



## **VICKERSTOWN SCHOOL & BRAMBLES NURSERY ATTENDANCE POLICY**

At Vickerstown Nursery and Primary School, attendance is everyone's responsibility. We provide a high-quality education in an extremely caring, friendly and supportive environment which is crucial for regular school attendance. We monitor attendance and punctuality carefully and regularly, and we will take appropriate action to ensure that all pupils achieve the maximum possible attendance. We have a good understanding of the complexities that may impede full attendance and we are committed to working with and offering support to both pupils and families to remove any barriers that may be stopping pupils from attending school or causing pupils to be late. We believe in creating strong, honest relationships with our families so that they feel supported and feel they can seek advice whenever it is required.

The statistics tell us that children who attend school regularly are more likely to: build firm and secure knowledge and understanding across all curriculum subjects; develop important life skills; build and maintain strong friendships; gain better qualifications and be as prepared as possible for the big, wide world when they leave school. At Vickerstown, we want children to be in school to help them reach their full potential and have a happy and fun education.

This policy takes into account the Human Rights Act 1998, the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and the Race Relations Act 2000. Aims Our school aims to ensure that:

- All pupils have an equal right, and access to, an education in accordance with the National Curriculum, or agreed alternatives.
- The safeguarding, child protection and welfare of all pupils is of paramount importance.
- No pupils will be deprived of their education opportunities by, either their own absence or lateness, or that of other pupils.
- Our school has high expectations of attendance and punctuality, and we share these expectations regularly with our families and pupils.
- We help reduce absence, including persistent and severe absence
- We work closely with pupils and families as early as possible to promote the importance of good attendance and punctuality.
- Attendance and punctuality is carefully and regularly monitored so we can provide effective strategies for early intervention wherever necessary to ensure pupils are not deprived of their educational opportunities through non-attendance or lateness.
- Good attendance and punctuality are recognised as the norm and are valued by pupils, staff and families. It is recognised that:

- Most pupils want to attend school to learn, to socialise with their peers, and to prepare themselves fully to take their place in society.
- Many pupils and their parents/carers may need to be supported and rewarded in meeting their attendance obligations and responsibilities.
- It is the responsibility of parents/carers to ensure their children's attendance at school as required by law (ref Section 7, 1996 Education Act).

### **Legal Frameworks**

This policy meets the requirements of [the working together to improve school attendance](#) from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on [school attendance parental responsibility measures](#). These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- Part 6 of [The Education Act 1996](#)
- Part 3 of [The Education Act 2002](#)
- Part 7 of [The Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)
- [The School Attendance \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2024 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#)
- [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2024 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#)

This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the school census, which explains the persistent absence threshold.

- Legal proceedings are a statutory intervention used by the local authority against the parents of registered pupils who fail to attend regularly at school. Parents whose children are on a school register and fail to ensure the regular and punctual attendance of their child(ren), may be guilty of an offence under Section 444(1) or 444(1A) of the Education Act 1996 and the authority may take enforcement action through the courts to secure regular attendance.
- Legal proceedings are not used as a punishment to parents for their pupil's absence from school; they are a supportive measure intended to make parents realise the importance of attendance and to avoid further absence from school.
- Section 7 of the 1996 Education Act states that parents must ensure that children of compulsory school age receive efficient full-time education suitable to their age, ability and aptitude to any special educational needs they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise. A prosecution can take place against any person who has parental responsibility for the child's education or who has care of the child. Parents have a legal duty to make sure that their children are properly educated. It is the parent's responsibility to

ensure that their children attend school regularly and arrive on time. If you allow your child to be absent from school without good reason, the school will not authorise the absence, you may be committing an offence, and you could be issued with a penalty notice or prosecuted.

- A child is of Compulsory School Age at the beginning of the term following their fifth birthday. A child ceases to be of compulsory school age on the last Friday in June of the school year in which they reach the age of 16.
- Under the Education Act 1996, the local authority has a statutory responsibility to ensure that parents secure education for children of compulsory school age and where necessary, use legal enforcement.
- The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024, require schools to take an attendance register twice a day, once at the start of the morning session and then again during the afternoon session.
- The register must record whether the pupil was:
  - present;
  - absent;
  - present at approved educational activity; or unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

### **Safeguarding**

Every pupil should be able to learn in an enjoyable and safe environment and be protected from harm. We respect and value all children and are committed to providing a caring, friendly and safe environment for all our pupils so they can learn and participate in all school activities in a relaxed and secure atmosphere.

