

WEST MOORS MIDDLE SCHOOL

ATTENDANCE

POLICY AND PROCEDURES

SEPT 2016

This is additional guidance to be used in conjunction with the LA policy.

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RATIONALE

High levels of student achievement and high levels of attendance are inextricably linked. Promoting good attendance and punctuality is a shared responsibility between the students, parents and school.

Taking a register twice each day is a LEGAL REQUIREMENT.

The whole school attendance target is at least 96%

The whole school persistent absenteeism upper limit target is 5%

IT'S YOUR CHILD'S FUTURE - SOME ATTENDANCE FACTS

An excellent attendance record is important for all pupils for the following reasons:

- 90% attendance may sound good. However, this is the equivalent of missing a half day of schooling EACH WEEK. If this continues over the five years a child spends at high school, a child with 90% attendance will miss HALF A YEAR'S schooling. A child with 80% attendance will lose A FULL YEAR of schooling over the same period.
- Taking your child out of school for a two week holiday during term time immediately reduces their attendance to 95% for the year.
- Poor attendance has a direct link to attainment - the more school a child misses, the less likely they are to achieve good exam grades.
- Good exam grades increase an individual's earning potential. Pupils who leave school with 5 GCSE grade As will, over the course of their lifetime, earn on average £350,000 more than those that leave with 5 grade Cs.
- Only 10% of persistent absence pupils achieve 5 A*- C grades at GCSE compared with 58% for other pupils.
- 21% of persistent absence pupils leave school with no qualifications at all.

Attendance is a key factor in your child achieving well at school. Pupils who miss lessons as a result of being taken on holiday during term time often never catch up on the work they miss, despite the effort made by their teachers, and this can have a direct effect on their GCSE grades, particularly in years 10 & 11. We strongly urge all our parents and carers to think carefully before taking their child out of school for holidays and routine appointments

THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING ON TIME

Being on time:

- Gets the day off to a good start.
- Sets positive patterns for the future.
- Helps your child to make the most of their learning.
- Helps children to develop a sense of responsibility both for themselves and for others.

Being late:

- Gets the day off to a bad start.
- Can put everyone in a bad mood and can be stressful.
- Can be embarrassing for both parent & young person.
- Is noticed by others, who may make negative comments.
- May damage your child's confidence.
- Disrupts the learning for everyone.
- Can create a bad habit.
- Can lead to poor attendance.

- May lead to children feeling confused or missing out on vital information & instructions at the start of the day

INFORMATION/EXPECTATIONS FOR STAKEHOLDERS

Parents/Carers

- Parents have a legal responsibility for ensuring that their child attends school regularly, punctually, properly equipped and in a fit condition to learn.
- If a child is prevented for any reason from attending, or is late, parents must notify the school as soon as possible on the first day of absence.
- One phone call may cover up to 3 days of absence. After this, more communication will be expected and possibly substantiated medical evidence such as a Doctor's appointment slip or prescription.
- A pupil's absence from school will be considered as unauthorised until a satisfactory explanation is received.
- Parents will be promptly informed over concerns about attendance and given the opportunity to discuss this with a member of staff.
- Attendance will be discussed with individual pupils if there is a level of concern or pattern of absence and with parents if necessary.
- Pupils who do experience attendance difficulties will be offered prompt and sympathetic support, initially from class tutor/teacher and year leader, and should the need arise, from a senior member of staff.
- All families will inevitably go through periods when life can be very challenging. In these circumstances it is important that parents talk to staff in confidence as to how this might be affecting a child's ability to focus at school, their behaviour and attendance. It may also be that a Common Assessment Form (CAF) is an appropriate response. A CAF is a way of gathering information from relevant agencies together to see what kind of support is needed. This is something that happens with you and can only be done with your consent. The outcome of this may well be help from targeted support services.
- Children and young people who are unable to attend school because of medical needs should have access to as much education as their medical condition allows so that they are able to maintain the momentum of their education and to keep up with their studies.
- An explanation of the CAF process should be given so parents and carers understand how this can support them.

Below is a link to a CAF leaflet:

[CAF Leaflet for Parents/ Carers](#)

Pupils

- Pupils are expected to attend school regularly and punctually.

- Pupils will be made aware of the importance of maintaining their attendance at the highest possible level. This will be encouraged through positive strategies and rewards. (see appendix 6)
- Pupils should be aware that bullying will not be tolerated, but also if they find they are being bullied they know how to get support.

Office team

- The office team will take calls/messages from parents and ensure that reasons for absence are recorded and that attendance registers are maintained.
- The office team will call home at the earliest possible opportunity, to alert the parent of an unexplained absence.
- The office team will provide feedback information to aid tutors in their role of recording attendance and maintaining absence records.
- The office team will prepare weekly attendance summaries.
- The office team will prepare general and bespoke letters linked to attendance, as documented in the appendices.

