

Pupil Attendance Policy

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Approving Body	Trust Board
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Owner	Director of School Improvement
Applies to	All Trust Schools, all Trust staff

Version	Date	Reason
1.0	April 2018	To establish a Trust wide policy
1.1	December 2020	Change ownership to DSI and review cycle from 3 yearly to annual.
1.2	March 2021	To include reduced timetables; study leave; Local Authority changes and updated government guidance
1.3	March 2022	To remove appendices. To include: professional judgement for welfare checks; procedures for tracking alternative provision; carers.

References:

[Education Act 1996](#)

[School Attendance Guidance](#)

[Education \(Pupil Registration\)](#)

[Keeping Children Safe in Education 2021](#)

[Alternative Provision - statutory guidance, 2013](#)

Introduction

1.0

Punctuality and regular attendance are crucial to children's achievement at school. Schools within Wimborne Academy Trust will work in collaboration with parents / carers and carers to ensure that all children benefit from regular attendance. Attendance is shared with parents / carers/ stakeholders. Good attendance is celebrated as part of our Trust wide vision. Trust school staff communicate to pupils that their contribution to the school community is valued; furthermore staff endeavour to make school a fruitful and enjoyable place to be so that a positive attitude to school and learning is fostered: through this, we aim to ensure that children want to attend school regularly in the first place.

1.1

By law, parents / carers are responsible for making sure that their children of compulsory school age receive a suitable full-time education (Education Act, 1996, Sec. 7) The government expectation is that all pupils will be punctual to their lessons (School Attendance Guidance, August, 2020). It is the responsibility of the school to support attendance and to take seriously problems which may lead to non-attendance.

1.2

Trust schools will endeavour to:

- Emphasise the positive reasons for full attendance;
- Recognise and acknowledge good attendance, including infrequent attendance achieved in very difficult circumstances (e.g. chronic illness);
- Through careful and systematic monitoring of attendance, identify and act upon difficulties at the earliest stage, working closely with parents / carers/ guardians; and
- Avoid acrimony and disappointment in connection with requests for absence through clarity and consistency in dealing with children and families.

2.0

Why is regular attendance so vital?

There is a clear link between low attendance at school and low achievement. Children who miss a substantial amount of school fall behind their peers, and struggle to catch up.

Most of the work they miss is never made up, which can lead to big gaps in their learning.

Poor attendance often starts at first school, and children who fall into this pattern are likely to underachieve at upper school. Pupils who miss between 10 and 20% of school (19 to 38 days per year) stand only a 35% chance of achieving five or more good GCSEs, compared to 73% of those who miss fewer than 5% of school days.

Friendships can be affected by persistent absence, too: it can be hard for a child who misses lots of school to form relationships with their classmates.

2.1

Above 97%: less than 6 days absence a year These young people have every chance to make really strong progress at school.
95%: 10 days absence a year These children benefit from strong overall attendance and are well placed to make good progress at school.
90%: 19 days absence a year Young people in this group are missing a month of school per year; it will be difficult for them to achieve their best.
85%: 29 days absence a year Young people in this group are missing six weeks of school per year; there is a real risk that this lower attendance will hinder children's progress. This level of absence is seen as persistent absenteeism.
80%: 38 days absence a year Young people in this group are missing a year of school over five years of education and are not benefitting from their entitlement to an education. parents / carers of young people in this group could be issued with a penalty notice.

Minutes late per day	= days of learning lost per year
5	3.2
10	6.5
15	9.5
20	12.5
30	19

3.0

Monitoring attendance and responding to concerns

All staff have a duty to informally monitor the children's attendance and to report any concerns they may have. In this way, pupil attendance is being monitored in the schools at all times. Schools will follow formal procedures for the regular and systematic monitoring of pupil attendance. Schools will identify appropriate key staff to undertake attendance monitoring and adhere to the following key principles:

- There will be a school attendance officer, usually within the administration team, who will ensure that careful records of attendance are maintained which conform to the codes set out in The School Attendance Guidance, 2020 and provide information as requested by staff and certainly at least three weekly for vulnerable groups and half termly for whole school attendance monitoring meetings;
- The school attendance officer will have a close link with the allocated lead within the school;
- Schools will work in close partnership with the Local Authority through the Inclusion Lead for their locality. ;
- Monitoring of attendance is a continual process and action may be triggered at any point where a concern is raised;
- Formal monitoring of vulnerable pupils will take place by the school on at least a three week basis through meetings typically attended by the School Attendance Officer and the allocated lead within the school. The whole school will be monitored in the same format on a half termly basis; and

- Formal monitoring of attendance will include analysis of absence levels for specific vulnerable groups including disadvantaged and pupils with SEND as a cohort compared to other children within the school. Such analysis will also consider other trends such as by year group and gender.
- Registers will be maintained using the absence and attendance codes set out in School attendance: Guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities, DfE, August, 2020.

