ATTENDANCE POLICY

Last review: November 2024

Next review: July 2025

Reviewed by: Rebecca Warhurst, Head Teacher

                          John Bolton, -Governance Chair

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1.0   INTRODUCTION

Regular attendance at school is essential for securing excellent pupil outcomes and improving overall life chances and success in adulthood. Local Authorities pay a significant fee for pupils to attend the specialist provision they need. Pupils cannot benefit from this provision unless they attend regularly.

1.1   Rationale

All our pupils have a range of needs, challenges, and difficulties, requiring the specialist support and education provided by our school. Many pupils have experienced significant disruption to their education, with a history of placement breakdowns and school moves.

Safeguarding our pupils is always our foremost priority and we ensure our procedures to secure good attendance reflect this. We know that improving attendance is the responsibility of everyone around a child. Staff understand that good attendance is vital in supporting us to build positive relationships and engagement in learning. We work closely with parents and carers to help them ensure their child's good attendance at school.

2.0   PURPOSE

Our aim is to improve the attendance of every pupil and therefore, the overall attendance at our school.

We will do this by:

- ensuring all staff and those responsible for governance know they have a key role to play in ensuring attendance and punctuality remain key priorities,
- providing a clear framework which sets out everyone's role and responsibilities in securing good attendance,
- making pupils, parents/ carers aware of the importance of good attendance and punctuality, and the issues which arise when they are not good,
- giving recognition and rewards to pupils with good and/ or rapidly improving attendance,
- supporting pupils and families to identify and address barriers to good attendance,
- promoting effective partnerships with the Early Help, Social Care and other agencies who can help us to work as a team around a child or family,
- monitoring, reporting, and analysing attendance and punctuality related data,
- identifying objectives to support continued good attendance, as part of our whole school development planning.

3.0   ATTENDANCE PROCEDURES

3.1   Punctuality

Pupils should arrive at school on time every day.

Local Authorities pay significant costs for transport to school for many of our pupils. Where this is the case, pupils should be ready in plenty of time ahead of transport arriving at their home. Ultimately, it is parents and carers responsibility to get a child to school. We cannot arrange alternative transport if it is missed.

The school gates and doors open to pupils from 8:45 a.m.

Our Breakfast Club. It is a great start to the day, with an opportunity to socialise before lessons.

Pupils should arrive by 8.55 a.m. at the latest. Staff will greet them ahead of Tutorial and take an Attendance Register at 9.00 a.m. Pupils arriving after this time will be marked as Late ('L'). The register will remain open until 9.30a.m. Pupils arriving after this time will be marked on the Register with a 'U' code.

3.2   Attendance Register

The Attendance Register is a legal document, which must be taken clearly and accurately, using the correct codes set out by the DfE. Registers are taken twice daily, at the start of each morning and afternoon session.

See Appendix 1 – DfE Attendance Code

3.3   Role of Parents and Carers

Parents and carers have a legal duty to send their children to school regularly. They risk prosecution if they fail in this duty. There are 190 school days per year for pupils. When a pupil misses one week from school, they miss 30 lessons, they miss out on vital social, emotional, and academic learning.

We expect pupils to attend 100% of the time, on a full-time basis, unless there is a good reason not to be in school; see Section 3.4 below. This is not only a national requirement, but also what local authorities are paying for when they send children to specialist schools such as ours.

We ensure that parents and carers are made aware of our high expectations and duty to expect good attendance at the Pupil Admission Meeting, where we share all relevant policies and procedures. We encourage open and honest dialogue about problems with attendance, as this helps us all to work together to identify solutions.

3.4   Reporting Absence

Parents and carers must telephone the school office before 9.00 a.m. on the first and every day of any absence. If we are not informed of the absence, we will contact home by 10:00 a.m.

If we have not received communication, then we will consider sending a member of staff to the home to establish:

- what has gone wrong on this occasion,
- if the child is well and any help needed,
- how we can support everyone to get the child back to school at the earliest opportunity.

Medical and other appointments should be arranged out of school hours, whenever possible. When the appointment is local, the pupil will be expected to attend school before and/ or after the appointment.

3.5   Different Types of Absence

The Attendance Register is taken twice daily: once for the morning half-day session and secondly for the afternoon half-day session.

Pupil attendance is classified and marked by the school as either 'authorised' or 'unauthorised' for every half-day session. This is why we need daily communication about why a pupil is absent from school, to ensure the absence is marked correctly.

Authorised Absences are morning or afternoon sessions away from school for a good reason and are unavoidable, e.g. illness, evidenced medical or emergency appointments, or religious observance.

Unauthorised Absences are those which legislation does not consider reasonable and for which no permission, or 'leave' has been given by the Head Teacher.

