

WHITGREAVE PRIMARY
SCHOOL

ATTENDANCE POLICY &
GUIDELINES



Mrs Redfern - Head Teacher
Miss Davies - Attendance Lead
Ms Westwood - Attendance Officer



Attendance Policy & Guidelines

Aims

This policy aims to show our commitment to meeting our obligations with regards to school attendance, including those laid out in the Department for Education's (DfE's) statutory guidance on working together to improve school attendance (applies from 19 August 2024), through our whole-school culture and ethos that values good attendance, including:

- Setting high expectations for the attendance and punctuality of all pupils
- Promoting good attendance and the benefits of good attendance
- Reducing absence, including persistent and severe absence
- Ensuring every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled
- Acting early to address patterns of absence
- Building strong relationships with families to make sure pupils have the support in place to attend school

At Whitgreave Primary School, we strongly believe that attendance at school and being punctual are vital foundations for children's personal and academic growth. Establishing excellent attendance and punctuality patterns from an early age gives children the greatest chance to maximise their potential and enable children to develop a deep-rooted sense of belonging to their class and school community.

Legislation and Guidance

This policy is based on the Department for Education's (DfE's) statutory guidance on working together to improve school attendance (applies from 19 August 2024) and school attendance parental responsibility measures. The guidance is based on the following pieces of legislation, which set 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 Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (and 2010, 2011, 2013, and 2016 amendments)
- The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 and the 2024 amendment

It also refers to:

- School census guidance
- Keeping Children Safe in Education
- Mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance: guidance for schools

Good Attendance

Good attendance is deemed to be 96% or above. Children should be in school, on time, every day that the school is open, unless the reason for absence is unavoidable. School start and end times vary:

Nursery:
 AM - 8.30 am - 11.30 am
 PM - 12.20 pm - 3.20 pm

Reception:
 8.45 am - 3.15 pm

Years 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 & 6:
 8.40 am - 3.10 pm

Authorised/Unauthorised Absences

It is an offence for a parent/carer to allow a child to be absent from school without a good reason. Every half day absence has to be classified as either **authorised** or **unauthorised**. This decision can only be made by school, not by parents/carers. In order to make this decision, school needs to be informed of the reason why a child is not in school. This information can be given to school in person, by telephone or in writing.

Authorised Absence - These are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason. The school **may** authorise absence in the following circumstances:

- Illness - Medical evidence may be required.
- Medical appointments - Evidence will need to be provided.
- Family bereavement.
- Religious observance.
- Approved sporting activity.

A **Leave of Absence** request must be completed for any other possible absence. This must be submitted to the school, no later than 4 weeks before the actual leave is required.

Unauthorised Absence - These are mornings or afternoons away from school for reasons which school cannot authorise:

- Truancy.
- Absences for which school has not been given a reason.
- Moving house.
- New babies in the family.
- Shopping, looking after other children, oversleeping, birthdays.
- Head lice.
- Family holidays.
- Leave of absence which is taken without the school's prior consent or knowledge, and/or in excess of the time agreed by the school.

When percentages start to fall below the average, research indicates that this will have a significant impact on a child's learning and progress. Attendance is extremely important. If children are not here, they cannot learn!

Attendance during one typical school year (190 days)	Equals this number of days absent	Which is approximately this many weeks absent	Which means this number of lessons missed
95%	10 days	2 weeks	60 lessons
90%	19 days	4 weeks	Over 100 lessons
80%	38 days	8 weeks	Over 200 lessons
70%	57 days	12 weeks	Over 300 lessons

Children can sometimes be reluctant to attend school. It is never better to give in to their pressure and cover up their absence. This gives them the impression that their education does not matter to you and could make things worse. Please do not hesitate to contact the school if you are having any problems with your child's attendance.

School cannot authorise absence for children with a below 96% attendance, unless there are special circumstances and appropriate evidence.

