



*'All individuals matter'*

# **WHOLE SCHOOL ATTENDANCE POLICY**

<b>School attendance champion</b>	<b>Mrs T Boulter</b>
<b>Attendance Governor</b>	
<b>Reviewed</b>	<b>October 2024</b>
<b>Next review</b>	<b>October 2026</b>

## **Statement of intent**

The staff and Governors at Winchelsea Primary School believe that in order to facilitate teaching and learning, good attendance is essential. Regular attendance is essential to allow children to access the curriculum and pupils cannot achieve their full potential if they do not regularly attend school. The school's attendance target is 100%. Persistent Absence is an attendance percentage below 90%. Our aim is to ensure our school works in partnership with parents, our local community, and the Local Authority to support and promote good attendance and punctuality.

We understand that barriers to attendance are complex, and that some pupils find it harder than others to attend school; therefore, we will continue to prioritise cultivating a safe and supportive environment at school, as well as strong and trusting relationships with pupils and parents.

We take a whole-school approach to securing good attendance and recognise the impact that our efforts in other areas – such as the curriculum, behaviour standards, SEND support and pastoral support can have on improving pupil attendance.

We are committed to:

- Promoting and modelling high attendance and its benefits.
- Establishing clear and effective procedures for administration
- Ensuring equality and fairness for all.
- Intervening early and working with other agencies to support attendance
- Building strong relationships with families to overcome barriers to attendance.
- Ensuring parents follow the framework set in section 7 of the Education Act 1996, which states that the parent of every child of compulsory school age shall receive efficient full-time education suitable to their age, ability and aptitude, and to any SEND they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.
- Ensuring our attendance policy is clear and easily understood by all staff, parents and pupils.
- Regularly monitoring and analysing attendance and absence data to identify pupils or cohorts that require more support.
- Complying with legal requirements

## **Legal framework**

This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation and statutory guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

- Education Act 1996
- Equality Act 2010
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (As amended)
- The Children (Performances and Activities) (England) Regulations 2014
- Children and Young Persons Act 1963
- DfE (2024) 'Working together to improve school attendance'
- DfE (2024) 'Keeping children safe in education 2024'
- DfE (2024) 'Children missing education'

This policy operates in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Complaints Procedures Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- SEND Policy
- Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions Policy

## **Why is attendance important?**

- **Learning:** Learning at our school is inclusive, interactive and sequential, requiring the participation of the pupils with the teacher and peers during learning time. This is adversely affected when a pupil is absent or habitually late – not only for that pupil, but for the dynamics of the entire class. This is both during their absence as well as upon their return, when time is taken to reintegrate them into the learning context of the class. Additionally, catch up tasks can help make up lost work, but cannot replicate the discussions led by the teacher and/or children, questions raised by other pupils or the activities conducted in class.
- **Safeguarding:** Children may be at risk of harm if they do not attend school regularly. Safeguarding the interests of each child is everyone's responsibility and within the context of this school, promoting the welfare and life opportunities for every pupil encompasses: Attendance, Behaviour Management, Health and Safety, Access to the Curriculum and Anti-bullying. Failing to attend school on a regular basis will be considered as a safeguarding matter.
- **The Law relating to attendance:** Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 states that 'the parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him / her to receive efficient full time education suitable:(a) to age, ability and aptitude and (b) to any special educational needs he/ she may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise'
- **The Law relating to safeguarding:** Section 175 of the Education Act 2002 places a duty on local authorities and governing bodies to have regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State with regard to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and students under the age of 18.

## **Definitions and expectations**

The following definitions apply for the purposes of this policy:

### **Absence:**

- Arrival at school after the register has closed
- Not attending school for any reason

### **Authorised absence:**

- An absence for sickness for which the school has granted leave
- Medical or dental appointments which unavoidably fall during school time, for which the school has granted leave
- Religious or cultural observances for which the school has granted leave
- An absence due to a family emergency

### **Unauthorised absence:**

- Parents keeping children off school unnecessarily or without reason
- Truancy before or during the school day
- Absences which have never been properly explained
- Arrival at school after the register has closed
- Absence due to shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- Absence due to day trips and holidays in term-time which have not been agreed
- Leaving school for no reason during the day

### **At risk of persistent absence**

- If a child's absence begins to fall below 95%

**Persistent absence (PA):**

- If a child's absence falls below 91%. Missing 10% or more of schooling across the year for any reason.
- If a child's attendance falls to 90%, a formal meeting with parents / carers will take place to plan support to improve the attendance. This may include an Early Help application.

