



Villa Real School
together we achieve

Attendance Policy

2024

Responsibility: Samantha Dawson

Date: February 2024

Signed and Adopted by the Governing Body:

Chair of Governors

Date: 04.03.24

Date to be reviewed: February 2025

INTRODUCTION

Villa Real School seeks to ensure that all its pupils/students receive an education which maximises opportunities for each pupil/student to realise his/her true potential. The School will strive to provide a welcoming, caring environment, whereby each member of the School community feels wanted and secure.

We believe that all pupils/students benefit from the education we provide, and therefore from regular attendance. The aim of our attendance policy is to provide a consistent practice that encourages and facilitates the regular attendance of all pupils/students.

All school staff will work with pupils/students and their families to support parents/carers in helping them to meet their legal duty; to ensure that their children attend school regularly and on time. A whole school attendance target of 95% has been set. However, this has been affected by school closures due to COVID 19, and ongoing isolation and illness throughout the pandemic.

The School has established an effective system of incentives and rewards which acknowledges the efforts of pupils/students to improve their attendance and timekeeping and will challenge the behaviour of those pupils/students and parents/carers who give low priority to attendance and punctuality. (We are aware that punctuality may be impacted by taxi / transport service provided and SMT challenge providers where this is an issue).

This policy has been reviewed and rewritten in line with the DfE publications 'Working together to improve school attendance', published May 2022 and operational September 2022. This guidance subsumes all previous guidance. Villa Real School has reviewed how we record attendance during COVID 19 period in line with DfE Guidance 2022 and Addendum to Safeguarding Policies.

This policy is supported by our policies: Child Protection Policy, Anti-Bullying Policy and Behaviour Policy.

1. Attendance and Attainment

We recognise that the relationship between attendance and achievement of our pupils/students is inextricably linked.

Regular school attendance is crucial to maximise pupil/student progress and enjoyment of learning, and for this reason the School is dedicated to ensuring its attendance policy is adhered to.

We will ensure that:

- All pupils/students have an equal right, and access to, an education in accordance with the national curriculum, or agreed alternative.
- Pupil/students will not be deprived of their education opportunities by, either their own absence or lateness, or that of pupils/students.
- Action is taken where necessary to secure an improvement in attendance. This includes intervention plans.

2. The Law

It is the parent/carer's responsibility to make sure their child attends school regularly, and on time. Parents/carers must ensure that the School is aware of any reason why their child is unable to attend school, and of arrangements for agreed equivalent provision such as Respite provision, Hospice Provision, Hospital Support supported by written confirmation.

The School and Local Authority want to help if parents/carers have a problem. If attendance does not get better or if parents/carers do not accept help and support offered, the Council may issue the parent/carer with a warning notice, Penalty Notice or ask the parent/carer to attend an interview to discuss these matters.

If the parent/carer goes to court and is found guilty of an offence, they could be fined up to £1,000 for a less serious offence or up to £2,500 if the law breaking is more serious. In very serious cases, the court may involve the probation service or consider up to 3 months in prison.

3. Attendance Procedures

a) On the first day off and any further absence

If a pupil/student is ill or is absent for any reason, parents/carers are asked to phone the School Office giving a reason for their child's absence. If a pupil/student is absent from school and there is no phone call from home, then school will phone home to inform parents/carers that their child is not in school and enquire about a reason why.

Doctor's and dentist's appointments should be made outside of school time. If this is not possible, pupils/students should miss the minimum amount of school time necessary. If they are well enough to come back to school following the appointment they need to.

b) Periods of extended absence

If a pupil/student's absence continues beyond 3 days, then parents/carers are requested to notify the School to update them. If a phone call is not received, then the School will contact home to verify the absence.

If the School receives no reason for any absence, then an unauthorised absence will be recorded. Continued absenteeism and unauthorised absences could result in further action such as referral to the Attendance Improvement Team to consider supportive visit or meeting or enforcement action and possibly a fixed penalty notice (this includes unauthorised absences accrued through leave of absence taken during term time).

If your child is absent from School more than they should be:

At the end of each half term the School Office will use its computer system to analyse absence across the School. As a result of this, some families will receive letters to inform them if their child's absence is lower than it should be if no prior discussion has taken place (unless this is due to frequent hospital appointments and/or long-term medical needs).

c) Help & Support:

If parents/carers need help with attendance, it is important that they talk to the School about the issues as soon as possible. Parents/carers may need to attend a meeting in School to talk about the problems and to put a plan in place to help. Sometimes, School may need to involve other services to help.

d) Communication:

The School will always try to communicate with parents/carers regarding their child's attendance if it declines. This communication may involve explaining that attendance is a cause for concern by letter, making telephone calls, and inviting parents/carers to attend a meeting in School depending on the circumstances. The School will work with parents/carers to discuss ways that we can offer support in finding a way to improve the situation.

e) Enforcement Action:

If, following the School's attempts to intervene there is no significant improvement and no good reasons for absences (i.e. absences are not supported by relevant evidence), or if the parent/carer has not co-operated with the School's attempts to improve the situation the School are required to consider referring the matter to the Local Authority for enforcement action.