- Attending school regularly promotes the welfare and safety of children whilst they are not in the care of their parents/carers. Safeguarding is about offering early help and support to children and families and difficulties with attendance and lateness may be signs that something is worrying the child or that there are difficulties within the family. Poor or irregular attendance, persistent lateness, or children missing from education may be considered a safeguarding matter if this places a child at risk of harm.
- Safeguarding the interests of each child is everyone's responsibility and within the context of this school, safeguarding and promoting the welfare and life opportunities for children encompasses attendance, behaviour management, health and safety, access to the curriculum and anti-bullying, protecting children from abuse and neglect, online safety, radicalisation and extremism, FGM and CSE.
- More information on safeguarding and the protection of children can be found in the school's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy. • In order to allow us to safeguard the children in our care it is important that parents and carers provide the school with



their current contact details and provide at least three other contact numbers in case of emergency.

- It is also important for parents inform the school of any specific vulnerability in relation to their child or home circumstances.

### **Expectations**

School expects that all our pupils will:

- Attend school regularly.
- Arrive on time, at 8:45am, and be appropriately prepared for the day as stated in our Home/School Agreement contract which parents/carers are asked to sign when a child starts school and at the start of each academic year.
- Carry out any work provided by the school during an authorised leave period.

School expects that parents/carers will:

- Endeavour to keep health appointments out of school hours when possible.
- Inform a member of staff of any reason or problem that may hinder their child from attending school.
- Fulfil their legal responsibilities and ensure their child/ren attends school.
- Contact school, as soon as is practical, whenever their child is unable to attend school.
- To take all family holidays and trips out of term time.
- Be honest! We want to support you wherever we can and understand the complexities life can bring sometimes.

Parents/carers and children can expect the following from the school:

- Regular, efficient and accurate recording of attendance.
- Early contact when a pupil is absent without explanation.
- Action on any attendance or punctuality issues.
- Referral of specific attendance and punctuality issues to supporting agencies where appropriate, including the Local Authority Inclusion Officer.

### **We encourage attendance by:**

1. Providing a safe, calm, welcoming and caring environment where all pupils feel valued and respected whilst receiving a broad and inclusive, high-quality education.
2. Consistent, clear communication with parents/carers and pupils about the importance of regular, prompt attendance.
3. Formal and informal reporting to parents/carers on individual attendance at various points throughout the year.
4. Setting targets for improved attendance and sharing these with Governors, parents/carers and pupils.
5. The accurate completion of registers at the start of each session, and within 15 minutes of the start of each session.
6. Individual certificates at the end of each term for 100% attendance and good (98%+) attendance
7. A weekly class incentive with Sam the Cheetah to get the best attendance of the week.
8. Weekly attendance updates on our school newsletter.

### **Registration:**

The school registers are legal documents and school must follow the legal requirements to administer them correctly. The school day starts at 8:30am. The class register will be taken in the first 15 minutes of class. The expectation is that children are in their classrooms and ready to learn by 8:30am. Any children arriving after 8.45am will be recorded as 'late'. The number of minutes late will also be recorded. The register is open for 30 minutes, until 9:00am. Any pupil arriving after 9:00am will be recorded as an unauthorised absence.

External doors leading into classrooms will be locked at 8:40am and all pupils arriving after this time are to enter through the front office. Our school administrators will then enter the children into the register as appropriate and sent/escorted to their classrooms depending on the age/needs of the pupil.

Any messages staff receive (verbal, Class Dojo, telephone call) regarding any attendance or punctuality matters will be recorded on the register.

### **Illness**

We understand that some absences are unavoidable and sometimes, children are not medically fit to attend school. It is vital that school is informed as soon as possible if a pupil is going to be absent due to illness.

The NHS gives the following advice on how long children should stay off school if they are unwell:



- Coronavirus (symptoms or a positive test) – Follow current Government and NHS guidance
- Vomiting and diarrhoea – 48 hours after the symptoms have stopped
- Chickenpox – when all the spots have crusted over, usually 5 days after they first appeared
- Impetigo – 48 hours after starting prescription medication, or when the patches have crusted over if they are not taking medication
- Scarlet Fever – 24 hours after starting antibiotics
- Hand, Food and Mouth – as long as the child is feeling unwell. There is no need to wait until the blisters heal
- Measles – at least 4 days after the rash develops
- Scabies – 24 hours after the first treatment
- Shingles – when the last blister has scabbed, usually 10-14 days after they first appear
- Flu – 5 days

There is no need for pupils to stay off school with the following conditions, unless they are medically unfit:

- Slapped cheek
- Headlice – however these must be treated as soon as possible, and treated again 7-10 days after the first treatment
- Coughs and colds
- Threadworms
- Ringworm
- Verrucas
- Periods

Most of our staff are First Aid trained and we will always support and care for children who may be feeling unwell (for example: headache, sore throat, period pains etc.) If a pupil is medically unfit to be in school, we will contact their First Emergency Contact and send them home.

