



# Attendance Policy

Next review date June 2018

Compassion  
Forgiveness  
Friendship  
Trust

**Ackworth Howard School is rooted in Christian belief and principles and it is a primary aim of our school that every member of the school community feels valued and respected, and that each person is treated fairly and well. We are a caring community, whose values are built on mutual trust and respect for all.**

## **AIM**

At Ackworth Howard we recognise the direct correlation between Attendance and Attainment. The aim of our Attendance Policy is to raise and maintain levels of attendance and punctuality for all pupils who attend our school, therefore maximising their opportunities for improved attainment.

### **Attendance Targets**

**Current attendance target set by School = 97%**

Actual 2015-16

Whole School Attendance = 96.9%

PA = 5.2%

Current 2016-17

Whole School Attendance = 96.8%

PA = 2.5%

## **OBJECTIVES**

The objectives of our Attendance Policy are:

- To reduce absence and lateness, and raise awareness of the importance of school attendance.
- To include all school staff, parents, pupils and Governors in our attendance strategies.
- To develop a robust electronic data handling system which enables school staff, the Local Authority and Department for Education to access attendance data in order to work in partnership with school.
- To work effectively with parents/carers and partner agencies, using a range of strategies to improve attendance of individual pupils and the whole school.

## **THE LAW**

Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act states that if a child of compulsory school age fails to attend school regularly, the parent is guilty of an offence. Parents, therefore have a legal responsibility to ensure their child's attendance at school. Failure to do this can lead to legal action being taken by the Local Authority in the Magistrates Court, or the need to issue Fixed Penalty Fines. Since March 2001 there has been a further offence, Section 444 (1A) where a parent **knowingly** allows their child to be absent from school. This offence can carry a custodial sentence.

## **ABSENCE FROM SCHOOL**

Any absence from school is detrimental to a child's education and progress. It disrupts learning, routines and progress. Government research shows that **17 days** lost learning in one school year can lead to a drop of one grade at SAT and GCSE level.

School will follow up any unexplained absences by contacting parents / carers on the first day of absence. Children with inadequate attendance will become part of our Key Focus Attendance Pupils. These children will have their attendance monitored daily. Parents / carers will be invited into school to discuss attendance issues if there is a cause for concern. If attendance does not improve a referral will be made to the Education Welfare Service.

### **AUTHORISED ABSENCE**

Some absences are unavoidable, usually due to illness, bereavement or difficult family circumstances. These absences should be supported by medical evidence where possible or a written explanation from the parent / carer. The decision as to whether an absence is authorised or not lies with the Headteacher.

### **UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE**

An unauthorised absence is an absence which is not permissible in Law. Unauthorised absences include:- birthdays, shopping trips, days out, term time holidays and absences where no explanation has been received. School will discuss unauthorised absence with the Education Welfare Service and further action will be agreed.

The school does not authorise holidays taken in term time and works in partnership with the Education Welfare Service regarding the issue of Fixed Penalty Fines. Pupils have an entitlement to an education, not a term time holiday.

### **TERM TIME HOLIDAYS**

Ackworth Howard School recognises that school attendance is closely linked to attainment. Following the recommendations of the Governments Attendance Lead, the Government has made clear in law that Headteachers cannot grant any leave of absence unless there are exceptional circumstances. The DFE website is clear that leave of absence is unlikely to be granted for the purpose of a family holiday. As such the Governors have made the decision to refuse requests for term time holidays unless there are exceptional circumstances. In order to enforce this decision the Governors have agreed to the issuing of Fixed Penalty Notices for parents taking their children out of school during term time for holidays without permission. The school will work closely with the Education Welfare Service to enforce this policy.

The policy is in line with Wakefield Council Code of Conduct on Penalty Notices and falls under section 44 of the Education Act 1996. The Education (penalty Notices) Regulations 2007 set the framework for the operation of the Penalty Notice scheme. The Code of Conduct states that a Penalty Notice may be issued where there are at least 10 sessions (half days) recorded as unauthorised absence due to a holiday in term-time.

Payment of a Penalty Notice is £60 per child, per parent if paid within 21 days, rising to £120 if paid within 42 days. If a parent fails to make payment the matter will be progressed to court by the Education Welfare Service.

