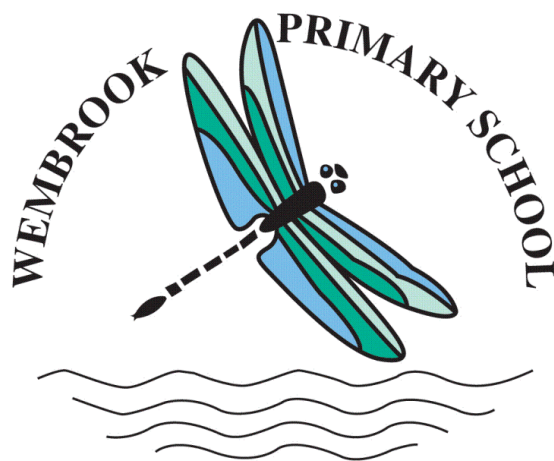


# Whole School Attendance and Punctuality Policy



Headteacher .....

Date .....

Chair of Governors.....

Date.....

## Whole School Attendance and Punctuality Policy

Wembrook Primary School is committed to providing a full and efficient educational experience for all pupils. We believe that if pupils are to benefit from education, good attendance is crucial. As a school we do all that we can to ensure maximum attendance for all pupils. Any problems that prevent full attendance will be identified and addressed as speedily as possible.

It is the policy of our school to celebrate achievement. Attendance is a critical factor to a productive and successful school career. Our School will actively promote and encourage 100 per cent attendance for all our pupils.

Our school will give a high priority to conveying to parents and pupils the importance of regular and punctual attendance. We recognise that parents have a vital role to play and that there is a need to establish strong home-school links and communication systems that can be utilised whenever there is concern about attendance.

If there are problems which affect a pupil's attendance we will investigate, identify and strive in partnership with parents and pupils to resolve those problems as quickly and efficiently as possible. We will adopt a clearly focused approach aimed at returning the pupil to full attendance at all times.

### Objectives

- to encourage full attendance and punctuality
- to record and monitor attendance and absenteeism and apply appropriate strategies to minimise its occurrence
- to ensure a consistent approach throughout the School

### Statutory Duty

The Education Act 1996 Section 7 requires parents or guardians to ensure their children receive efficient, full-time education, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise: **“By law, all children of compulsory school age must get a proper full-time education. Parents are responsible for making this happen, either by registering the child at school or by making other arrangements which provide an effective education”**.

Parents at Wembrook Primary school have chosen to send their children to our school and therefore it is their **legal duty** to ensure that he or she attends regularly, and on time. In accordance with the regulations relating to pupils' attendance at school, Wembrook Primary keeps an attendance register on which at the beginning of each morning and afternoon session, pupils are marked present or absent. An entry must be made on the attendance register for all pupils of compulsory school age who are on the school's admission roll.

There is only one major reason why a child should be absent from school, illness. As the parent/carer(s) they have a legal responsibility to ensure their child attends school regularly, and on time, and to provide a reason to the school for any absences. These absences will be authorised by the school following contact with parents or carers. School may authorise other absences if they consider them to be unavoidable. If possible parents should always consult with the school in advance if their child is going to be unavoidably absent.

Only school can authorise absence. Parents do not have this legal authority. Absences not accepted by the school will be 'unauthorised'. If sufficient unauthorised absence accumulates the school will take steps, such as inviting parents to a meeting to improve attendance.

Truancy is a form of unauthorised absence where a child deliberately misses school. Parents, however, remain legally responsible for this absence. Assistance is available in this situation and may be sought via the school or by directly contacting the Attendance, Compliance and Enforcement (ACE) Service.

If there is no improvement in attendance a referral will be made to the ACE Service and this may result in legal action.

### **Attendance, Compliance and Enforcement (ACE) Service**

We at Wembrook Primary School wish to work with families to ensure that any problems are resolved without involving outside agencies.

We liaise closely with ACE to monitor the attendance of all of its pupils. Where there are persistent absences or persistent lateness, the child in question may be referred to ACE. If no improvement in attendance or punctuality is made, then the Local Authority could issue fixed penalty notices or parents or carers could be fined up to £2500 and issued with a criminal record.

**Such a referral will be made as a last resort where all other intervention has failed to improve a child's attendance.**

### **Parental Involvement**

It is the responsibility of parents/carers to inform the school as soon as possible if there is going to be an absence.

If there is still no communication a letter is written asking the parents to inform the school why the child is absent. If there is still no response then ACE may be contacted

### **Categories of Absence**

There are two categories of absence:-

- (i) Authorised (approved)
- (ii) Unauthorised (not approved)

Only the Head teacher can approve absence.

#### **(i) Authorised Absence**

An absence is classified as authorised when a child has been away from school for a legitimate reason and the school has received notification from a parent. For example, if the child has been unwell and the parent writes a note or telephones the school to explain the absence.

Only the school can make an absence authorised. Parents do not have this authority.

