

Attendance Policy

West Heath School



Approved by:	Full Board of Trustees	Date: October 2024
Creation date/ Version Date:	October 2024	
Last reviewed on:	October 2024	
Next review due by:	July 2026	
Lead Person	Deputy Principal	
Policy Audience:	Staff/Parents/Carers/Students	

Contents

Contents	2
1. Rationale & Purpose	3
2. Legislation and Guidance.....	3
3. Aims.....	3
4. School's Role and Responsibilities	3
5. Attendance Leader	3
6. Registration.....	4
Register Codes	4
Categorising Absence.....	4
Approved Educational Activity	5
Absences After Close of Class Registers.....	5
Staff Training.....	5
Collection and Analysis of Data.....	5
Systems and Strategies for Managing and Improving Attendance	6
First-Day Calling	6
Meetings with Parents.....	6
Referral to the Education Attendance Service.....	6
Lateness and Punctuality	6
Post-Registration Truancy	7
Term-Time Holidays.....	7
Extended Leave of Absence.....	8
Parents/Carers Responsibilities	8
Students' Responsibilities	8
7. Persons with particular responsibilities.....	8
8. Other Participants & Stakeholders	9
9. Monitoring & Evaluation	9
10. Links with other Policies.....	9
11. Consultees.....	9
Appendix 1	10
Appendix 2.....	12
Appendix 3.....	13

Copies of this policy are available on the School Website - <http://www.westheathschool.com/> Staff matters - Policies or as a hard copy on request from the School Office.

1. Rationale & Purpose

The rationale is to improve attendance. Recognise that attendance is directly linked to achievement.

2. Legislation and Guidance

Education Act 2011

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2013.

DfE Working together to improve school attendance 2022

Policies will change in accordance with Government Covid Guidance

3. Aims

West Heath School is committed to providing an education of the highest quality for all its students and recognises this can only be achieved by supporting and promoting excellent school attendance for all. This is based on the belief that only by attending school regularly and punctually will children and young people be able to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them. High attainment depends on good attendance.

The whole school community – students, parents and carers, teaching and support staff and trustees – have a responsibility for ensuring good school attendance and have important roles to play. The purpose of the policy is to clarify everyone's part in this.

The policy has been drawn up based on current government and guidance and statutory Regulations. The school will ensure that all members of the community know of the policy and have access to it.

4. School's Role and Responsibilities

All staff at West Heath School have a key role to play in supporting and promoting excellent school attendance and will work to provide an environment in which all our students are eager to learn, feel valued members of the school community and look forward to coming to school every day. Staff also have a responsibility to set a good example in matters relating to their own attendance and punctuality.

5. Attendance Leader

The Principal will oversee, direct and co-ordinate the school's work in promoting regular and improved attendance and will ensure the Attendance Policy is consistently applied throughout the school. As the Attendance Leader, the Principal will ensure that up-to-date attendance data and issues are shared with the Senior Management Team, are made regularly available to all staff, students and parents (who will regularly be reminded about the importance of good school attendance) and that the Trustee Board via the Student Services Committee is fully aware of attendance data and targets. The Principal will ensure that attendance issues are identified at an early stage and that support is put in place to deal with any difficulties.

6. Registration

The school is required to mark the attendance register twice each day; once at the start of the day and once during the afternoon session. Tutors are responsible for completing the attendance registers. The school secretary will enter the registration information into the school management system SIMS.

Register Codes

See Appendix 1

The register will be called at **8.55 am and 1.15 pm** by each tutor and a mark will be made during the registration period in respect of each child.

The registers will close at **9.30 am and 2:00 pm**. Any student who arrives **after** the closing of the register will be marked as **absent unless by prior arrangement or because of transport difficulties**. Any child arriving late but before the closing of the register will be marked as **late**.

