



Whitecross Nursery School

Attendance Policy

Reviewed by	Claire FitzPatrick
Date of review	November 2024
Date of next review	November 2025
Ratified by the Governing Body	November 2024

This policy will be reviewed sooner if there is a change to legislation or guidance which may affect it. Any changes will be communicated to all stakeholders.

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Statement of intent

Whitecross Nursery School Nursery School believes that in order to facilitate the foundations of teaching and learning, good attendance is essential. Children cannot achieve their full potential if they do not regularly attend nursery.

We understand that barriers to attendance are complex, and that some children find it harder than others to attend nursery school; therefore, we will continue to prioritise creating and sustaining a safe and supportive environment at Whitecross Nursery School, as well as building strong and trusting relationships with children and their parents.

We take a whole-nursery school approach to securing good attendance, and recognise the impact that our efforts in other areas – such as the curriculum, behaviour standards, SEND support, family pastoral support, and the effective use of resources such as early years child premium (EYPP) – can have on improving attendance.

We are committed to:

- Promoting and modelling good attendance and its benefits.

- Ensuring equality and fairness for all.
- Intervening early and working with other agencies to ensure the health and safety of our children.
- Building strong relationships with families to overcome barriers to attendance.
- Working collaboratively with other nursery schools in the area, as well as other agencies.
- Ensuring our attendance policy is clear and easily understood by all staff and parents.

1. Legal framework

This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation and statutory guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

- Education Act 1996
- Equality Act 2010
- The Education (Child Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (As amended)
- The Children (Performances and Activities) (England) Regulations 2014
- Children and Young Persons Act 1963
- DfE (2024) 'Working together to improve nursery school attendance'
- DfE (2024) 'Keeping children safe in education (KCSIE) 2024'
- DfE (2024) 'Children missing education'
- DfE (2024) 'Providing remote education'
- DfE (2024) 'Summary table of responsibilities for nursery school attendance'

This policy operates in conjunction with the following nursery school policies:

- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Complaints Procedures Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- SEND Policy
- Supporting Children with Medical Conditions Policy

2. Roles and responsibilities

The governing board has overall responsibility for:

- Monitoring the implementation of this policy and all relevant procedures across the nursery.
- Promoting the importance of good attendance through the nursery school's ethos and policies.
- Regularly reviewing attendance data.
- Ensuring that this policy, as written, does not discriminate on any grounds, including, but not limited to, ethnicity/national origin, culture, religion, gender or disability.
- Handling complaints regarding this policy as outlined in the nursery school's 'Complaints Procedures Policy'.
- Having regard to KCSIE when making arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

The Headteacher is responsible for:

- The day-to-day implementation and management of this policy and all relevant procedures across the nursery.

- Ensuring all parents are aware of the nursery school's attendance expectations and procedures.
- Ensuring that every child has access to nursery education and we will support families as early as possible to address patterns of absence.

Staff are responsible for:

- Following this policy.
- Ensuring this policy is implemented fairly and consistently.
- Modelling good attendance behaviour.
- Using their professional judgement and knowledge of individual children to inform decisions as to whether any welfare concerns should be escalated.
- Where designated, taking the attendance register at the relevant times during the nursery school day.

Parents are responsible for:

- Providing accurate and up-to-date contact details.
- Providing the nursery school with more than one emergency contact number.
- Updating the nursery school if their details change.
- The attendance of their children at nursery school.
- Promoting good attendance with their children.
- Notifying the nursery school if their child is unable to attend, in line with nursery school procedures

3. **Definitions**

The following definitions apply for the purposes of this policy:

Absence:

- Not attending the nursery school for sessions that the child is registered at for any reason

Authorised absence:

- An absence for sickness or other illnesses
- Medical or dental appointments which unavoidably fall during nursery school time
- Religious or cultural observances
- An absence due to a family emergency
- Absence due to day trips and holidays

Unauthorised absence:

- Parents keeping children off nursery school unnecessarily or without reason
- Absences which have never been properly explained

Persistent absence (PA):

- Missing 10 percent or more of nursery schooling across the year for any reason

Children Missing Education

- All children are entitled to education, regardless of their circumstances. Unfortunately, children missing education (CME) risk underachieving, being victims of abuse, and not

being in education, employment or training (NEET) in later life.

