



WESTONZOYLAND

Community Primary School and Pre-school

Attendance and Punctuality Policy

September 2025

Ratified by: Ratified by:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A. Clark', is written over the 'Ratified by:' line.

Headteacher

Andy Clark

Chairs of Governors

Review date: September 2025

KEY GUIDANCE DOCUMENTS

This is the key documentation used when drawing up this policy.

Working together to improve school attendance:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-improve-school-attendance>

Children missing in education:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/550416/Children Missing Education - statutory guidance.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/550416/Children_Missing_Education_-_statutory_guidance.pdf)

School attendance parental responsibility measures:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/parental-responsibility-measures-for-behaviour-and-attendance>

Supporting pupils with medical conditions:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/supporting-pupils-at-school-with-medical-conditions--3>

Keeping children safe in education:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2>

KEY STAFF

Attendance lead	Mr Clark, Headteacher
Over-seeing daily registers Adding notes and codes Identifying children at risk	Miss Touchin, Office Manager
Authorising or unauthorising absence in line with this policy Allocating attendance support Escalating attendance challenge	Mr Clark, Headteacher
Managing attendance paperwork including completion of online forms and sending letters	Miss Touchin, Office Manager
Oversite of children who have medical needs, which may impact on their attendance	Mrs Bell, SENDCo

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INTRODUCTION

It is the aim of Westonzoyland Primary School that pupils should enjoy learning, experience success and realise their full potential. Our Attendance Policy reflects this and recognises that regular attendance has a positive effect on the motivation and attainment of pupils.

We do everything we can to ensure good attendance by supplying a calm, orderly, safe, and supportive environment where all pupils want to be and are keen and ready to learn. We also work with pupils and parents to remove any barriers to attendance by building strong and trusting relationships and working together to put the right support in place.

1. AIMS

Our school aims to meet its obligations with regard to school attendance by promoting good attendance; ensuring every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled; and acting early to address patterns of absence.

This policy sets out our school's position on attendance and details the procedures that all parents must follow to report their child absent from school.

A child is of Compulsory School Age at the beginning of the term following their 5th birthday. It is vital that children develop regular attendance habits at an early age. Therefore, the school will encourage parents of Pre-school children, and Reception children who are not yet compulsory school age, to send their children to every session that is available to them. If the child is unable to attend the school for any reason, the parent should inform the school of the reason on the first day of absence. If the school is concerned about a pupil's attendance for any reason, we will contact the parent to discuss the matter, in the first instance. We will also support parents to perform their legal duty to ensure their children of compulsory school age attend regularly, and will promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

Education law defines parents as: all natural parents, whether they are married or not; any person who has parental responsibility for a child or young person; and any person who has care of a child or young person i.e. lives with and looks after the child. In this policy the term 'parent' includes parents and carers.

We want our pupils to attend school every day, unless they are really not well enough to. We believe that children who attend school regularly are more likely to feel settled in school, maintain friendships, keep up with their learning and gain the greatest benefit from their education. We want all our pupils to enjoy school, grow up to become emotionally resilient, confident and competent adults who are able to realise their full potential. Regular attendance and punctuality is essential in the workplace and children who are used to attending school on time, and on every occasion unless they are too unwell to attend, will be better prepared for the attendance expectations in the workplace.

In April 2017 the Supreme Court clarified the definition of regular attendance to be attendance "in accordance with the rules prescribed by the school", therefore if an absence is not authorised by the school, the pupil's attendance is deemed to be irregular.

We will do all we can to encourage our pupils to attend. We will also make the best provision we can for any pupil who needs additional support in school or who is prevented from attending school, due to a medical condition.

This policy is written with consideration of the Equality Act 2010 and considerations under UN convention on the rights of a child.

We believe that one of the most important factors in promoting good attendance is the development of positive attitudes towards school. To this end, we strive to make our school a happy and rewarding experience for all children, and to foster positive and mutually respectful relationships with parents.

By promoting good attendance and punctuality, we aim to:

- Make good attendance and punctuality a priority for all those involved in the school community
- Raise our pupils' awareness of the importance of good attendance and punctuality
- Provide support, advice and guidelines to parents, pupils and staff
- Work in partnership with parents
- Celebrate and reward good attendance and punctuality

Attendance is a priority concern in our duty to 'safeguard' children. This policy aims to show our commitment to meeting our obligations with regards to school attendance, including those laid out in the Department for Education's (DfE's) statutory guidance on [working together to improve school attendance \(applies from 19 August 2024\)](#), through our whole-school culture and ethos that values good attendance, including:

Our school aims to meet its obligations with regards to school attendance by:

- Setting high expectations for the attendance and punctuality of all pupils
- Promoting good attendance and the benefits of good attendance
- Reducing absence, including persistent and severe absence
- Ensuring every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled
- Acting early to address patterns of absence
- Building strong relationships with families to make sure pupils have the support in place to attend school

We will also promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

2. IMPACT OF NON-ATTENDANCE

The table below indicates how what might seem like just a few days absence can result in children missing a significant number of lessons.

