Attendance Policy

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This Policy is founded within our School ethos which provides a caring, friendly and safe environment for all members of our community.

1. Rationale

Regular and punctual attendance is an essential prerequisite to effective learning. When children are not in school they are deprived of the educational opportunities which school has to offer them and they are at much greater risk of subsequently becoming socially excluded and disadvantaged. Wexham School has a well-developed ethos which demonstrates to children, parents and the wider community how much we value good attendance and punctuality. This is central to our belief that good attendance is the core to enjoyment, achievement and making a positive contribution.

We encourage and promote good attendance. We also balance this with specific strategies to address the needs of those children who experience difficulty in attending regularly. A whole school approach to attendance, therefore, focuses primarily on promoting attendance but will also address the issue of absenteeism, especially persistent absenteeism, when it occurs. Such an approach is both proactive and reactive and will combine, in appropriate measure, assistance with insistence.

2. Expectations

We expect that all students will:
- Attend school regularly, punctually and be appropriately prepared for the day.
- Discuss with their class/form teacher, Leader of Year, the Attendance Officer or the Senior Member of Staff i/c Attendance any problems preventing them from attending school.

We expect that all parents/carers and persons who have day to day responsibility for the students will:
- Encourage regular school attendance and be aware of their legal responsibilities.
- Ensure that the student/student in their care arrive at school punctually, prepared for the school day and have completed any homework they have been given.
- Contact the school promptly whenever any problem occurs that may keep the student away from school.
- Contact the school office on the first day of a student's absence, giving the reason for the absence.
- Discuss with their class/form teacher, Leader of Year, the Attendance Officer or the Senior Member of Staff i/c Attendance any problems preventing them from attending school.

We expect that school staff will:
- Keep regular and accurate records of attendance and monitor every student's attendance.
- Contact parents/carers on the first day of absence.
- Encourage good attendance and provide a welcoming and safe learning environment.
- Make enquiries to parents/carers of students who are attending irregularly, expressing the school's concerns and clarifying the school and the local authority's expectations regarding regular school attendance.
- Meet with the parents/carers of students who are attending irregularly, offering assistance and setting targets as and when necessary.
- Refer irregular or unjustified patterns of attendance to the attached Educational Welfare Officer should there be no improvement from the School's own actions.
- Parents/carers also need to support these views in the home to ensure that children are receiving corresponding messages about the value of education.

3. Types of absence

The parent/carer of a child of compulsory school age, **up 18 years old**, is required by law to ensure that the child regularly attends the school at which he/she is registered. Should a parent fail to ensure that his/her child attends that school regularly then the parent is guilty of an offence. Parents who are convicted of this offence may be fined up to £2,500 and/or sentenced to up to three months in prison. Alternatively parents may be subject to a fixed penalty notice. When a child of compulsory school age is absent from school, the attendance register must indicate whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised. Should the absence be authorised by the school the parent cannot be convicted.

3.1 Authorised Absence

Authorised absence is where the school has either given approval in advance for the student to be away or where an explanation offered afterwards has been accepted as satisfactory justification. Parents may not authorise absence; by law only schools can do this. Should school staff have reason to doubt that the explanation offered about a particular absence is genuine, the absence should be treated as unauthorised.

Absence may generally be authorised for the following reasons:
- Illness, medical or dental appointments, days of religious observance, exclusion, Traveller child travelling, family bereavement, a child caring for a sick or disabled family member (authorisation should, in such instances, be of limited duration) and involvement in a public performance.
- Emergency leave of absence (when the school has given approval in advance and for no more than 10 days);
- Lateness (when the child arrives after the register has closed and offers a satisfactory explanation – see below under lateness).

Excessive amounts of authorised absence may often be as damaging to continuity of learning as unauthorised absence; we therefore should only authorise absence sparingly and only after careful consideration, particularly where children have a history of irregular attendance.

Medical, dentist, opticians and similar should always be made outside of school hours.

3.2 Unauthorised Absence

Unauthorised absence is where no explanation has been given for the student's absence or where the explanation offered is considered by the school to be unacceptable. Absence should not be authorised in the following circumstances:

- No explanation offered by the parent/carer or the explanation offered is unsatisfactory (eg shopping, minding the house, etc).
- Family holidays (except in exceptional circumstances).
- Lateness when the child arrives after the register has closed and fails to offer a satisfactory explanation; this is often a difficult and potentially contentious issue – see below under Lateness.
- 'Special' occasions (when the school does not agree that leave should be given).