### **Our Attendance Procedures:**

- Parents/carers should contact the school and give a reason for absence before 9.00am on the first day of absence. A note, verbal message, telephone call, parent mail or Class Dojo message is required. Parents must continue to contact school for any subsequent days of absence.
- If parents/carers do not notify school on the first day of absence, school will endeavour to contact via telephone call by 9.30am. This will be done by Miss Furness (school administrator) on receipt of registers at 9.00am. If no reply, school staff may visit the home to find out the reason for absence.

- Parents can not authorise absence - only schools can do this. If school staff have reason to doubt that the explanation offered about a particular absence is genuine, the absence should be treated as unauthorised.
- At the end of each week, a list of all children with unexplained absences is compiled and referred to the Attendance Lead or the Headteacher for further investigation.
- At the start of the following week, our Attendance Lead, Mrs Hayes, along with our Educational Welfare Office (EWO) will carefully monitor attendance. Where a pattern of non-attendance is emerging, the parent/carer is informed, and support is offered from school staff to help resolve the difficulties.

We follow this Traffic Light Procedure to help create a more simplistic and clear approach:

**Green Zone – 95%+ Attendance is good and of little to no concern. Pupils will be awarded for this termly and an attendance report will be given to parents/carers termly.**

**Amber Zone – 90% - 94%** Improvement is required. A Dojo message will be sent made to any pupils' parent/carer informing them of their attendance data and our expectations to improve. A telephone call may also occur to offer support, which will be judged on a case-by-case basis.

**Red Zone – 90% (Persistent Absentees)**

**Step One - If the text message and/or telephone call do not help to improve attendance, a formal meeting will be arranged in school to offer further support and a Support Attendance Action Plan will be established. The Deputy Headteacher will send a letter inviting the parents/carers to the meeting outlining any data and reasons.**

**Step Two – If attendance fails to improve after the meeting and the desired outcomes are not met, the Headteacher or the Attendance Lead (Mrs Hayes-Deputy Headteacher) will refer the case to other outside support agencies, including the Local Authority Inclusion Officer.**

**Dark Red Zone – Less than 70% Attendance is inadequate.**

**Where there are pupils with less than 70% attendance, the Local Authority Inclusion Officer will be notified to offer further external support. This may lead to an Early Help Assessment.**

### **Persistent Lateness:**

- Where there is a pattern of persistent lateness emerging, the parent/carer will be contacted in a similar way to our Traffic Light Procedure to ensure school is offering as much support as possible before external support agencies, including the Local Authority Inclusion Officer, may need to intervene.

- All staff are aware of Children Missing from Education procedures in accordance with our safeguarding practices in school.



### **When a child is "Missing in Education"..**

#### **Step One**

School Administrator will check unexplained absences with Class Teachers: has the child arrived late? Has the teacher had a message from a parent/carer?

#### **Step Two**

School Administrator will contact child's primary care-giver to find out the reason for absence.

#### **Step Three**

If there is no reply, Administrator will leave a answerphone message and make note. If there is a second contact that we know the child lives with, they will also be contacted.

#### **Step Four**

If we have not heard back from the child's care-giver, Administrator will log this on CPOMs by the end of the school day.

#### **Safeguarding Concern?**

If the Class Teacher or Administrator are aware of any safeguarding concerns, they must notify the DSL or Deputy DSL **Immediately!**

**\*\* If there are any concerns, by any member of staff, please ask advice from the DSL or a member of the safeguarding team. Welfare checks will take place if deemed necessary and the police will be contacted.**

NB:

If a peer/ sibling has notified staff of a child's absence, the procedures must still happen!

## **Categorising Absence**

Where pupils of compulsory school age are recorded as absent, the register must show whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised. Absence can only be authorised by the headteacher and cannot be authorised by parents. All absences will be treated as unauthorised unless a satisfactory explanation for the pupil's absence has been received.

Parents must advise the school by telephone on the first day of absence and provide the school with an expected date of return. This should be followed up in the form of a written note from the parent/carer, though verbal explanations may be acceptable where this is considered appropriate.

