



White Woods
Primary Academy Trust

Attendance Policy

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Version History

Date	Amendment	Author
30/8/23	Amended to align with 5 foundations of effective attendance practice	Ryan Cousins

Attendance Policy



Why this policy exists

- regular school attendance is the key to enabling children to maximise the educational opportunities available to them
- to implement the 5 Foundations of the Effective Attendance Practice framework
- to define agreed roles and responsibilities and promotes consistency in carrying out designated tasks with respect to promoting attendance and punctuality.
- provide support, advice and guidance to; parents, staff and children and develop mutual cooperation between home and the school in encouraging good attendance and in addressing identified attendance issues.



Who

This policy applies to.

- This policy applies to all WWPAT staff, pupils and parents.



What

You need to know to comply.

- Your role and responsibilities with regards supporting good attendance.
- The stages in the attendance road map that should be followed
- The individual circumstances affecting an individual child's attendance

CONTENTS

Section:

1. Introduction
2. Aims
3. Policy Objectives
4. Expectations and Responsibilities
 - 4.1 we will
 - 4.2 Attendance Officer
 - 4.3 Attendance Lead
 - 4.4 Local governing body/Trust Board
 - 4.5 Local authority
 - 4.6 Parents
5. Strategic Approach
 - 5.1 Aims of the 5 Foundations strategy
6. Attendance Support Map.
7. Persistent Absence
8. Statutory Duty
9. Rotherham Early Help and family engagement
10. Legal sanctions
11. Children at risk of missing in education (CME)
12. Transition following long term absence

1. Introduction

White Woods Primary Academy Trust are united in their belief that regular school attendance is the key to enabling children to maximise the educational opportunities available to them. We aim to help all our children to become emotionally resilient, confident and competent in preparation for the next stage of their education and ultimately becoming adults who are able to realise their full potential and make a positive contribution to their community.

WWPAT values all children. As set out in this policy we will work with families to identify the barriers to achieving and maintaining excellent attendance and offer support to try to resolve any difficulties that families may have. Each situation will be dealt with on an individual basis, fairly and equitably, always remembering the welfare and safety of the child is the paramount concern.

2. Aims

Our aim is to always work in partnership with parents to support good attendance and any referral for consideration of a penalty notice is deemed to be a last resort.

School recognises that poor attendance can be an indication of difficulties in a child's life and their lived experience. This may be related to problems at home or in school. Parents should inform the school of any difficulties or changes in circumstances that may affect their child's attendance and or behaviour in school, for example, bereavement, divorce/separation, incidents of domestic abuse. This will help the school to identify any additional help that may be required. Ensuring children are safe is a priority, concerns for any child at any time will be reported to the Designated Senior Lead for Child Protection. We will

always follow Keeping Children Safe in Education guidance and our Safeguarding Policy.

Some children are more likely to require additional support to attain good attendance, for example, children who are vulnerable, have a medical need or EHCP plan will be monitored and supported in school. We will proactively identify and follow up on a child's non-attendance and gather information about the child. This will result in taking early action to prevent non-attendance developing and monitoring the impact of targeted support.

3. Policy Objectives

- create an ethos within the school in which good attendance is recognised as the norm and every child aims for excellent attendance.
- make attendance and punctuality a priority.
- set focused targets to improve individual attendance and whole school attendance levels.
- embed the 5 Foundations of the Effective Attendance Practice framework which defines agreed roles and responsibilities and promotes consistency in carrying out designated tasks with respect to promoting attendance and punctuality.
- record and monitor attendance and absenteeism and apply appropriate strategies to minimise absenteeism.
- develop a systematic approach to gathering and analysing relevant attendance data.
- provide support, advice and guidance to; parents, children and develop mutual cooperation between home and the school in encouraging good attendance and in addressing identified attendance issues.
- Demonstrate, using rewards, that the school recognises good attendance and punctuality are achievements in themselves.