The High Court has confirmed that the School's Headteacher authorises absences. If a pupil/student misses school a lot because of illness, or if school do not know of any serious health issue that would mean the pupil/student

could miss school a lot, the School may ask the parent/carer to provide medical evidence to authorise absences.

We are committed to supporting our pupils/students effectively, to ensure that they get the very best education possible and therefore have the best life chances. All challenges made concerning persistent absences, will be handled sensitively and in confidence.

f) Punctuality:

Registration time is between 9.20-9.30 a.m. and 12.00pm for all classes. It is so important for all pupils/students to be on time, as missing the first few minutes of any lesson can be disruptive and unsettling, both for pupils/students and for the rest of the class. If a pupil/student arrives in School up to 20 minutes after this time, then a late mark may be recorded in the register (L). Legally Registers will be closed at this point and any children arriving more than 20 minutes late may be recorded as (U) which is a late after registers close mark and this is classed as an unauthorised absence unless created by LA transport issues and will then be marks as (Y). (a number of these marks can also contribute to a fixed penalty notice being issued). Many of our pupils/students may be late through no fault of their own i.e. due to taxi contracts, marks will be altered to reflect this.

During periods of blended learning. All pupils/students in school will have their school times agreed on an individual basis.

1. If a pupil/student is late (after registers close) for school on a number of occasions with no explanation;

A letter will be sent home from school to parents/carers to say their child's punctuality is causing some concern. An appointment with the Deputy Head will be offered to discuss ways that the School can offer support in finding a way improve this.

2. If lateness becomes persistent with no identifiable reason –

A letter will be sent home from school with a specific appointment given to meet with the Headteacher or Deputy Head for a 'planning meeting'. This will aim to address any issues which may be behind this pattern of poor punctuality.

3. If the School continues to have concerns about a pupil/student's punctuality;

Then a referral may be made to the Attendance Improvement Team to consider if enforcement action is required or if multi agency support is required. Repeated issues with taxis will be referred to LA Transport Team, SEN Department and EDP.

g) Leave of Absence in Term Time

Head teachers are no longer able to grant leave of absence during term time **unless there are exceptional circumstances**. The School will consider each request of absence individually; taking into account the circumstances, such

as; the nature of the event for which leave is sought, the pupil/student's prior attendance and any important events taking place in school at that time e.g. termly tests.

An application for leave of absence must be made well in advance via a form which is available from the School website or in person from the School office. Where a leave of absence is granted, the Headteacher will determine the number of days a pupil can be away from school. At Villa Real School the Headteacher will not authorise absence for longer than 10 days unless for medical or bereavement reasons. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the Headteacher's discretion. As stated in the most recent DfE guidance on attendance, if an application for leave of absence is not made prior to the time of the required absence then the absence will be recorded as unauthorised regardless of circumstances.

Please note that absence will not be authorised under any circumstances during any period of public examinations or internal assessments.

h) Persistent Absentees.

If attendance falls below 90% without legitimate reason such as hospital admission, the DfE classifies pupils/students as Persistent Absentees. When attendance falls below 90%, the following actions will be taken;

- 1- Letter home informing parents/carers of attendance figures and offering support
- 2- If after 1 month, attendance has not improved, parents/carers will be invited into school to discuss attendance
- 3- If after a further month there is no improvement, a multi-agency meeting will be called to implement an action plan
- 4- If still no improvement after 1 month, the case will be referred to Attendance Improvement team who may start legal proceedings

5. Promoting good attendance and punctuality

Attendance percentages will be shared with parents/carers at termly parent/carers' evenings, CTMs and also annual reports to parents/carers will contain a record of individual pupil/students' attendance. The School routinely sends home attendance certificates for those parents/carers who requested them.

6. Overcoming Racism

Villa Real School is an anti-racist school and are committed to ensuring that all pupils/students, staff and visitors are treated equally no matter their race. Racism negatively affects mental health and wellbeing, academic attainment, confidence and trust. In an anti-racist environment, we are able

to increase self-esteem, increase the resilience of our school community, and understand the diversity of our wider community / country.