3.3 Persistent Absence

Persistent absence (or PA) is absence of 10% or more. An individual student is deemed to be a persistent absentee, therefore if his/her attendance is less than 90% (regardless of whether or not the absences have been authorised).

3.4**Approved Educational Activity**

Children who are educated off site or dual registered, or who are engaged in supervised educational activities away from school premises, need not be marked as authorised absent, provided that such activities are of an educational nature, approved by the school and supervised.

These children may be recorded as on an approved educational activity. This means that for statistical purposes, particular activities (such as approved work experience, field trips and educational visits, approved sporting activities and link courses) can be counted as statistically 'present'. The nature of the activity must, however, be recorded by use of appropriate code. This is important in order to ensure that an accurate record of those children physically present on site at any given time is instantly available.

4. **Poor attendees**

The following, far from exhaustive list, identifies those students who may potentially be poor attendees. These categories are not mutually exclusive and many clearly overlap. It is of course not inferred that such students are automatically prone to poor attendance nor does it seek to stigmatise such children in any way.

Students:
- whose parents have recently separated, who have recently moved into the area or who join a school midway through the school year
- who are 'looked after', who have caring responsibilities at home, who have recently missed a lot of school time through illness;
- whose siblings (and/or parents) have been poor school attenders and whose performance or attainment level in school tends to be poor;
- who may be teased or bullied, who have difficulty accessing the curriculum, who are persistently disruptive or who have previously been excluded;
- whose parents are experiencing severe financial hardship (and may not be able to afford bus fare, uniform, etc);
- who are under pressure from examinations.

Personal information about children must remain confidential or restricted on a need-to-know basis. With regard to personal details about children's lives staff need to be clear about:

- what is relevant;
- how this information is to be used;
- who needs to be aware of it;
- where such information is to be kept.

CONFIDENTIALITY can and should be mirrored by CARE and CONCERN.

5. Registers

We are required by law to call attendance registers twice daily - once at the start of the morning session and at some stage during the afternoon session. Registers – whether kept in paper form or electronically - are legal documents. Should the parents of a persistent non-attendee be prosecuted by the Local Authority under Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act, then the information which the register contains will be the main source of evidence presented to the court. The regulatory requirements placed on schools with regard to the keeping of registers are to be found in the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006.

There is a statutory requirement to complete registers and to keep them for a minimum of 3 years. The daily requirement to register students can and should be perceived as an opportunity to receive children formally from home and serve as an introduction to the school session.

At Wexham the morning register is taken as part of the tutorial activity, this is completed as close to 8.40 as possible, the start of the school day. The morning register must be conducted formally so as to convey the important message of attendance and punctuality and assist in fostering good habits of attendance. The morning register must never be completed by a student. It is vital that students are continually reminded that the school takes all matters of attendance and punctuality very seriously. The legal requirement for a PM register is recorded via a subject teacher's own electronic register and automatically transferred.

Parents are made aware and reminded of the school's expectations with regard to the times when registers open/close, procedures to be followed in the case of lateness, details of any practice regarding phone-calls/notes explaining absences, etc. This is communicated via letters, the School's Website and in the student diary.

Wexham School uses electronic registration. Adequate backup systems are in place and at the end of each school year a printed copy of the register is produced and archived.

6. Register Codes

The DfE offers a comprehensive set of register codes which all schools are required to use. These codes are as follows:

/ \ - Present am/pm
B - Educated off site - <u>Approved Educational Activity</u>.
C - Other authorised circumstances (including public performances licensed by the local authority, family bereavements, exceptional special occasions) - <u>Authorised Absence</u>.
D - Dual registration (i.e pupil attending other establishment) - <u>Approved Educational Activity</u>.
E - Excluded (no alternative provision made) - <u>Authorised Absence</u>.
F - Extended family holiday (agreed) - <u>Authorised Absence</u>.
G - Family holiday (not agreed or days in excess of agreement) - <u>Unauthorised Absence</u>.
H - Family holiday during term-time (provided this has been agreed by the school) - <u>Authorised Absence</u>.
I - Illness (not medical/dental appointments) - <u>Authorised Absence</u>.
J - Interview - <u>Approved Educational Activity</u>.
L - Late (before registers close) - <u>Present</u>.
M - Medical/Dental appointments - <u>Authorised Absence</u>.
N - No reason yet provided for absence - <u>Unauthorised Absence</u>.
O - <u>Unauthorised Absence</u>.
P - Approved Sporting Activity - <u>Approved Educational Activity</u>.
R - Religious Observance - <u>Authorised Absence</u>.
S - Study Leave - <u>Authorised Absence</u>.
T - Traveller child travelling - <u>Authorised Absence</u>.
U - Late after registers close without an acceptable explanation - <u>Unauthorised Absence</u>
V - Educational visit or trip - <u>Approved Educational Activity</u>.
W - Work Experience - <u>Approved Educational Activity</u>.
X - Non-compulsory school age absence - not counted in possible attendances.
Y - Enforced closure – not counted in possible attendances.
Z - Pupil not yet on roll - not counted in possible attendances.
- School closed – not counted in possible attendance.