4. Expectations and responsibilities

4.1 To support good attendance, and safeguarding we will:

- ensure the school is welcoming and every child feels a sense of belonging and connectedness.
- promote 97% threshold for children
- ensure the school site is open at the stated times.
- ensure the regular, efficient, and accurate recording of attendance is complete by every class teacher each day. This further supports our approach to safeguarding within the school.
- take safeguarding seriously. We will always contact parents on the first day that a child is absent from school. If a child arrives late after the close of registration, we will record their arrival at reception and transition the child to class.
- inform the appropriate member of staff of any information provided by children regarding their current or future attendance
- report any absence concerns to the Headteacher or attendance Lead/Officer.
- consider any requests for leave in term time individually. This will be aligned to the Local Authority code of conduct.
- Notify the Local Authority within 5 days if a new child is joining the school roll.
- Inform the Local Authority and Trust CEO of children whose parents have notified the school in writing and have opted for Elective Home Education.
- Work closely with the School Attendance Support Team.
- Notify the Local Authority of Children Missing in Education – aligned to the DfE 2022 Attendance paper.

4.2 Attendance officer:

- Attendance figures for each child will be reported to parents as part of the annual report
- If we have concerns regarding a child's attendance their attendance profile will also be shared with parents.
- Report on the overall attendance figures and those for specific groups to the local governing body and WWPAT Trust Board.
- Monitor data to ensure appropriate support is offered.

- Children's attendance will be monitored and shared with other agencies and the DfE.
- Check records, including any from other schools which the child has attended previously.
- Discuss with staff how the child is coping with the curriculum
- Speak to the Special Educational Needs Coordinator to establish whether the child is on the Special Educational needs register.
- Take into account the voice of the child and understand any difficulties, e.g. curriculum or bullying and their views on how the issue could be addressed.
- ensure that data is input daily into the attendance management system;
- ensure that parents of absent children are contacted where notification of absence has not been received;
- respond to any parent seeking support on attendance concerns;
- provide regular attendance and punctuality data to relevant staff and external agencies in line with the agreed procedures and timescales;
- be responsible for disseminating important attendance information including informing the Attendance Leader of which children are of concern; in-line with the agreed procedures and timescales;
- be responsible for keeping a record of the interventions in place to encourage attendance and for generating all documentation including letters to parents;
- be responsible for liaising closely with the Local Authority's Attendance Team to ensure appropriate levels of intervention take place; referrals are made, and attendance meetings are set up;
- be responsible for managing and maintaining attendance records and systems.

4.3 Senior leader responsible for attendance:

- regularly meet with their Line Manager reporting on progress and next steps planning;
- attend WWPAT attendance meetings;
- implement the 5 Foundations of Effective Attendance Practice framework;

- ensure the Foundations action plan is monitored and actioned throughout the school year;
- provide training and support to staff;
- participate in pre-legal meetings;
- use attendance data to make links with attendance and academic performance;
- lead attendance reward assemblies;
- ensure that reference to attendance is included in all school documentation e.g. Academy newsletters, letters to parents, school prospectus, information for booklets;

4.4 Local governing Body/Trust Board

- Monitor attendance data and offer support/challenge to the senior leadership team.

4.5 Local Authority

- Under the Education Act 1996, the Local Authority has a statutory responsibility to ensure that parents secure education for children of compulsory school age and where necessary, use legal enforcement to ensure this.

4.6 We expect that all parents/carers who have day to day responsibility for their child will:

- encourage regular and punctual School attendance
- ensure that the child/children in their care arrive at School punctually and prepared for the school day
- contact School before morning registration, on each day of the child's absence, by calling School and making the appropriate selection when prompted to do so and then stating the reason for absence. Alternatively, a letter can be sent explaining the reason and date(s) of absence, giving the child's full name. Any unexplained absence is treated as unauthorised absence
- contact School if a child will be arriving late and provide a reason for lateness. Alternatively, a letter can be sent explaining the reason the child is late, giving the child's full name

- contact the School promptly whenever any problem occurs that may keep the child away from School.
- Work *with* school to address issues that are negatively impacting attendance.
- Parents should wherever possible make all medical and dental appointments outside of the school day. Where this is not possible, children should attend school for part of the day. Appointment cards should always be provided as evidence of medical/dental appointments.
- Complete a leave of absence form if they are taking their children out of school at any point during term time.