Anti-racism is important to Villa Real School to ensure there is a better education for all, a better place to work, where all are fulfilling statutory responsibilities set out in the Equality Act 2010. Knowledge of race and racism is known as 'racial literacy'. As educators we are developing knowledge, skills, awareness and confidence to talk about race and racism in our school. We integrate cross-culture and cross race texts and learning across the curriculum and extend awareness through 'cultural exchanges' during international days, celebrations, and cultural visits at Villa Real School.

Terms & Definitions to support a shared understanding of racism;

Direct racism: treating someone less favourably than others on racial grounds.

Indirect racism: where a condition or requirement is applied equally to everyone, but that people of a particular racial group are less likely to be able to meet than other people, putting them at a disadvantage.

Harassment: treating someone in a way that violates their dignity, or creates a hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment.

Victimisation: treating someone less favourably for having made or supported a complaint of racial discrimination.

Institutional racism: the collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their colour, culture, or ethnic origin. This includes processes, attitudes and behaviour which amount to discrimination through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness and racist stereotyping which disadvantage racially minoritised people.

Racism of any kind will not be tolerated at Villa Real School.

7. Children Missing from Education:

It is vital that parents/carers keep school informed of any change of details if they move from the area, and regularly update school if details change. After 20 school days of **unauthorised** absence the School is legally required to take action, and report any pupil/student as missing from education. Villa Real follows, Missing from Education protocols for all Local Authorities which our pupils/students come from.

It is very important that emergency contact information is kept up to date and that if a pupil/student is leaving the area, the parent/carer provides details of where and how they can be contacted. If they do not do this and the School

is unable to trace the pupil/student, this would be treated as a **safeguarding matter** and referred to relevant agencies as such.

During periods of Remote Learning all pupils/students will be contacted weekly by class staff. They will also be offered daily face to face learning via TEAMS. Those pupils/students identified as vulnerable will also be contacted weekly by DSLs. In the event of school not being able to contact a family, this will be escalated to the EWO team and Safeguarding Team at DCC.

8. Roles and Responsibilities

Governing Body:

As part of our school approach to maintaining high attendance, the Governing Body will:

- Ensure that the importance of attendance is made clear by promoting the relevant school policies and guidance directed to parents/carers and staff.
- Annually review the School's Attendance Policy and ensure that all provisions are in place to allow school staff, parents/carers, and pupils/students to implement the policy effectively.
- Ensure that the School is implementing effective means of recording attendance and organising that data, including for pupils/students who are educated off site.

School Leadership Team:

As part of our school approach to maintaining high attendance, the leadership team will:

- Be active in their approach to promoting good attendance with pupils/students and their parents/carers.
- Ensure the School's teaching and learning experiences encourage regular attendance and that pupils/students are taught the value of high attendance for their own progression and achievement.
- Liaise with the Governing Body to monitor the implementation of the policy and its effectiveness, with annual review of full policy.
- Ensure that all staff are up to date with the School's attendance policy and that staff are fully trained to recognise and deal with attendance issues.
- Ensure Government legislation on attendance is complied with and that the leadership team are up to date with any legislation changes and how to implement them.
- Nominate or appoint a Senior Manager to take responsibility for overseeing and monitoring attendance provision and that this person has sufficient time and resources to give to the job.
- Ensure that systems to record and report attendance data are in place and working effectively.

Teachers and support staff:

As part of our school approach to maintaining high attendance, the teachers and support staff will:

- Be active in their approach to promoting good attendance with pupils/students and their parents/carers.
- Ensure the School's teaching and learning experiences encourage regular attendance and that pupils/students are taught the value of high attendance for their own progression and achievement.
- Ensure the senior manager responsible for overseeing attendance and any other relevant personnel are kept fully aware of and up to date with any concerns relating to pupils/students that may impact on their attendance.
- Ensure compliance with regulation and guidance on attendance.
- Work professionally with parents/carers, pupils/students and relevant agencies to secure improvements in attendance via appropriate support or enforcement measures.
- Ensure understanding and are following the correct systems for recording attendance and that attendance is taken each lesson and session.

Parents/ Carers:

As part of our School approach to maintaining high attendance, we expect that parents/carers will:

- Engage with their children's education – support their learning and take an interest in what they have been doing at school.
- Promote the value of good education and the importance of regular school attendance at home.
- Follow the procedures outlined in this policy regarding absences, ill health, medical or dental appointments, leave of absence in term time and punctuality.
- Do everything they can to prevent unnecessary school absences.
- Keep the School informed of any circumstances which may affect their child's attendance and work with staff in resolving any issues that may be having an impact on their child.
- Enforce a regular routine at home in terms of homework, bedtime etc. so that the child is used to consistency and the School becomes part of that routine. It is vital that the child receives the same messages at home as they do at school about the importance of attendance.

Appendix 1