Tutors

- Tutors are required to take an electronic register of attendance during morning and afternoon registration.
- If there is a technical problem, a paper register must always be taken.
- Tutors should complete registration by 8:50am in the morning session.
- Tutors must record an 'N' unless there is a parental reason for a pupil's absence
- It is the shared responsibility of both the tutor and office team to authorise absences with the correct code, when further information becomes available. Codes should be entered as follows:

/	= present morning
\	= present afternoon
B	= educated off site
C	= other authorised circumstances
D	= dual registration
E	= excluded
F	= extended family holiday (agreed)
G	= family holiday (not agreed)
H	= family holiday (agreed)
I	= illness
J	= interview
L	= late (before register closes)
M	= medical/dental appointment
N	= no reason yet given for absence
O	= unauthorised absence
P	= approved sporting activity
R	= religious observance
S	= study leave

- T = traveller absence
- U = late after register has closed
- V = educational visit or trip

- A child should be marked present if they arrive whilst the register is being taken.
- If a child arrives after the register has closed, they should report to the office where they will be given an 'L' mark if the child arrives before 9:10. Otherwise, a 'U' mark will be given
- Tutors will be given a 'week view' summary of attendance for Friday's registration, so that any unexplained absences can be acted on
- The tutor will be expected to record details of any communications made or received, in relation to attendance.
- Tutors will take action as deemed necessary to promote attendance (phone call to parents, speak to pupils, issuing rewards)
- Tutors will raise the attendance issues of specific pupils at year pastoral meetings every half term.
- Tutors will attend meetings involving parents, SLT members and possibly LA officers, where appropriate.

Senior Leadership Team

- The attendance leader will set targets for overall attendance and persistence absence (PA), pupils with less than 85%, which will be listed on the School Development Plan
- The attendance Leader will interrogate attendance issues with the office manager, every week
- The attendance leader will ensure that pro-active interventions are followed (appendix 1)
- The attendance leader will liaise with parents and other agencies, as appropriate, to support families and promote attendance
- The attendance leader will ensure that pupils are rewarded for excellent attendance and improved attendance records.
- The attendance leader will speak on attendance matters.
- The Headteacher will manage requests for term-time holidays under exceptional circumstances.

Governors

- Attendance will be monitored in accordance with the School Self Evaluation process, each term.
- The Resources Committee will monitor progress towards targets and impact of actions with respect to attendance.
- The school's policy should be ratified by the governing body and should include:
 - Actions to be taken for pupils who are identified as persistent absentees.
 - The school's policy on term time holidays and punctuality.

- An explanation of hierarchy of actions the school takes in the event of an absence

PRO-ACTIVE INTERVENTIONS (see appendix 1)

First Day Response

The school expects parents/carers to contact the school on the first day of absence to inform of a child's absence and associated reason. If they do not call then they can expect a phone call from the school at the earliest possible opportunity.

Certificates/Incentives

The school rewards good attendance. Pupils/tutor groups who achieve excellent attendance are rewarded and their achievements are celebrated via the school newsletter. Furthermore, where a pupil's attendance has improved, they will also be recognised and rewarded. A league table for tutor group overall attendance will be posted.

Letters to Parents.

At the start of a new school year, all parents will receive a newsletter detailing expectations and responsibilities with respect to attendance (See appendix 4).

Parents of any pupils whose attendance has fallen below 93%, without adequate explanation, will receive a letter (appendix 2) inviting parents to contact the school. An adequate explanation should be in the form of regular, pro-active communication with the school, supported by medical guidance where necessary. Furthermore, consideration should be given to the previous year's attendance record, where available.

Parents of any pupils whose attendance has fallen below 85%, without adequate explanation, will receive a letter (See appendix 3) or phone call inviting them to a meeting to discuss the way forward. If this does

Meeting with Parents/Carers and Pupils.

It may be appropriate to invite parents/carers and pupils to a meeting with a member of staff to discuss reasons for poor attendance, strategies to address it, targets to achieve and the date for review. This is an ideal opportunity to ascertain any underlying issues and where appropriate consideration should be given to the CAF.

HOLIDAYS IN TERM TIME

From September 2013, the government amended regulations as follows.

"The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 currently allow headteachers to grant leave of absence for the purpose of a family holiday during term time in "special circumstances" of up to ten school days leave per year. Headteachers

can also grant extended leave for more than ten school days in exceptional circumstances.

*Amendments to the 2006 regulations remove references to family holiday and extended leave as well as the statutory threshold of ten school days. The amendments make clear that headteachers **may not** grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are **exceptional circumstances**. Headteachers should determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted.”*

It is the responsibility of the head teacher to decide whether or not the ‘**exceptional circumstances**’ threshold has been met. Reference will be made to the Dorset LA policy and guidance on this issue.

If parents take their child away without permission or even fail to apply for it, the absence should be recorded as ‘unauthorised’. Under these circumstances, the school will refer with discretion to the Dorset LA policy and guidance on issuing penalty notices.

