

Welwyn St Mary's Primary School

Believe and Achieve



Attendance Policy

This policy will be reviewed every 4 years unless there is a change in legislation.

Reviewed by staff: March 2020
Covid guidance added: November 2021

Approved by Governors: 17th November 2021

At Welwyn St Mary's School, the whole school community - governors, staff, parents and pupils are committed to high standards of attendance and punctuality.

We believe that good attendance helps the children to maximise their learning. We encourage excellent levels of attendance and punctuality to enable all pupils to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them.

Expectations

The responsibility for excellent attendance is shared between school, parents and pupils.

School

- We ensure that records of attendance are maintained according to Government legislation and guidance on a daily basis.
- We follow up all instances of poor attendance and punctuality.
- We acknowledge and reward excellent attendance.
- Parents are actively discouraged from taking holidays in term time.

Parents

- Parents are expected to ensure that their child attends school regularly, punctually, properly dressed and equipped and in a fit condition to learn.
- Parents will inform school on the first day of absence by phone, e-mail or letter, of the reason for their child's absence from school.
- Parents will maintain regular communication with school staff where necessary e.g. when there is an extended period of absence.
- Parents will ensure that school are informed of any changes of contact details.
- Parents should avoid, if at all possible, making dental or medical appointments for their child during school hours.

Pupils

- All pupils are expected to attend school and all of their lessons regularly and punctually.
- Pupils must remember to hand any note giving reasons for absence to the class teacher.
- Pupils are expected to be ready to learn.

Doors open

School doors open at 8.35 am for Key Stage 2 pupils and 8.45am for Key Stage 1 pupils and pupils enter the building at that time.

Registration

Registers are taken electronically at 8.45 am and 1.00 pm. Registers close at 9.15 am and 1.05 p.m. Registers are marked consistently by staff in accordance with DfE guidance. Any pupil arriving after closure of the register will be marked absent for the whole session. Any pupil arriving after the register is called but before registration closes will be marked as late but present for the whole session.

Lateness

Any pupil arriving after 8.45 am or 1.00 pm should report to the school office as registers will have been returned from the classrooms. They should be signed in by an adult.

Following up Lateness

Arriving on time gives children a positive start to the day. Parents whose children are regularly late for school, will receive a letter. Agreed ways to monitor and improve punctuality will be put into place. Parents who are regularly late collecting their child at home time will also be contacted. Being collected last can be distressing, especially for younger pupils. Ways to improve this will be discussed, agreed and monitored.

Absences and Term Time Holidays

Notification must be provided for all absences from school by phone or written message. Absences are authorised by the headteacher. All medical absence must be supported by a doctor's note or appointment card. School may decide not to authorise an absence e.g. where the reason given is not acceptable.

We actively discourage parents and carers from taking family holidays during term time. Parents/carers complete an absence request form and submit this to the school for any requested absence.

When an absence form is received and the absence is unauthorised, the form will be returned and an unauthorised absence letter will be sent to parents.

Leaving and Returning to School during School Day

When pupils leave or return to school during the school day, office staff must be notified and pupils must be signed in and out using the pupils signing in/out book at the office reception.

Following up Absence

Welwyn St Mary's School follows up all absences from school to ensure that all attendance is accounted for on the first day of absence. If no notification for absence is received, contact

will be made by the school to locate the child. If no contact can be made we may make a home visit or request a police welfare check. The school's minimum target attendance rate is 96%.

Our school office generates regular reports on all pupils in order to identify pupils falling below 96% attendance. Letters are sent to the parents of these children.

Rewards

Excellent attendance is celebrated each year using the Hertfordshire Award Certificates.

Working with the Local Authority Attendance Officer (LAAO)

We work in partnership with the school's LAAO to improve attendance for individual pupils and the whole school. We work with individual pupils and their parents to improve poor attendance where necessary. If attendance does not improve sufficiently, and after discussion with the LAAO, the school will make a formal referral to Children, Schools and Families.

Fines

Fines are imposed for pupil absence as per government policy.

Education Related Penalty Notices from February 2016

Should a child of compulsory school age* have any unauthorised absence in the current and/or previous term, we will send a warning letter (see Appendix A) to both parents saying they at risk of being in breach of regulations. If unauthorised absence continues and subsequently reaches 15 sessions within the same time period then the school will contact the Local Authority who will issue a penalty notice. The amount payable is £60 (per parent) if paid with 21 days or £120 (per parent) if paid after 21 days but within 28 days of receipt of the notice. Separate notices are issued to each parent in respect of each child. Penalty notices are sent by first class post after the first day of absence and are deemed to have been received on the second day after posting. Arrangements for payment are detailed on the penalty notice.

There is no statutory right of appeal once a penalty notice has been issued. The Local Authority may withdraw a notice if it has been issued incorrectly. If the penalty notice has been issued in accordance with Hertfordshire's Code of Conduct there is no facility to overturn the decision to issue the notice.

If the notice remains unpaid after the expiry of the payment period and the Local Authority has not withdrawn the notice, the Local Authority will prosecute for the offence under section 444 of the Education Act 1996.

Publication of Information

Parents, pupils, staff and governors are informed annually of whole school attendance issues and statistics. Information on individual pupil's attendance is included in the pupil's annual report to parents. Where families are working with the school or LAAO to improve attendance, information is shared more frequently and in line with agreed targets

Children missing from Education

A child is missing from education if they are of compulsory school age*, do not have a school place and no alternative education arrangements have been made for them. It is vital that the authority, schools and other agencies work closely together to help safeguard children who may be missing from education.

If the school believes a child to be missing from education they will contact the Children Missing Education Officer (CMEO) and make a referral by returning the Children Missing Education (CME) Referral Form.

Covid guidance

Welwyn St Mary's will follow any additional government guidance on attendance relating to Covid. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-attendance>

*A child reaches compulsory school age on or after their fifth birthday. If they turn 5 between 1st January and 31st March, then they are of compulsory school age on 31st March; if they turn 5 between 1st April and 31st August, then they are of compulsory school age on 31st August. If they turn 5 between 1st September and 31st December, then they are of compulsory school age on 31st December. A child continues to be of compulsory school age until the last Friday of June in the school year that they reach sixteen.

Appendix A

Suggested penalty notice warning letter

Dear _____

The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007

Name of pupil ----- Registered at Welwyn St Mary's Primary School

This is a formal warning that if ----- (child's name) is/has been absent from school and the absence(s) has/have not been authorised you are at risk of being in breach of the regulations stated above.

Should the number of unauthorised absence sessions reach 15, (7.5 days) or more in the current and/or previous term you will be in breach of the regulations and the Local Authority may issue you with a penalty notice.

The notice requires you to pay a penalty of £60 within 21 days, rising to £120 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days. Each parent is liable to pay a separate penalty and penalty notices are issued for each child to whom the absence relates.

Payment of the penalty enables you to discharge your liability for the offence for the period in question of failing to ensure your child's regular attendance at school. (Section 444, The Education Act 1996).

Failure to pay the penalty means you are liable to prosecution for the offence, by summons to appear before the local Magistrates Court. On conviction you may be liable for a fine of up to £1,000 per parent. This is a criminal offence which carries a criminal record. The Local Authority will ask for costs of £125 to be awarded against you.

If you fail to ensure your child attends regularly and 15 sessions of unauthorised absence is reached a penalty notice will be issued. **You will not receive a further warning before the penalty is imposed.**

If you believe there are legitimate reasons for your child's absence please contact me within 5 working days to discuss the matter.

Yours sincerely

Mary Westley

Headteacher