Attendance during school year	Days lost in a year	Which is approximately	Approximate number of lessons missed
95%	9.5 Days	2 Weeks	50 Lessons
90%	19 Days	4 Weeks	100 Lessons

Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence may seriously affect their learning. The Department for Education (DfE) defines a pupil as a 'persistent

absentee' when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year, for whatever reason.

3. SAFEGUARDING AND ATTENDANCE

Our school will monitor trends and patterns of absence for all pupils as a part of our standard procedures. However, we are aware that sudden or gradual changes in a pupil's attendance may indicate additional or more extreme safeguarding issues. In line with government guidance [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#) (2024 DfE) we will investigate and report any suspected safeguarding cases on to the relevant authorities. As part of our safeguarding duty and our standard procedures, we will inform the Local Authority and/or the Police of the details of any pupil who is absent from school when the school cannot establish their whereabouts and is concerned for the pupil's welfare. (Please see the CME section of this Policy and our Safeguarding Policy for more information.)

4. LEGISLATION AND GUIDANCE

This policy is based on the Department for Education's (DfE's) statutory guidance on [working together to improve school attendance \(applies from 19 August 2024\)](#) and [school attendance parental responsibility measures](#). The guidance is based on the following pieces of legislation, which set out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- Part 6 of the [Education Act 1996](#)
- Part 3 of the [Education Act 2002](#)
- Part 7 of the [Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006 \(and 2010, 2011, 2013, and 2016 amendments\)](#)
- [The School Attendance \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2024](#)
- [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013 and the 2024 amendment](#)

It also refers to:

- [School census guidance](#)
- [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#)
- [Mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance: guidance for schools](#)

5. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

5.1 The governing board

The governing board is responsible for:

- Setting high expectations of all school leaders, staff, pupils and parents
- Making sure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties, including:
 - Making sure the school records attendance accurately in the register, and shares the required information with the DfE and local authority
 - Making sure the school works effectively with local partners to help remove barriers to attendance, and keeps them informed regarding specific pupils, where appropriate
- Recognising and promoting the importance of school attendance across the school's policies and ethos

- Making sure the school's attendance management processes are delivered effectively, and that consistent support is provided for pupils who need it most by prioritising staff and resources
- Making sure the school has high aspirations for all pupils, but adapts processes and support to pupils' individual needs
- Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data and helping school leaders focus improvement efforts on individual pupils or cohorts who need it most
- Working with school leaders to set goals or areas of focus for attendance and providing support and challenge
- Monitoring attendance figures for the whole school and repeatedly evaluating the effectiveness of the school's processes and improvement efforts to make sure they are meeting pupils needs
- Where the school is struggling with attendance, working with school leaders to develop a comprehensive action plan to improve attendance
- Making sure all staff receive adequate training on attendance as part of the regular continued professional development offer, so that staff understand:
 - The importance of good attendance
 - That absence is almost always a symptom of wider issues
 - The school's legal requirements for keeping registers
 - The school's strategies and procedures for tracking, following up on and improving attendance, including working with partners and keeping them informed regarding specific pupils, where appropriate
- Making sure dedicated training is provided to staff with a specific attendance function in their role, including in interpreting and analysing attendance data
- Holding the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy

5.2 The headteacher

The headteacher is responsible for:

- The implementation of this policy at the school
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils
- Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies
- Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary, and/or authorising The Deputy Headteacher, Mrs Bell, to be able to do so
- Working with the parents of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) to develop specific support approaches for attendance for pupils with SEND, including where school transport is regularly being missed, and where pupils with SEND face in-school barriers
- Communicating with the local authority when a pupil with an education, health and care (EHC) plan has falling attendance, or where there are barriers to attendance that relate to the pupil's needs
- Communicating the school's high expectations for attendance and punctuality regularly to pupils and parents through all available channels

5.3 The designated senior leader responsible for attendance

The designated senior leader (Mr Clark) is responsible for:

- Leading, championing and improving attendance across the school
- Setting a clear vision for improving and maintaining good attendance

- Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes
- Having a strong grasp of absence data and oversight of absence data analysis
- Regularly monitoring and evaluating progress in attendance
- Establishing and maintaining effective systems for tackling absence, and making sure they are followed by all staff
- Liaising with pupils, parents/carers and external agencies, where needed
- Building close and productive relationships with parents to discuss and tackle attendance issues
- Creating intervention or reintegration plans in partnership with pupils and their parents/carers
- Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families

The designated senior leader responsible for attendance is Mr Clark and can be contacted via email (office@wzps.co.uk).