Attendance concerns will be raised with parents if reasons for absence are not known by the school. Where we have concerns, or lack of engagement from families to improve attendance, we will follow our attendance roadmap to improving attendance as set out in this policy. Our escalated approach is child-centred and prioritises support and developing strong working relationships with families. We will work alongside Early Help services where we feel this could help a family to improve the attendance of their child/ren.

5. The Strategic Approach

WWPAT adopts the 5 Foundations of the Effective Attendance Practice framework (see Appendices for detail) . This is modelled on the work of Professor Katherine Weare. The emphasis is on developing a school culture and climate which builds a sense of connectedness and belonging to ensure all children can attend school and thrive. The approach ensures we prioritise building solid working relationships with children, and parents, prior to escalation. The staged approach we follow ensures we identify triggers early that can lead to poor attendance issues such as mental health issues, lack of trust, communication and relationship breakdowns and the possible lack of networking opportunities both internal (in-school) and external (external agencies).

WWPAT and its schools are engaged with the regional Attendance Hub.

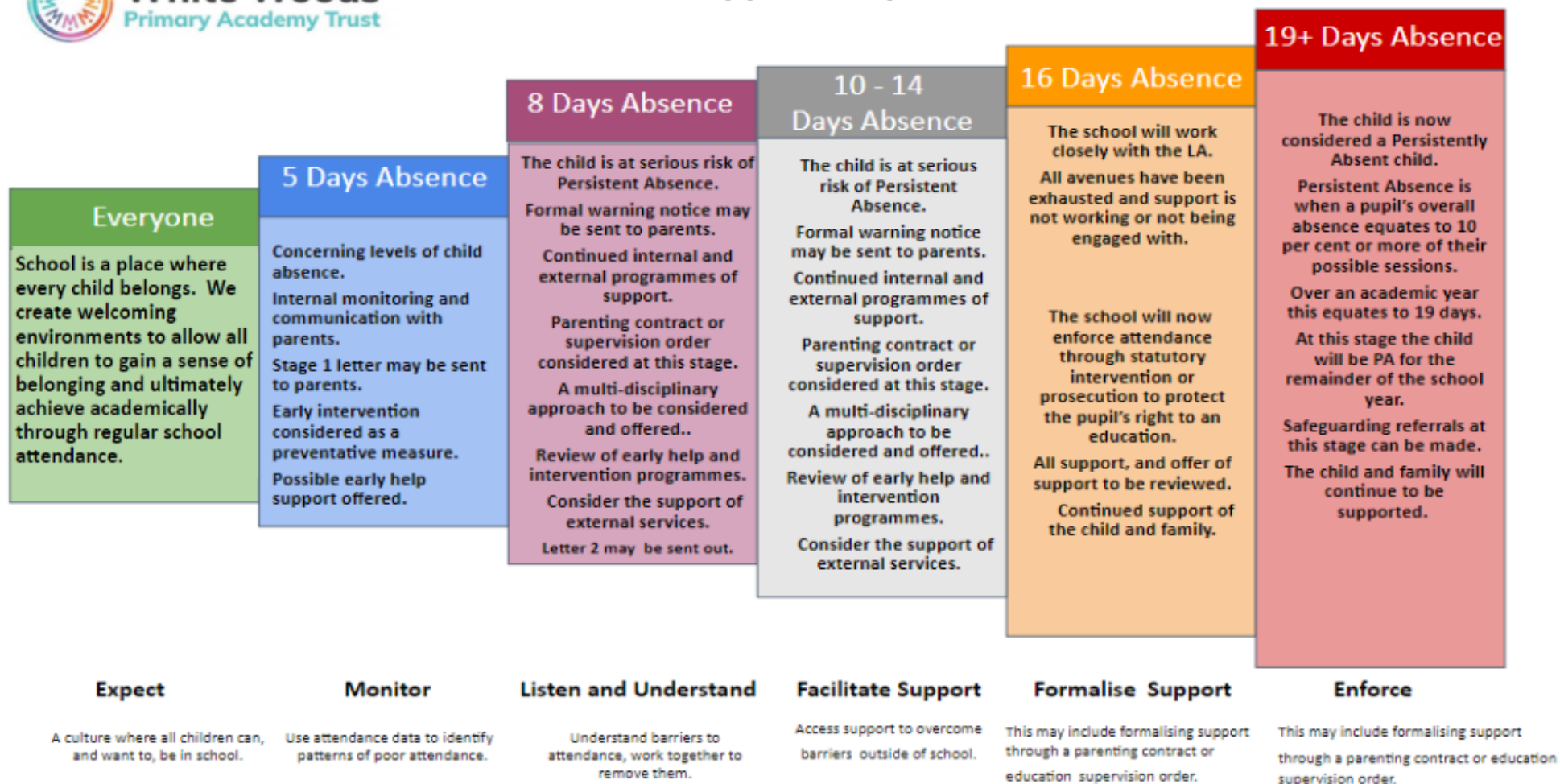
5.1 Aims of the 5 Foundations strategy

- Increase school Attendance and reduce Persistent Absence to meet set targets.
- Ensure Attendance is well managed within the school, with the appropriate level of resources allocated.
- Enable the school to make informed use of attendance data to target interventions appropriately, focusing on the key demographic groups highlighted in the 2022 DFE attendance paper.

6. Attendance Support Map.

We will always support children during each stage of our Attendance Support Map. If there is lack of engagement, or concerns regarding the reason for absence, we will follow the Attendance Support Map to ensure we prioritise a child's learning and right to education.

Attendance Support Map



7. Persistent Absence

We aim to communicate the importance of attendance with parents and children. We have a particular focus on reducing Persistent Absenteeism at the school. The Persistent Absence threshold for children is currently 10% and Ofsted will use this threshold in its inspection of schools.

The threshold means that any child will be classed as Persistently Absent when they have missed 38 or more sessions. This equates to 19, or more, missed days during the academic year - which is as little as 6 days over each of the three Terms. This also equates to the equivalent of 1 day of absence, or more, a fortnight across a full school year

We will use a tracking system to make parents aware of the number of days their child has missed in education. This will allow us to work together to reduce the number of days and attempt to prevent children from reaching this number.

Once a child has reached 38 sessions, or **19 days absence**, they will be classified as Persistently Absent from school and we will report this to the Local Authority and follow external legal proceedings.