**Severe Absence (or severe persistent absence):**

- If a child's absence falls below 80%. Missing 20% or more of schooling across the year for any reason.
- This could lead to escalating safeguarding concerns, which may include neglect and escalate to a referral to Children's services.

**Attendance expectations**

- Pupils are expected to attend school regularly and on time.
- The school day officially starts at 8.55am so pupils are expected to arrive in school at 8.45am so they are ready to begin lessons on time.

**We expect parents/carers to:**

- Ensure their children to attend school, every day, on time.
- Contact the school by 9.00am on the first day of their child's absence. This can be via telephone or email to : [enquiries@winchelsea.lincs.sch.uk](mailto:enquiries@winchelsea.lincs.sch.uk). We will require an explanation for the absence.
- Notify the school office every day of the child's absence. (this is in conjunction with our safeguarding protocols)
- Arrange holidays and medical appointments outside school hours.
- To regularly update emergency contact details.

**Parents and pupils can expect the following from school:**

- Regular, efficient and accurate recording of attendance.
- Regular follow ups to ascertain reasons for absence
- Early contact with parents when a pupil fails to attend school without providing good reason.
- Immediate and confidential action on any problem notified to us. (Confidential means that the member of staff notified will not disclose that information to anybody without the consent of the student or their parent with exceptions to class teachers and the headteacher where appropriate).

**Safeguarding**

In circumstances where the whereabouts or safety of children cannot be verified, the attendance champion or Designated Safeguarding Lead may make a home visit. They will be accompanied by a member of staff and may need to make a safeguarding referral call to Children's services or ask the Police to undertake a safe and well check.

A leave of absence during term time will only be granted where an application is made in advance to the school and the Headteacher considers that the leave of absence should be granted due to

exceptional circumstances relating to that application. Exceptional circumstances will be judged by the Headteacher on a case by case basis; however, affordability of holidays and availability of parental leave are unlikely to qualify as exceptional circumstances. While the final decision rests with the Headteacher, the following are examples of likely authorised/unauthorised absence.

Please note that we will not request medical evidence in most circumstances where a pupil is absent due to illness; however, the school reserves the right to request supporting evidence where there is a genuine and reasonable doubt about the authenticity of the illness. The school also reserves the right to request medical evidence of any child classed as a persistent absentee.

### **Attendance register**

The school uses MIS Integris to keep attendance registers to ensure they are as accurate as possible and can be easily analysed and shared with the appropriate authorities.

Designated staff members will take the attendance register at the start of each school day and at the start of the afternoon session. This register will record whether pupils are:

- Present.
- Absent.
- Attending an approved educational visit.
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

The school will use the national attendance codes to ensure attendance and absence are monitored and recorded in a consistent way.

When the school has planned in advance to be fully or partially closed, the code '# ' will be used for the relevant pupils who are absent.

Every entry received into the attendance register will be preserved for three years.

### **Term Time Holidays**

The law gives no entitlement to parents to take their child on holiday during term time. Parents should consider the disruptive impact of absences on the entire class when planning family holidays. Affordability of holidays and the ability of parents to take leave are not, in themselves, regarded as exceptional circumstances.

### **Leave of absence**

Parents will be required to request certain types of absence in advance. All requests for absence will be handled by the headteacher – the decision to grant or refuse the request will be at the sole discretion of the headteacher, taking the best interests of the pupil and the impact on the pupil's education into account. The headteacher's decision is not subject to appeal.

The school will only grant a pupil a leave of absence in exceptional circumstances. In order to have requests for a leave of absence considered, the school will expect parents to complete a Leave of Absence form, available on the website or from the school office, at least one week prior to the proposed start date of the leave of absence, providing the reason for the proposed absence and the dates during which the absence would be expected to occur.

Any requests for leave during term time will be considered on an individual basis and the pupil's previous attendance record will be taken into account. Where the absence is granted, the headteacher will determine the length of time that the pupil can be away from school.

Requests for leave will not be granted in the following circumstances:

- Immediately before and during statutory assessment periods
- When a pupil's attendance record shows any unauthorised absence

- Where a pupil's authorised absence record is already above 5 percent

If term-time leave is not granted, taking a pupil out of school will be recorded as an unauthorised absence and may result in sanctions, such as a fixed penalty notice. The school cannot grant leave of absence retrospectively; therefore, any absences that were not approved by the school in advance will be marked as unauthorised.