### **MEDICAL APPOINTMENTS**

Parents should inform the class teacher in writing indicating attendance at the dentist, doctor or optician before the arranged appointment unless an emergency situation has arisen.

Children should be collected from and returned to the school office to be signed in or out when attending medical appointments during the school day. If a child has an appointment in a morning or afternoon session and does not attend school for the other session this will be recorded as an unauthorised absence unless it has been agreed with the Head teacher.

## **PUBLIC PERFORMANCES**

On occasions children become involved in public performances for dance groups theatres etc. The school prides itself in the breadth of achievements of pupils both within and outside of the immediate community.

- The Head teacher has the discretion to grant authorised absence for these events.
- The Head teacher will take into account individual circumstances such as the attendance record of the child, whether the child would miss tests or any exceptional circumstances. If any child has an attendance record of less than 90% then authorisation will not be given. Permission is at the discretion of the Head teacher and may not always be granted.
- Parents must obtain a licence to perform from the employing agency. This must be submitted to the Head teacher for completion.
- A letter must also accompany the licence indicating the time out of school that the child will require in order to participate in the performances including time required for rehearsals.
- Absences for rehearsals will be recorded as unauthorised.
- Parents are asked to reflect upon the affect performances would have upon their child as **any absence because a child is tired after a performance will be recorded as unauthorised.**

## **PERSISTENT ABSENCE**

From 2015, a pupil becomes a persistent absentee if he/she has missed 10% or more of school for **any reason** and has an attendance of below 90%. The school will invite parents/carers in to discuss the situation, and referrals will be made to the Education Welfare Service. This will result in a range of strategies being deployed to improve attendance, including participation in the Fastrack Attendance Programme, Parenting Contracts, referral to School Health and Fixed Penalty Fines.

## **PUNCTUALITY**

The law states that children should arrive at school on time, everyday. School doors open at 8.50am and it is expected that pupils should be there ready to learn for that time. Poor punctuality is unacceptable and persistent lateness, i.e. after the close of registration at 9.05am will be referred onto the Education Welfare Service and parents may risk legal action.

## **ROLES / RESPONSIBILITIES**

### **SCHOOL**

The responsibilities of Ackworth Howard School in relation to attendance are as follows:-

- Set high expectations for pupil attendance, and monitor individual and whole school attendance on a daily and weekly basis.
- Identify causes of concern with regard to pupil attendance.
- Conduct First day response where there is unexplained absence.
- Invite parents/carers into school to discuss pupil attendance which is a cause of concern.
- Work with parents of individual pupils to try to improve attendance and punctuality.
- Work in partnership with Wakefield Authority and the Education Welfare Service.
- Maintain electronic registration data systems effectively and deploy them robustly to facilitate presentation reports.
- To provide attendance data for parents.
- Promote attendance at all levels.
- Celebrate excellent and improved attendance.

Please see Ackworth Howard School Attendance Procedures for further detail regarding the promotion of good attendance throughout school. (Appendix)

## **PARENTS / CARERS**

- To ensure pupils arrive at school on time every day and that routines are in place at home to support this.
- To contact school as soon as possible if absence is unavoidable.
- To obtain evidence where possible to support medical absence.
- To avoid term time holidays, and attempt to minimise school time appointments.

## **PUPILS**

- To arrive at school, on time every day with correct equipment and ready to learn.
- Comply with school regulations regarding attendance and punctuality.
- Discuss any concerns they may have with staff regarding attendance and punctuality.

## **EDUCATION WELFARE SERVICE**

- The Education Welfare Service will work in partnership with Ackworth Howard School to promote and facilitate improved attendance, at an individual level, either through a referral system or using the Fastrack to Attendance Programme; and at a whole school level using proactive strategies and action plans.
- The Education Welfare Service will work with children and families to ensure their school attendance and safeguarding is maintained.
- The Education Welfare Service will provide guidance with regards to Children Missing Education.
- The Education Welfare Service will work in partnership with other agencies and will offer advice and signposting for referrals to appropriate organisations.
- The Education Welfare Service will undertake legal action on behalf of the school.
- Wakefield Local Authority will support the school with networking and training events and with individual School Audits and Action Plans.

The Attendance Policy was reviewed in June 2017. The final draft was accepted by the Governing Body on Tuesday 27<sup>th</sup> June 2017.

This policy will be reviewed in June 2018.