

White Court School



Attendance Policy

September 2017

Statement of Intent

White Court School aims to create an environment where all pupils will have opportunities to develop their intellectual, social, physical, moral and aesthetic qualities in accordance with their age, aptitude and ability.

School Attendance and the Law

Under the 1996 Education Act, parents and carers are responsible for ensuring their children attend school regularly and punctually. Failure to do so could result in legal action being taken against them by the Local Authority.

The school attendance register is a legal document and schools must, under the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006 take a register at the start of the morning session, and again during the afternoon session. Since September 2006, schools have been required to use statutory registration codes which identify why the pupil was absent from school.

Under the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006, only the school (and not parents/carers) can authorise an absence. Where the reason for a pupil's absence cannot be established at the time the register is taken, that absence shall be recorded as unauthorised. If a reason for absence is provided by the parent/carer, the school may decide whether or not the absence is justified and, if so, should ensure that the most appropriate authorised absence code is entered into the attendance register.

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2013 have removed all references to family holidays and leave of absence shall not be granted unless an application had been made in advance and the Headteacher considers that leave of absence should be granted due to exceptional circumstances. **Headteachers no longer have the discretion to authorise up to ten days of absence.** This discretion has been removed by the aforementioned Regulations (2013).

It is a rule of this school that a leave of absence shall not be granted in term time unless there are reasons considered to be exceptional by the Headteacher, irrespective of the child's overall attendance. Only the Headteacher or her designate (not the local authority) may authorise such a request and all applications for a leave of absence must be made in writing on the prescribed form provided by the school. Whilst the Headteacher will consider all requests on a case-by-case basis, parents and carers must be aware that requests will normally be refused. Where a parent removes a child when the application for leave was refused or where no application was made to the school, the issue of a penalty notice may be requested by this school.

At White Court School 'exceptional circumstances' will be interpreted as: 'being of unique and significant emotional, educational or spiritual value to the child which outweighs the loss of teaching time.'

We will not agree leave during term time:

- at any time in September. This is very important as your child needs to settle into their new class as quickly as possible.
- during assessment and test periods in the school's calendar affecting your child.
- when a pupil's attendance record already includes any level of unauthorised absence or they have already been granted authorised leave within that academic year.

Where a family chooses to take a holiday during term time, the absence will be coded as unauthorised (G code) and a Penalty Notice **may** be issued to each parent for each child (provided the Essex Code of Conduct criteria has been met).

Time off for a family holiday is no longer a legal right. From 1st September 2013 the entitlement for parents to take their child out of school during term time was removed. In addition, the Supreme Court have ruled that the definition of regular school attendance is "in accordance with the rules prescribed by the school". Parents may, however, apply for leave of absence for exceptional circumstances, which will be carefully considered by the Headteacher.

The DfE have not provided any guidelines as to what they would consider to be exceptional circumstances. This is solely at the discretion of the Headteacher. Where possible, schools within close proximity of one another should look to have a consistent approach to all leave of absence requests – to try to ensure that requests for siblings who attend different schools are met with the same response by each Headteacher who receives a request.

Penalty notices for unauthorised leave of absence:

If a pupil is absent without a leave request having been agreed, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised. This may result in the Local Authority issuing a Penalty Notice, in line with the Essex Code of Conduct (£120 per parent, per child / £60 if paid within 21 days). Parents/carers who choose not to pay the fine(s) within relevant timeframes could face legal action in the Magistrates Court.

Penalty notices for irregular school attendance:

New guidance now means penalty notices may be issued for irregular attendance, including;

- Where there has been at least 10 sessions of unauthorised absence during the previous ten school weeks.
- In addition to the above criteria, due to the importance of pupils settling into school at the commencement of the school year, penalty notices may also be issued if there have been at least 6 consecutive sessions of unauthorised leave of absence during the first two weeks of September.

In compliance with section 436A of the Education Act 1996, the school will, after making appropriate checks, report any pupil who is believed to be 'missing from education' to the Local Authority (LA). Such referrals should be made to the Missing Education and Child Employment Service (MECES) by no later than the tenth day of absence. The LA has a duty to investigate the whereabouts of such children and negotiate their prompt return to suitable education.

Under the Education Pupil Registration Regulations 2006 (R12) deletions from the School Roll are reported to the Local Authority, Education Welfare Service, by the school giving reasons for that pupil's removal prior to deletion.

Understanding Types of Absence

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by the parent/carer), 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 (although you may be asked to provide medical evidence for your child before this can be authorised), medical or dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable cause.