Teaching staff and tutors completing a register must only enter / or \ if a student is present, N if they are absent or L if they are late. Other coding will be maintained by attendance staff, therefore it is vital that any notes from parents are passed to them as soon as they are received.

7. The Use of Attendance Data

The data which is extracted from attendance registers is used to support effective management of whole-school attendance matters. Such data is used to:

- Support and underpin the target-setting process.
- Identify individual students and particular groups of students who are or may be at risk of becoming persistent absentees and to facilitate and encourage early intervention.
- Identify particular types or patterns of absenteeism.
- Code level data is available to be scrutinised by the local authority and the DfE at any time.
- Identify possible inconsistencies in the implementation of school policy.
- Report attendance matters to parents.

8. First day response

Wexham School operates a policy of first day response. Here the attendance officer will make every effort to contact parents/carers should a student not be in school with any previous reason provided. It is a strategy which is aimed at the entire school community

9. Promoting good school attendance

Wexham School has a positive ethos in maintaining and promoting good attendance. Positive acknowledgement and praise for students who improve their attendance as well as for those that maintain excellent attendance exists and is regularly reviewed. A system of rewards and/or incentives shows the whole school community how highly attendance is valued and demonstrates to students and their families that the school values and appreciates their efforts. Promoting good school attendance is the responsibility of the whole staff.

Excellent/improved attendance is acknowledged by:

- Letters to parents, certificates, references in school newsletters/bulletins, presentations at assemblies.
- Our school's reward system, which is Vivo.
- Personal congratulations from senior staff.

Who we acknowledge:

- 100% attendees and other excellent attendees;
- Consistently good attendees;
- Poor attendees who show a marked/any improvement;
- Form or year groups with consistently good attendance;
- Form or year groups who show a marked improvement;
- Year 7 pupils who begin their secondary career with a good attendance record;
- The whole school.

10. The role of the Local Authoirty and Children Missing Education (CME)

As a maintained school the Local Authority is also responsible for maintaining good attendance, including prosecution should the need arise. Our Attendance Officer will inform the Local Authority when unauthorised absence becomes a concern.

The School also has a duty to report to the Local Authority a child who we believe is missing. This could be a sudden disappearance or unexplained absence where the schools own procedures have not been able to make contact with parents or the student.

11. Lateness

Wexham School encourages all students to arrive on time to school. Rigorous procedures are applied to ensure this occurs. These procedures take into account the local circumstances of the school in relation to transport and geography.

School registers are open from 8.40am until 9.05am. During this period any student registered will be marked as present for the morning session no matter what time during this period they arrive to school. However, unless they are present at 8.40 when the form tutor calls the register they will be marked as late (regardless of whether they were in fact on the school site).

Students who arrive after 9.05am with no acceptable reasons will be given a U code. This means they are late with no acceptable reason and there mark does not count towards overall attendance. Under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 these figures can be used for prosecution.

Students arriving after 8.40am (until 9.05.) will be greeted on the main entrance by the Attendance Team, this reinforces the importance of punctuality. A late mark is written in the student's diary and if any student is late for a second time in any ½ term period they are automatically given a 1 hour Lates detention. If they are late after this further detentions apply. Delays to buses, parents running late, oversleeping etc are not acceptable reasons for lateness, however, in certain circumstances allowances are made and these are explained below.

This stringent 8.40am cut off point reinforces the importance of punctuality and also takes into account local circumstances. Wexham serves an urban area, the vast majority of students live within walking distance and in line with our travel plan are encouraged to walk or cycle. Travelling by car or bus is a choice for our students and not forced due to distances travelled (with the exception of very small numbers). Therefore only in exceptional circumstances are detentions not given for lateness due to these forms of transport. The decision is made by staff on the main gate taking into account local conditions at a given time. These students will still be marked as late.

