

Attendance Policy

West Heath School



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Copies of this policy are available on the School Website

1. Rationale & Purpose

West Heath School is committed to securing the best possible attendance and punctuality for all students. Regular attendance supports educational achievement, emotional wellbeing, safeguarding, belonging and preparation for adult life.

Attendance is a key safeguarding indicator. Patterns of non-attendance, persistent absence, severe absence, repeated lateness or unexplained absence may indicate unmet need, disengagement, additional vulnerability or wider safeguarding concerns. The school will identify concerns early and work with students, parents/carers, placing local authorities and other agencies to remove barriers to attendance.

For the purposes of this policy, a student is classified as persistently absent where attendance falls below 90% of possible sessions. Severe absence refers to attendance of 50% or less of possible sessions. See Appendix 1 for absence equivalent data.

2. Legislative Framework and Statutory Guidance

This policy is informed by current legislation and statutory guidance relating to school attendance in England, including:

- Education Act 1996;
- The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024;
- Department for Education, Working together to improve school attendance, statutory guidance for schools, academy trusts, governing bodies and local authorities;
- Department for Education, Summary table of responsibilities for school attendance;
- Equality Act 2010, where a pupil is disabled for the purposes of that Act;
- relevant safeguarding guidance, including Keeping Children Safe in Education.

The school will review and update this policy when statutory guidance, regulations, local authority requirements or safeguarding expectations change.

3. Aims

West Heath School aims to:

- promote high attendance and punctuality for every student;
- maintain accurate, consistent and lawful admission and attendance registers;
- identify and address barriers to attendance at the earliest opportunity;

- work restoratively and in partnership with families before escalation, unless safeguarding or legal risks require urgent action;
- be particularly mindful of students affected by physical health, mental health, SEND, disability, trauma, anxiety or other vulnerabilities;
- use data intelligently to identify individuals, groups and patterns requiring support;
- fulfil safeguarding, equality and legal responsibilities effectively.

Attendance is everyone's responsibility. Students, parents/carers, staff, senior leaders, trustees and external partners each have a role in supporting good attendance.

4. Whole School Responsibilities

All staff are responsible for promoting good attendance and punctuality and for creating a welcoming, inclusive environment where students feel safe, valued and ready to learn. Staff must record attendance accurately, report unexplained absence or emerging patterns promptly, and contribute to attendance support plans where requested.

In line with statutory expectations, schools must:

- Develop a whole-school culture that promotes attendance.
- Build strong relationships with families, understanding barriers to attendance.
- Accurately complete admission and attendance registers.
- Have effective systems for following up absence, including first-day calling.
- Regularly analyse attendance data to identify pupils requiring support.
- Work collaboratively with LA attendance services and partner agencies.

5. Attendance Leadership

The Principal is the Senior Attendance Champion and retains strategic oversight of attendance. The Deputy Principal is the Operational Attendance Lead and is responsible for day-to-day coordination, unless otherwise delegated. The Attendance Officer supports the Operational Attendance Lead.

Attendance information and emerging concerns will be:

- reviewed regularly by the Senior Leadership Team;
- shared appropriately with staff, students and parents/carers;
- reported to trustees through the Student Services Committee;
- shared with placing local authorities and relevant professionals where needed.

6. Registration Procedures

The school complies with statutory registration expectations:

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.

Session	Register Opens	Register Closes	Notes
Morning	8:30am	8.55am	After 8.55am the register will close and students will be recorded using Code U unless another statutory code applies.
Afternoon	1:00pm	1:15pm	After 1:15pm the register will close and students will be recorded using Code U unless another statutory code applies.

The statutory code table (Appendix 1).

7. Authorised and Unauthorised Absence

The decision whether to authorise absence rests with the school, acting through the Principal or delegated attendance lead. A parent/carer explanation does not automatically authorise an absence.

Absence may be authorised only where the circumstances match a statutory attendance code, including where:

- leave of absence has been granted in advance under the relevant statutory category;
- the student is too unwell to attend, including physical or mental ill-health;
- the student is attending a necessary medical or dental appointment and the absence is for the minimum time required;
- the absence is for religious observance;
- the student is unable to attend because of an unavoidable cause covered by the statutory codes;
- the student is subject to an agreed and documented temporary part-time timetable and Code C2 applies.

The school may ask for additional information where absence is repeated, prolonged, unclear or gives rise to safeguarding concerns. Medical evidence will not be requested routinely for illness but may be requested where absence for a medical or dental (or other) appointment is requested, or in the event of patterns of

absence, repeated absences, or prolonged absence. The school will handle such requests sensitively and proportionately.