### **Religious observance**

Parents will be expected to request absence for religious observance at least one week in advance. The school will only accept requests from parents for absence on grounds of religious observance for days that are exclusively set apart for religious observance by the relevant religious body. The school will define this as a day where the pupil's parents would be expected by an established religious body to stay away from their employment to mark the occasion.

The school may seek advice from the religious body in question where there is doubt over the request.

### **Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence**

Where a pupil's parent belongs to a community covered by this code and is travelling for occupational purposes, the parent will be expected to request a leave of absence for their child at least two weeks in advance. Absences will not be granted for pupils from these communities under this code for reasons other than travel for occupational purposes.

### **SEND- and health-related absences**

The school recognises that pupils with SEND and/or health conditions, including mental health issues, may face greater barriers to attendance than their peers, and will incorporate robust procedures to support pupils who find attending school difficult.

In line with the SEND Policy and Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions Policy, the school will ensure that reasonable adjustments are made for disabled pupils to reduce barriers to attendance, in line with any EHCP plans that have been implemented. The school will secure additional support from external partners to help increase attendance where appropriate.

Where the school has concerns that a pupil's non-attendance may be related to mental health issues, parents will be contacted to discuss the issue and whether there are any contributory factors to their child's lack of attendance. Where staff have a mental health concern about a pupil that is also a safeguarding concern, they will inform the DSL or DDSL and the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy will be followed.

If a pupil is unable to attend school for long periods of time due to their health, the school will:

- Inform the LA if a pupil is likely to be away from the school for more than 15 school days.
- Provide the LA with information about the pupil's needs, capabilities and programme of work.
- Help the pupil reintegrate at school when they return.
- Make sure the pupil is kept informed about school events and clubs.
- Encourage the pupil to stay in contact with other pupils during their absence.

The school will incorporate an action plan to help any pupils with SEND and/or health issues cope with the stress and anxiety that attending school may cause them. Such plans will be regularly monitored and reviewed until the pupil is attending school as normal and there has been signs of significant improvement.

To support the attendance of pupils with SEND and/or health issues, the school will consider:

- Holding termly meetings to evaluate any implemented reasonable adjustments.
- Incorporating a pastoral support plan.
- Carrying out strengths and difficulties questionnaire.

- Using an internal or external specialist.
- Enabling a pupil to have a reduced timetable.
- Implementing a system whereby pupils can request to leave a classroom if they feel they need time out.
- Phased returns to school where there has been a long absence.
- Tailored support to meet their individual needs.

### **Attendance intervention and working with parents**

In order to ensure the school has effective procedures for managing absence, the Senior leadership team and attendance champion will:

- Establish a range of interventions to address barriers to attendance, according to the needs of the pupils and families
- Monitor the implementation and quality of escalation procedures
- Attend or lead attendance reviews in line with escalation procedures.
- Establish robust escalation procedures which will be initiated before absence becomes a problem by:
  - Send letters to parents.
  - Offer Early Help Assessments with parents to establish and try to overcome barriers to good attendance
  - Engaging with Local Authority teams

The school will use attendance data to monitor and analyse data in order to improve attendance. These strategies will be on a case-by-case basis and consider the needs of the pupils whom intervention is intended to target.

Open and honest communication will be maintained with pupils and families about the expectations of attendance and the school will liaise with other agencies when needed to support families, e.g social services.

The school will regularly inform parents about their child's attendance, absence, punctuality and the benefits of regular school attendance and punctuality.

If a pattern of absence becomes problematic, the attendance champion will work collaboratively with the pupil and family to address specific barriers that prevent the pupil from being able to attend regularly. This is a supportive process that will be dealt with sensitively and solutions focused. If the barriers are linked to experiences in school, senior leaders and relevant staff will work to resolve these but should these reasons be related to family circumstances, we may liaise with external agencies and authorities.

Please find a flow diagram in Appendix 4, to show intervention, support and actions in response to falling attendance or lateness.

