

# WEST HAMPSTEAD SCHOOL



## POLICY FOR ATTENDANCE AND PUNCTUALITY

This policy explains the importance of good attendance and punctuality. It contains information for staff and parents and includes a copy of Camden LA's official document.

## **1. GOOD ATTENDANCE AND PUNCTUALITY AT WEST HAMPSTEAD**

Children succeed best when they arrive in school on time at 9:00am and attend regularly. Erratic attendance or lateness means that children miss out on their education, or miss important parts of the day or week, finding it difficult to catch up with those in their class. Erratic attendance or lateness is also unsettling and often affects the child's relationships with friends. When children attend regularly teachers can plan for them to work on the curriculum at a pace which is suitable to them as individuals. They can be certain that a child gets the benefit of attention at the right time - as an individual, within a group, or as part of a class lesson.

When children arrive on time, the teachers are able to greet all the children in the class at the beginning of the day. **A good start to the day is crucial to children.** Late comers are often embarrassed at being late. In addition it can be disruptive for a teacher and class to have to repeat what all the other children have been told already. It is also important for children to be on time, as they may miss vital instructions or activities which they will need to experience as part of the session of work. If there are circumstances which will prevent normal attendance or punctuality over a period of time, **please inform the school**, as we may be able to offer support.

## **2. ATTENDANCE, PUNCTUALITY AND THE LAW**

Schools are now **required, by law**, to publish their attendance figures (and to put individual attendance details on children's reports). Unauthorised absence is regarded legally as truancy. We hope that parents will support West Hampstead in making sure that we do not have to record absence as truancy on their children's reports or as part of school statistics. We know in reality that there is little or no truancy amongst pupils at West Hampstead.

An explanation of what counts as Authorised and Unauthorised absence is contained in Camden LA's statement in the appendix. It is also outlined briefly on page 4.

If your child is unwell or is away for any reason, **you must inform us on the first day of absence, before 9.30am**, and then update us should the absence be prolonged. Should you fail to call we will call you each day to ensure that the child is safe. This way we can ensure that the statistics we return to Camden Local Authority and the government are an accurate reflection of what is taking place.

It is extremely important that your child comes to school on time. Failure to do so impacts on your child's attainment and their attitude to learning. If your child is late more than five times, or if their attendance falls below the expected level of 95%, you will receive a letter from our School Home Liaison Officer. If this persists you will be asked to meet with the Headteacher and the School Home Liaison Officer to explain the reasons for the lateness and/or low school attendance. Punctuality may also refer to lateness when picking pupils up at the end of the day. **It is the parent's responsibility to ensure their child is collected at 3:30pm.** If there are problems with getting to school on time, please

phone the school to clarify what is happening. The Head is advised to phone Safeguarding and Social Care if a child is not collected by 4:30pm.

### **3. ATTENDANCE & HEALTH**

In encouraging regular attendance we do not want to encourage children to come to school if they are unwell. Children who are ill (including those with heavy colds, earache, 'flu etc.) are miserable in school and cannot work well.

Children who have recovered but still need to finish a course of prescribed medicine can return. Medicine needs to be handed to the school office, clearly labelled, and a form filled in and signed by the Head. Medicines are administered on a voluntary basis in the school. We are not required by law to administer medicines. Normally, children on antibiotics should not really return to school until the course is finished.

**Please make sure that our office has up to date emergency phone numbers for your children, in case they are taken ill or have an accident in school.**

### **4. EXCEPTIONAL LEAVE IN TERM TIME**

Any leave from school must be authorised by the Head. This must be done in advance by filling out a green form which you can get from the office. The local authority and the government strongly encourages schools not to authorise leave during term time. Parents must plan to take their holidays during the thirteen weeks of school holidays. As Camden's policy explains, parents may request, **in advance**, leave during the school term for their children, but only if there are **exceptional circumstances**. These need to be explained to the Head. Only the head teacher may authorise exceptional leave. Parents need to ensure that if a sibling attends another school the Head of that school is also asked to authorise the same leave of absence. If exceptional leave is authorised and a child does not return to school on the agreed date, following consultation with the Education Welfare Service, the child may be removed from the school roll and their place offered to another child.

If the Head does not authorise an absence, but the parents take their child on leave, this will be recorded as an unauthorised absence. A penalty notice referral for both parents may be made to the Education Welfare Service. The Education Welfare Service may ask the parents to attend a legal advisory meeting, or they may issue each parent with a penalty notice, which is a £60 fine, per parent, per child. In some cases the Education Welfare Service may decide to take the case straight to court.

### **5. REGISTRATION & PUNCTUALITY**

By law, teachers are asked to record information about absence and lateness in a more detailed way. Children who arrive on time, at 9:00am, are marked present. Children who arrive after 9.05am are marked late. **Children who arrive after 9.30am are recorded as an unauthorised absence** for the whole of the morning, unless parents inform us of a valid reason. (This also applies in the afternoons if children are very late.)