Examples of absence that will not be authorised include shopping, birthdays, caring for the house, non-urgent appointments that could reasonably take place outside school time, holidays and explanations the school is not satisfied are genuine or sufficient.

8. First-Day Contact and Safeguarding

Parents/carers are expected to notify the school on the first day of absence and provide the reason for absence. Where a student is absent without explanation, the school will make first-day contact with parents/carers or designated emergency contacts as soon as practicable.

If direct contact is not made, the school will leave a voice message where appropriate and send a follow-up message. Staff will continue to make reasonable efforts to establish the student's whereabouts and welfare.

If absence is unexplained, unexpected, out of character, linked to known risk factors, or if contact cannot be made, the school will consider its safeguarding procedures, the student's individual risk assessment, placing local authority contacts and, where necessary, police or social care involvement.

This aligns with DfE expectations on "support first" and early intervention.

9. Escalation, Support Plans & Local Authority Referral

9.1 Mental Health and Attendance

Where a student's attendance is affected by social, emotional or mental health needs, including anxiety-based school avoidance, emotionally based school non-attendance or other diagnosed or emerging mental health difficulties, the school will adopt a supportive and individualised approach.

The school will:

- seek to understand the barriers affecting attendance through early conversations with the student, parents/carers and relevant professionals;
- consider appropriate reasonable adjustments to support attendance and engagement;
- maintain regular contact with the student and family during periods of absence;

- work collaboratively with health professionals, placing local authorities, social workers, virtual schools and other relevant agencies where appropriate;
- ensure support plans include achievable attendance goals, review arrangements and the student's voice;
- avoid relying solely on absence as evidence of need and consider wider indicators of emotional wellbeing, distress or vulnerability;
- ensure any temporary part-time timetable forms part of a planned reintegration pathway and is regularly reviewed;
- consider safeguarding implications where mental health difficulties are contributing to prolonged absence; and
- balance the need to support wellbeing with the importance of maintaining access to education and positive peer relationships.

9.2 Attendance Monitoring and Escalation

The school will:

- Monitor attendance figures in weekly attendance meetings.
- Monitor attendance closely where attendance falls below 95%, consider early support where attendance falls below 90%, and implement or review an attendance support plan where attendance falls below 85% or sooner where patterns of concern emerge;
- Invite parents/carers to a meeting when attendance falls below 85% and implement an attendance support plan .
- Communicate regularly with parents/carers about their child's attendance;
- Implement, monitor and review attendance support plans;
- Work with families using a whole-family and multi-agency approach where required.

10. Reduced Timetables

All compulsory school-age students are entitled to a full-time education. A temporary part-time timetable will be used only in exceptional circumstances, where it is in the student's best interests and forms part of a time-limited plan to return to full-time education or otherwise meet the student's needs.

A temporary part-time timetable must:

- be agreed in writing with the parent/carer with whom the student normally lives;
- state why the arrangement is necessary and why it is in the student's best interests;
- set out the exact sessions the student is expected to attend and the sessions covered by the temporary arrangement;

- include safeguarding and welfare arrangements for the time the student is not in school;
- include a review date and a clear plan/timeline for transition into full-time education.
- include consultation with the placing local authority, social worker, virtual school head, youth justice worker, health professional or EHCP caseworker where relevant;
- not be used as a behavioural sanction or as an informal exclusion.

Where a student is not expected to attend a session as part of an agreed temporary part-time timetable, the Attendance Officer will record the absence using the appropriate statutory attendance code.

11. Term-Time Leave & Extended Leave

In line with DfE guidance, term-time holidays will not normally be authorised and are not considered to be exceptional circumstances.

West Heath School:

- Where unauthorised absence meets the national threshold, the school will consider whether a penalty notice referral to the Local Authority is appropriate, in line with the National Framework for Penalty Notices and local arrangements.

12. Parents' /Carers' Responsibilities

Parents/carers have the legal responsibility to ensure that their child receives suitable full-time education and attends school regularly. The school expects parents/carers to:

- ensure their child attends school regularly and on time;
- notify the school of absence on the first day of absence either by contacting reception via the telephone or via the parent portal on Arbor. A reason for absence must be provided.;
- keep requests for absence to a minimum and notify the school in advance of any planned absence and submit requests for leave of absence where required
- provide updated addresses, telephone numbers, emergency contacts and relevant medical or safeguarding information;
- work with the school and external agencies to remove barriers to attendance;
- attend meetings or reviews about attendance where requested.

13. Student Expectations

Students are expected to attend school regularly, arrive on time, attend lessons and registration sessions, and engage positively with the support offered by the school. Students should speak to a trusted adult if they are experiencing difficulties which may affect their attendance, punctuality or engagement. The school will listen to students, seek to understand barriers to attendance, and involve them in support planning wherever appropriate.

