

William Edwards School



Pupil Attendance Policy

Reviewed September 2023
Next Full Review August 2024



Pupil Attendance Policy

Introduction

At William Edwards School we strive to provide the best possible learning opportunities for all students and to prepare them for their future. We embrace the concept of equal opportunities for all. As part of this we have high expectations of attendance and punctuality and we have a system of support and monitoring in place for families who do not meet the attendance expectations.

All children of compulsory school age have the right to full-time education, regardless of age, aptitude, ability and any special needs s/he may have. Regular school attendance is essential if a child is to make the most of the educational opportunity available to them. William Edwards School takes seriously its responsibility to monitor and promote the regular attendance of all its pupils and the school will consistently work towards a goal of 100% attendance for all pupils. It acknowledges that irregular attendance seriously disrupts continuity of learning, undermines educational progress, can lead to underachievement and low attainment and impedes the child's ability to develop friendship groups within school.

This policy seeks to ensure that all parties involved in the practicalities of school attendance are aware and informed of attendance matters in school and to outline the school's commitment to attendance matters. It details the responsibilities of individuals and groups involved and the procedures in place to promote and monitor pupil attendance.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the national guidance: *Summary table of responsibilities for school attendance - Guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools, and local authorities* May 2022.

Strategies used to promote good attendance and punctuality

- Class teacher will ensure that the curriculum is delivered within a culture of inclusion and in such a way that pupils feel that they have and can succeed.
- Individual pupils whose attendance has been a cause for concern will be encouraged to set and achieve personal attendance goals.
- Positive verbal reinforcement is given to pupils who have been absent from school for a period of time and a plan to support them to catch up with any missed curriculum and promote future attendance improvements will be implemented.
- Children with 100% attendance at the end of each academic year will be personally written to by the Headteacher to commend them on their achievement.
- The House & Tutor group with the highest attendance each term holds the attendance trophy and are celebrated in newsletters.
- In each term, all pupils achieving at least 98% attendance are entered into a draw to receive a prize.

- Members of the leadership team periodically monitor the gate for latecomers and detentions are set accordingly.

What is expected of parents?

Parents have the prime responsibility for ensuring that their child attends school regularly and punctually. They have a legal responsibility to ensure that their children attend school regularly, and stay in school for every lesson after they have registered. Parents may be issued with a fixed penalty notice or prosecuted if a child does not attend school regularly and punctually under Section 7 of the Education Act 2006 and the amendments made to the Act which came into force on 1st September 2013.

If a child is in the care of foster parents or in a residential home, it is important that the carers recognise their parenting role where attendance to school is concerned. They will be supported by close co-operation between the school, education welfare services and the social services where such a child's attendance is irregular.

Parents and carers are expected:

- To offer a reason for any period of absence, preferably before the absence or on the first, and each subsequent day of absence.
- To ensure that their child arrives at school on time, properly dressed, with the right equipment and in a condition to learn. A reason should be offered for any lateness.
- To work closely with the school and any outside agencies to resolve any problems that may impede a child's attendance.
- To take family holidays during school holiday periods and be aware that all requests for absences during term time will be refused except in exceptional circumstances. Family holidays are not considered exceptional.
- To be aware of curriculum requirements and be especially vigilant with regards to attendance during important academic times such as statutory testing.
- Children should only be kept at home if they have a serious illness or injury. If a child is absent, the school must be notified by 9.00am on the first day of absence, and each subsequent day thereafter, unless an expected date for return has been notified (for example when there is an agreed period of isolation). A message can be left of the dedicated absence line by dialling 01375486000 and selecting option 1. Alternative arrangements can be agreed for non-English speaking parents/carers.
- Understand that they are legally responsible for ensuring their child's regular attendance.
- Provide an up to date contact number and an emergency number that may be used in exceptional circumstances. It is important, that should the need arise, we contact Parents/Carers without delay.
- Note the dates of public, statutory and internal examination periods. These are usually held in May/June each year. The dates for public examinations cannot be changed for any reasons. If the public exams and Statutory Assessment Tests are missed they cannot be retaken during the examination cycle.

