

WSAPC ATTENDANCE POLICY

Guiding Principles

Young people are entitled to formal education from the age of 5yrs and it is important that they receive this entitlement to benefit their present and future lives, and for the economic and social well-being of society. **Pupils who leave year 11 as of summer 2014 must continue in education or training until at least their 18th birthday.**

West Sussex Local Authority is responsible by law for making sure that registered pupils of compulsory age regularly attend their school. The Government also has a priority in reducing unnecessary absence from school.

Many pupils attending West Sussex Alternative Provision College are more vulnerable and have greater needs than the majority of their mainstream counterparts. This means that they may have more genuine absences from school for medical reasons or experience greater social need than others. It is our responsibility as educators to do all we can to encourage and support regular and frequent school attendance.

Parents and carers are responsible for ensuring their children attend school. We at WSAPC are committed to ensuring that families understand how important this is. We give 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 are concerns about attendance.

If there are problems which affect a pupil's attendance we will investigate, identify and strive in partnership with parents/ carers and pupils to resolve those problems as quickly and efficiently as possible.

Information for Parents

At WSAPC we aim to:

- ✦ Maintain good attendance and punctuality;
- ✦ Maintain parents' and pupils' awareness of the importance of regular attendance.

Good attendance is important because:

- ✦ Statistics show a direct link between good achievement and good attendance;
- ✦ Regular attenders make better progress, both socially and academically;
- ✦ Regular attenders find school routines, school work and friendships easier to cope with;
- ✦ Regular attenders find learning more satisfying;
- ✦ Regular attenders settle into their next school, college or work placement more easily.



As a parent you can help us by:

- ✦ Ensuring your child attends their APC centre regularly (*absence should only happen when your child is significantly ill and therefore unfit to attend school, or if there is an unavoidable/unforeseen reason or circumstance which is causing a difficulty/period of difficulty*);
- ✦ Telephoning on the first morning of any absence to give us the reason and tell us when the child is likely to return to school;
- ✦ Arranging all non-emergency medical appointments out of school hours or during school holidays;
- ✦ Sending us a note confirming the reason for your child’s absence when s/he returns to school;
- ✦ Providing medical evidence for any frequent absence attributed to illness;
- ✦ Keeping us updated by telephone or letter if your child has any extended period of absence;
- ✦ Making sure we always have your current contact numbers; this includes all telephone numbers, child minder and emergency contact details.

We ask all parents to consider the following:

A whole year has 365 days
A school year has only 190 days.

- ✦ Missing 10%, or about 18 days, may affect academic success;
- ✦ Attendance is an important life skill that will help a young person succeed, either at college, or to keep a job;
- ✦ A pupil who is 10 minutes late every day will miss 30 hours of learning over a school year;
- ✦ 90% attendance is equal to one day off every 2 weeks;
- ✦ Young people with over 90% attendance are more likely to gain 5 or more A-C GCSE’s or equivalent qualifications.

The chart below indicates the impact of days absent from school:

No absence	10 days absence	19 days absence	29 days absence	38 days absence	47 days absence
190 days of education	180 days of education	171 days of education	161 days of education	152 days of education	143 days of education
100%	95%	90%	85%	80%	75%
Very Good		Worrying		Serious Concern	



Strategies for improving attendance:

What can parents and carers do to improve their young person's attendance?

- ✦ Make sure your son/daughter has a good night's sleep - set a regular bed-time and morning routine;
- ✦ Discourage your child from eating and drinking the 'wrong' things at night, such as energy drinks, sweets and snack foods, because all of these can have a negative impact on young people's sleeping habits and how they feel the next morning;
- ✦ Prepare for school the night before by laying out uniforms, bus/train passes etc.;
- ✦ A healthy breakfast is proven to increase concentration and decrease emotional and behavioural difficulties;
- ✦ If your child seems reluctant to attend school, talk to school staff; perhaps there is an underlying problem - please contact your son/daughter's tutor in the first instance;
- ✦ Try not to schedule dental/medical and other appointments during the school day.

What does WSAPC do to try to improve attendance?

- ✦ Pupils who are admitted to WSAPC will be interviewed with parents and will then be set targets for attendance within 2 weeks of admission;
- ✦ We will follow up unexplained absences by phone calls and letters from the first session of absence as necessary;
- ✦ Parents will be kept regularly informed of all concerns regarding punctuality and attendance and WSAPC will publish your child's attendance rate on her/his school reports;
- ✦ Attendance statistics are monitored by the Co-Head Teachers, the Assistant Headteachers (Heads of APC Centres) and the Governing Body and are reported to the Local Authority;
- ✦ Targets are set annually for overall WSAPC attendance figures. The current target is 80%;
- ✦ Targets for improving school attendance are set, as appropriate, for senior leaders within WSAPC as part of the ongoing Staff Appraisal process;
- ✦ Opportunities to maintain awareness of the importance of good attendance through newsletters and the school website, Parent/Carer Consultation Days and pupil reports will be maximised;
- ✦ Parents and carers, pupils and staff will be regularly reminded of what constitutes authorised and unauthorised absence;
- ✦ **Regular attendance and punctuality is promoted and recognised through awards and certificates in tutor groups and assemblies. A termly attendance prize for the centre with the best attendance will be presented to raise awareness and commitment from pupils and their parents/ carers and pupils who achieve 100% over a**



term will be rewarded. Interim rewards will be organised by centres for improving attendance;

- ✦ The Head of Centre will have regular meetings with the Local Authority Education Welfare Officer, in order to identify and support those pupils who are experiencing attendance difficulties;
- ✦ A letter will be sent out to parents if a child is persistently absent from school.