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 the Local Authority using sanctions and/or legal proceedings. Unauthorised absence includes:

- parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily e.g. because they had a late night or for non-infectious illness or injury that would not affect their ability to learn.
- absences which have never been properly explained
- children who arrive at school too late to get a mark on the attendance register
- shopping trips
- looking after other children or children accompanying siblings or parents to medical appointments
- their own or family birthdays
- holidays taken during term time without leave- 5 days unauthorised absence will lead to a penalty notice being triggered by the Local Authority
- day trips
- other leave of absence in term time which has not been agreed

Roles and Responsibilities

School

Attainment is strongly linked to attendance, and research has shown that if pupils are to achieve their full potential, they must attend school regularly.

The registration system used by White Court School is the Attendance programme on SIMs.net. Classroom staff complete an OMR registration sheet which is then analysed for absence.

Registration for the morning session, is taken at 8.55 a.m. The afternoon registration period is at 1.15 p.m. Children arriving after this time will be recorded as late.

An absence would be recorded as unauthorised until the Office Staff have confirmed the reason for absence. This activity is undertaken by the Office Staff within the first hour of the registers being returned to the main office, on a daily basis. A policy of "First day calling" is operated by the school. Failure to contact school before 8:55 a.m., the start of the school day, to report an absence will result in this telephone call from school.

For Safeguarding purposes, if we cannot make contact with a parent or carer, we will visit the child's residence to ensure their safety and the safety of their parents or carers.

Time off for a family holiday is not a legal right. At White Court School the discretion to allow leave of absence within a school year has been delegated to the Headteacher by the Governing Body. As from 1st September 2013, the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 amended Regulation 7 to prohibit the proprietor of a maintained school from granting leave of absence to a pupil, except where an advanced application has been made by the parent or carer with whom the pupil normally resides, and the proprietor considers that there are exceptional circumstances relating to the application. The application form (appendix 1) must be accompanied by a letter explaining the 'exceptional circumstances' for which a leave of absence is being applied. If the 'exceptional circumstances' are related to restrictions applied by an employer then a letter direct from the employer should be submitted with the application. Whilst the Headteacher will consider all requests on a case by case basis, parents must be aware that requests will normally be refused. See letter (Appendix 2).

Taking a child out of school during term time could be detrimental to the child's educational progress. A pupil who takes 10 days absence will only attain 94.7% attendance in the year. 10 days absence also means the pupil will miss 50 hours of education.

If we suspect a reported absence is in fact a holiday, not sickness, we may appear at the child's residence to check the validity of the sickness. We work closely with feeder schools, and may check patterns of absence between siblings. If you do not want us to make contact with another school, please advise us in writing.

The Office Staff analyse the OMR Register forms weekly. All staff are encouraged to note irregular patterns of attendance by the children in their class. Concerns are shared with the Head or member of the Senior Leadership Team. An individual attendance profile is then produced for that child and queries cross referenced to the attendance diary.

If the child's attendance rate falls below 91%, without a viable explanation such as a prolonged illness, the Headteacher would contact the parent /carer to discuss the situation and agree strategies for improving the pupil's attendance. The child's attendance would then be monitored on a daily basis, to ensure attendance does not drop below **90% which is classed as Persistent Absence.**

If a poor pattern of attendance continued the child would be discussed with the Education Welfare Officer at the termly meeting or earlier if there were more serious cause for concern.

If a child is absent from school for a prolonged period of time the school would consult with the child and parent/carer to devise a re-entry plan. This may include:

1. Part time education for an agreed period of time.
2. Establishment of a support group of named staff and pupils.
3. Catch up support for core curriculum areas.

Parents and Carers

Your child is expected to attend every session in school which is available to them. Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any pupil's absence or late arrival disrupts teaching routines and so may affect the learning of others in the same class. Ensuring a child's regular attendance at school is a parental responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

Information about procedures to follow if a child is absent from school is shared with parents via the School Prospectus and School Website.

Parents are asked to contact the school on the first day of absence of a child, before 9.30 a.m., and confirm the reason for absence in writing when the child returns to school.

If a child appears to be having an unacceptable level of absence due to medical reasons, the school may request that medical evidence (such as appointment cards or prescribed medication) be provided to cover all absences. Failure on the part of the parent or carer to provide such medical evidence, will result in absences being recorded as unauthorised and a referral to the Missing Education and Child Employment Service will be considered.

Pupils

Children tell us through pupil surveys and discussions that they enjoy coming to school and are eager to learn. The children are clear that they are expected to come to school every day and arrive from 8.45.a.m., to be in class by 8.55 a.m., when they will take part in Early Morning Work, which is an important part of the school day.

