- Individual incentives.

All PA cases are also automatically made known to the Headteacher.

Absence procedures

If your child is absent you must:

- Contact us on the first day of absence by coming into reception or by telephoning us.

If your child is absent we will:

- Contact you on the first day of absence unless you have previously contacted us
- Write to you if the absences are cause for concern
- Invite you in to discuss the situation with the teacher or Headteacher if absences persist
- Refer the matter to the Educational Welfare Officer if attendance moves below 85%.

Telephone numbers:

There are occasions when we need to contact parents about absence, so it is vital that we have your contact numbers at all times. So parents/carers need to ensure that we always have the most recent numbers.

Education Welfare Officer

Parents are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with staff in resolving any problems together. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, school may refer your child to the Education Welfare Officer. He/she will also try to resolve the situation by agreement, but if these fail and the unauthorised absence persists, he/she can use sanctions such as penalty notices or prosecutions in the Magistrates Court. Alternatively, parents/carers or pupils may wish to contact the Educational Welfare Officer themselves to ask for support or information. They are independent of school and will give impartial advice. Their contact number is available through the school office.

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 getting vital information and news for the day. Pupils arriving late disrupt the learning of others and this can cause embarrassment for the pupil and can lead to further absence.

How we manage lateness:

The school day starts at 8:25am and we expect all our pupils to be in class at 8:30am, otherwise pupils will receive a late mark. Pupils arriving late will need to enter through the office as the gates will be closed at 8.30am. Pupils will typically be required to make up for the learning lost in their own time – this will be recorded in the child's planner.

At 8.50 the registers will be closed. If a pupil arrives after this time, pupils will be recorded as being present but this will count as an **unauthorised absence**.

You could face the possibility of a Penalty Notice if the problem continues.

If a pupil has a persistent late record you will be asked to meet with the Headteacher and possibly the Educational Welfare Officer to resolve the problem, but you can approach us at any time if you are having problems getting your child to school on time.

Linked policies.

- Holidays in term-time
- Safeguarding Children and appendices
- Supporting children unable to be in school with medical conditions

Prepared by: Headteacher	Responsibility of: Headteacher
Agreement Date: November 2015	Review date: November 2017
This Policy was prepared giving due regard to the disabilities and special education needs, ethnicity, culture, language, religious affiliation, sexual orientation, national origin and national status and gender of the children and staff at Witton Middle School and its community.	

This policy appears on the school website.

Appendix i

Attendance and Fixed Penalty Protocol

Poor attendance	Unauthorised Absence
<p>Inclusion Assistant generates a weekly printout of attendance handed to class teachers with below 92% attendance highlighted.</p> <p>Class teachers speak to pupils regarding overall picture of absences and a letter is sent home. If there is no improvement within 2 weeks, parents/carers will meet with class teacher. Following this meeting, Year Team leaders will monitor for a further period and you may be required to meet with them.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Call by school office 2. Inclusion Assistant speaks with parents/carers/pupils 3. The unauthorised absence is recorded on SIMs and this is communicated to parents/carers.
<p>Inclusion Assistant generates a weekly printout attendance handed to Leadership Team (LT) with below 85% attendance highlighted.</p> <p>Headteacher/LT monitors pupils with attendance less than 85%.</p> <p>Where there is a concern the Headteacher/LT communicates this to parents/carers. The outcome of this communication is recorded.</p>	<p>Monitored by Inclusion Assistant for 12 school weeks. If there are 20 sessions (10 school days) of unauthorised absence (the absence could have been avoided) then the Headteacher contacts the Educational Welfare Officer.</p>
<p>Where concerns continue Headteacher places the pupil on an attendance support plan. Where there is no significant improvement in attendance during the next two weeks (10 school days) the Headteacher will initiate contact with Educational Welfare Officer (EWO).</p>	
<p>The Educational Welfare Officer will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • collect the evidence of concern from the school • issue a warning letter and monitor with the school for a further 15 school days. 	
<p>Where there is no improvement refer to the Educational Investigation Service.</p>	
<p>If there is no further improvement, using the powers of 1996 Education Act, EIS proceed with court action.</p>	