Absence will be categorised as follows:

- **Illness** Parents may be asked to provide medical evidence to allow the headteacher to authorise absence where appropriate. This will usually be in the form of an appointment card, prescription, etc.
- **Medical/dental appointments** Parents are advised where possible to make medical and dental appointments outside of the school day. Where this is not possible, pupils must attend school for part of the day. Parents must show the appointment card to school.

## **Other authorised circumstances**

All schools can grant a leave of absence when a pupil needs to be absent from school with permission. All schools are expected to restrict leaves of absence to the specific circumstances set out in regulation 11 of the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024.

These circumstances are:

### **• Suspended or permanently excluded (no alternative provision made)**

Suspension or permanent exclusion from attending school is counted as an authorised absence. The child's class teacher will make arrangements for work to be sent home. Alternative provision must be arranged from the sixth consecutive school day of any suspension or permanent exclusion and the appropriate attendance code should be used to record this.

### **• Religious Observance**

Vickerstown Primary School and Brambles Nursery acknowledges the multi-faith nature of British society and recognises that on some occasions, religious festivals may fall outside school holiday periods or weekends and this necessitates a consideration, by written request by the parent, of authorised absence.

### **• Traveller absence**

It is expected that Traveller children, in common with all other children, are to attend school as regularly and as frequently as possible.

To protect Traveller parents from unreasonable prosecution for non-attendance, the Education Act 1996, section 444(6), states that a Traveller parent is safe from prosecution if their child accrues 200 attendances (ie 200 half days) in the year preceding the absence. To help ensure continuity of education for pupils, when their parent(s) is travelling for occupational purposes in England it is expected that the pupil should attend a mainstream school where their parent(s) is travelling and be dual registered.

Vickerstown Primary School and Brambles Nursery will be regarded as the base school if it is the school where the child normally attends when they are not travelling. However, the pupil must have attended in the last 18 months. Traveller children can register at other schools temporarily while away from their base school; in such cases, the pupil's school place at Vickerstown Primary School and Brambles Nursery will be kept open for them whilst travelling. This is to protect them from unfairly losing their place at their school of usual attendance.

Vickerstown Primary School and Brambles Nursery can only effectively operate as the child's base school if it is engaged in on-going dialogue with Traveller families. This means that parents must:

- advise of their forthcoming travelling patterns before they happen; and
- inform the school regarding proposed return dates.

Vickerstown Primary School and Brambles Nursery will authorise absence of Traveller children if we are satisfied that a family is travelling for work or trade purposes and has given indication that they intend to return. Traveller children will be recorded as attending an approved educational activity when:

- the child is on roll and attending another visited school;
- the child is undertaking supervised educational activity under the jurisdiction of another local authority's Traveller Education Service;

Where Traveller children are registered pupils at a school and are known to be present either at a site (official or otherwise) or in a house and are not attending school, the absence will be investigated in the same way as that for any pupil and appropriate statutory action may be undertaken.

- Late arrival Registration begins at 8:30am. Pupils arriving after this time will be marked as present but arriving late. The register will close at 8:45am. **Pupils arriving after the close of register will be recorded as late (code U).** This is not authorised and will count as an absence for that school session and statutory action may be taken where appropriate.

On arrival after the close of register, pupils must report to the school office to ensure that we can be responsible for their health and safety whilst they are in school. The absence will only be authorised if a satisfactory explanation for the late arrival can be provided, for example, attendance at a medical appointment.

The absence will be recorded as unauthorised if the pupil has arrived late without justifiable cause.

- **Unauthorised absence**

Absence will not be authorised unless parents have provided a satisfactory explanation and that it has been accepted as such by the headteacher.

### **Education Off Site**

As well as the above leaves of absence, we can allow pupils to be absent from the school site for certain educational activities or to attend other schools and settings:

- To attend an offsite approved educational activity
- To attend another school at which the pupil is registered (dual-registration)
- To attend provision arranged by the local authority eg: alternate provision or as part of an education, health and care plan
- To participate in an approved sporting activity



- To attend an educational visit or trip arranged by the school
- To attend work experience

**Leave of Absence during Term Time, including Holidays:**

If the request is for a family holiday and not considered to be identified as exceptional circumstances, and you nevertheless take your child out of school for the leave of absence **this will be recorded as unauthorised leave**. Generally, the Department of Education does not consider a need or desire for a holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure and recreation to be an exceptional circumstance. Leave of absence should also not be granted for a pupil to take part in a protest activity during school hours.

**All** leave of absence requests must be completed on the official form. Letters and emails will not be accepted. All requests must be made prior to the leave being taken as leave cannot be authorised retrospectively.