Children whose attendance falls under 50% attendance will be classified as a Severely Absent child. Ultimately this will indicate that all intervention, and support offered by school has not made the expected impact to improve overall attendance. Where attendance remains a concern and all other interventions and support have not made a significant impact, we will escalate with external partners.

8. Statutory Duty

Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 states that the parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause them to receive efficient full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude and ability and any special educational needs they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

A child is of compulsory school age at the beginning of the term following their 5th birthday.

The term 'parent' includes those who are not a natural parent but have parental responsibility for the child as defined by the Children's Act 1989 or have care of the child as defined by the Education Act 1996.

In accordance with the regulations regarding pupils' attendance at school, we will keep an electronic attendance register on which children are marked present or absent at the beginning of each morning and afternoon session. The marks are electronically processed and stored on the school's central administrative system Arbor. This information is shared with the Department for Education.

- Absence can only be authorised by the school; parents do not have this authority. All absences will be treated as unauthorised unless satisfactory evidence for the child's absence has been received. In the first instance contact from the parent will be accepted as evidence. However, if a child's attendance continues to cause concern, parents may be asked to provide medical evidence where absences occur repeatedly due to reported illness. This will usually be in the form of an appointment card, prescriptions etc. Absence may be coded as unauthorised without evidence.
- Unless parents have provided a satisfactory explanation and it has been accepted by the school, the absence will not be authorised.

9. Rotherham Early Help and Family Engagement Service

Parents are expected to contact the School at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any problems together. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be resolved in this way, the School may discuss the matter with their Early Help link partner or Attendance Lead.

School can refer a child to the Local Authority Early Help team (with the parent/guardian consent) if the family has needs that are impacting on the child's education.

School and/or Early Help will also try to resolve the situation by agreement, but if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed and unauthorised absences persist, the Local Authority can use sanctions such as Fixed Penalty Notices or prosecutions in the Magistrates Court. Full details of the options open to enforce attendance are available on the [Local Authority school attendance website](#).

