

White Trees
independent school



Absence & Attendance policy

See also, 'Who We Are, What We Do and How We Do It', Anti-Bullying, Equality & Diversity and Safeguarding policy

Our vision is to provide pupils with the confidence, skills and ambition to achieve a successful and productive life. We aim to ensure they leave the school with a 'new day, new opportunity' ethos and are capable of becoming positive members of their communities. To do this, we have 3 principles that underpin our policies, practices and everything we do:

- Everyone can learn, achieve and has the potential to be successful
- Positive relationships are key to success and are underpinned by mutual trust, respect and caring for one another
- We have high expectations in everything we do

Wonderful

Excellent

Lovely

Clever

Outstanding

Magnificent

Enthusiastic

(Acronym created by White Trees pupils)

INTRODUCTION

At White Trees Independent School, high attendance is crucial to accessing and excelling in learning. It is important to highlight that some of our pupils who join us have experienced prolonged periods of absences from school - some having been out of education for up to 1 year. With that in mind it is important to celebrate and recognise that each individual pupil's attendance journey is relevant and specific to them and their previous experiences. At White Trees we work hard to build up mutual respect and trust with all pupils to support them overcome their barriers to school/learning so we can work together to enhance their journey to 100% attendance.

We understand that any form of absences from school negatively affect the pattern of a pupil's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Ensuring a pupil's regular attendance at school is a parents or carer's responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law. We work hard to support all parents/carers in ensuring their pupils regular attendance, including providing welfare visits, calls if a pupil is absent - where appropriate. We also conduct 'Keeping in touch' visits/calls during the school holidays to all pupils, to provide support/contact during the holidays. At White Trees Independent School, we set aspirational targets for school attendance of all pupils, supporting each pupil on their individual journeys, breaking down any barriers.

PROMOTING REGULAR ATTENDANCE

The school aims to promote a high level of awareness of the need for regular and prompt attendance.

We will:

- Advise parents & carers of the school's expectations during the induction meetings for new pupils and provide updates through school reports
- Contact parents & carers every day to clarify the reason for a child's absence from school, this will happen as soon as is practicable on the first day, the reason for absence will then be recorded on the register. If we are unable to obtain the reason for a pupil being absent, we will attempt to contact the pupil's emergency contacts.
- If unable to contact the family or emergency contacts, relevant professionals will be contacted, and a home visit will be carried out. As a last resort, if the school has not been able to ascertain where a pupil is after following the steps above, the pupil will be classed as a missing child and they will be reported to the police
- Contact with home will also be made should a pupil's attendance be a cause for concern
- Celebrate good attendance

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TYPES OF ABSENCES

Every half-day absence from school is classified by the school (not by the parents/carers), as either **AUTHORISED** or **UNAUTHORISED**. This is why the information about the cause of the absence is so important. Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no 'leave' has been given. This includes:

- Parents & carers keeping their child off school unnecessarily
- Truancy before or during the school day
- Absences which have never properly been explained
- Pupils who arrive at school too late to get a mark
- Activities such as shopping, looking after other pupils, family members or birthdays
- Day trips and holidays in term time which have not been formally agreed.

Any problems with regular attendance are best resolved between the school, parents/carers and child. If school or a parent/carer thinks their child is reluctant to attend school, then we will work together understand the cause of the problem and overcome it.

When a child's attendance drops below 90%, this will usually be addressed via a meeting with parents/carers and the child (decision made on a case-by-case basis), highlighting the concern. Absence at this level is doing damage to any pupil's education and we need the fullest support and co-operation from parents & carers to deal with this.

If the child's attendance still does not improve, a letter will be sent, and if appropriate, the matter will be raised with the relevant local authority. In most cases, the school will make the referral when they have concerns, but parents and carers can contact us too, via the Customer Service Centre – telephone 03001234043.

Parents' consent is not required for a referral to the Attendance Team.

- Schools can request support direct by calling us, or by sending a [Service Request form](#)

Attendance teams are based within 2 area teams – East and West across Hertfordshire.

West Area - Watford, Three Rivers and Hertsmere; Dacorum and St Albans.

East Area - North Herts and Stevenage; East Herts, Broxbourne, Welwyn and Hatfield

If there are further issues or additional support is needed a referral can be made to the Families First Assessment and Early Help Module (EHM). The EHM is a multi-agency case recording and management system that we use for Families First Assessment case work.

These have replaced Family CAF and eCAF system which are no longer in use.