APPENDIX 1 – PRO-ACTIVE INTERVENTIONS

Clarifying expectations

- General letter sent to all parents documenting interventions and attendance targets
- Attendance policy on website

On-going monitoring and communication

- Authorisations sought from parents (first day response)
- Parents consulted where no authorisation is apparent
- HT/Tutor to contact parents and trigger school letters where appropriate

Targeted interventions

- Issue 90%/85%/lateness letters
- Phone calls made to parents
- Fortnightly pupil assemblies

Solution meetings

- Parent, pupils, tutor and attendance leader involved
- Discuss issues
- Set targets for improvement
- Ascertain need for support from East Dorset Families Partnership Team and CAF completion

Legal intervention

- Monitor attendance in lined with LA penalty thresholds
- Apply for local authority penalty letters

APPENDIX 2 – FIRST LETTER

Dear INSERT name,

(CHILD’S NAME)’s attendance is below expectations this academic year and is currently _____.

In line with local authority guidance, I am writing to you in order to highlight this issue.

Good levels of attendance have a clear link with pupils’ progress in school. Therefore, it is important that we offer support and guidance in an effort to reduce absence.

Please contact me to discuss the matter in further detail.

Yours sincerely

APPENDIX 2 – SECOND LETTER

Dear INSERT name,

(CHILD'S NAME)'s attendance is well below expectations this academic year and is currently _____.

According to new government guidance, this falls into the category of Persistent Absence.

Missing 15 per cent of lessons a year is the equivalent of having a month off school a year. Much of the work children miss when they are off school is never made up, leaving these pupils at a considerable disadvantage for the remainder of their school career. There is also clear evidence of a link between poor attendance at school and low levels of achievement.

I will be in touch shortly to arrange an appointment to discuss this matter further.

The school will not authorise any more absence, pending further discussion at this proposed meeting. In accordance with Dorset Local Authority policy, we reserve the right to apply for a penalty letter to be issued where there are 10 half day sessions of unauthorised attendance within a 12 week period.

Yours sincerely

APPENDIX 4 – UNIVERSAL LETTER AT START OF YEAR

Dear Parent/Guardian

Re: Attendance

At the start of a new school year, it is important to remind you of the need for high attendance and punctuality levels and their direct correlation with pupils' attainment.

- Arriving 5 minutes late every day adds up to over 3 days lost each year
- A half day of absence from each week of the school year is equal to an attendance rate of 90%, which is equivalent to taking 4 weeks off school in total during an academic year
- Research suggests that poor attendance results in declining GCSE attainment
- Positive behaviours and attitudes in relation to attendance need to be established as early as possible, in order to avoid habits that are hard to break later in a child's school life

Please help us and your child by ensuring that their attendance remains above 96%, allowing them to enjoy and achieve whilst in school.

The school has recently reviewed its attendance policy and a copy of this can be found on the website, alongside the Dorset LA policy and guidance document. It outlines the interventions that will be taken if attendance rates are causing concern. This policy also reiterates recent changes to government regulations which state that headteachers **may not** grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are **exceptional circumstances**.

If you are at all concerned about any of the issues raised in this letter, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Many thanks in anticipation of your support.

Yours sincerely

APPENDIX 5 – PERSISTENT LATENESS LETTER

Dear NAME

It has been noted that CHILD'S NAME is often late for school and their tutor is concerned that this is having a detrimental effect on their learning.

It is essential for our pupils to arrive at school before the first bell at 8.40. If they are not present, they begin their day feeling flustered and will miss out on opportunities and learning time. Being punctual is a life skill and it is important for pupils to learn that punctuality is essential in all work places, both in education and later in their chosen career. Also, pupils after 9.10 a.m. are entered as unauthorised absence for the morning session. 10 unauthorised half day sessions within 12 weeks can lead to a penalty notice letter being issued.

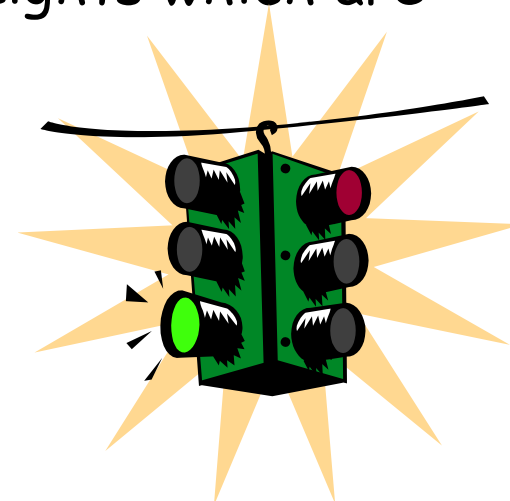
Children perform far better and with more confidence in class if they have had a good start to the day. Therefore, we ask that you support us by ensuring your child arrives at school with time to spare.

Yours sincerely,

Attendance Traffic Lights

The school currently runs Attendance Traffic Lights which are displayed in the form rooms

- Green** - Attendance is 93% - 100%
- Amber** - Attendance is 86% - 92%
- Red** - Attendance is 85% or less



These figures are monitored fortnightly making form tutors aware of any attendance concerns, it also allows form tutors to recognise and reward improved attendance.