- Adhere to the government guidance regarding term time holidays (any holiday taken in term time will be unauthorised and may be subject to a penalty notice).

What is expected of the school?

The school will endeavor to provide an environment that is conducive to educating every individual pupil. School attendance will be positively supported wherever possible and the promotion of good communication and co-operation between all parties involved will be paramount. The school has a statutory responsibility to record and monitor the punctuality and attendance of pupils for both the morning and afternoon sessions. A register of attendance has to be taken once at the start of the morning session and once during the afternoon session. The register has to record whether a pupil is present, engaged in an approved educational activity off site or absent. If a pupil is absent the register must record whether the absence was authorised or unauthorised. William Edwards also tracks each student during the day by taking a register at the start of each lesson.

The school will:

- Create a school ethos that pupils want to be part of
- Meet the legal requirements set out by Government
- Give a high priority to punctuality and attendance
- Have procedures that enable the school to identify, follow up and record unauthorised absence, patterns of absence and parent condoned absence with effective monitoring and intervention
- Consistently record authorised and unauthorised absences within the guidance of the 1995 education act
- Have a range of effective strategies to follow up intermittent and long term absenteeism and promote good attendance
- Encourage open communication channels between home and school
- Have procedures for the reintegration of long term absentees
- Have procedures leading to a formal referral to the SAST (School Attendance Support Team).
- Work with families to overcome any boundaries, within the bounds of resources available, and ensure the appropriate delivery of the curriculum
- Follow up with social care on any safeguarding concerns which may be related to a child's attendance or punctuality.

Details of expectations of schools for attendance available on this link: Published May 22 for September 22.

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1073619/Summary_table_of_responsibilities_for_school_attendance.pdf

What is expected of the Local Authority?

The Local Authority (LA) has a responsibility to provide education and promote regular attendance of all statutory school age children. Through the School Attendance

Support Team (SAST) the Local Authority provides support to schools and parents to fulfil their legal duty. The SAST is the enforcement agency of the LA and as well as providing guidance and support through its officers may take a parent to court for not fulfilling their duty under section 444 of the Education act 1996.

School Procedures for Recording and Monitoring Attendance

Recording

The class teacher will take a register recording who is present and absent from school by 8.45 am. Any late pupils arriving before 8.55 am must go to their tutor room and present to the tutor who will amend the mark from absent to late. Anyone arriving after 8.55 am must go to student reception and sign in giving a reason for the lateness. This may then be checked via a telephone call home. All staff need to be aware that any child arriving late MUST be registered as being on site. It is everyone's responsibility to ensure that Health and Safety procedures, as well as Safeguarding responsibilities are adhered to.

The register officially closes 5 minutes after the start of tutor time. Students arriving after this time will be marked late for the session. For the morning session, when pupils arrived after 9.15 a.m. they will be marked as 'U' in the register as an unauthorised late unless evidence has been/is provided.

If a child does not arrive at school, the following procedures are instigated:

- As soon as possible and no later than 9.45am, the office will send a 'first day' text to all contacts on the student's school record who have parental responsibility.
- If the parent/carer does not respond to the text is unreachable, the school will continue by calling those on the contact lists, including emergency contacts.
- If contact cannot be made or, a suitable explanation is not received, a home visit may be made by the school to determine the welfare of the pupil.
- If a home visit is not successful and still no contact can be made, the pupil will be classed as a 'missing pupil' and the school have a legal responsibility (Education Act 436A - chapter 2 part 6) to involve external agencies.

Reasons for absence may be offered verbally by phone. You must provide the school with the appointment card or letter if the child will be absent for a medical appointment. The school may then decide whether to authorise the absence or record it as an unauthorised absence. This decision will be made within the guidance set out in the 1996 Education act, which identifies the following reasons as acceptable reasons for an authorised absence.

