



THE
WESTCLIFFE
FEDERATION

West Felton CofE Primary School
Attendance Policy

Approved by: Governing Body

Date: February 2025

Next review due by: February 2027



1. Introduction

At West Felton CofE Primary School, policy formation always begins with our vision and values. Our aim is for them to permeate everything we do and underpin our philosophy and decision making.

Our vision is:

Preparing for life in all its fullness

Our values are:

- Aspiration
- Community
- Dignity
- Kindness

We strive to create a learning environment where all pupils have the skills, knowledge and recall to access a broad and balanced curriculum. Regular attendance is vital for pupils as it promotes good learning, positive attitudes and maintains continuity in their education, and in their friendships. Where a pupil's attendance is impacting on achievement, all school staff will work with the pupil and their families to support them in accessing the broad and balanced curriculum they are entitled to.

This policy has been prepared with regard to the Federation's statutory duties relating to attendance, including those set out in the Department for Education's statutory guidance entitled Working together to improve school attendance (2024), which is referred to in this policy as the "DfE Attendance Guidance".

2. Principles

Promoting excellent attendance is the responsibility of the whole school community. This policy should not be seen in isolation, but as a strand running through all policies related to the education, well-being and behaviour of pupils.

Staff and Governors expect full and punctual attendance from all pupils and know that:

- There is a link between regular attendance and academic achievement (DFE - The link between absence and attainment at KS2 and KS4 – 6th May 2022)
- Regular attendance encourages pupils to benefit from the whole range of curricular and extra-curricular opportunities on offer
- Attendance is a duty, and a crucial factor in determining personal responsibility and a good work ethic.
- Some pupils find it harder than others to attend school. Our schools are committed to working with pupils, parents/carers and other local partners to remove any barriers to attendance.

3. Roles and Responsibilities

The school will:

- Develop and maintain a whole school culture that promotes the benefit of high attendance.
- Work with pupils and their families, building strong relationships, to support high levels of attendance and punctuality and remove any barriers to attendance.
- Investigate unexplained or unjustified absence.
- Take into account individual needs when implementing this policy, including having regard to the school's obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- Share information, including returns information required to be shared in accordance with regulations (School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024) and the DfE Attendance Guidance, and work collaboratively with the local authority, other schools in the area and other partners including, where required, making appropriate referrals in accordance with local procedures, legislation and guidance.
- Regularly monitor, review and analyse attendance and absence data including to identify pupils or cohorts that require attendance support and to set targets for the future.
- Ensure that all pupils can access full-time education putting strategies and support in place where there is evidence to suggest that this is not the case.
- Ensure that the Local Governing Body (LGB) and schools' leadership team work together to monitor attendance levels and the effectiveness of this policy.
- Ensure that all legislation and guidance are complied with and reflected in our policies and procedures.
- Have in place appropriate safeguarding responses for pupils who are at risk of missing education, having regard to the statutory guidance (see Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy)
- Provide information requested by the Secretary of State, including termly absence data collected by the Department for Education.
- Regularly inform parents/carers about pupils' attendance and absence levels.
- Support pupils who are returning to education following long term absence.
- Ensure that effective systems to record and report attendance data are in place, including accurate completion of admission and attendance registers using an electronic management information system.
- Assign overall responsibility for championing and improving attendance at the school to a designated senior leader.
- Observe and fulfil the responsibilities set out in guidance issued by the Department for Education Summary table of responsibilities for school attendance (August 2024) to the extent not covered above or elsewhere in this policy.

Parents and Carers will:

- Ensure that pupils arrive at the school on time, in the correct uniform and with the necessary equipment.
- Promote the importance of regular attendance.
- Follow the correct procedure for reporting the absence of pupil from the school.
- Avoid unnecessary or unjustified absences.
- Keep the school informed of any circumstances which may affect pupil's attendance.
- Not take pupils out of education for holidays during term time.
- Inform the school in advance of any proposed change of address for pupils, along with the name of the parent with whom the pupil shall live.
- Observe and fulfil their responsibilities set out in the guidance issued by the Department for Education Summary table of responsibilities for school attendance (August 2024).

The Senior Leadership Team will:

- Set a clear vision for improving and maintaining good attendance.
- Establish and maintain effective systems for tackling absence and ensure that these are followed by all staff.
- Evaluate and monitor attendance expectations and processes.
- Have a strong grasp of absence data to focus the collective efforts of the school.
- Ensure that key attendance messages are communicated to parents/carers and pupils.
- Provide data and reports to support the work of the Governing Body

The Governors will:

- Take an active role in attendance improvement, recognise the importance of school attendance and promote it across the Federation and the Federation's ethos and policies.
- Ensure the Governing Body fulfils its expectations and statutory duties.
- Regularly review attendance data, discuss and challenge trends and help leaders focus improvement efforts on the individual pupil or cohorts who need it most.