3.1

There is a tiered system to respond to low and/or falling attendance levels:

3.2

Attendance below 95%: A standard letter is typically sent to any parent/carer whose child's attendance has dropped just below 95%. This letter is for information – it notifies the parent / carer of this attendance level and explains that the school will continue to monitor the child's attendance. Where the cause for a child's attendance dropping below 95% is very specific and clearly known and evidenced to the school, we may decide that such a letter is not required or appropriate. For example, where a child has had a known and confirmed medical issue and where this is the only substantial cause for the lower attendance. In such circumstances, the child's attendance will be closely monitored – further reduction in attendance may prompt this initial letter, without the need to wait for the next formal half-termly audit.

3.3

Attendance between 90% and 94%: The standard letter described above may be used again where a child's attendance sits at this level. This letter may be used twice in succession but if attendance remains at this level for a third time, it will be treated as for attendance which is below 90%.

3.4

Attendance which is below 90%: Attendance at 90% equates to 19 days absence through a year and is therefore a cause for concern. In such circumstances, parents / carers will receive a specific letter which very clearly identifies that the attendance level is a significant cause for concern (except for in exceptional circumstances where the attendance is not a cause for concern, such as known medical condition). Parents / carers are requested to attend a meeting, the purpose of which is to explore the reasons for the child's low attendance and formulate a plan for improvement. The content of this meeting will be used to draw up an attendance improvement plan which will be shared with the parents / carers and a review date will be agreed. Participants in that meeting may vary according to the circumstances but may often involve staff such as the allocated lead within the school, class teacher, SENDCo and pastoral staff. The school may also invite the Local Authority Inclusion Lead. At this stage, schools should make it known and confirm in writing that absences cannot be authorised without medical evidence unless there are exceptional reasons which render this inappropriate (for example, a known medical condition); schools cannot routinely authorise absence where a child's attendance has reached this level of concern.

3.5

Attendance which continues to decline from below 90%: Unless there are specific circumstances, the school will not be authorising absences at this stage because attendance at 90% equates to 19 days absence through a year. If attendance is not

showing reasonable improvement within three weeks of the last communication to parents/carers, then schools will take further action which will involve further meetings with the parents / carers. It is likely that a referral for intervention by the Local Authority will be appropriate; certainly advice from the LA Inclusion Lead will be sought.

3.6

These figures expressed as % attendance levels are intended as a guide. However, a decision may be made to intervene earlier if there are specific concerns. Communication with the assigned Local Authority may occur at any stage if there is particular concern about a child's attendance.

4.0

Working with the Local Authority

Schools will work in close partnership with the Local Authority through their appointed locality Inclusion Lead. School attendance audits may warrant discussion for further advice and guidance for specific children and may require intervention from the Local Authority Inclusion Lead.

5.0

Managing lateness

If a child arrives at school after the start of the school day but within 30 minutes, they will be registered as 'late'; this is not an unauthorised absence and the child is counted as present for the morning session. Lateness beyond 30 minutes will be counted as an absence. This will be an unauthorised absence unless parents / carers provide the school with an acceptable reason.

5.1

Schools will also contact parents / carers if a child regularly arrives late at school. Staff who notice a problem with punctuality will consult with the attendance lead before communication is made with parents / carers regarding the matter.

5.2

Persistent lateness will be addressed according to the particular circumstances; it is likely that persistent lateness will have triggered the previous low attendance measures. Advice regarding persistent lateness may be sought from the Local Authority.

6.0

Parents / carers notifying the school of absence and 'first day contact'

Parents / carers are required to contact their child's school on the first day of their child's absence and every day thereafter. This is an important aspect of the schools' safeguarding procedures: if a child is not registered at school in the morning, then schools must satisfy themselves that the child is safe. It is therefore necessary for parents / carers to telephone their child's school by 9am, giving a reason for their child's absence. This absence will then be recorded as authorised, provided that the reason for absence is significant and that there are no current concerns about the child's attendance.

6.1

Staff will contact parents / carers on the first day a pupil is absent without explanation. This contact will usually be via text message in the first instance, requesting a call from the

parent. If no response is obtained, the school will endeavour to reach the parent / carer via telephone.

6.2

Schools will use their professional judgement and knowledge of individual pupils and their circumstances to inform decisions about escalation of welfare concerns if they are unable to account for a child's safety following their unexplained absence from school. At each stage of unsuccessfully attempting to contact parents / carers, schools should also use other registered contacts for the child, and contact siblings' schools if appropriate, in an effort to get hold of the parents / carers.