If a child is absent, we are required to give the reason for the absence. By law, only the school can authorise an absence, not the parent. A child's absence will be deemed authorised if they are absent due to:

- Illness (school must be notified daily)
- Medical treatment
- Educational visit
- Off-site education
- Exceptional leave (authorised by the Head)
- Religious observance (authorised by the Head)
- Exclusion
- Circumstances (e.g. bereavement, moving house, etc.)

***Absence is unauthorised if there is no reason given for the absence, or if the reason does not fall into the categories above. For example, a child missing a day because it is their birthday, or because they are taken shopping, are not considered valid reasons for missing school and these would be marked as unauthorised. The Head makes the final decision about whether to authorise absences.***

## **6. LINKS WITH THE EDUCATION WELFARE OFFICER (EWO)**

The Education Welfare Officer liaises with the school regularly. During the term routine register checks are carried out for each class. Parents will be informed by the school if there are any concerns over a child's attendance or punctuality. This may be because of a pattern of irregular attendance or lateness over a long-term period (e.g. odd days off), or because a child has had a lot of time away from school. The main purpose of this is to let parents know that their child has missed an above-average amount of time, which is affecting the child's ability to access education. If the pattern continues the school and the EWO will follow this up with the parents.

Parents may receive an attendance letter even if absence is authorised and school has been informed. In this case, parents should not worry but get in touch so that help for the family can be given if needed, from school home liaison or the school nurse.

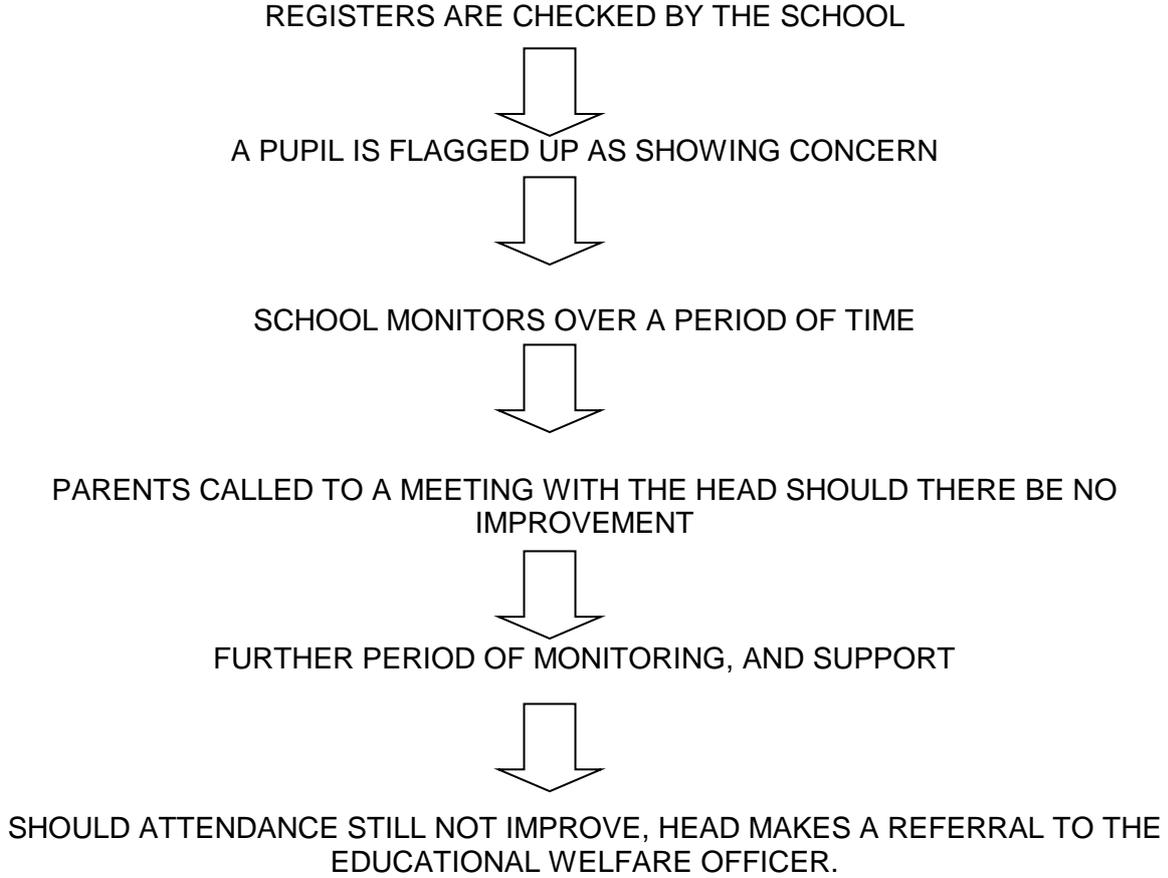
***In extreme cases, should poor attendance persist, parents may be subject to a penalty notice or court proceedings may be started against them by the local authority. However, we would wish to work with the parents and try to support them before this action would need to be taken.***

At West Hampstead, we want your child to be happy and to achieve highly. Attendance and punctuality have a big part to play in this. Most children at West Hampstead attend regularly and are punctual. Parents are usually extremely co-operative and follow the guidelines outlined in this document. We value very highly the partnership we have with parents and understand the great efforts that are made to ensure their child has a good attendance and punctuality record.