Categorising Absence

A mark will be made in respect of each child following the close of the registers. Any child who is not present will be marked unauthorised absence unless leave has been granted by the school in advance or the reason for absence is already known and accepted by the school as legitimate. Where a reason for absence is given and accepted by the school at a later stage, the register will be amended in such a way that the original entry and the amendment / correction are distinguishable. The decision about whether the absence should be authorised or unauthorised rests with the Principal.

West Heath School recognises the clear links between attendance and attainment, and attendance and safeguarding children. It recognises that inappropriate authorisation of absence can be as damaging to a child's education as authorised absence as it will potentially send a message to parents that any reason for non-school attendance is acceptable and can render children extremely vulnerable to harm. If absence is frequent or continuous, except where a child is clearly unwell, staff at West Heath School will challenge parents about the need and reasons for their child's absence and will encourage them to keep absences to a minimum. A note or explanation from a student's home does not mean an absence becomes authorised. The decision whether or not to authorise an absence **will always rest with the school**.

If no explanation about an absence is received by the school **within 2 weeks**, the absence will remain unauthorised;

Absence will be authorised in the following circumstances:

- where leave has been granted by the school in advance, for example:
- a student is to participate in an approved performance
- a student is involved in an exceptional special occasion (each case will be considered on an individual basis)
- in exceptional circumstances, permission has been granted for a family holiday for which the parents have sought permission in advance (see Appendix 2 for the school's term-time holiday form);
- where the school is satisfied that the child is too ill to attend;

- where the student has a medical appointment – although parents/carers should be encouraged to make these out of school hours wherever possible, and to return their child to school immediately afterwards, or send him / her to school beforehand;
- where there is an unavoidable cause for the absence which is beyond the family's control, e.g. extreme weather conditions;
- the absence occurs on a day exclusively set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the student's / student's parents belong;
- in other exceptional circumstances (e.g. a family bereavement) and for a very limited period.

Except in the circumstances described above, absences will be unauthorised. Some examples of reasons for **not** authorising absence would be:

- no explanation has been given by the parent;
- the school is not satisfied with the explanation;
- the student or parents are staying at home to mind the house;
- the student or parents are shopping during school hours;
- the student is absent for **unexceptional** reasons, e.g. a birthday;
- the student is absent from school on a family holiday without prior permission;
- the student has been stopped during a truancy sweep and is unable (or the parent is unable) to give a satisfactory reason for the absence.

Approved Educational Activity

Where a student is engaged in off-site approved educational activities, the school will check their attendance on a daily basis before entering the appropriate code in the register.

Reduced Timetable Arrangements – where an arrangement is made for a student to work at home for a period of time in order to facilitate a re-engagement with their learning the Tutor will mark the register with the code 'C'.

Absences After Close of Class Registers

Any sudden absences that occur during the day will be picked up immediately by the class teacher and reported to the school office. The school office will advise the Principal/Deputy Principal or member of SMT.

Staff Training

Data Analyst and Curriculum Support will ensure that all staff responsible for taking registers, including any temporary or supply staff, receive sufficient training to enable them to perform the task accurately.

Collection and Analysis of Data

Data Analyst and Curriculum Support will ensure that attendance data is complete, accurate, analysed and reported to the Senior Management Team, parents and the governing body. The report should include commentary on the trajectory and the school target. The data will inform the school's future practice to improve attendance and prevent disaffection.

Attendance is monitored by year group and by reasons for absence.

This data is then analysed across different categories (for example, gender, ethnicity etc).

Systems and Strategies for Managing and Improving Attendance

Attendance has a very high profile at West Heath School. Parents are regularly reminded in newsletters and school meetings about the importance of good attendance and its links to attainment.

West Heath School has procedures for dealing with unexplained absences within a week. The school office will contact the families for an explanation of absence and refer to the Principal.

First-Day Calling

West Heath School has in place a system of first-day calling. This means that parents will be telephoned on the first day if a student is absent without explanation to establish a reason for the absence. This helps to identify at an early stage students who do not have a good reason for absence or who may be absent without their parents' knowledge. The School will make every effort to contact the parents/carers or designated next of kin contact. In the event that direct contact is not made, the School will leave a voice message and send a follow up email.