4. Key Attendance Information

Parents/carers of registered pupils have a legal duty under the Education Act 1996 to make sure that pupils of compulsory school age attend school on a regular and full-time basis.

Permitting unauthorised absence from school is an offence and parents/carers may be reported to the Local Education Authority if problems cannot be resolved by agreement.

Every half-day absence from school must be classified by the school (not parents/carers) as either authorised or unauthorised. Therefore, information about the cause of each absence is always requested.

- Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason (e.g., illness or other unavoidable cause).
- Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no 'leave' has been given. This includes keeping pupils off school unnecessarily, truancy, absences which have not been properly explained, and pupils who arrive at school too late to receive a present mark in the register.

Any problems with regular attendance are best resolved between the school, parents/carers and the pupil. If a pupil is reluctant to attend, a referral may be made to a relevant support mechanism provided by the school, e.g. the ELSA, Wellbeing Lead or Education Welfare Officer (EWO) and may include formalising support through a parenting contract or education supervision order. Other outside agencies may also be invited to become involved, e.g. Early Help or the School Nursing Service. Schools may offer Parenting Support as part of a team approach to improve attendance where absence is a symptom of wider issues.

Parents/carers are requested to contact school at an early stage, and to work with staff to resolve problems together.

All schools within the Westcliffe Federation have a named Education Welfare Officer (EWO). EWOs always act in a supporting role and court proceedings to prosecute parents/carers for poor or non-attendance are always as a last resort. Parents/Carers are encouraged to contact the school EWO if they feel they need independent advice on school attendance matters.

Schools will keep parents/carers informed of pupil's attendance and provide updates on Attendance Procedures at least termly.

5. Registration

The school maintains an attendance register and uses this to record each pupil's attendance at the start of the school day and again in the afternoon. Details of start and end times for registration are contained within the appendix.

The register is marked using the national statutory attendance and absence codes which can be found in the DfE Attendance Guidance.

6. Punctuality

Pupils must attend on time to be given a mark for that session unless the lateness is unavoidable (e.g., traffic accident or medical appointment). Parents/carers are expected to ensure that pupils are on time for registration.

7. Procedures

Illness and Other Legitimate Reasons

Any pupil who is absent from the school at the morning or afternoon registration period must have their absence recorded as being authorised, unauthorised or as an approved educational activity. Only the Headteacher or a member of staff acting on his/her behalf can authorise absence. If there is no known reason for the absence at registration, the absence must be recorded in the first instance as unauthorised.

If a pupil is unfit for school, parents/carers are asked to contact the school on each day of absence no later than 9.00 am. Other reasons for absence must be discussed with the school Senior Leadership on a case-by-case basis.

It is not appropriate for schools to authorise absences for shopping, looking after younger pupils, day trips, hairdresser appointments etc. Leave of Absence may be granted in an emergency (e.g., bereavement) or for medical appointments which take place during school time. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the Headteacher's discretion.

Medical, dental and other essential appointments for a pupil should take place outside of school hours where this is reasonably possible.

Where an appointment must take place during school time, the pupil should attend the school for as much of the day as possible and as much prior notice as possible should be given to the school.

Schools within the Federation operate a 48-hour rule for vomiting and diarrhoea, in these cases, this will be made clear to parents/carers.

Parents/carers are required to inform the school of the reasons for a pupil's absence. It is up to school if any absence is authorised and simply stating 'not in' or 'unwell' gives us insufficient information to make an informed decision, and it may therefore be recorded as unauthorised.

Notes of telephone calls received, and written notes received from parents/carers explaining absence must be kept electronically.

Absence Without Explanation

If a pupil is absent at morning registration, and the school has not received an explanation, the school administrator will contact the parent/carer by either telephone, or email.

In all cases, it is the responsibility of parents/carers to ensure that pupils attend school, that emergency contact details are kept updated and that school is aware of an absence.

Failure to provide a reason for absence will be investigated by the local attendance officer, or EWO and this may include conducting a Home Visit.

Holidays

Our schools are pro-active in discouraging parents/carers from taking pupils out of school for holidays during term time. Parents/ carers should make every effort to avoid taking pupils out of education for holidays during term time. Taking pupils out of school without authorisation from the Headteacher could result in parents/carers receiving a Truancy Penalty Notice.

Schools may grant permission for a pupil to be absent from school in the circumstances described in paragraph 37 of ***Working together to improve school attendance: Statutory guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities*** August 2024

Headteachers are only allowed to authorise Leave of Absence when an application has been made more than two weeks in advance. An application form can be requested from the school administrator.

The Headteacher will consider:

- Any exceptional circumstances
- If it is highly unlikely that the event will occur again in a pupil's school life.

Headteachers may co-ordinate absence requests where siblings are at different schools.