6.3

If the allocated lead within the school has any cause for concern about the reason given for any absence, it will remain unauthorised until the matter has been discussed with the parents / carers and a satisfactory explanation secured. If the reason given is not acceptable, the absence will remain unauthorised. For the absence to be authorised, there must have been no reasonable way in which the child could have come to school.

7.0

Appointments during the day

Parents / carers must avoid arranging appointments for their child during the day. However, if it is unavoidable, parents / carers must notify the school of the appointment details. A child should only be taken out of school for his/her own appointment, not because another family member has an appointment. This includes collecting a child early so a parent or carer can attend an appointment for someone else.

8.0

Leave of Absence during term time

Following amendments to the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 which came into effect 1st September 2013, Headteachers¹ are only allowed to grant leave of absence from school in exceptional circumstances. The decision as to whether any request is considered as 'exceptional circumstances' rests solely with the Headteacher.

8.1

The fundamental principles for defining 'exceptional' are **rare, significant, unavoidable and short**; 'unavoidable' should be taken to mean an event that could not reasonably be scheduled at another time.

8.2

In considering whether or not to authorise a request for exceptional leave of absence in term time, the Headteacher will look at each individual case and only grant authorisation if the circumstances are truly exceptional. Additionally, any request should be made prior to the leave of absence and should be submitted to the school via the school's processes. Parents / carers may be asked to provide additional information/evidence or meet with the school to discuss the circumstances.

¹ Throughout the document Headteacher also refers to Head of School

8.3

Only the parent the child resides with can make an application for a leave of absence.

The following (not exhaustive) are examples of situations which **could** be considered as exceptional:

- Return of parent from active service (Forces);
- Death or terminal illness of a parent, step-parent or sibling;
- Young Carers;
- Disability or respite leave; and
- Periods of obligatory religious observance.

8.4

The following (not exhaustive) are examples of situations which would not typically be considered as exceptional:

- Family holiday/cheaper holiday dates;
- Educational visits arranged by family members during school time;
- Attendance at a wedding or christening;
- Visiting relatives either abroad or in the UK;
- Limitations on parents / carers leave' entitlement or dates/parents / carers' profession or place of work making it difficult to coincide school and work holidays; and
- A family member going for medical treatment abroad.

8.5

Parents / carers will be notified of the Headteacher's decision at the earliest opportunity. When a leave of absence is taken and the school has not authorised the absence because the reasons are not considered 'exceptional', the school will request that the Local Authority issues a Penalty Notice. In considering whether to request a Penalty Notice, the school will consult the latest advice given from the LA. If the absence meets the threshold in this document, the school will request that a Penalty Notice is issued.

8.6

Schools will make parents / carers aware of these arrangements for requesting leave of absence, including the implications of taking unauthorised absence, through publication of this policy on the school website and also through other opportunities including information packs for new parents / carers and regular newsletters.

9.0

Off-site education. alternative provision or specialist provision

Where a child's special educational needs are recognised by the school, and special tuition/therapy not available in school is required, the allocated lead within the school may authorise absence for specific times when such tuition or therapy may be given outside school. For pupils using alternative provision or off site education, the allocated lead will ensure that the safeguarding and quality of education for the pupil is at least good by following Wimborne Academy Trust's procedures.

10.0

Absence for performance

The Headteacher may grant leave of absence for approved public performances provided that clear evidence is issued of the approved nature of this activity. The following will also be taken into account in reaching a decision:

- The nature and purpose of the performance;
- The frequency of absence requested and the likely impact on the child's education and progress; and
- The child's attendance record

10.1

Where licenses are issued by the Local Authority, absences will be monitored to ensure that they comply with the permissions given in the license. Any concerns will be communicated to the school attendance lead. .

11.0

Reduced / Part-time Timetables

All pupils of compulsory school age are entitled to a full-time education. In very exceptional circumstances there may be a need for a temporary part-time timetable to meet a pupil's individual needs. For example, where a medical condition prevents a pupil from attending full-time education and a part-time timetable is considered as part of a re-integration package. A part-time timetable must not be treated as a long-term solution. Any pastoral support programme or other agreement must have a time limit by which point the pupil is expected to attend full-time or be provided with alternative provision; this will usually be no longer than six weeks. In agreeing to a part-time timetable a school has agreed to a pupil being absent from school for part of the week or day and therefore must record it as authorised absence. All pupils recommended for a reduced timetable need school, parents and, if already involved, outside professionals agreement. A comprehensive risk assessment will be undertaken by the school and the Local Authority will be informed using their reporting systems.

12.0

Study Leave

Study leave, where used, will only be granted to pupils in year 11. Study leave will not be granted by default once tuition of the exam syllabus is complete. If a school does decide to grant study leave, provision will still be made available for those pupils who want to continue to come into school to revise. All pupils are different and have different requirements and preferences when preparing for examinations and this will be catered for.