Children who arrive late at the gate at the start of the school day, are greeted by a member of the Senior Management Team and asked for a reason why they are late and are encouraged to be on time in the future. Children in Key Stage 2 are given strategies they could use to get to school on time, in preparation for their move to Secondary Education.

The PSHE and Citizenship curriculum of the school encourages the children to embrace the duties and responsibilities the children have within the home, the school and the wider community.

Missing Education and Child Employment Service

- Works within a 4 quadrant based Area of Attendance Teams, to reduce Persistent Absence (less than 90% attendance), improve overall attendance and give advice and support to children, families and schools.
- Carries out statutory duties on behalf of the Local Authority to ensure parents/carers fulfil their legal requirements in relation to school attendance.

The school may refer a pupil to the Missing Education and Child Employment Service when attendance remains a concern following school intervention. The MECES will work with schools and families to address attendance issues. However, if attendance fails to improve, legal action may be taken against parents/carers and could include a Penalty Notice, Education Supervision Order or Prosecution.

Rewards and Celebrations

White Court School monitors attendance on a regular basis and acknowledges good attendance.

- Each half term the EYFS/Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 class with the best attendance will be acknowledged during Celebration Assembly and rewarded.
- Pupils with 100% attendance at the end of the academic year will receive a certificate during Celebration Assembly.

Evaluation and Review

This policy will be reviewed annually and updated accordingly to include changes in the law and guidance on good practice. The policy will be promoted throughout the school community and shared with outside agencies and partners as required.

Equal Opportunities

Please refer to White Court School's Equal Opportunities Policy and Guidance.

Review

This policy will be reviewed as part of the policy review cycle. It will also be monitored for its effect on pupils with protected characteristics.

Policy discussed and ratified at the meeting of the Governing Body – Autumn Term 2017

Appendix 1

APPLICATION FOR LEAVE OF ABSENCE DURING TERM TIME

Leave of absence may only be granted by a person authorised in that behalf by the proprietor of the school. As from 1st September 2013, the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 amended Regulation 7 to prohibit the proprietor of a maintained school from granting leave of absence to a pupil, except where an advance application has been made by the parent with whom the pupil normally resides, and the proprietor considers that there are exceptional circumstances relating to the application.

Taking your child out of school during term time could be detrimental to your child's educational progress. A pupil who takes 10 days absence will only attain 94.7% attendance in the year. 10 days absence also means the pupil will miss 50 hours of education.

There is no entitlement to parents to take their child out of school during term time, however, you may apply to the school for leave of absence if you believe there are exceptional circumstances.

If the absence is not authorised and the holiday is taken, the case will be referred to the Education Welfare Service who may issue a Penalty Notice for £120 (or £60 if paid within 21 days) to each parent for each child taken out of school.

Please complete one application per child.

Name of Child	
D.O.B:	
Class:	

Date of First Day of Absence: _____

Date of Return: _____

Number of Days Requested: _____

Important: A letter must be attached to this request, outlining the 'exceptional circumstances' for which a leave of absence is being applied for.

Signed: _____ Dated: _____

Name: _____

School/office use only:

Attendance percentage preceding 12 weeks:			
Number of sessions absence this academic year:	Auth	Unauthorised	Total

Appendix 2

Essex County Council



White Court School

Ennerdale Avenue Great Notley Braintree CM77 7UE

Headteacher Mrs D Deans BSC PGCE NPQH

Telephone: Braintree (01376) 331801

Website: www.whitecourt.essex.sch.uk

Dear

I refer to your application for leave of absence for to be absent for .. days from ..to . inclusive.

The current law does not give any entitlement to parents to take their child out of school during term time. The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 prohibits Headteachers granting leave of absence to a pupil except where an application has been made in advance and the Headteacher considers that there are exceptional circumstances relating to the application. Following due consideration, I am unable to agree to your request as the reason provided is not considered exceptional.

I must warn you that, if you do take your child out of school for this time, the absences will not be authorised and the Education Welfare Service may issue a penalty notice to each parent of £60 for each child to be paid within 21 days. If the penalty is not paid within the time scale the penalty will increase to £120. If the higher penalty is not paid within 28 days, the Education Welfare Service will then institute legal proceedings against you in the magistrate's court under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 for failing to ensure your child attends school regularly.

The matter will also be recorded on your children's school record as an unauthorised absence.

If you would like to meet with me to discuss this matter, please contact the school office to arrange an appointment.

Yours sincerely,

Diane Deans

Head teacher