- At Whitecross Nursery School Nursery School we monitor absences and record information regarding children's attendance, even though nursery education is non-statutory education.
- If a child fails to attend our nursery and after the absence procedures have been followed, (including contacting the nursery school which an older sibling may attend) the child's whereabouts is still not known, a referral will be made to Health and Social Care.
- All children leaving Whitecross Nursery School have documents which are transferred to their new provision or school. This ensures that each child has been registered at an appropriate setting.

4. Attendance expectations

The nursery school has high expectations for children's attendance and punctuality, and ensures that these expectations are communicated regularly to parents and children.

Children will be expected to attend nursery school punctually every day. They are required to be at nursery school, for the full session.

Registers will be taken as follows throughout the nursery school day:

- The morning register will be marked by 9:25am.
- The afternoon register will be marked by 1:15pm.

5. Absence procedures

Parents will be required to contact the nursery school office before 9:15am on the first day of their child's absence by either email or telephone. Families will be expected to provide an explanation for the absence and an estimation of how long the absence will last, e.g. one nursery school day.

Where a child is absent, and their parent has not contacted the nursery school by the close of the morning register to report the absence, administrative staff will contact the parent by telephone call as soon as is practicable on the first day that they do not attend nursery school.

The nursery school will always follow up any absences in order to:

- Ascertain the reason for the absence.
- Ensure the proper safeguarding action is being taken.
- Identify whether the absence is authorised or not.
- Identify the correct code to use to enter the data onto the nursery school census system.
- The nursery school will not request medical evidence in most circumstances where a child is absent due to illness; however, the nursery school reserves the right to request supporting evidence where there is genuine and reasonable doubt about the authenticity of the illness.
- If a child's attendance drops below 85 percent, a formal meeting will be arranged with the child's parent.
- Where a child has not returned to nursery school for 10 days after an authorised absence, or is absent from nursery school without authorisation for 20 consecutive nursery school days, the nursery school will remove the child from the admissions register if the nursery school and the LA have failed to establish the whereabouts of the child after making reasonable enquiries.

6. Attendance register

The nursery school uses Integris to keep attendance registers to ensure they are as accurate as possible and can be easily analysed and shared with the appropriate authorities.

Designated staff members will take the attendance register at the start of each nursery school day and at the start of the afternoon session. This register will record whether children are:

- Present.
- Absent.
- Attending an approved educational visit.
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

When the nursery school has planned in advance to be fully or partially closed, the code '#' will be used for the relevant children who are absent. This code will also be used to record year groups who are not due to attend because the nursery school has set different term dates for different years, e.g. induction days.

The nursery school will use the national attendance codes to ensure attendance and absence are monitored and recorded in a consistent way. The following codes will be used:

- # = planned whole nursery school closure
- / = Present in the morning
- \ = Present in the afternoon
- L = Late arrival before the register has closed
- C = Leave of absence granted by the nursery school for exceptional circumstances
- I = Illness
- M = Medical or dental appointments
- R = Religious observance
- B = Off-site education activity
- G = Unauthorised holiday
- O = Unauthorised absence
- U = Arrived after registration closed
- N = Reason not yet provided
- X = Not required to be in nursery school
- T = Traveller absence
- V = Educational visit or trip
- P = Participating in a supervised sporting activity, with supervision being physically provided by an appropriately trained and knowledgeable person
- D = Dual registered – at another educational establishment
- Z = Child not on admission register

When Whitecross Nursery School has planned in advance to be fully or partially closed, the code '#' will be used for the relevant children who are absent. This code will also be used to record year groups who are not due to attend because the nursery school has set different term dates e.g. induction days.

