

William MacGregor Primary School



ATTENDANCE POLICY

Policy revised and adopted by staff and the Governing Body: December 2019

Next Review: September 2020

Our School Vision





William MacGregor is an accredited Rights Respecting School, Bronze Award:

"The CRC (the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child) provides young people and everyone working with them a common moral framework of values and a common language to support their development as rights respecting global citizens. Through learning about their rights and the responsibilities these rights imply, young people are able to reflect on the consequences of their actions with regard to their own rights and the rights of others."

The Key Principles based upon our Rights Respecting School status:

- Everyone has the right
 - To feel safe, healthy and happy
 - To be treated with respect, dignity and equality
 - To learn or to teach, or to do their job

The **policy aims** to raise the profile of attendance by encouraging and promoting a positive attitude in order that all children can achieve a good rate of attendance throughout their time at school.

Objectives

- To foster a high expectation of pupils' attendance in school on a regular basis.
- To raise family awareness of the importance of a child's regular attendance at school.
- To inform parents/carers as to the legitimate reasons for absence.
- To maintain an accurate attendance/registering system and a mechanism for monitoring and controlling attendance.
- To maintain a clear policy on attendance which is known to all staff, pupils and parents/carers.
- To maintain clear communication both within the school and between school and parents.

School Attendance and the Law

Under Section 44 of the Education Act 1996, parents of a child of compulsory school age are under a legal duty to ensure the regular attendance of that child at the school where he or she is a registered pupil. Failure to discharge this duty may result in the LA prosecuting the parents and each parent may be fined.

This policy reflects the most up to date legal powers and duties that govern school attendance in accordance with The Education Act 1996 and subsequent regulations and amendments in 2006, 2010, 2011 and 2013.

The content of this policy is taken from the latest regulations - 'School Attendance - Statutory Guidance and Departmental Advice' (*Published October 2014*)

Absences are considered either to be:

- **Authorised absence** means that the school has either given approval in advance for a pupil of compulsory school age to be away, or has accepted an explanation offered afterwards as justification for absence.
- **Unauthorised absence** is where a school is not satisfied with the reasons given for the absence.

The Headteacher, or person acting in the absence of the Headteacher, has the authority to decide whether to authorise an absence. This is to agree that there was a legitimate reason for a child not to be in school.

There are only four legitimate reasons for absence:

- 1) Religious observance
- 2) Illness of the child
- 3) The death of a close family member
- 4) An urgent medical or dental appointment

Leave of absence authorised by the school

Only exceptional circumstances warrant an authorised leave of absence. We will consider each request individually taking into account the circumstances, such as: the nature of the event for which leave is sought; the frequency of the request; whether the parent gave advance notice; and the pupil's attainment, attendance and ability to catch up on missed schooling.

Holiday authorised by the school

The Head teacher will not grant leave of absence unless in exceptional circumstances. The application must be made in advance and the head teacher must be satisfied that there are exceptional circumstances which warrant the leave. Where a leave of absence is granted, the head teacher will determine the number of days a pupil can be away from school. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the head teacher's discretion.

Illness (not medical or dental appointments)

We urge parents to notify us on the first day the child is unable to attend due to illness. We will authorise absences due to illness unless they have genuine cause for concern about the legitimacy of an illness. If the authenticity of illness is in doubt, we can request parents to provide medical evidence to support illness. Medical evidence can take the form of hospital letters, appointment cards, etc. rather than doctors' notes. Schools can record the absence as unauthorised if not satisfied of the authenticity of the illness but should advise parents of their intention.

Medical or dental appointments

We do encourage parents to make appointments out of school hours. Where this is not possible, the pupil should only be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary for the appointment. We can only authorise an absence for a medical or dental appointment if medical evidence is provided, where the child will be marked with an 'M'. However if there is no medical evidence, the child will be marked with a 'U', Late (after registration has closed) or 'O', an unauthorised absence (if the child does not attend school for the whole session or full day).

Religious observance

We treat absence as authorised when it is due to religious observance. The day must be exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the parents belong. Where necessary, we do seek advice from the parents' religious body about whether it has set the day apart for religious observance.

Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence

A number of different groups are covered by the generic term Traveller - Roma, English and Welsh Gypsies, Irish and Scottish Travellers, Showmen (fairground people) and Circus people, Bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and New Travellers.

This code is used when Traveller families are known to be travelling for occupational purposes and have agreed this with us but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision. It will not be used for any other types of absence by these groups.

To help ensure continuity of education for Traveller children it is expected that the child should attend school elsewhere when their family is travelling and be dual registered at that school and William MacGregor school. Children from these groups whose families do not travel are expected to register at a school and attend as normal. They are subject to the same rules as other children in terms of the requirement to attend school regularly once registered at school.

Holiday not authorised by the school or in excess of the period determined by the head teacher.

If the Head teacher does not authorise a leave of absence for the purpose of a holiday but the parents still take the child out of school, or the child is kept away for longer than was agreed, the absence is unauthorised. The regulations do not allow us to give retrospective approval. If the parents did not apply for leave of absence in advance, the absence must be recorded as unauthorised.