Alternatively, parents/carers or childrens may wish to contact the Local Authority themselves to ask for help and information. They are independent of the School and will give impartial advice. If a child's attendance gives cause for concern and sickness is continually reported, support will be sought through the School Nursing team.

10. Legal Sanctions

There are several sanctions that school can take to address the issue of non-attendance. To try and identify the reason for absence we will always talk to Parents/guardians first to identify the reason for absence. The School will always ensure the attendance support map is followed, focusing on the support a child needs at each stage. However, for lack of engagement in attendance support there are sanctions that will be followed:

10.1 Penalty Notices (Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003)

Penalty Notices will be considered

when:

- A child is absent from school for the purpose of a Leave of Absence in term time and the absence has not been authorised by the school.

- A child has accumulated at least ten sessions of unauthorised absence and further absence has occurred following written warning to improve

Penalty Notices will be used in accordance with Rotherham Council [Code of Conduct](#).

10.2 Prosecution

Where intervention through the school's process fails to bring about an improvement in attendance, the local authority will be notified and legal proceedings in the Magistrates Court may be taken. The school will provide the Local Authority with evidence required for a prosecution under section 444/4441(a) of the Education Act 1996 and will appear as a prosecution witness if required by the court. This is to ensure that parents realise their own responsibilities in ensuring their child's attendance at school.

Section 4441(a) of the Education Act 1996 states that if a parent fails to ensure the regular school attendance of their child if he/she is a registered pupil at a school and is of compulsory school age, then they are guilty of an offence.

Schools, trusts and local authorities are expected to work together and make use of the full range of legal interventions rather than relying solely on fixed penalty notices or prosecution. It is for individual schools and local authorities to decide whether to use them in an individual case after considering the individual circumstances of a family. These are:

- Parenting contracts
- Education supervision orders
- Attendance prosecution
- Parenting orders
- Fixed penalty notices

Please refer to section 6 of the [DFE Working together to improve school attendance 2022](#) for more information (appendix 2).

11. Children at risk of Missing in Education (CME)

Children Missing Education (CME) are a vulnerable group of children. All agencies who work with children have a duty to support the Local Authority in ensuring all children are safe and looked after appropriately.

CME includes those children who are **missing** (family whereabouts unknown), and are children who are registered on a school roll / alternative provision. This might be a child who is not at their last known address **and either**

- has not taken up an allocated school place as expected, or
- has 5 or more days of continuous absence from school without explanation, or
- left school suddenly and the destination is unknown

It is our responsibility as a school to work with the LA Education and Inclusion team, by making referrals.

12. Transition following long term absence or illness

Absence can significantly interrupt the continuity of children's learning.

During any long-term absence, school will:

- Maintain contact with the child.
- Carefully plan the transition back to school, ensuring children feel welcome and gain a sense of belonging.
- Ensure the child once again feels safe in school and if they experience any concerns, they will have an appointed member of staff to work with.
- The Class Teacher and Teaching Assistant will support a child when returning to class and help them with any work they may have missed.

Appendices

1. Attendance Management Procedures
2. DfE working together to improve attendance 2022
3. Attendance concern letter 1 template
4. Attendance concern letter 2 template
5. Holiday authorisation letter template
6. Holiday refusal letter template

Other Policies supporting attendance.

Behaviour Policy

SEND Offer

Pupil Premium Statement

Safeguarding policy

Relevant legislation

[The Education Act 1996](#)

[The Children Act 1989](#)

[The Crime and Disorder Act 1998](#)

[The Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003](#)

[The Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)

[The Sentencing Act 2020 The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006](#)

[The Education \(Parenting Contracts and Parenting Orders\) \(England\) Regulations 2007](#)

[The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) Regulations 2007](#)

Relevant government guidance

Parental responsibility measures for attendance and behaviour

Children missing education

Keeping children safe in education

Working together to safeguard children

Working together to improve school attendance

Elective home education

Alternative provision: statutory guidance for local authorities

Exclusion from maintained schools, academies and pupil referral units in England

Supporting pupils at school with medical conditions

Ensuring a good education for children who cannot attend school because of health needs

Promoting and supporting mental health and wellbeing in schools and colleges

Approaches to preventing and tackling bullying