Families First Assessment (FFA) is used by practitioners who work with children, young people, parents and carers. It's used to identify needs, and to organise the right support and services to address those needs at an early stage. The FFA process allows different agencies and services to share information and work together in a coordinated way. FFAs are voluntary and require consent from parents or carers before they can begin.

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How to access/use the form: [Families First Assessment and Early Help Module \(hertfordshire.gov.uk\)](https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk)

- The form can be located on this page and is called the FFA Family Registration Form
- All parts of the form are mandatory fields. We will not be able to register the family for an FFA or Short Term Work until we have all this information.

PUNCTUALITY

Being on time helps a pupil to be calm, relaxed and happy in school. Poor punctuality is unacceptable. If a pupil misses the start of the day, they miss work and do not spend time with their teacher getting vital information and news for the day. Timings are made exceptionally clear to families and local authority transport teams. The register is a statutory document and is updated twice a day. Each day counts as 2 sessions of attendance.

Attendance is marked at all sites at 9.30am and recorded on SIMS. If a child arrives after the registration period he/she will be noted as late. At 10.00am the registers are closed. In accordance with the regulations, if a child arrives after that time, they will receive a mark to note that they are on site but they will have an unauthorised absence for this period. The afternoon register is updated at 12pm.

If a child has a persistent late record, parents/carers will be asked to meet with the relevant senior leader to resolve the problem. However, parents & carers can approach us at any time if they are having problems getting their child to school on time.

ILLNESS AND MEDICAL APPOINTMENTS

Every effort should be made to arrange medical appointments outside of school hours and term dates.

School should be notified of these appointments as far in advance as possible. Every effort should be made to have the pupil absent for as little time as possible. Long-term standing medical conditions need to be reviewed and monitored with evidence provided to a senior leader.

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If your child is absent the parent must follow the following procedures:

- Contact us as soon as possible on the first day of absence before 9.30am.
- You should email your child's Operations Lead and or Head of Operations, the details are below:

Deputy Head, The Mill	lukas.bradon@whitetrees-school.com
Deputy Head, Woodlands	georgia.rossides@whitetrees-school.com
Deputy Head, Purley Farm	Lennox.pierre@whitetrees-school.com
Head of Operations	lukas.bradon@whitetrees-school.com 07960 298496

- The school has an answer phone available to leave a message if nobody is available to take the call
- Communicate an explanation for all absences of more than one day on the pupil's return to school and send written evidence where required
- For medical appointments during the school day – phone us or send us a note in advance of the appointment.

If your child is absent White Trees School will:

- Call the parent or carer on the first day of absence if we have not heard from them
- Invite the parent or carer in to discuss the situation with a senior leader if absences persist
- Make every reasonable effort to support families to ensure the very best possible attendance

HOLIDAYS DURING TERM TIME

There is no automatic entitlement in law which permits time off during school time to go on holiday. It is strongly discouraged by the government, local authorities and White Trees School.

It is the parent's or carer's obligation to apply to the school (in writing or at a meeting arranged with the headteacher) for a leave of absence. It must be made by the parent or carer with whom the child normally resides. All applications for leave must be made in advance and are at the final discretion of the head. In making a decision, the school will consider the circumstances of each application individually, including any previous pattern of leave in term time as well as the attendance and punctuality record of the child.

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ARRANGEMENTS FOR ABSENCE IN OTHER CIRCUMSTANCES

Sudden serious circumstances do rarely occur when it is impossible for a family to bring their child to school. It is essential that the school is informed by the parent or carer of the circumstances immediately so that the appropriate code can be noted in the register.

MONITORING ABSENCE

- Attendance is reviewed on a termly basis where pupils identified as persistent absentees are noted for further monitoring. As a school, we have a duty to inform parents & carers of their child's attendance and how this can impact on their attainment
- White Trees School also keeps the local authorities (who are responsible for pupils' placements) informed of all their placed pupils' attendance.
- All pupils who have 100% attendance and punctuality over a term will receive a special praise and appropriate reward at the end of each term
- The Head Teacher or Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) meets with parents & carers of pupils whose absence or punctuality are causing concern

THE ROLE OF THE EDUCATIONAL WELFARE SERVICE (EWS)

Parents & carers are expected to contact the school at an early stage and to work with the staff in overcoming any attendance and/or punctuality problems together. If difficulties cannot be resolved this way, the schools may refer to the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) from the local authority.

With the school the EWO will also try to resolve the situation by agreement but, if other ways of trying to improve the pupil'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 to enforce attendance at school are available from your local authority.

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