### **Reintegration:**

- The return to school for a pupil after long term absence requires special planning. For example, it may be appropriate to establish a Pastoral Support Programme as detailed in the DfES Social Inclusion: Pupil Support Guidance.
- The appropriate staff will be responsible for deciding on the programme for return and the management of that programme.
- Programmes may need to be tailored to individual needs and may involve phased, part-time re-entry with support in lessons as appropriate. Support from the SEN Co-ordinator may be required

**Missing in Education:** A Child Missing in Education (CME) is defined as a child or young person of compulsory academy age who is not attending school, not placed in alternative provision by an LA, and who is not receiving a suitable education elsewhere. This definition also includes children who are receiving an education, but one that is not suitable; this could include children who are not receiving full-time education suitable to their needs, e.g. age, ability, aptitude, special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). Children missing from education can mean either a child being unenrolled or a child on extended absence.

School has a legal duty to inform the appropriate LA if:

- After 5 days of internal investigation, there is sufficient evidence to suggest that a child is missing from the area and their location is unknown (Child Missing in Education - CME)
- A child is absent for 10 or more consecutive days (Pupil Not Attending Regularly - PNAR)
- A child is deleted from the school register (after 20 days) when the next school is unknown (CME)

### **Legal intervention**

The school will allow sufficient time for attendance interventions and engagement strategies to improve pupils' attendance; however, where engagement strategies to improve attendance have not had the desired effect after one full term (two half terms), the attendance champion will consider:

- Holding a formal meeting with parents and the school's point of contact in the School Attendance Support Team.
- Working with the LA to put a parenting contract or an education supervision order in place.
- Engaging children's social care where there are safeguarding concerns.

Where the above measures are not effective, the headteacher may issue a fixed penalty notice in line with the LA's code of conduct.

Where attendance still does not improve following a fixed penalty notice, the school will work with the LA to take forward attendance prosecution as a last resort.

### **National Fine Thresholds**

From September, schools will consider a fine if a pupil misses 10 sessions (half days) of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks. The threshold can be met with "any combination of unauthorised absence". For example, four sessions in term time plus six instances of arriving late. The period of 10 weeks can also span "different terms or school years".

Councils "retain the discretion to issue one before the threshold is met". This could include where parents "are deliberately avoiding the national threshold by taking several term time holidays below threshold, or for repeated absence for birthdays or other family events".

More information about this can be found in appendix 2.

### **Roles and responsibilities**

#### **Headteacher:**

- To oversee the whole policy.
- To oversee the operation of the attendance system and the collation of attendance data
- To oversee the work of administrative staff

- To report to governors.
- To liaise with members of teaching staff.
- Support operation of the attendance system and the collation of attendance data.
- To liaise with Education Welfare officer

### **Class Teachers**

- To complete registers accurately and on time.
- To record all reasons for absence in the register.
- To inform the headteacher of concerns.

### **Governors:**

- Appoint a Governor to lead on attendance issues.
- Make a report to each Governors' Meeting.

### **Parents:**

- Contact with school on first day of absence or as soon as possible.
- Absence notes if longer than initially indicated.
- Support for general attendance.

### **Office Staff:**

- Produce updates from weekly registers, error sheets, absence code sheets, weekly % information
- Telephone or email absence to be put on registers.
- To follow-up immediately any unexplained non-attendance by contacting parents.

## **7. LIAISING WITH VARIOUS AGENCIES WHEREVER APPROPRIATE**

Good relations and working practices are essential. Agencies have difficult roles in that they endeavour to support both the school in meeting its legal obligations as well as home and pupil in ensuring that the latter's educational opportunities are maximised to the full. Some parents need the support of these agencies so that they can fulfil their legal obligations to their children. These agencies could include:

- \* Behaviour Outreach Support Services
- \* Educational Psychologists
- \* Special Educational Needs Service
- \* Social Care
- \* Working Together Team
- \* Specialist Teaching Team
- \* Re-integration and Out of school team
- \* Children and Young Peoples Nursing Service
- \* Local police

## **Lateness**

Our pupils must arrive by 8:50am (gates open at 8.45) on each school day. Our morning register is taken at 8.55am and will be kept open until 9.00am. Any children registering after 9.00am will be classed as late. Our afternoon register is taken at 1:00pm and will close at 1.10pm. Pupils who arrive after 1.10pm will again be marked as late in accordance with the above policy.

A pupil who arrives late after the registers close will be marked as absent. If the pupil is late arriving due to a valid reason such as an unavoidable medical appointment, the absence will be authorised. If the pupil is late for no good reason they will be marked with the unauthorised absence code 'Late after registers close' (U).