Meetings with Parents

Where there is an emerging pattern to a student's absence over a 3 to 4 week period (or sooner if staff are particularly concerned), with or without explanation, the school will invite parents to a meeting to discuss the reasons for the absences. Plans should be put in place with the parents and student to resolve any difficulties and improve the attendance within a specified time limit – usually no more than 6 weeks. It will be explained to parents that any future absences will be unauthorised unless there is clear evidence of a good reason for them.

Referral to the Education Attendance Service

If there continue to be unauthorised absences by the end of the specific time (or sooner if the student is failing to attend school at all), the matter will be referred to the Education Attendance Service of the local authority placing the student.

Lateness and Punctuality

Students are expected to arrive at school on time every day. It is very disruptive to their own education, and that of others in their class, if they are late. Students who arrive after the register closes will be marked absent for the whole session (a session being a morning or an afternoon). This absence will be unauthorised unless the school is satisfied that there is a legitimate reason for the student to be late. Such a reason will not include things such as missing the bus, clothes in the washing machine or lost shoes. A student who is persistently absent by reason of lateness will be dealt with in the same way as other students with an emerging pattern of absence. If the matter is not resolved quickly, it will be referred to the Education Attendance Service.

For health and safety reasons it is important that the school knows who is in the building. Students arriving late should therefore report to the school office. It is important that all students arriving late follow this procedure.

For the same reason it is important that parents of students leaving the premises legitimately (e.g. for a medical appointment), or returning to school later in the day inform the school office. The school office will record that the child has left the school site and will mark them back in when they return.

Post-Registration Truancy

Post-registration truancy occurs when a student goes missing from school having previously registered for the session. This behaviour not only means the student will not be receiving a full-time education, it also potentially renders them vulnerable to harm. West Heath School takes this very seriously and will endeavour to ensure it does not happen. If, however, a student appears to have left the premises without authorisation, the school will try to contact their parents immediately. Consult the risk assessment for that student and report as a missing person accordingly.

Term-Time Holidays

Term-time holidays are intended for children whose parents are unable to take holiday at any other time.

West Heath School will consider every application individually, its policy is NOT to grant leave of absence for a holiday other than in the most exceptional circumstances. Time off school for family holidays is not a right. An application must be made in writing using the appropriate form (see Appendix 2), with appropriate evidence, in advance of the intended holiday.

- West Heath School will consider authorising holidays for: service personnel and other employees who are prevented from taking holidays during term-time;
- when a family needs to spend time together to support each other during or after a crisis;
- Parents who are subject to a strict and un-negotiable holiday rota and evidence is provided to this effect.

Requests for holidays for the following reason will not be authorised:

- cheaper cost of holiday;
- availability of the desired accommodation;
- poor weather experienced in school holiday periods;

West Heath School will respond to all requests for a leave of absence using the appropriate form (see Appendix 2) giving the reasons for the decision.

West Heath School will **NOT** authorise a holiday during periods of national tests and examinations.

Extended Leave of Absence

In considering absence for extended trips overseas West Heath School will take account of the following:

- a visit to family overseas has a very different significance from a normal 'holiday';
- such visits may be important in terms of children's identity and self-esteem as they grow up;
- parents/carers may feel that the reasons for their visit outweigh the importance of their child's uninterrupted attendance at school (although parents could be encouraged to use the school holiday periods for at least part of their trip);

Parents/carers understand that where extended leave of absence is granted there will be an expectation that their child undertakes some school-set work during this period.

Parents/Carers Responsibilities

The prime responsibility for ensuring children receive an appropriate and full-time education rests with parents / carers (defined by the Education Act 1996 as those with parental responsibility and those who have the care of a child), who will be supported and encouraged by West Heath School.

