

Attendance Policy

Wollaston School



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1. Aims

We are committed to meeting our obligation with regards to school attendance through our whole-school culture and ethos that values good attendance, including:

- Promoting 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 ensure pupils have the support in place to attend school

We will also promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

2. Legislation and guidance

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 Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006 \(and 2010, 2011, 2013, 2016 amendments\)](#)
- [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)

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

3. Roles and responsibilities

3.1 The governing board

The governing board is responsible for:

- Promoting the importance of school attendance across the school's policies and ethos
- Making sure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties
- Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data
- Monitoring attendance figures for the whole school
- Making sure staff receive adequate training on attendance
- Holding the head of school to account for the implementation of this policy

3.2 The head of school

The head of school is responsible for:

- Implementation of this policy at the school
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils
- Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies
- Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary

3.3 The designated senior leader responsible for attendance

The designated senior leader is responsible for:

- Leading attendance across the school
- Offering a clear vision for attendance improvement
- Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes
- Having an oversight of data analysis
- Devising specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data
- Arranging calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues
- Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families

The designated senior leader responsible for attendance is the Head of School.

3.4 The attendance officer

The school attendance officer is responsible for:

- Monitoring and analysing attendance data (see section 7)
- 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 of school

- Working with education welfare officers to tackle persistent absence
- Advising the head of school/designated senior leader (authorised by the head of school) when to issue fixed-penalty notices

3.5 Form Tutors and Class Teachers

Form tutors and class teachers are responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the school office on the same day.

- Form tutors are responsible for submitting completed registers during the AM registration period.
- Class teachers are responsible for submitting completed registers during the PM registration

3.6 School Administrative staff

School administrative staff will:

- Take calls from parents or carers about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the school system
- Transfer calls from parents or carers to the Head of behaviour and Attendance to provide them with more detailed support on attendance

3.7 Parents/carers

Parents/carers are expected to:

- Make sure their child attends every day and timetabled lesson on time
- ensure their children stay at school once they have registered
- Notify the school to report their child's absence before 8.15 on the day of the absence and each subsequent day of absence, and advise when they are expected to return
- Provide the school with more than 1 emergency contact number for their child
- Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day
- Ensure that family holidays are taken outside of term time

3.8 Pupils

Pupils are expected to:

- Attend school every day on time
- Attend every timetabled session on time

4. Recording attendance

4.1 Attendance register

We will keep an 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 and once during the second session. It will mark whether every pupil is:

- Present
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity

➤ Absent

➤ Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

➤ The original entry

➤ The amended entry

➤ The reason for the amendment

➤ The date on which the amendment was made

➤ The name and position of the person who made the amendment

See appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes.

We will also record:

➤ Whether the absence is authorised or not

➤ The nature of the activity if a pupil is attending an approved educational activity

➤ The nature of circumstances where a pupil is unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

Pupils must arrive in school by 8.30am on each school day.

4.2 Unplanned absence

The pupil's parent/carer must notify the school of the reason for the absence on the first day of an unplanned absence by 8.15am or as soon as practically possible via the Edulink app or by calling the school absence line (see also section 7).

We will mark absence due to illness as authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may ask the pupil's parent/carer to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents/carers will be notified of this in advance.

4.3 Planned absence during term time

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the pupil's parent/carer notifies the school in advance of the appointment.

However, we encourage parents/carers to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

The pupil's parent/carer must also apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence. Go to section 5 to find out which term-time absences the school can authorise.

4.4 Lateness and punctuality

A pupil who arrives late:

➤ Before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code

- After the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code

The school's attendance team monitor lateness and punctuality and persistent lateness will be managed via the punctuality escalation system. Parents are notified of our concern promptly and are invited to participate in the process to improve their child's punctuality. We may take advice and/or refer to the local authority cases of persistent lateness.

4.5 Following up unexplained absence

Where any pupil we expect to attend school does not attend, or stops attending, without reason, Wollaston School will:

- Call the pupil's parent/carer on the morning of the first day of unexplained absence to ascertain the reason. If the school cannot reach any of the pupil's emergency contacts, the school may conduct a home visit to ensure the safeguarding of children not in school.
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not
- Identify the correct attendance code to use and input it as soon as the reason for absence is ascertained – this will be no later than 5 working days after the session
- Call the parent/carer on each day that the absence continues without explanation to ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary. If absence continues, the school will consider involving an education welfare officer

4.6 Reporting to parents/carers

Wollaston School will regularly inform parents about their child's attendance and absence levels via the EduLink app and termly reports.

5. Authorised and unauthorised absence

5.1 Approval for term-time absence

The head of school will only grant a leave of absence to a pupil during term time if they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'. A leave of absence is granted at the head of school's discretion, including the length of time the pupil is authorised to be absent for.

We define 'exceptional circumstances' where the leave would be of unique and significant emotional, educational or spiritual value to the child and to not give authorisation would disadvantage the child.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request.

Any request should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated and, where possible, at least two weeks before the absence, and in accordance with the Leave of Absence Exceptional Circumstances form which can be found [HERE](#).

We expect all students to attend school regularly and as such will not authorise any extended leave or holidays during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments (see sections 4.2 and 4.3 for more detail)

- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart
- Traveller pupils travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh gypsies, Irish and Scottish travellers, showmen (fairground people) and circus people, bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and new travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school, but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision
- Serious or terminal illness of a close relative
- Funeral of grandparent, parent or sibling
- Wedding of parent or sibling

5.2 Legal sanctions

The school or local authority can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age.

