



# Westminster City School

## Attendance policy

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**Reporting to**

# Attendance policy

***Westminster City School is committed to providing a full and efficient education to all students and embraces the concept of equal opportunities for all.***

Regular attendance to school is essential to a good education and establishes a positive working ethos early in life for all our students. This is a high priority at Westminster City School and we aim for an environment which enables and encourages all members of the community to reach out for excellence. For our students to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and your child should be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

Every opportunity will be used to convey to students and their parents/carers the importance of regular and punctual attendance. It is very important therefore that you make sure that your child attends regularly and this policy sets out how together we will achieve this.

School attendance is subject to various Education laws and this school attendance policy is written to reflect these laws and the guidance produced by the Department for Children, Schools and Families.

Each year the school will examine its attendance figures and set attendance targets. These will be set against both National and Local Education Authority attendance targets.

The school will review its systems for improving attendance at regular intervals to ensure that it is achieving its' set goals.

This policy will contain within it the procedures that the school will use to meet its attendance targets.

## ***Why Regular Attendance is so important:***

Any absence affects the pattern of a students schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any student's absence disrupts teaching routines so may affect the learning of others in the same class. Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is your legal responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution by the Borough Education Service and a financial fine.

### ***Promoting Regular Attendance:***

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility, parents/carers, students and all members of school staff. To maximise school attendance of all students, Westminster City School will:

- Provide you with details on attendance on the school's web page
- Report to you at least half-termly on how your child is performing in school and what their attendance and punctuality rate is.
- Celebrate good attendance by displaying individual and class achievements;
- Reward good or improving attendance through class competitions, certificates, acknowledgement in assemblies and outings/events.
- Run promotional events when parents/carers, students and staff can work together on raising attendance levels across the school.
- Provide an environment which will encourage regular attendance and punctuality to school ensuring that this is a main priority for all students attending school.
- Monitor and support students whose attendance is a cause for concern and to work in partnership with parents/outside agencies to resolve these concerns.
- Work closely with and make full use of support from additional practitioners in the community which will include working with the Education Welfare Service, the school nurse and multi-agency teams.

### ***Understanding types of absence:***

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by the parents), as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required, preferably in writing.

**Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason like illness, medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable cause.**

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been given. This type of absence can lead to the Authority using sanctions and/or legal proceedings. This includes:

- Parents/carers keeping students off school unnecessarily
- truancy before or during the school day
- absences which are unexplained.
- students who arrive at school too late to get a mark at morning registration
- shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- day trips and holidays in term time which have not been agreed.

Whilst any student may be absent from school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents and the student. If your child is reluctant to attend, please do not cover up their absence or give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. Please contact the school immediately to enable us to address the issues of your child's reluctance to attend school so that we can resolve these issues immediately, causing less disruption to your child's education. Failure to do this gives the impression that attendance does not matter and usually make things worse for the student and is harmful to their education.

### ***Persistent Absenteeism (PA):***

A student becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 20% or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any student's educational prospects and we need parents/carers fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

We monitor all absence thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority and you will be informed of this immediately.

PA students are tracked and monitored carefully through our pastoral system and we also combine this with academic mentoring where absence affects attainment.

All our PA students and their parents/carers are subject to an Action Plan and the plan may include: allocation of additional support through a Mentor or a Connexions worker, use of circle time, individual incentive programmes and participation in group activities around raising attendance. All PA cases also follow or are in conjunction with formal referral to the Education Welfare Service.

### ***Absence Procedures:***

Any student who is absent from school at the morning or afternoon registration period must have their absence recorded as being authorised, unauthorised or as an approved educational activity [attendance out of school]. Only the Headteacher or a member of staff acting on their behalf can authorise absence. If there is no known reason for the absence at registration, then the absence must be recorded in the first instance as unauthorised.

### ***First Day Absence***

Parents/carers should contact the school as soon as possible on the first day of absence. If this does not happen the school has an automated response system (truancy call\*) for informing parents by telephone or text on a student's first day of absence from school. This system is the responsibility of the schools data manager and family liaison officer, they will ensure that information received on student absenteeism, is transferred to the school register for what ever reason.

\*Truancy call sends to parents/carers whose children are absent from school, an automated phone call to their landline or mobile phone and a text message to their mobile phone. The parent/carer is then required to respond to these messages in the same manner. Should a parent not respond an hour later they will be called again, the system will continue to phone hourly until 8 pm or until a response is received.

Truancy Call gives parents/carers as part of the automated phone call, the opportunity to provide a reason for their child's absence either verbally or if they have received a text message, by text.. Truancy call will also be used to inform parent/carers if their child arrives late to morning registration. This will give notice that their child will be attending a late detention at the end of the school day.

### ***Third Day Absence***

The school will telephone/send a standard letter asking parents/carers to contact the school if there has been no parent/carer contact and a student has been absent from school for three consecutive days.

### ***Continuing Absence***

If there continues to be no contact with parents/carers then the school will continue to contact parents/carers by telephone.