Consequently not all absences supported by parents will be classified as authorised. For example, if a parent takes a child out of school to go shopping during school hours, this will not mean it is an authorised absence.

#### **(ii) Unauthorised Absence**

All other absences (including persistent lateness) constitute unauthorised absence.

When completing the absence report forms, the school admin person will record the relevant category of absence. Where the admin person is unsure of the category of absence the Head teacher will decide on the evidence provided. The head Teachers decision will be made after referring to guidance published by the Department of Education.

Codes are used on the registers to inform reason for absence.

### **Leave of Absence**

- The Head Teacher can only authorise leave of absences in exceptional circumstances. Leave is unlikely, however, to be granted for the purposes of a family holiday as a norm.
- Where parents are separated, only the parent with residence may make an application for holiday leave, and must do so on behalf of the other parent if that parent wishes to take the child out of school.

- If the Headteacher grants a leave request, it will be for the Headteacher to determine the length of time that the child can be away from school.
- If parents have to apply for holiday leave, they should do so BEFORE booking transport and accommodation to avoid disappointment. The regulations do not allow schools to give retrospective approval. If the parents did not apply for leave of absence in advance, the absence must be recorded as unauthorised.
- School has strict criteria which they must follow when deciding when to authorise a leave of absence (the government guidelines can be found on the back of the application form). If your application does not meet these criteria, the Headteacher will let you know that your holiday cannot be authorised.
- Leave of absences which are unauthorised should not be taken. If they do so, parents are committing an offence and, in certain cases, may be subject to a *Fixed Penalty Notice or prosecution*

### **Medical and Dental Appointments**

- We prefer that parents make all but emergency appointments for medical and dental check-ups outside of the school day.
- If parents need to collect their child from school for an appointment, they will be asked to sign him/her out of the building and back in again when they return.

### **Punctuality**

Excellent punctuality is insisted on. Registration closes 10 minutes after the start of morning and afternoon session. At each registration session any child not present is marked as absent. If the child subsequently arrives the child is marked as present but late.

If children are persistently late the school admin person will inform the Head teacher who will speak to the parents/carer about the impact on the child arriving late.

If this persists a formal letter will be written and if that does not promote a correct response then ACE will be informed

### **Principles**

As stated above, parents and carers are legally responsible for ensuring that children of compulsory school age attend school regularly. And staff will support families where there are issues affecting attendance.

- We will work towards ensuring that all pupils feel supported and valued.
- We will send a clear message that if a pupil is absent, she/he will be missed.
- We will consult with all members of the School and the ACE Service in developing and maintaining the whole school attendance policy.
- We will encourage parents/carers to be actively involved in promoting their child's attendance.
- We will ensure that all staff are aware of the requirements of the registration process and that they receive training on Registration Regulations and the Law relating to attendance
- We will promote positive staff attitudes to pupils returning after absence.
- We will ensure regular evaluation of attendance policy and procedures by Senior Managers and the School governors.
- Consistent and vigorous monitoring and evaluation procedures will be in place. This takes place half termly and known poor attenders/late arrivals are monitored more closely

### **Procedures**

- Start and finishing times of registration are 8.50 - 9.10 am and 1.05-1.10 pm
- Guidance on the accurate completion of registers will be given to all new staff and supply teachers

- For pupils with emerging attendance problems the referral routes will be as follows. A phone call or a letter to parents if attendance is 90% or below with an offer of an interview to talk. If there is no improvement in attendance, a further letter will be sent explaining that the ACE Service will be informed. Again, if there is no improvement in the child's attendance, a referral to the Education Social Work Service will be made.
- Monitoring progress towards targets will be done half termly at the meeting between the Head teacher and school admin person. SIMS information can produce reports on various aspects of attendance and this is utilized at the half termly monitoring meetings. Headteacher's reports and school analysis along with an evaluation of the impact of the Attendance Policy.
- Attendance information will be contained in the termly governors report

### **Rewards for good attendance**

- The school will endeavour to be imaginative by having various initiatives and competitions to raise the profile of attendance over the year.
- Children who achieve 100% attendance for the year are awarded with BA bear.

### **Reintegrating Long Term Absentees:**

Absence can significantly interrupt the continuity of pupils learning and positive strategies should be employed to minimise such effects.

### **Key Principles**

- We should always keep in touch with a child's family during a long absence.
- We should always make sure the child is welcomed back.
- The class teacher should let the pupil know that it is ok to let them know if they experience any difficulties.
- The class teacher/TA will support the pupil in their return to class and help them with any work they may have missed.

### **Legal Issues**

By law, all children of compulsory school age (between 5 and 16, soon to be 18) must get a proper full-time education. Parents are responsible for making this happen, either by registering the child at school or by making other arrangements, which provide an effective education. (The Education Act 1996 Section 7). Failure to comply with this could result in legal action being sought by the Local Authority

### **Monitoring and Evaluation**

The school will regularly review attendance and report to Governors throughout the school year.