Unauthorised absence includes:

- absence which has never been properly explained,
- parents/ carers keeping pupils off school,
- truancy during the school day,
- shopping,
- looking after other children,
- birthdays,
- hair appointments,
- day trips,
- waiting for a delivery,
- sleeping in after a late night,
- parent/ carer's illness,

Persistent Absenteeism (PA) – a pupil will be classified as a 'persistent absentee' when their attendance falls to 90% or below, regardless of the reason for absence(s).

Parents/ carers will be informed immediately if a pupil is at risk of moving towards the PA mark or is at the PA mark.

Descriptor	Attendance %	Impact on Pupil Outcomes
Outstanding	100 - 99	Best chance of success
Good	98 - 96	
Satisfactory	95 - 91	
Cause for Concern	90 - 86	Worrying. Less chance of success
Serious Cause for Concern	85 or below	Serious concern. Limited progress. Damage to future prospects.

It takes very little for pupil attendance levels to fall. Attendance reduces to 96% after 9 days' absence.

3.6   Attendance Support Plan

We review attendance each day and are vigilant about any patterns or trends with pupils who are late or absent from school.

Senior leaders identify pupils who need additional support to improve or maintain rates of attendance and/ or punctuality. Staff will meet with the pupil and family to discuss the issues preventing good attendance. We will write and implement an Attendance Support Plan, which will set out the role and responsibilities of the pupil, parents/ carers, and the school in supporting improvements in attendance. The Attendance Support Plan will identify targets, timescales and any other additional services which might be involved.

 See Appendix 2 – Attendance Support Plan

3.7   Rewarding Good and Improved Attendance

A range of strategies are used to encourage good attendance and punctuality.

Each week, pupils will be given a certificate and merit points for achieving 100% attendance that week. Each week, all pupils who have 100% attendance will be entered for a prize draw. Achievements are celebrated privately with the pupil concerned, in Tutorial, assembly, on school noticeboards as appropriate.

Each half-term, certificates and prizes will be awarded to pupils who have significantly improved their attendance or have 100% attendance overall, since September of that academic year.

Every year, at the end of the Summer Term, we will recognise and reward pupils who achieve 100% attendance during that academic year, and those who achieve 100% attendance over two or more consecutive years.

When fully established, we will work with our **Student Council** and ask them to consider awarding group points and certificates for Tutor Groups with the highest attendance.

Pupils who have an Attendance Support Plan may also have their own reward system to encourage them to achieve their individual targets and overall goals.

Merit/ reward points can be used by pupils to either purchase appropriate items which will be available in our 'school shop', or bank for a larger reward item as the term or academic year progresses. This helps pupils to learn several valuable life lessons, which will be crucial to the world of work, including attendance, punctuality, and the routine of earning, spending and saving.

It should be noted that we do not 'pay pupils to come to school'. Any merit points earned will not be swapped for money, vouchers, or food. Pupils can use points only to contribute towards small items available in the 'school shop' such as stationery and books, or a wider range of reward trips and opportunities than is ordinarily on offer as standard and part of our wider curriculum.

3.7   School Absence Procedures

Procedure	Role	Responsibilities
First and each day of absence	Parent/ Carer	• Contact Reception by 9a.m. to notify school, give reason for absence, and expected date of return to school.
First and each day of absence	Administrator	• If parent/ carer has not contacted school, call them by 10 a.m. to question reason for absence. • Request parent/ carer to call the following day if pupil remains absent, and that a home visit might be conducted by staff. • Log the reason for absence on the MIS.
Third day of absence *or sooner where there are specific concerns*	Head Teacher	• Identify Tutor/ staff to conduct a home visit to share attendance information and identify plan for returning to school. • Visits may take place earlier if unable to contact a family or if the family is receiving external support.
Daily	Administrator	• Check attendance for pupils who are dual registered/ attend elsewhere such as mainstream.
Daily	Head Teacher	• Identify if reasons given for absence will be unauthorised, and any action needed.
Daily	Designated Safeguarding Lead	• Inform social care of any unauthorised absences for pupils known to them.
Weekly – Fridays	Administrator	• Identify pupils with 100% attendance – print certificates for Tutors. • Give names of the above for the class draw, • Identify Tutor group with highest attendance. • Update the noticeboards as relevant. • Share above information with senior leaders ahead of weekly assembly.
	Head Teacher	• Celebrate attendance and punctuality in Friday tutorials/ assembly as relevant.
Weekly – Mondays	Senior Leader - Attendance	Provide the Head Teacher with: • headline attendance data for Tutor Groups and whole school, • update on children looked after (CLA) • progress of Persistent Absentees and those on Attendance Support Plans.
Half-termly	Senior Leader - Attendance	Work with the Administrator to: • produce certificates and celebrate improvements/ good attendance. • update attendance display with achievements and photographs of rewards.
	Administrator	• Send attendance summary to parents and carers of all pupils.
	Head Teacher/ School Governance	• Ensure attendance is standing item on the agenda of every School Governance Meeting. • Report on trends, concerns and actions identified as part of routine data analysis. • Governance Chair to review attendance data, providing support and challenge.
Pre-Admission of new pupils	Administrator	• Gather attendance data from previous school settings.