Roles and Responsibilities

The Governing Board

The Governing Board is responsible for:

- Setting high expectations of all school leaders, staff, pupils and parents
- Making sure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties, including:
 - Making sure the school records attendance accurately in the register, and shares the required information with the DfE and local authority
 - Making sure the school works effectively with local partners to help remove barriers to attendance, and keeps them informed regarding specific pupils, where appropriate
- Recognising and promoting the importance of school attendance across the school's policies and ethos
- Making sure the school's attendance management processes are delivered effectively, and that consistent support is provided for pupils who need it most
- Making sure the school has high aspirations for all pupils, but adapts processes and support to pupils' individual needs
- Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data and helping school leaders focus improvement efforts on individual pupils or cohorts who need it most
- Working with school leaders to set goals or areas of focus for attendance and providing support and challenge
- Monitoring attendance figures for the whole school and repeatedly evaluating the effectiveness of the school's processes and improvement efforts to make sure they are meeting pupils' needs
- Where the school is struggling with attendance, working with school leaders to develop a comprehensive action plan to improve attendance
- Making sure all staff receive adequate training on attendance as part of the regular continued professional development offer, so that staff understand:
 - The importance of good attendance
 - That absence is almost always a symptom of wider issues
 - The school's legal requirements for keeping registers
 - The school's strategies and procedures for tracking, following up on and improving attendance, including working with partners and keeping them informed regarding specific pupils, where appropriate
- Holding the Head Teacher to account for the implementation of this policy

The Head Teacher

The Head Teacher is responsible for:

- The implementation of this policy at the school
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils

- Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary, and/or authorising Miss Davies to be able to do so

The Senior Leader Responsible for Attendance

The Designated Senior Leader (also known as the 'Senior Attendance Champion') is responsible for:

- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors
- Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies
- Working with the parents of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) to develop specific support approaches for attendance for pupils with SEND, including where school transport is regularly being missed, and where pupils with SEND face in-school barriers
- Communicating with the local authority when a pupil with an education, health and care (EHC) plan has falling attendance, or where there are barriers to attendance that relate to the pupil's needs
- Communicating the school's high expectations for attendance and punctuality regularly to pupils and parents through all available channels
- Leading, championing and improving attendance across the school
- Setting a clear vision for improving and maintaining good attendance
- Having a strong grasp of absence data and oversight of absence data analysis
- Regularly monitoring and evaluating progress in attendance
- Establishing and maintaining effective systems for tackling absence, and making sure they are followed by all staff
- Liaising with pupils, parents/carers and external agencies, where needed
- Building close and productive relationships with parents to discuss and tackle attendance issues
- Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families

The designated senior leader responsible for attendance is Miss Davies who can be contacted via the School Office.

The Attendance Officer

The Attendance Officer is responsible for:

- Monitoring and analysing attendance data
- Benchmarking attendance data to identify areas of focus for improvement
- Providing regular attendance reports to school staff and reporting concerns about attendance to the designated senior leader responsible for attendance, and the Head Teacher/Senior Leader Responsible for Attendance
- Working with education welfare officers to tackle persistent absence
- Advising the Senior Leader Responsible for Attendance when to issue fixed-penalty notices

The attendance officer is Ms Westwood who can be contacted via the School Office.

Class Teachers

Class Teachers are responsible for recording attendance for both morning and afternoon sessions on a daily basis, and submitting this information to the School Office.

Parents/Carers

Parents/Carers are expected to:

- **On the first day of absence** - Parents/carers are requested to ring school, if possible before 9.30 am, on 01902 558930, to give the reason for absence. If school is not contacted we will contact you by telephone, letter or home visit. If the absence continues, please keep school notified at reasonable intervals. **Please remember, no contact may result in a visit from the staff responsible for attendance within school, the Local Authority Attendance Service, or the Police, as it is important that we know that ALL our children are safe and well. This is part of our statutory safeguarding responsibility.**
- **Medical appointments** - Parents/carers are requested where possible, to make medical appointments outside school hours. Where this is not possible, please try to request early or late appointments and inform school in advance. Children should be signed in and out at the School Office. Medical evidence will need to be provided.
- **Holidays** - **Holidays within term-time have a detrimental effect on the education and progress of children.** Holidays should be taken during the school holidays. Leave of absence requests are available from the Main Reception and should be handed in at least four weeks in advance. **Holidays/Leave within term-time can no longer be authorised by the Head Teacher and Governing Board, unless there are any 'exceptional' circumstances. Any holiday/leave taken which is unauthorised, will be referred to the Local Authority Attendance Service for further action, which may result in a fine. Parents/carers can be fined per child, per parent/carer.**
- **Late arrival** - School aims to foster good habits of attendance and punctuality. Children should arrive at school by their designated time, which is detailed above. If children arrive late, they will receive a late mark. The codes utilised will depend upon the lateness and this will be decided by the Attendance Officer. If you are running late, please call the School Office and inform us, so that we are aware of this. **Every minute late, is a minute of learning lost!**
- Provide the school with more than 1 emergency contact number for their child
- Keep to any attendance contracts that they make with the school and/or local authority
- Seek support, where necessary, for maintaining good attendance, by contacting relevant people in school