- The child is ill or is prevented from attending by unavoidable cause
- The child is absent on days exclusively set apart for religious observance in their particular faith

A reason for a period of absence is always required. The school will contact parents who have not offered a reason and will mark the absence as unauthorised if no reason is provided. If contact cannot be made with the family, a referral will be made to the School Attendance Support Team reporting the child as 'missing from education'. This procedure forms part of the safeguarding protocols in school. Where an absence causes concern re welfare of a child and no answer can be obtained by telephone, a police welfare check may be requested as part of our duty to safeguard children.

Attendance codes

A set of standard codes is used consistently within the register. These codes are input into the electronic register daily as required and are used to give depth of meaning to the register and provide statistical meaning to the absences.

Code

/ Present (AM)

\ Present (PM)

B Educated off site (Not dual registration)

C Other authorised circumstances

D Dual registration

E Excluded

G Family holiday (not agreed)

H Family holiday (agreed)

I Illness (not med/dental etc. appointments)

J Interview

L Late (before reg closed)

M Medical/Dental appointments

N No reason yet provided for absence

O Unauthorised absence

P Approved sporting activity

R Religious observance

S Study leave

T Traveller absence

U Late (after registers closed)

V Educational visit or trip

W Work experience

Y Enforced closure

School closed to pupils and staff

* DfES Z: Pupil not on roll

-All should attend / No mark recorded

The codes G N O and U are unauthorised absences

Understanding types of absence:

Authorised absences are sessions absent way from school for a legitimate reason, such as approved illness. Children should not come to school if they are too unwell to attend. However, simply 'not feeling right' or absences due to being tired will not be authorised. A good measure is to assess whether you, as a parent would go to work with the same symptoms and still be paid by your employer. If the answer is that you would attend your place of work, then the child should attend school. Any absences due to illness of more than 4 days will be recorded as authorised without medical evidence being provided.

Unauthorised absences are sessions away from school which the school deems unreasonable. This type of absence can lead to referral to the School Attendance Support Team (SAST) which may result in a Penalty Notice of legal proceedings. Unauthorised absences may include:

- Absences which have not been properly explained
- Children who arrive after 9.15am without a good reason for doing so or without evidence being provided.
- Shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- Day trips and holidays
- Attending the medical appointment of another family member

Please be aware that arrival in school after 9.15am results in an unauthorised absence being recorded if there is no good reason for doing so or without evidence being provide.

Penalty Notices

The school adheres to the Thurrock Code of Conduct for issuing penalty notices for unauthorised absence and refers to this in all cases. Persistent lateness may also be a trigger. Penalty notices may be issued by the SAST (School Attendance Support Team) for any unauthorised absence in the following circumstances, not just unauthorised absence for holidays.

- Irregular attendance – at least 12 sessions of any unauthorised absence are recorded against the child's name within the previous 120 sessions. One session is half a day. Parents will receive a warning letter giving them a chance to improve attendance before a Penalty Notice is issued.
- If the Head Teacher does not authorise a request from a parent for term time leave of absence, including holidays, and the parent takes leave of 10 sessions or more. In such circumstances, the school must advise parents of this and how the action conforms to the school's attendance policy.
- Where a pupil of compulsory school age, who has been excluded from school, has been found in a public place during school hours without reasonable justification. This is explained when a child is excluded from school, and in writing to parents.

Holidays are not authorised during term time in response to the Government and Thurrock Authority initiative and has been agreed by the SWECET Trust. Holidays will be unauthorised.

Our school follow the recommended practice for Government and Thurrock Authority initiative.

- Parents/Carers take responsibility for ensuring children's regular, uninterrupted school attendance.
- Parents/Carers do not have the legal right to take children out of school on holiday.
- In exceptional circumstances it may be necessary for planned absence. All such cases should be made to the Head Teacher.
- If leave is taken without authorisation it will be recorded as unauthorised absence, and a Penalty notice may be issued. This is set by regulation at £60 if paid within 21 days, rising to £120 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days.
- Penalty notices must be paid in full. Instalment payment is not acceptable.
- If the recipient fails to pay the fine within 28 days the Local Authority will prosecute for the offence to which the Notice applies, save for the very limited circumstances when the Notice may be withdrawn.