## **Effects of lateness**

When a child arrives late to school, they miss important events like well-being time, teacher instructions and introductions to lessons. Children often also feel embarrassed at having to enter the classroom late.

The table below indicates how frequent lateness can add up to a considerable amount of learning being lost. This can seriously disadvantage children and disrupt the learning of others.

<b>Minutes late per Day</b>	<b>Equates to Days of Teaching Lost in one Year</b>	<b>Which means this number of lessons missed</b>
5 mins	3 Days	15 Lessons
10 mins	6 Days	30 Lessons
15 mins	9 Days	45 Lessons

Lateness will be monitored and the parents/careers of any child who shows a % of lateness reaching 10%, in a half term will be contacted by the school to discuss the concern.

## **Appendices**

Appendix 1: Leave of absence form

Appendix 2: Penalty notice fines

Appendix 3: Letter to parents template

Appendix 4: Further information



**EXCEPTIONAL LEAVE FROM LEARNING REQUEST FORM**

In line with Government legislation, all pupils should attend school during the whole of the term to maximise their learning. We therefore ask parents **NOT** to take children out of school unless there are exceptional circumstances.

**Exceptional circumstances may include:**

- Religious reasons (this may need to be confirmed by a religious leader)
- Family bereavement
- To take exams (common entrance, ballet, music etc.)
- To participate in recognised sporting/cultural activities
- Service personnel with restricted holidays

**Please attach any documentation in support of your request to the form.**

<b>NAME OF CHILD/CHILDREN:</b>		
<b>YEAR GROUP/S:</b>		
<b>DATE OF ABSENCE:</b>	<b>From:</b>	<b>To:</b>
<b>DATE OF RETURN TO SCHOOL:</b>		
<b>NO OF SCHOOL DAYS REQUESTED:</b>		
<b>Please give full details of the exceptional reasons for this leave of absence:</b>		

***We advise parents/guardians not to plan for children to be absent from school without gaining prior agreement. Unauthorised absence may be recorded and could result in legal proceedings against you, either through a Penalty Notice or Magistrates Court.***

**Signed:** ..... **Print Name:** ..... **Date:** .....

Please return this form to the school office as soon as possible – but at least **ONE** week prior to the start date of the leave requested unless the exceptional circumstances are because of an emergency or bereavement.

**For office use only**

<b>Authorised:</b> <input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Unauthorised:</b> <input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Warning:</b>	<b>Signed:</b> .....
<b>Attendance</b> .... %	<b>Absence Code:</b> <input type="checkbox"/> <b>No of days:</b> <input type="checkbox"/>	<b>FPN:</b>	<b>Position:</b> ..... <b>Date:</b> .....

Appendix 2: Penalty notice fines

The introduction of the National Framework for penalty notices has come into force for penalty fines as of August 2024

<u>Per Parent, Per Child</u>	<u>First Offence</u>
Penalty Notice fines will now be issued to each parent, for each child that was absent. For example: 3 siblings absent for term time leave, would result in each parent receiving 3 separate fines.	The first time a Penalty Notice is issued for Term Time leave of 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.

5 consecutive days of term time leave

Penalty Notice Fines will be issued for Term Time leave of 5 or more consecutive days, inset training days are school days and can be included in the 5 or more consecutive days where there was intent to be absent for term time leave.

10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a 10-week period Penalty Notice fines will be considered when there have been 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a 10-week period

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 paid within 28 days

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 the parents future DBS certificate, due to a 'failure to safeguard a child's education'.

Appendix 3: Letter template in response to a request for leave of absence

Date

Name of child/ ren

Class:

Period of absence: .....to.....

Dear Parents / Carers,

I am writing in response to your request for leave of absence to confirm that:

Leave of absence has / has not been granted.

The reasons for this are:

Your child's attendance is..... This is classed as below/ at expected standard.

Please note that in the DfE document, Working together to improve school attendance states "the DfE does not consider a need or desire for a holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure and recreation to be an exceptional circumstance." There is no entitlement in law for any leave of absence from school in term time.

Any period of leave taken without the agreement of the school, or more than that agreed, will be classed as unauthorised and may attract sanctions such as a Penalty Notice.

Please refer to the National Framework for penalty notices attached in this letter for your reference and via this link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-improve-school-attendance>.

I also include a summary of this information in Appendix 2 of our Attendance policy.

Kind regards

#### Appendix 4: Attendance action flow diagram

Please find below an order of intervention and support in response to frequent attendance and lateness.