If issued with a fine, or penalty notice, each parent must pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the local authority.

Penalty notices can be issued by a head of school, local authority officer or the police.

The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice may take into account:

- The number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year
- One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission
- Where a suspended pupil is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason

If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute or withdraw the notice.

6. Strategies for promoting attendance

All students are expected to attend well and aspire to have 100% attendance and Heads of Year and form tutors work to promote good attendance with students and parents to achieve this aim. Specific strategies may include:

- Positive praise from form tutors for maintaining expected levels of attendance and for those showing improvement in their attendance
- Celebration in form time and assemblies
- Inclusion in recognition and reward incentives
- Congratulatory letters to the parents of students who have maintained 100% attendance
- Pastoral support programmes including school counselling to promote positive emotional wellbeing amongst students

7. Attendance monitoring

7.1 Monitoring attendance

- The school's Student Support Officer for Attendance monitors pupil absence on a daily basis
- The school will monitor attendance and absence data half-termly, termly and yearly across the school and at an individual pupil level
- The school will identify whether or not there are particular groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern

Pupil-level absence data will be collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. The school will compare attendance data to the national average and share this with the governing board.

7.2 Analysing attendance

Wollaston School will:

- Analyse attendance and absence data regularly to identify pupils or cohorts that need additional support with their attendance, and use this analysis to provide targeted support to these pupils and their families
- Look at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence, and then develop strategies to address these patterns

7.3 Using data to improve attendance

Wollaston School will:

- Provide regular attendance reports to form tutors, and other school leaders, to facilitate discussions with pupils and families
- Use data to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place in order to modify them and inform future strategies

7.4 Reducing 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.

Wollaston School will:

- Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence as well as students with increasing absence from school
- Hold regular meetings with the parents of pupils who the school (and/or local authority) considers to be vulnerable, or are persistently or severely absent, to discuss attendance and engagement at school
- Provide access to wider support services, including early help, to remove the barriers to attendance

For students with attendance concerns, support will be offered to encourage them to raise their attendance to above the school target using our staged escalation system.

- **Stage one** – parents/carers are made aware of the fall in attendance by a letter detailing our concern and requesting parents contact us if they need support.

- **Stage two** – a formal letter is sent to the parents/carers to outline the school's continued concerns in relation to the absence of the child. This letter will state what evidence is required to ensure that any further absences for illness or medical conditions can be authorised. Advice will be given regarding stage three of the process.
- **Stage three** – a formal attendance contract invitation is sent to the home address and a meeting will be scheduled to formally address the reasons for absence and to set targets for improvement. This meeting is also an opportunity for support to be put into place to ensure the regular attendance of the child. A home visit to conduct the meeting may take place if parents fail to attend without notice.
- **Stage four** – a formal review of the attendance contract is carried out to map any progress in the nominated period. This meeting will be followed by three potential outcomes:
 - Attendance has improved enough and, as such, the child will be taken off the attendance contract and will be informally monitored.
 - Attendance has not improved enough, or the child would benefit from another review period, and therefore will be invited to review his or her attendance again in 4-6 weeks.
 - Attendance has continued to decline and therefore a referral to the Local Authority will be completed by the school. Where there are also safeguarding concerns, we will intensify support through statutory children's social care.

Parents are made aware that the Head of school or a nominated officer acting on their behalf may escalate the process and/or make a referral to the Local Authority during any point of the escalation process if they feel attendance is deteriorating at a pace which may harm the continuity of learning.

Where long-term sickness absence takes place, we will work with parents/carers to source education otherwise to support the child's continuity of learning.

8. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the local authority or DfE is updated, and as a minimum annually by the head of school. At every review, the policy will be approved by the full governing board.

9. Links with other policies

This policy links to the following policies:

- Child protection and safeguarding policy
- Behaviour policy

Appendix 1: attendance codes

The following codes are taken from the DfE's guidance on school attendance.

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	Pupil is present at morning registration
\	Present (pm)	Pupil is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Pupil arrives late before register has closed
B	Off-site educational activity	Pupil is at a supervised off-site educational activity approved by the school
D	Dual registered	Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
J	Interview	Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
P	Sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
V	Educational trip or visit	Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised, or approved, by the school
W	Work experience	Pupil is on a work experience placement
Authorised absence		
C	Authorised leave of absence	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
E	Excluded	Pupil has been excluded but no alternative provision has been made
H	Authorised holiday	Pupil has been allowed to go on holiday due to

		exceptional circumstances
I	Illness	School has been notified that a pupil will be absent due to illness
M	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment
Code	Definition	Scenario
R	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance
S	Study leave	Year 11 pupil is on study leave during their public examinations
T	Gypsy, Roma and traveller absence	Pupil from a traveller community is travelling, as agreed with the school
Unauthorised absence		
G	Unauthorised holiday	Pupil is on a holiday that was not approved by the school
N	Reason not provided	Pupil is absent for an unknown reason (this code should be amended when the reason emerges, or replaced with code O if no reason for absence has been provided after a reasonable amount of time)
O	Unauthorised absence	School is not satisfied with reason for pupil's absence
U	Arrival after registration	Pupil arrived at school after the register closed
X	Not required to be in school	Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
Y	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances	School site is closed, there is disruption to travel as a result of a local/national emergency, or pupil is in custody
Z	Pupil not on admission register	Register set up but pupil has not yet joined the

		school
#	Planned school closure	Whole or partial school closure due to half-term/bank holiday/INSET day