On-going lateness is classified as an unauthorised absence and this is contrary to The Education Act. Parents/carers are reminded that **ALL** absences and lates, are part of a child's record. The records are inspected by the Local Authority Attendance Service.

Recording Attendance

We will keep an electronic attendance register, and place all pupils onto this register. We will take our attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day (AM) and once during the second session (PM). It will mark, using the appropriate national attendance and absence codes from the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024, whether every pupil is:

- Present
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity
- Absent
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 6 years after the date on which the entry was made.

Children Missing from Education

All children, regardless of their circumstances, are entitled to an efficient, full-time education which is suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs they may have.

Children missing from education are children of compulsory school age who are not registered pupils at a school and are not receiving suitable education otherwise than at a school.

Children missing from education are at significant risk of underachieving, being victims of harm, exploitation or radicalisation, and becoming NEET (not in education, employment or training) later in life. Effective information sharing between parents/carers, schools and Local Authorities is critical to ensuring that all children of compulsory school age are safe and receiving suitable education.

The Local Authority Attendance Service

Your child must be in school, every day, unless there is a valid reason for their absence. If problems cannot be sorted out between school and parents/carers, then the matter will be referred to the Local Authority Attendance Service. Referral to this Service would normally take place if:

- A pattern of irregular attendance or lateness is either continuing or worsening.
- Parents/carers do not accept their responsibilities for ensuring that their child attends school.
- Condoned/unjustified absence is an increasing problem.
- Parents/carers ask for excessive authorised absence.
- Pupil overall attendance remains at 93% or below.

After referral, the Local Authority Attendance Service will work with the family in a bid to improve attendance for a specified period of time. If the situation has not been improved during this time, **court proceedings** may ensue. The Local Authority Attendance Service have the following legal powers to enforce attendance:

- **School Attendance Orders (Parent Contracts)** - These enforce responsibility of the parents/carers for ensuring that children of compulsory school age receive suitable education and to ensure that the parent/carer takes responsibility for making sure that their child attends school regularly.
- **Penalty Notice** - For irregular attendance, truancy, unauthorised absence and holidays which have not been authorised by the school. This can result in parents/carers being fined for each child who is not going to school. **This option does not require an appearance in Court and is an alternative to prosecution.** Parents/carers can be issued with a Penalty Notice if a child has been excluded from school and contravenes the details set out in the Exclusion Letter, as to their whereabouts during the first 6 days of the exclusion.
- **Prosecution** - This may be considered for periods of poor attendance, and/or following a Penalty Notice or depending on the circumstances of the absenteeism. It is not necessary to issue a Penalty Notice initially.

- **Parenting Orders** - This is a legal requirement for a parent/carer to undertake specific measures in order to improve a child's attendance.
- **Education Supervision Orders** - This means that the Court appoints a Supervisor to help and give advice to the parents/carers and the child.

Penalty Notices

The Head Teacher (or someone authorised by them), Local Authority or the Police can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age, by issuing a penalty notice. If the school issues a penalty notice, it will check with the Local Authority before doing so, and send it a copy of any penalty notice issued.

Each parent who is liable for the pupil's offence(s) can be issued with a penalty notice.

The payment must be made directly to the local authority, regardless of who issues the notice. If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute or withdraw the notice.

- If issued with a **first penalty notice**, the parent must pay £80 within 21 days, or £160 within 28 days.
- If a **second penalty notice** is issued to the same parent in respect of the same pupil, the parent must pay £160 if paid within 28 days.
- A **third penalty notice** cannot be issued to the same parent in respect of the same child within 3 years of the date of the issue of the first penalty notice. In a case where the national threshold is met for a third time within those 3 years, alternative action will be taken instead.