If a student continues to be absent without an explanation for 15 consecutive days then a referral will be made to the Education Welfare Officer.

### ***Frequent absence***

It is the responsibility of Heads of Learning and the Family Liaison Officer to be aware of and bring attention to, any emerging attendance concerns. In cases where a student begins a pattern of absences, the school will try to resolve the problem with parents/carers. If this is unsuccessful the school will refer to the school nurse if the problem appears to be a medical one. In other cases the school will invite parents/carers in to the school to discuss the situation with our Family Liaison Officer and/or Pastoral Leaders, Assistant Head teacher. If there is no improvement and attendance moves below 85% then the matter will be referred to the Education Welfare Officer.

### ***Absence notes***

An absence note should be brought into school on the first day that a student returns after an absence with an explanation of the absence. This should be done even if the school has been informed previously by telephone. It would be best practice to provide the school with a medical appointment notes in advance of the appointment whenever possible.

Notes/photocopies of notes in planners received from parents explaining absence should be kept for the remainder of the academic year. If there are attendance concerns about the pupil, that may require further investigation, then the notes may need to be retained for a longer period.

### ***A Welcome Back***

It is important that on return from an absence that all students are made to feel welcome. Subject teachers should ensuring that students are helped to catch up on missed work and form tutors will ensure that students are brought up to date on any information that has been missed during their absence..

### ***Lateness***

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If your child misses the start of the day they can miss work and do not spent time with their form tutor getting vital information and news for the day. Late arriving students also disrupt registration, lessons, can be embarrassing for the student concerned and can also encourage absence. A positive attitude towards punctuality is essential if a student is to develop a positive working ethos in later life. Any reference produced for your child by the school will include their punctuality figures.

### ***How lateness is managed***

Morning registration will take place at the start of school at 8.45 am. The registers will remain open for 30 minutes. Any student arriving after this time will be marked as having an unauthorised absence unless there is an acceptable explanation. In cases for example, where the absence at registration was for attending an early morning medical appointment, the appropriate authorized absence code will be entered. If a student arrives after the close of registration then the student is required to sign the late book that is located in the main school office.

Students arriving after 8.50 a.m. but before the end of the registration period will be treated for statistical purposes, as present, but will be coded as late before registers close. This may mean that you could face the possibility of a Penalty Notice if the problem persists.

If your child has a persistent late record you will be asked to meet with the Head of Learning and/or Family Liaison Officer to resolve the problem, but you can approach the school at any time if you are having problems getting your child to school on time.

**Afternoon registration is held at: 3.10 p.m.**

**The registers will close: 3.20 p.m.**

For students who are late to school with no reasonable excuse, a detention of 20 minutes will be held after school on the day of the lateness or on subsequent days should a student fail to attend a detention or is attending off-site games on that day.

### ***Lateness to lessons***

Lateness to lessons e.g. after break, or from lesson to lesson will be followed up by subject teachers and is a departmental responsibility. Heads of Learning will become involved if it becomes an issue across curriculum areas.

### ***The registration system***

The School will use a computerized system for keeping the school attendance records.

The following national codes will be used to record attendance information.

<b><i>Code</i></b>	<b><i>Description</i></b>	<b><i>Meaning</i></b>
/	Present (AM)	Present
\	Present (PM)	Present
B	Educated off site (NOT Dual registration)	Approved Education Activity
C	Other Authorised Circumstances (not covered by another appropriate code/description)	Authorised absence
D	Dual registration (i.e. student attending other establishment)	Approved Education Activity
E	Excluded (no alternative provision made)	Authorised absence
F	Extended family holiday (agreed)	Authorised absence
G	Family holiday (NOT agreed or days in excess of agreement)	Unauthorised absence
H	Family holiday (agreed)	Authorised absence
I	Illness (NOT medical or dental etc. appointments)	Authorised absence
J	Interview	Approved Education Activity
L	Late (before registers closed)	Present
M	Medical/Dental appointments	Authorised absence
N	No reason yet provided for absence	Unauthorised absence
O	Unauthorised absence (not covered by any other code/description)	Unauthorised absence
P	Approved sporting activity	Approved Education Activity
R	Religious observance	Authorised absence
S	Study leave	Authorised absence
T	Traveller absence	Authorised absence
U	Late (after registers closed)	Unauthorised absence
V	Educational visit or trip	Approved Education Activity
W	Work experience	Approved Education Activity
X	Untimetabled sessions for non-compulsory school-age students	Not counted in possible attendances
Y	Enforced closure	Not counted in possible attendances
Z	Student not yet on roll	Not counted in possible attendances
#	School closed to students	Not counted in possible attendances

### **Registers by law must be kept for at least 3 years.**

Computer registers must be printed out at least once a month and bound into annual volumes. (Phoenix report A02). Alternatively electronic back-ups or micro-fiche copies can be made. These also need preserving for at least three year.

**Holidays in Term Time:**

Taking holidays in term time will affect your child's schooling as much as any other absence and we expect parents/carers to help us by not to take students away in school time. Remember that any savings you think you may make by taking a holiday in school time are offset by the cost to your child's education.