School Senior Leadership Team will actively investigate any absence where there is a suspicion that a pupil might be absent without good reason. This may include conducting a home visit or requesting support from the EWO and this may include a request to issue a Fixed Penalty Notice

Religious Observance

We recognise that pupils of certain faiths may need to participate in days of religious observance. This needs to be agreed and authorised by the Headteacher.

Attendance Monitoring

Each school's Senior Leadership Team will monitor pupil attendance on a regular basis and will contact parents/carers if attendance is causing concern.

The EWO monitors attendance closely, meeting with the Senior Leadership Team to identify poor patterns of attendance. If a pattern of attendance gives cause for concern the EWO will contact the parent/carer. They will seek to listen and understand barriers to attendance and agree how all partners can work together to resolve them. If non-attendance continues, and following receipt of a Final Warning, the Local Authority may issue or Fixed Penalty Notice of £80 per parent per pupil. Alternatively, the Local Authority may decide to prosecute. Any pupil who is absent without an explanation for ten consecutive days will be notified to the relevant Local Authority, by submitting a referral to the EWO.

“Failure to ensure a child’s regular attendance at the school at which he/she is a registered pupil is a criminal offence under the Education Act 1996. If convicted under Section 444 (1) of the Act a parent can be fined up to £1000 for each offence. A conviction under Section 444 (1a) – which is the more serious offence when a parent knowingly allows a child to be absent from school without authorisation – can lead to a fine of up to £2,500 and/or 3 months in prison. If a parent is prosecuted under Section 444 (1a) he/she will be formally cautioned and interviewed under the Police and Criminal Evidence (PACE) Act 1984.”

Where a pupil falls below expected attendance threshold, parent/carers will receive a warning letter from either the Headteacher or the EWO informing them to take action to improve. Further escalation and involvement from the EWO may be deemed appropriate if attendance does not improve.

Autumn – 90%

Spring – 92%

Summer – 94%

All pupils are expected to have an overall attendance rate of 97% or above.

The EWO may contact parents/carers if they are concerned about a pattern of attendance, regardless of the pupil's attendance percentage.

Parents/carers may be invited into school to discuss attendance and progress with a member of staff. Alternatively, the EWO may request to meet with parents/carers. At this meeting, an Action Plan is agreed to support the pupil to return to school full time and the EWO will outline the legal implications of further absence from school.

Elective Home Education

If schools receive written notification from parents/carers that they wish to home educate pupils, we will inform the Local Authority of the decision to remove their name from the school roll. We will not seek to prevent parents/carers from choosing to home educate pupils, neither will we seek to encourage them to do so as a way of avoiding exclusion or due to poor attendance.

8. Addressing Poor Attendance and Punctuality

Our schools will use data to target attendance improvement efforts to the pupils or groups of pupils who need it. We will:

- monitor and analyse weekly attendance patterns, proactively using data to identify pupils at risk of poor attendance
- identify pupils who need support
- benchmark school attendance data at each level against local, regional and national level
- work closely with the Education Welfare Officer to identify poor patterns of attendance
- hold regular meetings with the parents/carers of pupils who the school and/or local authority consider to be vulnerable

In cases where the school has been unable to establish a clear reason for absence and/or has welfare concerns about the pupil, a home welfare check may be carried out.

Where parents/carers have failed to ensure that pupils of compulsory school age are regularly attending the school and wider support in accordance with this policy is not appropriate or effective, we may consider issuing a penalty notice. A penalty notice is a financial penalty (£80 if paid within 21 days, £160 if paid within 28 days) imposed on parents/carers which is intended to change behaviour without the need for criminal prosecution.

9. A Welcome Back

It is important that on return from an absence, all pupils are made to feel welcome. This must include ensuring that the pupil receives help to catch up on missed work and is updated on any information which has been passed to other pupils.

10. Safeguarding

Attendance is an important element of safeguarding and schools should put in place appropriate safeguarding responses for pupils who go missing from education, particularly on repeat occasions.

Being absent, as well as missing, from education can be a warning sign of a range of safeguarding concerns, including sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, or child criminal exploitation. (Source: Keeping Children Safe in Education, 2024 (KCSIE))

Emergency contact numbers should be provided and updated by the parent with whom the pupil normally resides. Schools should hold more than one contact number; this goes beyond the legal requirement but is good practice. Doing so provides schools with additional options for making contact with a responsible adult when a pupil is missing school and is also identified as a welfare and/or safeguarding concern.

Schools must always follow-up any absences to ensure that the proper safeguarding action is taken. DSLs should check the absence list on a daily basis to ensure that appropriate follow-up action can be taken where required.