Monitoring and action to be taken

The Head Teacher and Senior Attendance Officer will, in conjunction with the Tutor, House Leader, Pastoral Managers and the Senior Leadership team review attendance on a weekly basis of those students whose attendance overall is below 94%. They will also review attendance for those students who show a pattern to absence or lateness, and those who are frequently absent in conjunction with siblings and or friends. Regular absences immediately before and after school holidays will also be closely monitored and decisions made whether the absence will be authorised or not.

A Stage 1 letter will be sent to the parents of any pupil identified as having regular non-attendance informing them of the school's concerns. This letter would normally be triggered by an attendance % of less than 94%. The child's attendance will then be monitored very closely.

If no improvement is seen, the school will write to the parent and require them to attend a meeting which will offer support to resolve any problems that may be impeding a child from attending this will form Stage 2 of our attendance policy.

The pupil's attendance will be closely monitored and after period of supportive measures this will escalate to a Stage 3 which will lead to a parent contract.

If after this there is no improvement in attendance, and the support offered has had little impact or has not been engaged with the case will be formally referred to the Local Authority for statutory action to be considered after all stages have been processed. This could mean an application for a Penalty Notice to be issued OR referral made for Prosecution. Parents will be sent a letter notifying them of this action.

Medical Evidence

At Stage 2 of our attendance policy, parents will be asked to provide medical evidence for any absences. Medical evidence could be a prescription, appointment card from the hospital or surgery or a note/phone call from the surgery. Where a child has a recurring medical condition we will strive to support to ensure good attendance. This can be done in partnership with families and medical practitioners.

Requests for leave of absence

If a parent wishes to request a period of leave they are required to write to the Head Teacher via the Attendance Team, and must give the following information. Students name, year group and tutor, inclusive dates the leave of absence is requested for and reason for the leave. If the request is denied the school will inform the parent of the reason in writing and the request will be noted in the electronic register. Leave of absence will **not** be authorised for family holidays. Only exceptional circumstances will be considered on a case by case basis. If the activity leading the absence request could be reasonably done outside of term-time then it will not be authorised.

Examples of circumstances NOT considered exceptional:

- Holidays taken in term time due to lower costs/parental work commitments
- Holidays abroad to visit a sick relative
- Pilgrimages by parents
- Holidays booked by surprise by relatives
- To attend weddings

Categories of “concern” and what our school will do in response:

Pupils at risk of becoming persistently absent

- Proactively use data to identify pupils at risk of poor attendance.
- Work with each identified pupil and their parents to understand and address the reasons for absence, including any in-school barriers to attendance.
- Where out of school barriers are identified, signpost and support access to any required services in the first instance.
- If the issue persists, take an active part in the multi-agency effort with the local authority and other partners. Act as the lead practitioner where all partners agree that the school is the best placed lead service. Where the lead practitioner is outside of the school, continue to work with the local authority and partners.

□

Persistently Absent pupils – less than 90% attendance

- Continued support as for pupils at risk of becoming persistently absent and:
- Where absence becomes persistent, put additional targeted support in place to remove any barriers. Where necessary this includes working with partners.
- Where there is a lack of engagement, hold more formal conversations with parents and be clear about the potential need for legal intervention in future.
- Where support is not working, being engaged with or appropriate, work with the local authority on legal intervention.
- Where there are safeguarding concerns, intensify support through statutory children's social care.
- Work with other schools in the local area, such as schools previously attended and the schools of any siblings

Severely absent pupils – less than 50% attendance

- Continued support as for persistently absent pupils and:
- Agree a joint approach for all severely absent pupils with the local authority.

Support for cohorts of pupils with lower attendance than their peers

- Proactively use data to identify cohorts with, or at risk of, low attendance and develop strategies to support them.
- Work with other schools in the local area and the local authority to share effective practice where there are common barriers to attendance.