14. Monitoring & Evaluation

The Senior Management Team and Trustees will receive regular attendance reports and updates to support strategic oversight and challenge.

Attendance data will be analysed to identify trends, patterns and emerging concerns, including persistent absence, severe absence, punctuality, health-related absence, SEND, SEMH needs, looked-after and previously looked-after children, and other vulnerable groups.

The effectiveness of attendance interventions and support plans will be reviewed regularly to ensure barriers to attendance are identified and addressed at the earliest opportunity.

15. Persons with Particular Responsibilities

Principal, Deputy Principal, Attendance Officer, SMT, Pastoral Leads, DACs, Tutors, Reception, Trustees

16. Other Participants & Stakeholders

Local Authorities

All Staff

17. Links with other Policies

This policy should be read alongside:

- Promoting Positive Behaviour Policy;
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy;
- Health and Safety Policy;
- SEND Policy;

- Children Missing Education procedures;
- Data Protection Policy.

18. Consultees

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

Appendices:

Appendix 1 Absence and Attendance equivalent data

School Attendance and Absence Equivalent Days

Attendance	Absence	Days missed	Days attended
100%	0%	0.0	178.0
95%	5%	8.9	169.1
90%	10%	17.8	160.2
85%	15%	26.7	151.3
80%	20%	35.6	142.4
75%	25%	44.5	133.5
70%	30%	53.4	124.6
65%	35%	62.3	115.7
60%	40%	71.2	106.8
55%	45%	80.1	97.9
50%	50%	89.0	89.0
45%	55%	97.9	80.1
40%	60%	106.8	71.2
35%	65%	115.7	62.3
30%	70%	124.6	53.4
25%	75%	133.5	44.5
20%	80%	142.4	35.6
15%	85%	151.3	26.7
10%	90%	160.2	17.8
5%	95%	169.1	8.9
0%	100%	178.0	0.0

- ✓ **95%** attendance = about **9** days missed
- ✓ **90%** attendance = about **18** days missed
- ✓ **85%** attendance = about **27** days missed

Appendix 2 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>Attendance Officer 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 6th Form Only
C2	<i>Leave of absence for a compulsory school age pupil subject to a part-time timetable</i>	<i>Attendance Officer only</i>
D	<i>Dual registered at another school</i>	<i>Attendance Officer only</i>
C	Leave of absence for exceptional circumstance	Exceptional circumstances
Absent - other authorised reasons		
T	<i>Parent travelling for occupational purposes</i>	<i>Attendance Officer 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>Attendance Officer only</i>
Unauthorised Absence from School		
G	<i>Holiday not granted by the school</i>	<i>Attendance Officer only</i>
N	Reason for absence not yet established	Missing Student Protocol – Attendance Officer to follow up
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 – Attendance Officer only

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, bank holidays, INSET days)</i>
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: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-improve-school-attendance	

Appendix 3 A Guide for Parents

A GUIDE FOR PARENTS

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

Your child should be at school by 8.30am to be ready to go into class at 8:55 am.

The register is taken between 8:30am and 8:55am.

Afternoon registration is between 1:00pm and 1:15pm.

2. What happens if my child is late?

- Registration finishes at 8:55am in the morning and 1:15pm 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 appropriate Local Authority attendance service

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

Please telephone school office or report absence via Arbor on the first day of absence and explain the reason. Please do not report absence only to the tutor.

If we do not hear from you, we will contact you.

If we cannot establish the reason for absence, the absence will be coded as unauthorised unless and until a satisfactory reason is provided and a lawful amendment is permitted

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 may lead to a referral to the appropriate Local Authority attendance service.

4. What reasons will the school accept for absences?

- Illness
- Emergency dental/medical appointment (letter required) - Please make routine appointments after school or during the holidays
- Day of religious observance
- Family bereavement
- 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.

5. What action may we take?

Where unauthorised absence meets the national threshold, the school will consider whether a penalty notice referral to the Local Authority is appropriate, in line with the National Framework for Penalty Notices and local arrangements.

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

No. Term-time holidays will not be authorised unless there are exceptional circumstances.

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

This needs to be raised with the Deputy Principal – attendance lead

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.

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

Contact your child's tutor / the attendance lead or safeguarding team to discuss your worries.

Your child may be finding attendance difficult for a number of reasons, including anxiety, emotional wellbeing, friendship difficulties, bullying, learning concerns or family circumstances. It is important that we identify the barriers to attendance at an early stage so that we can work together to provide appropriate support and help your child attend regularly.