Sam Drake  
Head Teacher

**APPENDIX 1**

**PROCEDURE FOR DEALING WITH POOR ATTENDANCE**



**Once the EWO is involved, a plan will be drawn up to improve attendance. This may include the issue of a court warning letter. If there is improvement, no further action will be taken. Should attendance still fail to improve a Court Assessment Meeting will be held to decide whether to progress the case to court, issue a penalty notice, or offer parenting support.**

We like to reward good attendance, and the EWO and school will reward excellent or improved attendance. Children with good attendance receive attendance certificates and attendance stickers in whole school assemblies.

What else do we do?

- We always mention attendance and punctuality on end-of-year reports
- We record all the pupils who arrive late to school and their time of arrival
- We call parents after 9.30am if we have not received a call from them explaining their child's absence, each day that the child is absent.

## **APPENDIX 2**

### **A copy of Camden LA's Policy Document on Attendance**

## **CAMDEN LA -YOUR CHILD AND ATTENDANCE AT SCHOOL**

### **Why is attendance important?**

Changes in schools over the last few years such as the National Curriculum and GCSE course work make it even more important that your child is at school.

As a parent you have a legal responsibility to make sure that your child goes to school regularly and is not late. When pupils are late or absent from school, they have to find time to make up work missed and lose out on chances of working and mixing with their classmates.

### **Parents' charter**

Under the Parents' Charter schools now have to publish their rates of unauthorised absences or "truancy". This means schools will be changing some of their previous rules about absences. Absences will now fall into two new groups, authorised and unauthorised absence.

### **What is authorised absence?**

Authorised absence means time out of school for approved reasons. For example, taking part in activities outside school, such as sports, field trips, visits to museums etc., even though these may be in school time. Illness and urgent medical treatment are also authorised absences.

The school will need an explanation from you (a note or telephone call) if they are to authorise the absence. Routine dentists and GP appointments should be made outside school hours. However, it is understood that specialist hospital or clinic appointments may have to be made during school hours.

### **What is unauthorised absence?**

Unauthorised absence is any absence from school without any explanation from you, or where the reason for absence is one that the school cannot authorise. For example, waiting for British Gas, shopping or baby sitting for younger children are all reasons that have often been used in the past, but they are not good reasons for your child missing school.

### **What you should do about absence**

Contact the school every time your child misses even half a day. A telephone call or note will do. If you need to take your child away for any length of time, no matter how

short, you must tell the school in advance so that they can authorise the absence. The school will then understand the reason for absence and if there is a problem you can discuss it with them in advance.

If you are thinking of taking your child on holiday during school time, please contact the school before making travel arrangements. This is important because your child may miss National Curriculum examinations or other important school events.

Education is a partnership between you and the school. You can do your share by contacting the school whenever your child is absent. You have every right to expect the school to do its share by keeping you informed about your child's attendance and any other issues of concern.

### **The Education Welfare Officer**

If there are any problems with your child's attendance at school, the head teacher may ask the Education Welfare Officer for the school to contact you. The role of the Education Welfare Officer is to support the partnership between parents and schools and to ensure that the maximum school attendance of Camden pupils' is achieved.

The Education Welfare Officer may wish to see you and your child at school, at your home, or at the Education Welfare Service office, which is at 10<sup>th</sup> Floor, 5 Pancras Square, N1C 4AE. She or he will want to discuss the reasons for non-attendance and to support parents in addressing any issues that are linked to unauthorised absences.

Camden Local Authority may prosecute parents under the 1944 Education Act for failing to ensure that their child receives an efficient full-time education. The Local Education Authority may also consider applying for an Education Supervision Order, which would place a pupil or student under the supervision of the Local Authority. Unauthorised absence can then be tackled by devising a planned programme of support for a child in collaboration with parents. Education Supervision orders normally last for one year.

### **Removing your child from school.**

If your child needs to change schools because you are moving home or for other reasons, it is important that you contact the school before taking any action. The school can then assist you by providing information to the new school about your child's progress before s/he starts. Points to remember:

1. Please contact the school by note or telephone if your child is away from school, giving the school advance warning if possible.
2. Try to make non-urgent medical appointments out of school time.
3. If you want to change your child's school, talk to their present school first.
4. If you have any problems with your child's attendance, contact the school. They are there to help you and your child get the most from their education.