Some students, normally with Education and Health Care Plans may need to come to school by Taxi. If these students are late they are not sanctioned as to do so would be unfair. However, we expect Local Authorities who are responsible for the taxi to meet our 8.40am start. Repeated lateness of Taxi's will be followed up by a Senior Member of Staff to the Authority responsible.

It may also be necessary at times to limit sanctioning lateness for other students who may, for example, be young carers, looked after or due to medical concerns. However, the expectation remains for all students that lateness is not tolerated.

Students who are persistently late will go on punctuality report and may therefore be encouraged to be punctual by deploying rewards for improvement. Parental meetings may also take place for

students who do not improve. If students are persistently late due to their parents/carers and school action has had little impact, these cases will be referred to the Educational Welfare Service or in exceptional circumstance Social Care.

Students arriving to school after 9.05am are required to report to the student reception and will be given a late slip. Staff on reception will also issue detentions if required.

In order to set a good example it always expected that staff should be punctual to registration and their lessons.

It is also compulsory that staff mark students late if they are indeed late. This is important as when attendance of pastoral staff analyse registers it may hide those that are persistently late and therefore is neglectful in our duty of care. (It may also delay support to those students or families suffering difficulties.)

12. Monitoring Attendance

The monitoring of attendance is a partnership between the Senior Member of Staff i/c attendance, attendance officers and Leaders of Year. However, all staff are expected to monitor attendance in their own lessons and respond accordingly.

The monitoring of attendance is conducted on several levels
- Persistent Absence and below 95%
- Medical Reasons
- Unauthorised Absence
- Truancy
- Patterns of Attendance
- Cohorts (e.g. LAC, SEN, Ethnicity)

Depending on the above, interventions occur such as an Acceptable Attendance Agreement, parental interviews, student interviews, incentives, Learning Mentors, referral to agencies such as counselling, Social Care, Youth Support, Early Intervention Teams. Students will, depending on individual circumstance, frequently be given a specific time frame to improve, such as a four week period. Some students will go on attendance report.

The School will send warning letters to parents when thresholds slip below the required standards.

Depending on the nature and history of the Local Authority may - Serving a Notice, Serving a School Attendance Order, Issuing a Penalty Notice, Seeking an Education Supervision Orders, Establishing a Parenting Contract or Seeking a Parenting Order.

The collation of paperwork to prove a case is the responsibility of the School and the Local Authority.

13. Leave of Absence

- Any request for a leave of absence should be given in writing to the headteacher . It should state clearly the name of the student, the reason for request and how long the leave is for. It should also be provided in plenty of time for a response to be formulated. All requests for leave of absence are responded to in writing.

- Wexham School follows the DFE guidance that all leave of absence will be recorded as unauthorised, except in emergency circumstances.

- Parents will be asked to attend a meeting at School with the students Leader of Year and the Attendance officer and if required a senior member of staff.

- Penalty fines can be enforced on parents taking leave of absence.

- A student may lose their right to a place at the School should they fail to return from a leave of absence within the required time limit.

- Parents/carers are reminded at regular intervals of the damage that leave of absence can inflict on a student education

14. Post registration truancy

Post-registration truancy is not reflected in published figures of unauthorised absence yet it may account for a significant part of any truancy that actually takes place in schools. Early identification of and response to post-registration truancy is vital not just from a pastoral but also from a health and safety perspective.

Post-Registration Truancy is addressed by:

- Identification of absence through electronic registers (taken during every lesson).
- Attendance staff monitor attendance throughout the day, in general, but also for specifically targeted students.
- 'On Call' staff regularly patrol the school during lesson time.
- The senior member of staff i/c attendance and/or the attendance officer carry out frequent inspections of the area surrounding the school, therefore supporting the work of the EWS and Police
- Analysis of visits by students to medical, identifying regular attendees, times etc.
- Parental interviews for students who are truanting.
- Investigation as to why a student may be truanting with intervention if required.
- Students and parents sign an acceptable attendance agreement.
- Referral to multi agencies.

15. Re-integrating long-term absentees

A number of children miss long periods of school through sickness, exclusion, school refusal/phobia and may feel especially vulnerable when they return. It is vital therefore to make the transition back to full-time schooling as smooth as possible.

To ease the return of the long-term absentee we:

- Nominate a key person to co-ordinate, monitor and review the students return, this takes into account the students views.
- Make the student feel welcome and ensure that all staff are aware of the situation.
- Consider a phased or gradual return, using reduced timetables if required.
- Consider the timetable and determine what is immediately possible and manageable for the student.
- Consider whether extra classroom support (from the Special Needs or Learning Support Team) is appropriate.
- Consider the need to allocate a student advisor, Learning Mentor or buddy for the returner.

