

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Walton Hall supports the Staffordshire Children's Plan with regards to Attendance and Attainment by encouraging multi-agency work² developing local networks at school level, C&LP level and District Children's Trust Level.

Legislation and guidance for producing this policy is taken from:

- Education Act 1996
- Education Act 2002
- Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003
- Section 175 of the Education Act 2002
- Children Act 1989
- Crime and Disorder Act 1998
- Education and Inspections Act 2006
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006
- Education (School Attendance Targets) (England) Regulations 2007
- The Education (Parenting Contracts and Parenting Orders) (England) Regulations 2007
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007
- Safeguarding and Promoting the Welfare of pupils' and changes in guidance are from the Key Stage 3 'Advice on whole school behaviour and attendance policy'

Principles

All schools and parents have statutory duties with respect to attendance and a targeted approach needs to be balanced with ensuring that these duties are carried out effectively with respect to all pupils of compulsory school age. At Walton Hall, we strive to maintain effective systems of attendance management by working in partnership with parents to maintain good overall attendance and reduce persistent absence to 4%. This is below the local authority target currently set at 5% for secondary schools.

Persistent absence is defined as a pupil who is absent for school for any reason for more than 15% of the school year.

The Interim Executive Board (IEB) acknowledges that school staff, both teaching and non-teaching, are vital in the drive to improve attendance. While LA staff make a valuable contribution, teachers and others who work at Walton Hall are in daily contact with pupils and can forge effective links with parents.

We believe that promoting positive behaviour and excellent attendance are the responsibility of the whole school community. This is achieved through use of innovative curriculum and reward systems throughout day school and in residence.

All children should be at school, on time, every day the school is open, unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

Children may sometimes be reluctant to attend school. Any problems that arise with

attendance are best resolved between the school, the parents and the child. If a 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 may make things worse. Permitting absence from school without a good reason is an offence by the parent.

Walton Hall has a duty in law to refer any absence of 10 sessions or more, where it has been unable to make contact with the parent/child or has general concerns about the absence, to the Education Welfare Service (EWS) .

In September 2013 the school adopted an attendance tracking system recommended by the Education Welfare Officer which is used weekly to track and record pupils' attendance under 95%.

An electronic attendance register is taken twice daily. This shows whether the pupil is present, engaged in an approved educational activity off-site, or absent. If a pupil of compulsory school age is absent every half-day absence from school is classified as either **AUTHORISED** or **UNAUTHORISED**. Only school can authorise the absence, not parents - this is why information about the cause of each absence is always required, preferably in writing. If absence is due to a medical appointment the medical appointment card or letter should be shown to the school attendance officer.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason like illness or other unavoidable causes.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been given. This includes:

- parents 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

Parents whose children are experiencing difficulties should contact the school at an early stage and work together with the staff in resolving any problems. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, the school or the parent may refer the child to the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) from the County Council. He/she will also try to resolve the situation with voluntary support; if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed, these Officers can issue Penalty Notices or use court proceedings to prosecute parents or to seek an Education Supervision Order on the child. The maximum penalty on conviction is a fine of £2500 and/or 3 months imprisonment.

Alternatively, parents or children may wish to contact the EWO themselves to ask for help or information. They are independent of the school and will give impartial advice. Their telephone number is 01785 276800 or information on their contact details and guidance can be accessed on the Staffordshire website at <http://www.staffordshire.gov.uk/education/parents/InformationforParentsandCarers/SupportingYourChildsAttendance.aspx>

Procedures, targets, projects and special initiatives

In addition to reducing the number of pupils with persistent absence to 4%, the school has adopted an overall attendance target of 92%. Absences are reported to IEB termly and annual data is also reported.

At Walton Hall good practice is evidenced by:

- Electronic registration system which encourages children and parents to account promptly for any absences. These are in accordance with legal requirements and show a consistent approach to the classification of absences as either authorised and unauthorised;
- Use of First Day Contact scheme where all parents are contacted on the first day of pupil absence by school office.
- A designated member staff with pastoral responsibility and a designated member of the IEB (Mrs E Pohl) with responsibility for behaviour and attendance matters, including the setting and regular review of targets for the whole school, year/class groups and individual pupils, have overall responsibility for ensuring all pupils attain good levels of attendance.
- Regular training to ensure staff awareness of the legal requirements which define how attendance and registration is managed.
- Collaborative working within the Staffordshire Safeguarding Children's Board.
- Innovative residential provision to encourage widening participation and support pupils and their families where attendance may be an issue.
- Developing partnership working with local schools to enrich the 14-19 curriculum for disaffected pupils and thus improving attendance and attainment for this cohort
- Commitment to increase the attendance and educational attainment of Looked After Children.
- In September 2013 Walton Hall adopted a tracking system recommended by Education Welfare Officer which is used to track pupil's attendance on a weekly basis to track pupils who have regular absences from school. This system is used by most schools in Staffordshire.
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In addition:

- Patterns/frequency of pupil attendance are monitored and the school has a duty to report to the Education Welfare Service. When an individual pupil's attendance level falls below 85% in any term without good reason, a referral to the EWS will be made by the school. Following investigation any unresolved issues could result in the parent receiving a Penalty Notice or ultimately a prosecution under the Education Act 1996 s.444.
- School maintains an Admission and an Attendance Register for all pupils. Children can only be removed from the Admission Register in accordance with the requirements of The Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006. All registers are kept securely for three years and made available to an authorised officer of the Local Authority when required.

- Efficient and timely monitoring and referral procedures are in place which ensure that children whose attendance is a cause for concern are identified, supported through our pastoral systems, including appropriate contact with parents, and, if required, brought to the attention of the LA. This includes referral for any irregular attendance issues or continuous absence over two weeks which following schools investigation has not been resolved satisfactorily, regular late arrival at school, or any other social/welfare/behaviour concerns that impact on the regular attendance of a pupil;

New rules for holiday leave

On 1st September 2013 a significant alteration in the law came into effect which changed the grounds on which a Headteacher could allow a pupil to go on holiday during term time.

Prior to the change the law stated that 'a pupil may be granted leave of absence from the school to go away on holiday' where the Headteacher considered that there were 'special circumstances relating to that application'. This section has been deleted and **there is now no rule which allows for authorisation to be given specifically for holidays.**

The replacement section states that 'leave of absence shall not be granted' unless the Headteacher considers that there are 'exceptional circumstances relating to that application'. (Pupil's leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances application form attached).

Leave of absence due to urgent and unavoidable circumstances (such as a family bereavement) would clearly be considered exceptional. Other than this however it will be appropriate for Headteachers to deal with applications on a case-by-case basis.

Oct 2011

Updated November 2013

Ratified by IEB..... Date ...5th December 2013

Request for leave during term time

To: The Headteacher of: Walton Hall School Date.....

I request consideration of a grant of leave of absence from school during term time for:

my child (full name)

for the period from (date) to (date)

The **exceptional** circumstances and reason for this request are: -

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I have (an)other child(ren) in (an)other school(s) as follows

Child(ren) (full name(s))School(s) attended

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.....

(Signature of 1st parent/carer(s) Print Name.....

(Signature of 2nd parent/carer(s) Print Name.....

Please return completed form to the school office. The school will write to you and inform you of the decision on whether the request is authorised or not.

For Office Use Only

Current Attendance.....% Last Year's Attendance.....%

Number of school sessions taken as leave during term time(this academic year)

Agreed/Not Agreed

Request for leave is agreed/is not agreed for the above student to take leave during term time between the above dates.

Rationale to decline request :

SignedHead teacher . Date

Notification of decision: Date letter sent to parent/carer.....