West Heath School expects parents/carers will:

- ensure their children attend the school regularly;
- support their children's attendance by keeping requests for absence to a minimum;
- not expect the school to automatically agree any requests for absence, and not condone unjustified absence from school.
- to notify the school of any change of address or change of contact details

Parents/carers will also be expected to:

- notify West Heath School on the first day of absence by telephone or reporting directly to the school office.
- ensure their child arrives at school on time, properly dressed and with the right equipment for the day;
- work in partnership with the school, for example by attending parents' meetings and consultations, taking an interest in their children's work and activities;
- contact the school without delay if they are concerned about any aspects of their children's school lives and West Heath School will endeavour to support parents to address their concerns.

Students' Responsibilities

All students should be aware of the importance of regular school attendance. If they are having difficulties that may prevent them from attending school regularly, they should speak to their class teacher.

Students should attend all their lessons on time, ready to learn.

7. Persons with particular responsibilities

Principal, Deputy Principal, SMT, DACs, Tutors, Reception, Trustees

8. Other Participants & Stakeholders

Local Authorities

All Staff

9. Monitoring & Evaluation

SMT

Student Services Committee

Trustees

10. Links with other Policies

Promoting Positive Behaviour

Health & Safety

11. Consultees

The Principal, Senior Management Team, Student Services Committee and the Trustees of the School.

Appendix 1

Statutory Attendance Codes for Registers (AM and PM)

Code	Description	Application
Present in School		
/	Present (AM)	
\	Present (PM)	
L	Late arrival before the register is closed	
Attending a place other than the school		
V	Attending an educational visit or trip	Organised visit or trip including residential trips
P	Participating in a sporting activity	
W	Attending work experience	
B	Attending any other approved educational activity	Supervised offsite activities (by WH staff)
Absent - leave of absence		
C1	<i>Leave of absence for the purpose of participating in a regulated performance or undertaking regulated employment abroad.</i>	<i>School Office Use Only</i>
M	Leave of absence for the purpose of attending a medical or dental appointment	Dentist, Doctor (inc CAMHS) or Hospital Appointments.
J1	Leave of absence for the purpose of attending an interview for employment or for admission to another educational institution	
S	Leave of absence for the purpose of studying for a public examination	Year 11 and 6 Form Only
C2	<i>Leave of absence for a compulsory school age pupil subject to a part-time timetable</i>	<i>School Office Use Only</i>
D	<i>Dual registered at another school</i>	<i>School Office Use Only</i>
C	Leave of absence for exceptional circumstance	Exceptional circumstances to include pregnant pupils
Absent - other authorised reasons		
T	<i>Parent travelling for occupational purposes</i>	<i>School Office Use Only</i>
R	Religious observance	Religious Observance
I	Illness (not medical or dental appointment)	Physical and Mental Health related
E	<i>Suspended or permanently excluded</i>	<i>School Office Use Only</i>
Unauthorised Absence from School		
G	<i>Holiday not granted by the school</i>	<i>School Office Use Only</i>
N	Reason for absence not yet established	Missing Student Protocol - Reception to follow up

Code	Description	Application
O	Absent in other or unknown circumstances	Insufficient contact from parent / School is not satisfied with reason for absence
U	Arrived in school after registration closed	To be used where student arrives in school after registration closed

Absent - unable to attend school because of unavoidable cause – School Office Use Only	
Q	<i>Unable to attend the school because of a lack of access arrangements</i>
Y1	<i>Unable to attend due to transport normally provided not being available</i>
Y2	<i>Unable to attend due to widespread disruption to travel</i>
Y3	<i>Unable to attend due to part of the school premises being closed</i>
Y4	<i>Unable to attend due to the whole school site being unexpectedly closed</i>
Y5	<i>Unable to attend as pupil is in criminal justice detention</i>
Y6	<i>Unable to attend in accordance with public health guidance or law</i>
Y7	<i>Unable to attend because of any other unavoidable cause</i>
Administrative codes	
Z	<i>Prospective pupil not on admission register</i>
#	<i>Planned whole school closure (Non school days, banks holidays, INSET days)</i>
<p>West Heath School follows DfE Guidance to improve school attendance. Attendance codes and their specific use can be found using the link to the DfE Guidance “Working together to improve school attendance” below:</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-improve-school-attendance</p>	

Appendix 2



APPLICATION FOR LEAVE OF ABSENCE OF A STUDENT TO ACCOMPANY PARENT/CARER ON HOLIDAY

It is necessary for the approval of the Principal to be obtained for a student's absence from school during term time.