Absent from school without authorisation

If we are not satisfied with the reason given for absence we will record it as unauthorised.

Parenting orders are available as an 'ancillary order' following a successful prosecution by the local authority for irregular attendance or breach of a school attendance order.

They are also available as a 'free-standing order' by direct application by the governing body of a school, or local authority to the Magistrates' Court,

The Code of Conduct

The *Education (Penalty Notices) Regulations 2007* set out the details of how the penalty notice scheme must operate. This includes a requirement that every local authority must draw up and publish a Code of Conduct for issuing penalty notices, after consulting all schools, including academies, and the police. The code should set out the criteria that will be used to trigger the use of a penalty notice.

New guidance came into force from **1st January 2018** and is detailed below:

Penalty Notice for leave of absence (holiday) in term time

From 1 January 2018 **any** period of unauthorised leave may result in you as a parent receiving a penalty notice fine. Your head teacher will continue to be the only person able to authorise leave in term time, but this will apply only in exceptional circumstances. Any unauthorised absence will be referred by your head teacher to the local authority.

Penalty Notice for persistent lateness

A pupil needs to achieve 10 unauthorised late marks before a penalty notice warning could be issued. Late marks do not have to be one after the other in order for the penalty notice to be issued. You are therefore encouraged where possible to ensure your child attends school on time. However, if your child is late you must inform the school of the reason(s) why, as they may be able to offer you some form of advice or support.

Period of time used to measure persistent absence and lateness

If your child has had 10 days unauthorised absence or is late 10 times over a twelve week period, you may receive a penalty warning notice and also potentially a fine.

These changes have been agreed with local head teachers and have been implemented to help promote and support good attendance to school.

If a child's unauthorised absence for leave meets the above criteria, the school will refer the case to the Local Support Team to pursue issuing parents with a penalty notice.

Further details and a copy of the revised Code of Conduct for issuing Penalty Notices can be obtained from the council's website

<https://www.staffordshire.gov.uk/Education/Education-welfare/Attendance.aspx>

Monitoring attendance and punctuality at William MacGregor Primary School

Dealing with late arrivals

- The school's main gate on Basin Lane is opened from 8.30am where children go straight into the school building and prepare for the start of the school day at 8.40am.
- At 8.45am the school gate is closed on the playground. The time between the children going into school and the gate closing is an opportunity for parents to discuss any concerns with the headteacher.
- Children arriving at school after the gate is locked will have to enter through the main entrance where parents will need to sign the 'late book' situated by the school office to explain the reason for the pupil's late arrival.
- A late mark will be recorded on the SIMs class register and how many minutes late will be noted. (Please refer to SCC Code of Conduct regarding fines issued to parents whose child is persistently late)
- If the child is unaccompanied, the school secretary will fill details in the 'late book' on behalf of the parent.
- The 'late book' will be monitored regularly by the Headteacher and parents will receive a letter if there are more than 5 episodes of lateness in any half term.
- Once a child has accumulated 10 lates 'U' or unauthorised 'O' a fine may be issued.
- Children will be classed as late if they arrive at school between 8.45 - 9.00am and this will be recorded as 'L'. You will be required to sign your child in at the office and state the reason why.
- Teachers will close the SIMs register by 9.00am. Any pupils not in class by that time will be recorded as 'N'. The school office will then contact the parents to find out reason for absence.
- Any child arriving after 9.00am will also be late, but recorded as 'U' (late after registration has closed) on the register.

Dealing with unauthorised absence

- Until a legitimate reason is provided, all absence is unauthorised.
- Parents are expected to give the reason for absence by phoning or texting the school before **9.00am** on the first day their child is absent.
- If the school has not been notified of the reason for absence, parents will be contacted to provide the information.
- To ensure the safety of the child, school will immediately send a member of staff to the home when contact cannot be made by phone with the parent of an unexpectedly absent

child. If there is no answer when staff visit the family home, the police will be called immediately.

- The LA will be notified if a child is frequently absent.
- Attendance figures are monitored by the LA regularly (usually each half term).
- Please see SCC Code of Conduct for issuing fines for any unauthorised absence.

Disaffected pupils (Pupils who are experiencing personal challenges)

The school will endeavour to support children in extreme personal situations by employing one or more of the following strategies:

- The pupil and/or parent will be offered support from the Deputy Head Teacher.
- Parents will be asked to attend meetings to discuss problems with the school. (With DHT initially and then HT if attendance does not improve)
- The LTS (Local Support Team) may be contacted for support and advice for pupil, parents and the school - this will be accessed through First Response.
- Outside agencies may be liaised with if necessary for support and advice.

Rewards and incentives for attendance

Those children who achieve an attendance percentage of 97.8% (no more than 4 days/ 8 sessions absent) or above at the end of the year will be rewarded with a trip to the local bowling alley and enjoy a picnic lunch in the Castle Grounds (weather depending)

At the end of each half term children will be informed of their current attendance percentage so they know how well they are doing towards achieving the target of 97.8%.

Those children with 100% attendance at the end of each term will take part in a celebration treat in school - this could be enjoying a film one afternoon.

Those children who achieve 100% attendance for the whole year will also be rewarded with a £10 voucher.