16. Secondary Transfer

Any change of school can be difficult for a student. The transfer from primary to secondary school can be a particularly difficult time for some children as they face up to a number of new experiences. We have developed effective links with partner primaries to facilitate the smooth transfer of children and to identify those children in Year 6 who may appear likely to experience attendance and other difficulties at secondary school.

We know that Year 7 children may:

- experience difficulty adjusting to a much more complex learning environment;
- lack basic social and interpersonal skills;
- have special educational needs which have not yet been clearly identified;
- experience curriculum discontinuity;
- experience difficulty relating to several new teachers;
- experience difficulty working in a number of different classrooms;
- have problems with a more structured timetable;
- find it difficult coping with the demands of homework;
- be unused to moving around a large school for different lessons;
- lack basic organisational skills;
- be unused to using public transport to get to school;
- have difficulty adjusting to a large impersonal dining room:
- be unused to relating to large numbers of adults and children;
- have to make new friends;
- miss the intimacy of primary school;
- be unused to the demands of wearing school uniform;
- find it difficult adjusting to a feeling that they are at the bottom of the school's structure (i.e. 'the pecking order');
- feel isolated and lost.

Any combination of the above factors may cause a Year 7 child to experience difficulties in attending. It is vital that such difficulties are identified and addressed sooner rather than later.

In order to minimise the impact of changing School we have;

- a member of the Senior Management Team responsible for maintaining links with partner primaries;
- a clearly defined and regularly reviewed strategy to facilitate secondary transfer;
- effective systems to monitor and review the progress of all Year 7 children;
- a Teaching Assistant is attached to each Year 7 Form Group in the first few weeks
- structured visits from primary schools in the summer term - and follow-up meetings with
- primary staff;
- effective liaison with partner primaries;
- special induction programmes for those Year 7 children who come from primaries other than;
- those who may find secondary transfer a lonely and difficult time;
- involving parents from the very beginning, all new parents are interviewed by Senior Members Staff;
- Involve students, both current Year 7 and Sixth Form students in the induction process.

17. Specific staff roles in creating good attendance

17.1 The Form Tutor

- is the key person in the school's pastoral care system;
- promotes habits of regular attendance and punctuality both with individuals and with the form group;
- accurately maintains registers and responds to parental notes and unexplained absences;
- is alert to absence being condoned for trivial or spurious reasons;
- is alert to emerging patterns of absence and lateness;
- is aware of and consistent in applying school systems for monitoring and promoting attendance.
- requests the support/intervention of the Leader of Year when appropriate.

17.2 The Subject Teacher

- sets an example of punctuality by arriving for lessons on time;
- keeps an accurate register of attendance in each lesson and promptly feeds back absences;
- deals with lateness to lessons consistently and promptly (action taken immediately is often more effective than a detention at a later date);
- recognises that learning difficulties are an important factor in poor attendance;
- explores methods of making specific provision for children who are frequent or long-term absentees;
- welcomes and values the presence of all children in his/her lessons.

17.3 The Leader of Department

- examines the curriculum in order to develop ways of improving the quality of the classroom experience;
- develops sensitive and effective departmental re-entry strategies which welcome children back from a period of absence and offers support in the organisation of missed work;
- regularly liaises with Form Tutors and Year Heads on attendance related matters.

17.4 The Leader of Year

- assumes a key role in co-ordinating all aspects of attendance related matters;
- ensures that registers are properly maintained and that absences are appropriately followed up;
- generally monitors and supervises the work of Form Tutors in promoting attendance;
- effectively liaises with other senior staff on attendance related matters;
- ensures that up-to-date attendance data is regularly available;
- when necessary communicates with and meets parents of children experiencing attendance difficulties;

17.5 The Headteacher (through the senior member of staff i/c attendance)

- ensures that a whole-school attendance policy is implemented (and regularly reviewed);
- ensures that this policy is communicated to children, staff, parents and governors (via, for example, the school brochure);
- ensures that detailed attendance data is regularly collected and used to inform strategic planning on attendance matters;
- ensures that whole-school attendance targets are set and achieved;
- reports to governors on attendance matters;
- creates a school ethos which values and promotes excellent levels of attendance and punctuality.

18. Communicating the policy

Students and parents must be regularly reminded of the school's expectations regarding attendance and punctuality. Governors should be kept informed of the policy and how it is operating.