The parent/carer is requested to complete this form and forward it, at least two weeks before the proposed period of absence, to the Principal.

Please note authorisation will NOT be given until the parent/carer provides an explanation to the Principal for the application for leave of absence during term time.

I wish my child -----

to be absent from school from -----

----- to accompany me on my annual holiday.

Signature of Parent/Carer

Date

Note:

- i) *Not more than two weeks leave of absence may be granted in any academic year.*
- ii) *Leave of absence may not be granted for any purpose except to enable children to accompany their parent/carer on their annual holiday.*

This portion to be retained by West Heath School

Name of student: -----

Absence from school approved from: ----- to -----

Signature of Principal

Date

This portion to be retained by the Parent/Carer

Appendix 3

A GUIDE FOR PARENTS

1. When does my child need to be in School?

Your child should be at school by 8.55am, but not before 8.30am. to be ready to go into class at 8:55 am. The register is taken at 8.55am. Afternoon school starts at 1.15pm.

2. What happens if my child is late?

- Registration finishes at 9.30am in the morning and 2pm in the afternoon.
- Students who arrive after registration should report to the school office.
- A series of unauthorised late marks may lead to referral to the EWO (Education Welfare Officer).

3. Does the School need letters explaining my child's absence or will a phone call do?

We would expect a parent to telephone the school on the first day of absence. We will telephone you if your child has not arrived in school by 9.30am. On return to school, a letter explaining the absence is expected. If we do not receive an explanation, or if the explanation is unsatisfactory, we will not authorise the absence.

If we are concerned about aspects of your child's attendance or punctuality we will contact you to discuss the best way forward.

An accumulation of unauthorised absences will lead to a referral to the Educational Welfare Service.

4. What reasons will the school accept for absences?

- Illness
- Emergency dental/medical appointment (Please make routine appointments after school or during the holidays)
- Day of religious observance
- Family bereavement
- Family holidays in exceptional circumstances (only when prior approval has been given)
- Except in the case of illness, you should ask for permission for your child to miss school well in advance, giving full details. In cases of recurring absences through illness you may be asked to produce a medical certificate.

5. What is unacceptable?

The school will not authorise absences other than those in exceptional circumstances. Family holidays, day trips, shopping or birthdays are not classed as exceptional.

6. Can we take family holidays during term-time?

Family holidays should be taken during school holidays. Only in exceptional circumstances will permission be given. You need to request permission for your child to accompany you on a family holiday during term time. The Principal has the right to refuse permission.

7. I am thinking about sending my child on an extended absence for an overseas trip to visit relatives. What should I do?

The school recognises that such absence can be important for children to keep in touch with their extended family, particularly for minority ethnic families. Contact your child's class teacher or form tutor as soon as possible to discuss the best time for such a visit.

The school would strongly recommend that such absences do not take place during your child's exams and assessments. You need to complete an application form for extended leave of absence and if the Principal then approves the visit, the school will set work for your child to complete while away.

As far as possible we will ensure the work set reinforces the educational value of such a visit.

8. What can I do to encourage my child to attend School?

Make sure your child gets enough sleep and gets up in plenty of time each morning. Ensure that they leave home in the correct clothes and properly equipped. Show your child, by your interest, that you value their education. Your child will bring home a school diary each evening. Please ensure you look at it with your child and sign it ready for the next day.

9. My child is trying to avoid coming to School. What should I do?

Contact your child's class teacher immediately and openly discuss your worries. Your child could be avoiding school for a number of reasons – difficulties with school work, bullying, friendship problems, family difficulties. It is important that we identify the reason for your child's reluctance to attend school and work together to tackle the problem.