

Whitchurch Combined School



ATTENDANCE POLICY

Aim

Whitchurch Combined School aims to maximise attendance rates in order to ensure that all pupils are able to take the fullest advantage of learning experiences available to them.

Statutory Framework

Under Section 7 of the 1996 Education Act, a pupil is required to attend regularly at the school where he / she is a registered pupil. Parents / Carers have the prime responsibility for ensuring this happens. If a child of compulsory school age who is a registered pupil at a school fails to attend regularly at the school, his parent(s) are guilty of an offence.

The school is obliged by law to differentiate between authorised and unauthorised absence. A letter or telephone message from a parent does not in itself authorise an absence. Only if the school is satisfied as to the validity of the explanation offered by the letter / message will the absence be authorised (see page 2).

Rights and Responsibilities

Improving attendance at Whitchurch School is the responsibility of everyone in the school community – pupils, parents and staff.

Pupils

All pupils are expected to attend school and all their lessons regularly and punctually.

Parents

Parents are responsible for ensuring that their child attends school regularly, punctually, properly dressed and equipped and in a fit condition to learn. If a child is prevented for any reason from attending, or is late, parents are required to notify the school as soon as possible, by phone call or preferably in writing. A pupil's absence from school must be considered as unauthorised until a satisfactory explanation is forthcoming from the parent. Parents will be promptly informed of any concerns which may arise over a child's attendance. Parents whose child's attendance is a cause for concern will be written to by the Head and / or Bucks Council Attendance Team when appropriate. Parents should avoid, if at all possible, making medical / dental appointments for their child during school hours. Parents whose first language is not English or have literacy problems will be offered appropriate support from school in matters of communication. Parents should not take pupils on holidays in term time. This policy is available on the school website and letters will be sent to parents notifying them of any changes to the policy.

Parents will receive a letter home or a phone call if their child's attendance falls below 95% in a single term.

School

Staff will endeavour to encourage good attendance and punctuality through personal example. Attendance is the responsibility of all school staff. The school will employ a range of strategies (see below) to encourage good attendance and punctuality and will promptly investigate all absenteeism, liaising closely with parents. Staff will respond to all absenteeism firmly and consistently.

Registration

Registers will be taken at 8:45am and 1.15pm and will be marked on the computer by the class teacher.

Registers will close at 9.00am and 1.15pm. If a pupil fails to arrive before the registers close, he / she will be marked as 'late'. Pupils who arrive after the registers have closed should report to the office. If a pupil is persistently late the Head will contact the parents. The following way of marking registers should be used:

/	present
C	absent, authorised
O	unauthorised absence
L	late (before registers close)
U	late (after registers closed)
I	Illness

The Head, School Secretary and the Bucks Council Attendance Team will inspect all registers each term in order to ensure that correct procedures are being followed.

Authorised / Unauthorised absence

It is vital that all staff adhere to the same criteria when deciding whether or not to authorise an absence.

Absence can be authorised if:

- the pupil was absent with the prior agreement of the Headteacher / governing body
- the pupil was ill 'or prevented from attending by any unavoidable cause'
- the absence occurred on a day exclusively set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong.'
- there is a close family bereavement
- the pupil is participating in an approved public performance
- the pupil is involved in an exceptional special occasion (e.g. if a pupil is attending the graduation of an older sibling)

Absence should be unauthorised if:

- holidays are taken within term time unless authorised under exceptional circumstances by the Headteacher. Cheap flights; availability of desired accommodation and poor weather experienced in school holiday periods will not be considered as exceptional.
- no explanation for absence is forthcoming
- the school is dissatisfied with the explanation
- the pupil is absent for unexceptional special occasions (e.g. birthday)

Procedures for Applying for Leave of Absence

The current school policy, as at March 2022, is that the Governing Body has delegated power to the Headteacher to use her discretion when considering applications for leave of absence, including family holidays which may only be granted under exceptional circumstances. The school is confident that every child's absence is accounted for and all parents are completing the appropriate request form. However, requests for leave of absence which involve periods leading up to and during SATs will not be granted.

Procedures for Following Up Absences

- If a pupil is persistently (or intermittently) absent the Head and / or Bucks Council Attendance Team will write to the parents and, if necessary, invite them to attend a meeting at the school.
- If a pupil is persistently absent (or late) and the school's efforts to effect an improvement have been unsuccessful, the situation will be referred to the Bucks Council Attendance Team during his / her consultation visit.

Strategies for Promoting Attendance

- Whitchurch Combined School offers an environment in which pupils feel valued and welcomed. The school's ethos demonstrates that pupils feel that their presence in school is important, that they will be missed when they are absent / late and that follow up action will be taken.
- 'First day' calling is completed by the School secretary when a child is absent on the first day.
- Parents and teachers discuss any concerns at parent evenings.
- Attendance awards are given out in assembly.
- Weekly attendance figures are shared on the Website.
- Attendance data will be regularly collected and analysed in order to help identify patterns and support and inform policy / practice.
- Pupils who are absent through sickness for any extended period of time will (when appropriate) have work sent home to them and will be re-integrated back into school upon their return.
- The admissions secretary will have regular meetings with the school's Bucks Council Attendance Team in order to identify and support those pupils who are experiencing attendance difficulties.

Updated: September 2025

Next review: September 2026