Notices to Improve

If the National Threshold has been met and support is appropriate, but parents do not engage with offers of support, the school may offer a notice to improve to give parents a final chance to engage with support. Notices to Improve will be issued in line with processes set out in the local code of conduct for the Local Authority area in which the pupil attends school. They will include:

- Details of the pupil's attendance record and of the offences
- The benefits of regular attendance and the duty of parents under section 7 of the Education Act 1996
- Details of the support provided so far
- Opportunities for further support, or to access previously provided support that was not engaged with
- A clear warning that a penalty notice may be issued if attendance doesn't improve within the improvement period, along with details of what sufficient improvement looks like, which will be decided on a case-by-case basis
- A clear timeframe of between 3 and 6 weeks for the improvement period
- The grounds on which a penalty notice may be issued before the end of the improvement period

Persistent and Severe Absence

Persistent absence is where a pupil misses 10% or more of school, and severe absence is where a pupil misses 50% or more of school. Reducing persistent and severe absence is central to the school's strategy for improving attendance. The school will:

- Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence
- Consider potential safeguarding issues and, where suspected or present, address them in line with Keeping Children Safe in Education
- Hold regular meetings with the Parents/Carers of pupils who the school (and/or Local Authority) considers to be vulnerable or at risk of persistent or severe absence, or who are persistently or severely absent, to:
 - Discuss attendance and engagement at school
 - Listen, and understand barriers to attendance
 - Explain the help that is available
 - Explain the potential consequences of, and sanctions for, persistent and severe absence
 - Review any existing actions or interventions
- Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance, in conjunction with the local authority, where relevant
- Consider alternative support that could be put in place to remove any barriers to attendance and re-engage these pupils. In doing so, the school will sensitively consider some of the reasons for absence
- Implement sanctions, where necessary

Support

Parents/carers may wish to contact the Local Authority Attendance Service themselves to ask for help or information. This service is independent of school and will give impartial advice. Their telephone number is available from the School Office.

The people responsible for attendance matters within school are: **Miss Davies, Attendance Lead and Ms Westwood, Attendance Officer. Contact can be made via the School Office, on 01902 558930.**

School has a legal duty to promote attendance and to publish absence figures to parents/carers. Equally parents/carers have a legal duty to make sure that their children attend school.

Parents/carers of children whose attendance is becoming a concern will be notified, by telephone or letter. Home visits may also take place, by staff responsible for attendance within school, the Local Authority Attendance Service, or the Police.

School Closures

The Head Teacher will make every effort to ensure that the school remains open. However, in some circumstances, such as severe weather, the school may have to close. The Head Teacher must always consider the health, safety and welfare of every person, who uses the school site, children, staff, parents/carers, volunteers and visitors.

If a decision is made to close part or all of the school, the Head Teacher will inform the Local Authority and a notice will be placed on Wolverhampton Today.

Attendance Rewards

School staff are committed to working with parents/carers to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible. Rewards will be given to all children achieving a 'good level' of

attendance for a term and for the whole year. **A 'good level' of attendance will be deemed as 96% or above.**

100% Attendance = Children receive a Certificate and a Gold Award.

98% - 99.99% Attendance = Children receive a Certificate and a Silver Award.

96% - 97.99% Attendance = Children receive a Certificate and a Bronze Award.

In addition, where children have significant medical needs or additional needs which impacts upon their attendance, they will also be rewarded for improving their overall attendance. (Significant medicals needs and/or additional needs will be determined by an appropriate professional)

There are also rewards for the class with the best attendance each week and each term. Trophies are awarded to the individual, winning classes. In addition, children have daily raffle tickets for their attendance, which are entered into a weekly draw, so that children can win prizes too!

School also hold 'Golden Ticket Days' whereby all children in school on a particular day receive a special 'Golden Ticket' and again, can win prizes within school.

Children with an attendance level of below 96% will have their attendance closely monitored, with actions taken accordingly.

Attendance Targets

The Governing Board sets targets for attendance for the whole school, in line with the School Development Plan, on an annual basis.

This policy will be reviewed on a regular basis, in line with the school's Policy Schedule and presented to the Governing Board.

Miss Davies - Attendance Lead

Ms Westwood - Attendance Officer