



# Attendance Policy

Agreed by governing body – 29/3/2022

Compassion  
Forgiveness  
Friendship  
Trust

# Ackworth Howard Church of England (VC) Junior and Infant School

## Educating for 'life in all its fullness.'

**Providing opportunities for growth in mind, body and spirit through inspirational and innovative education underpinned by a deeply Christian ethos. Those who learn and work here will develop confidence, embrace creativity and enhance their knowledge and skills so that they can experience 'life in all its fullness.'** (John 10:10)

### 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.

We are committed to meeting our obligations with regards to school attendance by:

- Promoting good attendance and reducing absence, including persistent absence
- Ensuring every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled
- Acting early to address patterns of absence

We will also support parents to perform their legal duty to ensure their children of compulsory school age attend regularly, and will promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

### LEGISLATION AND GUIDANCE

This policy meets the requirements of the [school attendance guidance](#) from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on [school attendance parental responsibility measures](#). These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- Part 6 of [The Education Act 1996](#)
- Part 3 of [The Education Act 2002](#)
- Part 7 of [The Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006](#) (and [2010](#), [2011](#), [2013](#), [2016](#) amendments)
- [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)

This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the [school census](#), which explains the persistent absence threshold.

### 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.

The pupil's parent/carer must notify the school on the first day of an unplanned absence as soon as practically possible via telephone or email.

### FOLLOWING UP ON ABSENCE

Where any child we expect to attend school does not attend, or stops attending, the school will:

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- Follow up on their absence with their parent/carer to ascertain the reason, by initiating first day response – text message, phone call and in extreme circumstances home visits.
- Ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not
- Identify the correct attendance code to use

### **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.

Exceptional circumstances could include:

1. Service personnel returning from a tour of duty abroad where it is evidenced the individual will not be in receipt of any leave in the near future that coincides with school holidays.
2. Where an absence from school is recommended by a health professional as part of a parent or child's rehabilitation from a medical or emotional issue.
3. The death or terminal illness of a person close to the family.
4. To attend a wedding or funeral of a person close to the family.
5. Out of school programmes such as music, arts or sport operating at a high standard of achievement. Documentary evidence of this event will be required.
6. Religious observance – The Education Act 1996 S444(3) (c), states "on any day exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which his/her parent belongs."
7. Where there are exceptional and unforeseen circumstances that fall outside of 1 to 6 above, the Headteacher will consult with the education welfare officer prior to any authorisation being given to the parent. The education welfare officer will discuss each case with the Headteacher and will make a recommendation to the school. Evidence would be required in each case.

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If a request meets the above exceptional circumstances but falls within the following times, the Headteacher must be convinced that absence from school is the only option:

- The first half term of any academic year (applies to all pupils).
- Statutory assessment periods such as Year 6 SATs week.

Examples of circumstances NOT considered as exceptional:

- Holidays abroad for the purpose of visiting a sick relative, excepting where that person is seriously ill. Medical evidence may be requested.
- Holidays taken in term time due to lower cost/parental work commitments.

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 school in writing indicating attendance at a medical appointment before the arranged absence unless an emergency situation has arisen.

However, we encourage parents/carers to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

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 effect performances would have upon their child as **any absence because a child is tired after a performance will be recorded as unauthorised.**

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### PERSISTENT ABSENCE

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, every day. 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 9.00am will be referred onto the Education Welfare Service and parents may risk legal action.

A pupil who arrives late:

- Before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code.
- After the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate punctuality code.

### ROLES / RESPONSIBILITIES

The governing body is responsible for monitoring attendance figures for the whole school on at least a termly basis. It also holds the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy.

The headteacher is responsible for the implementation of this policy at the school, monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors. The Headteacher works closely with the Education Welfare Officer.

### 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.

### 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.

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### **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.

### **RECORDING ATTENDANCE**

We will keep an attendance register, and place all pupils onto this register. We will take our attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. It will mark whether every pupil is:

- Present
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity
- Absent
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

All marks will be compliant with the DfE attendance codes.

Pupils must arrive in school by 8:50am on each school day. The register for the first session will be taken at 8:50am and will be kept open until 9:00am. The register for the second session will be taken at 1:00pm.

### **REPORTING TO PARENTS**

School reports to parents on their child's attendance record annually in the written end-of-year report. Where attendance falls below the expected standard, parents are likely to receive letters updating them on their child's attendance more frequently.

### **COVID-19**

As a consequence of the pandemic, adjustments to this policy are regularly reviewed. In line with guidance, specific Covid-19 attendance codes are being used and adaptations may be made to expectations of attendance. Any changes to this policy are identified in the Schools Covid Guidance: <https://www.ackworthhowardschool.co.uk/news/2021/december/schools-covid-guidance-and-outbreak-management-plan-spring-1-2022>

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### **MONITORING ARRANGEMENTS**

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the local authority or DfE is updated, and as a minimum annually by the Headteacher. Where changes are made, the policy will be approved by the full governing board.