Support for pupils with medical conditions or SEND with poor attendance

- Maintain the same ambition for attendance and work with pupils and parents to maximise attendance.

- Ensure join up with pastoral support and where required, put in place additional support and adjustments, such as an individual healthcare plan and if applicable, ensuring the provision outlined in the pupil's EHCP is accessed.
- Consider additional support from wider services and external partners, making timely referrals.
- Regularly monitor data for such groups, including at board and governing body meetings and with local authorities.

Support for pupils with a social worker

Inform the pupil's social worker if there are any unexplained absences and if their name is to be deleted from the register.

Summary of interventions

After each of the stages (1-3) attendance will be reviewed and the next stage will be implemented if attendance has not improved to a satisfactory level.

Stage 1	Parent/Carer will receive a letter informing them that their child's attendance has fallen below the school's acceptable level and informing them that an immediate and sustained improvement is needed. Parents will be invited to speak with the child's tutor should they feel the need to do so.
Stage 2	Parent/Carer will receive a letter stating that an improvement has not been made and sustained since our previous letter and the Parent/Carer will be invited in for a meeting with their House Leader. At this meeting parents will have the chance to discuss reasons for poor attendance and given the opportunity to meet with Pastoral at a later date in order to complete a CAF which will enable them to access help from outside agencies. Minutes will be taken at the meeting and shared with parents.
Stage 3	Parent/Carer will receive a letter inviting them in for a meeting with the Senior Attendance Officer where all interventions to date will be discussed. At this stage, depending on the level of engagement and reasons for poor attendance, a Parenting Contract may be considered or, if the school does not feel that this would be productive then the school will consider statutory action (Penalty Notice or prosecution).
Stage 4	Parent/Carer will receive a letter notifying them of the outcome of stage 3 and an Application for a Penalty Notice or Prosecution will be made.

Children Missing in Education

A registered pupil is deemed to be missing when:

- a) They fail to attend school without any explanation;
- b) The school has been unable to establish the reason, or locate the pupil with any of the contact names at the last known address, or from intelligence from the wider school community; or
- c) The pupil's parents/carers have not provided any information to indicate a change of education provision, unavoidable cause for the pupil's absence or that the pupil is travelling with them whilst in pursuit of their business.

Our school will adhere to the guidance set out in 'Thurrock Council Protocol and Procedures' and 'Essex County Council Children Missing from Education Policy' for:

- Children missing education
- Children not in receipt of full time education
- Children missing from a school role

Electronic copies are available at: www.thurrock.gov.uk/information-for-schools.
Essex schools will have access to Essex County Council policies via Infolink.

Within each school's appendix actions will be identified for pupils at high risk (if a child is subject to Child Protection Plan, Child in Need Plan or is a Child Looked After. Alternative actions will be identified for pupils who are not deemed to be at high risk in line with the above guidance. However, if at any time the schools have concerns about a pupil's welfare they should refer to the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub.

Pupils missing from school - high risk

The following actions will be taken by professionals if a child goes missing from a school roll and is considered to be at high risk.

This applies to any child that is:

- subject to a child protection plan
- subject to a child in need plan
- a looked after child

The child's key worker is to be notified within the first 24 hours of the unauthorised absence if no home contact can be made. An immediate Child Missing Education (CME) referral should also be made to the Pupil Tracking and Child Employment Officer, who will arrange for the Local Authority Education Welfare Officer (EWO) to contact the key worker and agree a plan of action.

Where it is suspected or known that a pupil is at potential risk or harm, or where there is information or reason to suspect the pupil has been a victim of criminal activity:

- the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub should be notified immediately
- the Education Welfare Service (EWS) will be notified as soon as possible afterwards

Pupils missing from school - not high risk

The following actions will be taken by professionals if a child goes missing from a school roll but the child is not considered to be at high risk.