All amendments made to the attendance register will include the original entry, the amended entry, the reason for the amendment, the date of amendment and the name and role of the person who made the amendment.

Every entry received into the attendance register will be preserved for three years.

7. Authorising parental absence requests

We ask that where possible parents and carers will make medical and dental appointments outside of nursery school hours wherever possible. We also ask for notification of religious and cultural events that children make take part in.

As attendance to nursery is non-statutory, our families do not need to complete any forms to request permission for absence. Instead, we ask our families to politely email the nursery school before children attend things during the session their child should attend.

Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence

Where a child's parent belongs to a community covered by this code and is travelling for occupational purposes, the parent will be expected to notify the nursery in advance of travelling.

8. SEND and/or health-related absences

The nursery school recognises that children with SEND and/or health conditions, including mental health issues, may face greater barriers to attendance than their peers, and will incorporate supportive procedures to support children who find attending nursery school difficult.

In line with the SEND Policy and Supporting Children with Medical Conditions Policy, the nursery school will ensure that reasonable adjustments are made for disabled children to reduce barriers to attendance, in line with any EHC plans that have been implemented.

Where the nursery school has concerns that a child's non-attendance may be related to family mental health issues, parents will be contacted to discuss the issue and whether there are any contributory factors to their child's lack of attendance. Where staff have a mental health concern about a child that is also a safeguarding concern, they will inform the DSL and the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy will be followed.

If a child is unable to attend nursery school for long periods of time due to their health, the nursery school will:

- Help the child reintegrate at nursery school when they return.
- Make sure the child is kept informed about nursery school events and notices.

The nursery school will incorporate and support an action plan to help any children with SEND and/or health issues cope with the stress and anxiety that attending nursery sessions may cause them. The support and plans will be regularly monitored and reviewed until the child is attending nursery school as normal and there has been signs of significant improvement.

To support the attendance of children with SEND and/or health issues, the nursery school will consider:

- Holding termly meetings to evaluate any implemented reasonable adjustments.
- Late starts or early finishes.
- Phased returns to nursery school where there has been a long absence.

9. Absent children

Children are unable to leave nursery without being collected. They must be collected by a known adult, or an adult who has been given the relevant password by the child's family.

Please see the 'Lost Child Policy' for a list of procedures if a child goes missing from nursery school during the day.

10. Working with parents to improve attendance

The nursery school will work to cultivate strong, respectful relationships with parents and families to ensure their trust and engagement. Open and honest communication will be maintained with children and their families about the expectations of nursery school and attendance so that they understand what to expect and what is expected of them. The nursery school will liaise with other agencies working with children and their families to support attendance, e.g. social services.

Whitecross Nursery School will ensure that where possible there are two sets of emergency contact details for each child wherever possible to ensure the nursery school has additional options for getting in touch with adults responsible for a child where the child is absent without notification or authorisation.

The Headteacher will remind parents of absence procedure and the importance of good attendance regularly on the nursery newsletters as well as in person.

If the child's absence drops below 85% then the Headteacher will discuss the situation with parents or carers.

11. Training of staff

Whitecross Nursery School will recognise that early intervention can prevent poor attendance. As such, staff will be made aware of and support identifying potentially at-risk children.

The governing board will ensure that teachers and support staff receive training in line with this policy as part of their induction. Training will cover at least the following:

- The importance of good attendance
- That absence is almost invariably a result of wider circumstances
- The legal requirements on nursery schools, e.g. the keeping of registers

Staff will receive training to ensure they understand that increased absence from nursery school could indicate a safeguarding concern, and know how such concerns should be managed.

12. Monitoring and Review

Attendance and punctuality will be monitored throughout the year. The nursery school's attendance target is always 100%. We understand that that may appear to be aspirational but we always aim high.

The nursery school monitors attendance and punctuality throughout the year.

Any changes made to this policy will be communicated to all members of staff and parents.