**There is no automatic entitlement in law to time off in school time to go on holiday.**

All applications for leave must be made in advance and at the discretion of the school a maximum of 10 days in any academic year may be authorised. In making a decision the school will consider the circumstances of each application individually, including any previous pattern of leave in term time.

It is important that Parents/carers understand the circumstances when leave in term time will not be agreed by us:

- When a student is just starting the school. This is very important as your child needs to settle into their new environment as quickly as possible.
- Immediately before and during assessment periods, e.g. GCSE or any other public examinations.
- When a student's attendance record already includes any level of unauthorised absence.
- Where a student's attendance rate is already below (90%) or will fall to or below that level as a result of taking holiday leave.

Any period of leave taken without the agreement of the school, or in excess of that agreed, will be classed as unauthorised and may attract sanctions such as a Penalty Notice.

**The Education Welfare Officer:**

Parents/Carers are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any problems together. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, the school may refer the student to the Education Welfare Officer from the Local Authority. He/she will also try to resolve the situation by agreement but, if other ways of trying to improve the student's attendance have failed and unauthorised absences persist, these Officers can use sanctions such as Penalty Notices or prosecutions in the Magistrates Court. Full details of the options open to enforce attendance at school are available from the school or the Local Authority. Alternatively, parents or children may wish to contact the EWO themselves to ask for help or information. They are independent of the school and will give impartial advice. Their telephone number is available from the school office or by contacting the Local Education Authority.

**Telephone numbers**

There are times when we need to contact parents/carers about lots of things, including absence, so we need to have your contact numbers at all times. So help us to help you and your child by making sure we always have an up to date number – if we don't then something important may be missed. There will be regular checks on telephone numbers throughout the year.

**Promoting attendance:**

The school will use opportunities as they arise to remind parents/carers, that it is their responsibility to ensure that their children receive their education.

The Home/School agreement can be used in this way.

### ***Attendance Awards***

The school will use the following system to reward pupils who have good or improving attendance / punctuality.

- Students in tutor groups with over 95% attendance for the week will be placed in a draw for a £5 foot locker voucher.
  - Termly certificates for over 95% attendance and punctuality.
  - Termly trips for the form achieving the highest attendance percentage in each year group.
  - Acknowledgement of good attendance in assemblies and in school newsletters
  - Termly "Footlocker" vouchers for students with 100% attendance and punctuality.
- positive letters home for students with improved attendance/punctuality.

### ***Attendance Targets***

The school has targets to improve attendance and your child has an important part to play in meeting these targets. Targets for the school and for individual classes are displayed around the school.

The minimum level of attendance for this school is 95% and we will keep you updated regularly about progress to this level and how your child's attendance compares. Our target is to achieve better than this however because we know that good attendance is the key to successful schooling.

Through the school year the school will monitor and analyse absences and punctuality to show us where improvements need to be made. A senior teacher will be responsible for overseeing this work.

Information on any projects or initiatives that will focus on these areas will be Shared with you and we ask for your full support.

The school will set attendance targets each year.

### ***Those people responsible for attendance matters in this school are:***

Miss K. World, Year 7 and 11 Head of Learning  
Ms L. Walwyn, Year 8 Head of Learning  
Mr A. Phillips, Year 9 Head of Learning  
Mr S, Boden Year 10 Head of Learning  
Ms S. Wadhvani, Family Liaison Officer  
Mr C. Rees, Assistant Headteacher/Attendance Leader

### ***Summary***

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents/carers and to promote attendance. Equally, parents/carers have a duty to make sure that their children attend. All school staff are committed to working with parents and students as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible.



# Appendices

## ***The Law***

### **The Education Act 1996 Part 1, Section 7 states:**

The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him to receive efficient full-time education suitable-

[a] To his age, ability and aptitude and

[b] To any special needs he may have.

either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

For educational purposes the term parent is used to include those that have parental responsibility and/or those that have the day to day care of the child. The legislation that appertains to children who are of compulsory school age and are registered at school is contained within this Act. Part V1 Section 444 contains the details of when an offence is committed if a child fails to attend school.

### ***Register and Admission Roll keeping.***

The legal requirements are found in:

The Education [Pupil Registration] (England) Regulations 2006

### ***Categorisation of Absence***

Any pupil who is on roll but not present in the school must be recorded within one of these categories:

- Unauthorised Absence
- Authorised Absence
- Approved Educational Activity

### ***Unauthorised absence***

This is for those pupils where no reason has been provided, or whose absence is deemed to be without valid reason.

### ***Authorised absence***

This is for those pupils who are away from school for a reason that is deemed to be valid under the Education Act 1996.

### ***Approved Educational Activity***

This covers types of supervised educational activity undertaken off site but with the approval of the school. **Note** students recorded in this category are deemed to be present for attendance returns purposes. This would include:

- Work experience placements
- Field trips and educational visits
- Sporting activities
- Link courses or approved education off site
- Most types of dual registration
- with their social worker.