Days 1 to 5

Follow first day calling and contact procedures as defined by the school policy. Continuous efforts should be made by the school to make contact with the family, including calling all emergency contacts.

Days 6 to 10

Where a pupil has been absent for more than 5 school days, and all efforts to contact the family have been unsuccessful, a home visit will be made.

If the child remains missing the school will make a referral to the school attendance support team.

The referral should include all the attempts made by the school to make contact and any other information that the school hold. Schools should continue checks on a daily basis and update us if any further information is obtained.

Days 11 to 19

Once a referral has been sent to the Pupil Tracking and Child Employment Officer, schools should continue to make efforts to contact the family and assist the Pupil Tracking and Child Employment Officer and other agencies in the search. If, during this time, the child is located and confirmed to be living outside of a reasonable distance to the school, the LA investigation officer and schools will agree a date from which the pupil may be removed from roll.

Day 20

After 20 days of unauthorised absence, if the pupil remains a child missing education (CME) and efforts to trace them have been unsuccessful, the SAST will:

- review the situation with the school
- notify the school and other relevant agencies in writing

If the decision is made to remove the child from the school roll, the pupil's records must be uploaded to the 'Lost Pupils' database using the statutory electronic Common Transfer File (CTF).

As CME status may raise child protection issues, if schools believe a child or family has gone missing, the child should remain on the school roll until all enquiries have been completed by the school and SAST.

The SAST team, together with the school, must record that they have completed these procedures before deleting them from the register.

Schools cannot remove a pupil from the school roll until reasonable enquiries have been made over a period of at least 4 weeks. If this process has not been followed, schools will be required by law to reinstate pupils back on their school roll.

Following receipt of a CME referral, if the SAST is able to contact the family via phone and confirm their whereabouts - within a reasonable distance from the school - the case will be referred back to the school as a non-attendance issue and a home visit by SAST will not be necessary.

Deletions from a School Roll

The 2006 Pupil Registration Regulations came into force on 1st September 2007. These revoke the 1995 regulations and subsequent amendments of 1997 and 2001, but only in England. Two of the significant changes are regulation 5 and regulation 12.

Regulation 5

Schools must now put pupils on the admissions register on the first day that the school expects them to attend, not, as previously, when they first attend.

Regulation 12

Schools must provide their local authority with the details of pupils who fail to attend regularly or have ten days of continuous unauthorised absence. It also requires schools to inform their local authority of deletions of compulsory school age pupils as soon as they become aware of the circumstances and **before the deletion is made**, and the grounds for deletion;

- The parent/carer has advised in writing that they are withdrawing their child to electively home educate; the school must inform the EWS via their referral processes.
- A pupil has ceased to attend the school and no longer lives or boards within travelling distance of the school;
- The school medical officer has certified that the pupils' health means they will not return to the school before reaching the end of their compulsory school age.

- A pupil has been detained in pursuance of a final order made by a court for a period of not less than 4 months and the proprietor does not have reasonable grounds to believe that the pupil will return to school at the end of that periods (please refer to the guidance on young offenders in section 10); or
- Permanent exclusion (current practices of informing the Senior Access & Inclusion Officer (SAIO) should be continued)

Key Personnel with Attendance responsibilities:

Mr S Bell
Executive Head Teacher
Email: BelIS@WES.SWECET.ORG

Mr J Callender
Director of Excellence
Email: CallenderJ@WES.SWECET.ORG

Ms. L Oxland
Senior Attendance Officer
Email: OxlandL@WES.SWECET.ORG

Mrs L Simpson
Attendance assistant
Email: SimpsonL@WES.SWECET.ORG

To report an absence, please call the office on 01375 486000 (option1) before 9am on each day of absence.

To inform us of planned forthcoming absences, including medical appointments, please contact Mrs Simpson, Attendance assistant.

Our Senior Attendance Officer, Lynn Oxland can be contacted at the above email address, or on 01375486000 (Monday to Thursday) should you wish to discuss any concerns you have about your child's attendance to school.