11. Children & Young People with medical conditions or special educational needs and disabilities

Some pupils face greater barriers to attendance than their peers. These can include pupils who suffer from long term medical conditions or who have special educational needs and disabilities. Their right to an education is the same as any other pupil and therefore the attendance ambition for these pupils should be the same as they are for any other pupil. That said, in working with their parents/carers to improve attendance, schools should be mindful of the barriers these pupils face and make reasonable adjustments or put additional support in place where necessary to help them access their full-time education.

12. School Specific Procedures

It is recognised that all schools in the Westcliffe Federation have their own distinctive character, and that their registration procedures may differ from school to school. However, the principles of this policy will be applied equally across all schools and all schools will issue an addendum to this policy outlining school specific procedures. School specific procedures can be found in the APPENDIX.

13. Monitoring Arrangements

Each schools' Senior Leadership Team conducts a thorough analysis of attendance half-termly, termly, and full year data to identify patterns and trends. This will include analysis of pupils and cohorts and identifying patterns in uses of certain codes, days of poor attendance and where appropriate, subjects which have low lesson attendance.

Headteachers will keep their Governors regularly informed of attendance data and trends.

This policy will be reviewed by the Governing Body annually.

APPENDIX

West Felton CofE Primary School Attendance Procedures

Registration

- We open the school gates at 8.45am and school starts promptly at 8:55am.
- Pupils who arrive after 9:05am will be marked as Late.
- Pupils who arrive after 9:30am will be marked as Late after the Register Closed.

Illness or Medical Appointments:

- Please let us know by 9am if a pupil is too ill to come to school. We need a call for every day of absence.
- Please try to arrange medical appointments before or after school. If you can't do this, please let us know of all appointments in advance.
- You can contact us as follows: Phone – 01691 610388
Email – admin.westfelton@westcliffe.shropshire.sch.uk
- Alternatively, you can report absence using the Absence Reporting Tool on ParentApp

If we do not hear from you, we will try to phone you or any of the contacts you have given us. If we cannot make contact, we will send a message and/or email. If a pupil is off school and we cannot talk to you, absences will be unauthorised. We will continue to try and make contact to find out the reason for the absence and will try and support you if there are problems we can help with.

Other sources of help

- Education Welfare Service 0345 678 9063
- BEAM - Beam is an emotional health and wellbeing service for young people under 25 years old who are registered with a GP in Shropshire, and Telford & Wrekin – <https://shropshire.gov.uk/the-send-local-offer/mental-and-emotional-health-andwellbeing-service/beam/>
- Citizens Advice <https://www.cabshropshire.org.uk/>
- Your GP
- Shropshire Early Help <https://shropshire.gov.uk/early-help>
- Shropshire Information Advice and Support Service - We provide information, advice and support to parents and carers of children aged 0 to 25, and young people aged 16 to 25 who have, or may have, special educational needs or disabilities (SEND). <https://www.cabshropshire.org.uk/shropshire-iaas>

ATTENDANCE

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

ABSENCE FROM SCHOOL

Children are required by law to attend school 190 days per year. The Government states that every pupil's attendance should be at least 95%.

How do YOU measure up?

Attendance	Days Absent	Weeks Absent	Lessons Missed
95%	9 Days	2 Weeks	50 Lessons
90%	19 Days	4 Weeks	100 Lessons
85%	29 Days	6 Weeks	150 Lessons
80%	38 Days	8 Weeks	200 Lessons
75%	48 Days	10 Weeks	250 Lessons
70%	57 Days	11.5 Weeks	290 Lessons
65%	67 Days	13.5 Weeks	340 Lessons

89% & Below
Drastic effect on
academic achievement

95% - 90%
Cause for
concern

100% - 96%
Excellent



PENALTY NOTICE FINES FOR SCHOOL ATTENDANCE IS CHANGING

FIRST OFFENCE

1

The first time a Penalty Notice is issued for Term Time Leave or Irregular Attendance the amount will be:

£160 per parent, per child if paid within 28 days
Reduced to £80 per parent, per child if paid within 21 days.

2

SECOND OFFENCE (WITHIN 3 YEARS)

The second time a Penalty Notice is issued for Term Time Leave or Irregular Attendance the amount will be:

£160 per parent, per child to be paid within 28 days. No reduced rate will be offered.

The following changes will come into force for Penalty Notice Fines issued after **19th August 2024**.

3

THIRD OFFENCE AND ANY FURTHER OFFENCES (WITHIN 3 YEARS)

The third time an offence is committed for Term Time Leave or Irregular Attendance a Penalty Notice will not be issued, and the case will be presented straight to the Magistrates' Court. Magistrates' fines can be up to £2500 per parent, per child.

Cases found guilty in Magistrates' Court can show on a Parents future DBS certificate, due to failure to safeguard a child's education'.

10 SESSIONS (5 DAYS) OF UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE IN A 10-WEEK PERIOD

Penalty Notice Fines will be considered when there has been 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a 10-week period.

Please follow the link for the Publication that will start from 19th August 2024.
www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-improve-school-attendance