Parents will be informed, in writing, of decisions about whether planned absences are to be recorded as authorised or unauthorised.

We do have concerns, as do other Headteachers, that families may feel they cannot share with schools that they plan to take time off during term time. This could mean that children will not be able to share any experiences they may have had, and it could even encourage them to lie about their absence. This is not a situation we would want any of our families or children to be in.

Not sharing planned absence from school could also lead to safeguarding issues; if families have not informed school that they are taking a break and school cannot contact them for an explanation of absence; school may need to take all necessary steps to ensure the children and family are safe and well.

All requests for leave of absence will be responded to in writing outlining the conditions of leave granted.

- If a pupil fails to return and contact with the parents has not been made or received, school may take the pupil off the school's roll in compliance with the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024. This means that the child will lose their school place.
- If the permission to take leave is not granted and the parent takes their child out of school the absence will be unauthorised. In cases where the national threshold is met schools must consider a penalty notice. In these circumstances the school will refer to the local authority.
- Fixed penalty notices will be issued in accordance with Westmorland and Furness Council's code of conduct.

**Deletions from the register**

In accordance with the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024, pupils will only be deleted from the register when one of the following circumstances applies:

- The school is replaced by another school on a School Attendance Order.
- The School Attendance Order is revoked by the local authority.
- The pupil has ceased to be of compulsory school age.
- Permanent exclusion has occurred and procedures have been completed.
- Death of a pupil.
- Transfer between schools.
- Parent notifies the school in writing they are withdrawing the child to be educated otherwise than at school.
- Failure to return from a period of leave after both the school and the local authority have tried to locate the pupil.
- Where a pupil has been detained under a sentence of detention and here are reasonable grounds to believe the pupil will not return to the school after the period of detention. This will be agreed in discussion with the Youth Justice Service.
- 20 days continuous unauthorised absence and both the local authority and school have tried to locate the pupil and agree to deletion from the register.
- Left the school but not known where he/she has gone after both the school and the local authority have tried to locate the pupil.

Vickerstown Primary School and Brambles Nursery will follow Westmorland and Furness Council's Children Missing Education Procedures when a pupil's whereabouts are unknown.

### **Legal Interventions:**

#### **Prosecution**

Where intervention fails to bring about an improvement in attendance, the local authority will be notified and legal action in the Magistrates' Court may be considered however; initiating prosecution proceedings is a serious step that is normally taken by an Attendance Support Officer or other relevant officer at the LA.

- All alternatives to prosecution will be considered and discounted ahead of considering prosecution. These include Attendance Contracts, Penalty Notices or an Education Supervision Order.
- Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 states that if a parent fails to ensure the regular school attendance of their child if he/she is a registered pupil at a school and is of compulsory school age, then they are guilty of an offence.
- A parent found guilty of this offence can be fined up to £2,500 and/or be imprisoned for a period of up to three months.



- Alternatives to Section 444 prosecution are Attendance Contracts, Penalty Notices or an Education Supervision Order.

**Attendance contracts**

An attendance contract is a voluntary agreement between school and the parent. It can also be extended to include the child and any other agencies offering support to resolve any difficulties leading to improved attendance. The contract will outline attendance targets and will detail agreed actions that will help to achieve the target. The contract will be reviewed regularly. The contract can be used as evidence in a prosecution should parents fail to carry out agreed actions.

**Penalty Notices**

Penalty Notices will be considered when:

- A pupil is absent from school and the absence has not been authorised by the school.
- A pupil has accrued unauthorised absence without reasons provided and/or accepted as exceptional by the headteacher.
- A Penalty Notice gives the parent the opportunity to discharge themselves of their legal responsibility if a £160 fine is paid within 28 days. There is usually the opportunity to pay a reduced amount of £80 if paid within 21 days of the date the Notice was issued.
- Failure to pay the Penalty Notice may result in a prosecution under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996.
- Penalty Notices will be used in accordance with Westmorland and Furness Council’s Penalty Notice Code of Conduct.

**Who To Contact:**

If a parent/carer would like to contact us regarding any attendance or punctuality matters, please speak directly to your child’s class teacher, or:

**Headteacher:** Mrs K Stepanian,  
**Attendance Lead and Deputy Head:** Mrs F Hayes  
01229 471350

**Policy Review:**

<b>Author</b>	<b>Date Revised</b>	<b>Approved by Governors on:</b>	<b>Next Review:</b>
F.Hayes	01.05.25		May 2026