Other information for parents:

"Leave" in relation to a school means leave granted by any person authorised to do so by the governing body or proprietor of the school.

The Co-Head Teachers will only consider authorising an absence during term time where an application has been made in advance and where s/he is satisfied that there are exceptional or special circumstances to justify the request. The DfE (2013) now state that leave of absence requests for holidays should not be granted.

It is acknowledged that due to individual needs of pupils at WSAPC, the Co-Head Teacher may apply special consideration to requests for compassionate leave and where a parent/carer can demonstrate external funding has been awarded to a family for a holiday.

It may be necessary for the school or Education Welfare Officer to ask the parent/ carer to provide the school with written evidence of the reason for absence e.g. appointment cards, medical certificate or a letter from the GP.

If there is an extended period of absence due to medical reasons the school or the Education Welfare Officer may ask for permission of the parent/ carer to contact the child's GP to confirm that the medical condition prevents the child from attending school and to establish a possible return date for the child.

Authorised Absence

Some absences are allowed by law and are known as "authorised absences". For example: if a child is ill, family bereavement, religious observance.

Unauthorised Absence

There are times when children are absent for reasons which are not permitted by law. These are known as "unauthorised absences". Examples of unauthorised absence are:

- ✦ Waiting in for a delivery
- ✦ Taking or collecting a relative to/from the airport
- ✦ Going for a family day out
- ✦ Sleeping in after a late night
- ✦ Going shopping or for a hair cut
- ✦ Because it is your child's birthday
- ✦ Term time holiday/cheap flights
- ✦ A parent or carer's illness



Where there is no explanation for an absence, or where the explanation or reason for the absence is considered unsatisfactory, absence will be recorded as 'unauthorised'. Unauthorised Absences have to be reported to the Local Authority. The Education Welfare Service may contact you where unauthorised absence continues to be a problem. **Unauthorised absence could result in a Fixed Penalty Fine or other legal action.**

Sanctions for persistent lateness and Non – Attendance

A Penalty Notice can be considered for unauthorised leave of absence taken without permission after the third day of absence. It will be issued by the EWS at the request of the Co-Head Teacher in accordance with Local Authority policy. A penalty Notice can also be considered for any unauthorised absence where there is no justifiable cause. There is no statutory right of appeal against the issuing of a Penalty Notice.

The Local Authority may impose an Education Supervision Order, Parenting Contract or Parenting Order in certain circumstances.

Punctuality

- ✦ It is important to be on time as the first part of the school day is used to give out instructions or organise schoolwork for the rest that day.
- ✦ Arrival (particularly if the lateness is frequent/persistent) after the close of registration will be marked as unauthorised absence code 'U' in line with the DfE guidance. This is effectively an absence.
- ✦ All lateness is recorded daily. The number of minutes late and the reason for lateness if known will also be recorded. This information can be made available to the courts in the form of a report, should a prosecution be the outcome of repeated lateness.

Exceptional Leave - Term Time Leave of Absence

We are always concerned about the amount of school time pupils miss as a result of term time leave. There is **no entitlement** to time off during term time. Leave of absence is only granted in exceptional circumstances at the discretion of the Co-Head Teacher in accordance with the school policy as agreed by the governing body.

It is our policy:

- ✦ Only in an exceptional circumstance will term time leave be allowed. Parents/carers wishing to apply for leave of absence need to fill in an application form well in advance and before booking tickets or making travel arrangements.
- ✦ If term time leave is taken without prior permission from the school, the absence will be unauthorised and you may be liable for a fixed-penalty fine or other legal action.
- ✦ Please remember that absence for whatever reason disadvantages a child by creating gaps in his/her learning. A good understanding of the work and good progress can only take place when the child is in the classroom regularly and on time.



Leavers

If your child is leaving our school (other than at the end of their WSAPC placement) parents are asked to:

Give WSAPC comprehensive information about their plans including any date of a move and your new address and telephone numbers, your child’s new school and the start date when known. This should be submitted to our school in writing;

When pupils leave and we do not have information about where they have gone, then your child is considered to be a ‘Child Missing Education’. This means that the Local Authority has a legal duty to carry out investigations, which will include liaising with Children’s Services (formerly Social Services), the Police and other agencies, to try and locate your child.

By giving us the above information, these investigations can be avoided.

Legal Note

Parents have a legal duty to ensure the regular and full time attendance at school of registered pupils (Education Act 1996). This policy is based on the law and on Best Practice guidance produced by the DfE and the Local Authority. The Education Welfare Service aims to work with schools and families to promote good attendance and avoid legal action. However in some cases, parents are prosecuted (taken to court) or have to pay a Fixed Penalty (fine) if these absences continue.

We value your support in helping us to maintain the high standards to which we always aspire.

A final reminder:

Attendance during one school year	Equals days absent	Which is approximately weeks absent
95%	9.5 days	2 weeks
90%	19 days	4 weeks
80%	38 days	8 weeks
70%	57 days	12 weeks
60%	76 days	15 weeks
50%	95 days	19 weeks
40%	114 days	23 weeks
30%	133 days	27 weeks
20%	152 days	30 weeks
10%	171 days	34 weeks



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