4.0   POLICY MONITORING

Monitoring of the attendance policy will be continuous and proactive. The Administrator updates senior leaders daily on pupil absence and reasons provided for it.

Attendance is on the agenda of the weekly Leadership Meeting. At this meeting the following is always discussed and followed up:

- o overall attendance for the setting and vulnerable groups,
- o attendance of persistent absentees,
- o pupils who need or have an Attendance Support Plan and reviews,
- o attendance data is shared each half-term with the Proprietor and those responsible for school governance.
- o data is available for local authority commissioner, and/ DfE/ Ofsted as appropriate.

5.0   REFERENCES

- Summary Table of Responsibilities for School Attendance, DfE, 29 Feb 2024 (for use Aug 2024 +)
- Moments Matter - Attendance Counts. Communications Toolkit for Schools, DfE, Feb. 2024
- Working Together to Improve Attendance, DfE, May 2022
- Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006
- The Education Act 1996
- The Education Act 2002
- Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003
- Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, para 7(b)
- The Children Act 1999
- Parental Responsibility Measures for Attendance and Behaviour, DfE, Jan.2015
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSiE)
- Working Together to Safeguard Children, DfE, updated Feb.2024
- Arranging Education for Children who Cannot Attend School because of Health Needs, DfE updated Dec.2023
- Is My Child Too Ill for School, NHS, 2021

See also:

- Admission Policy – The Willows School

6.0   APPENDICES

5.1   Appendix 1 – DfE Attendance Codes

5.2   Appendix 2 – Attendance Support Plan

6.1   Appendix 1 – DfE Attendance Register Codes

CODE	DESCRIPTION	MEANING
/	Present – morning registration (a.m.)	Present
\	Present – afternoon registration (p.m.)	Present
B	Educated off school site (NOT dual registration)	HT Approved Education Activity
C	Other Authorised Circumstances (not covered by another appropriate code/description)	Authorised absence
E	Excluded (no alternative provision made)	Authorised absence
G	Family holiday NOT agreed by the Head Teacher, or days in excess of an agreement	Unauthorised absence
H	Family holiday (agreed)	Authorised absence
I	Illness (NOT medical or dental etc. appointments)	Authorised absence
J	Interview	HT Approved Education Activity
L	Late (before registers closed)	Present
M	Medical/Dental appointments	Authorised absence
N	No reason yet provided for absence	Unauthorised absence
O	Unauthorised absence (not covered by any other code/description)	Unauthorised absence
P	Approved sporting activity	HT Approved Education Activity
R	Religious observance	Authorised absence
S	Study leave	Authorised absence
T	Traveller absence	Authorised absence
U	Late (after registers closed)	Unauthorised absence
V	Educational visit or trip	HT Approved Education Activity
W	Work experience	HT Approved Education Activity
D	Dual registration (i.e. pupil attending other establishment)	Not counted in possible attendances
X	Untimetabled sessions for non-compulsory school-age pupils	Not counted in possible attendances
Y	Enforced and partial enforced closure	Not counted in possible attendances
Z	Pupil not yet on roll	Not counted in possible attendances
#	School closed to pupils	Not counted in possible attendances

KEY:	
Present	
Authorised absence	
Unauthorised absence	
Approved Education Activity (Present)	
Not counted in possible attendances	

6.2   Appendix 2 – Attendance Support Plan

ATTENDANCE SUPPORT PLAN

Pupil Name: **Year Group:**   **Date Plan Written:**

Overall % Attendance this academic year: %

History and Background Information

Attendance last academic year	%
Reasons for absence, support and impact of strategies implemented:	
Attendance history at previous school settings	%
Reasons for absence and support strategies implemented:	

Views of Pupil
Views of Parents/ Carers
Names of Parents/ Carers providing information:

Actions to Improve Attendance *What will be done?*	**Responsibility** *Who will do this?*	**Timeframe** *Date it will be achieved by?*	**Review** *What was the impact?*

Signed: _____ (Pupil)   Date: _____

Signed: _____ (Parent/ Carer)   Date: _____

Signed: _____ (Senior Leader)   Date: _____