5.4 The attendance officer

The school attendance officer is responsible for:

- Monitoring and analysing attendance data (see section 6)
- Benchmarking attendance data to identify areas of focus for improvement
- Providing regular attendance reports to school staff and reporting concerns about attendance to the designated senior leader responsible for attendance, and the headteacher
- Working with education welfare officers to tackle persistent absence
- Advising the headteacher (authorised by the headteacher) when to issue fixed-penalty notices

The attendance officer is Miss Touchin and can be contacted via email (office@wzps.co.uk).

5.5 Class Teachers

Class teachers are responsible for recording attendance for both morning and afternoon sessions on a daily basis, using the correct codes (see Appendix 1), and submitting this information to the school office (see section 4. 'Registration' for more information).

5.6 School office staff

School office staff will:

- Take calls from parents/carers about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the school system
- Transfer calls from parents/carers to the Headteacher where appropriate, in order to provide them with more detailed support on attendance

5.7 Parents

Where this policy refers to a parent, it refers to the adult the school and/or local authority decides is most appropriate to work with, including:

- All natural parents, whether they are married or not
- All those who have parental responsibility for a child or young person
- Those who have day-to-day responsibility for the child (i.e. lives with and looks after them)

Parents are expected to:

- Make sure their child attends every day on time

Call the school to report their child's absence before 9am on the day of the absence. If the absence is more than 2 days in duration, then parents should contact the school again to keep them updated about the student's welfare and provide an expected date of return.

- Provide the school with more than 1 emergency contact number for their child
- Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day
- Seek support, where necessary, for maintaining good attendance, by contacting Miss Touchin in the first instance.

5.8 Pupils

Pupils are expected to:

- Attend school every day, on time

6. RECORDING ATTENDANCE

6.1 Attendance register

We will keep an electronic attendance register, and place all pupils onto this register. Students are expected to be registered twice a day for attendance. The two attendance registers happen in the morning (8:50 am) and immediately after lunch (1:15pm)

Pupils are marked present if they are in school when the register is taken. If a pupil leaves the school premises after registration, they are still counted as present for statistical purposes.

Students will remain on our register until we receive notification from another School or from the County that they are attending a different provision, or until we receive a notice of elective home education.

If registration times need to be altered for any reason – for example staggered start times – then all these adjusted times will be clearly shared with parents and staff. This will include the new times that registers close and children are classed as late, as outlined below.

The class teacher will mark, using the appropriate national attendance and absence codes from the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024, whether every pupil is:

- Present
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity
- Absent
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

- The original entry
- The amended entry
- The reason for the amendment
- The date on which the amendment was made
- The name and position of the person who made the amendment

See Appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes.

We will also record:

- Whether the absence is authorised or not
- The nature of the activity, where a pupil is attending an approved educational activity

- The nature of circumstances, where a pupil is unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 6 years after the date on which the entry was made.

The school day starts at 8.40am and ends at 3.15pm.

Pupils must arrive in school by 8.40am on each school day.

6.2 Unplanned absence

Parents must advise the school by telephone on the first day of absence and provide the school with an explanation and an expected date of return. This call should be made by 9:00am. A message can be left on the answering machine if the phone is not answered. If the absence continues into a second day, then parents should contact the school again to keep them updated about the student's welfare and provide an expected date of return.

We will mark absence due to physical or mental illness as authorised, unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness. If no reason is provided for an absence, this will be marked as unauthorised.

Where the absence is longer than 5 days, or there are doubts about the authenticity of the illness, the school will ask for medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents will be notified of this in advance.

6.3 Planned absence

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the pupil's parent notifies the school in advance of the appointment.

Parents are requested to complete the request for absence form available from Miss Touchin in the school office.

However, we encourage parents to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

The pupil's parent must also apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence. Go to section 7 to find out which term-time absences the school can authorise.

6.4 Lateness and punctuality

A pupil who arrives late:

- Before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code
- After the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code

It is the duty of parents to ensure that children attend school on time. This encourages habits of good timekeeping and lessens any possible classroom disruption.

Registration begins at 8:50am, and students arriving after this time will be marked as present but arriving late (L code). The register will close at 8:55am and students arriving after the close of register will be recorded as late (U code). This will not be authorised and will count as an absence for that school session. This form of absence will be followed up in the same manner as any other form of unauthorised absence; including following through to penalty notice if the problem is not addressed.

Register Timing Information			
	Registration	Late	Unauthorised
AM	08.50	09.00	09.20
PM	13.15	13.25	13.45

The absence will only be authorised if a satisfactory explanation for the late arrival can be provided; for example, attendance at a medical appointment. The absence will be recorded as unauthorised if the student has arrived late without justifiable cause.

Afternoon registration closes at 1:20pm and similar procedures will be observed.

Punctuality is judged on arrival time, not method of entry. Students can come in through the normal gate and still be 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.

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

6.5 Following up unexplained absence

If a child is absent and no explanation has been received then the school will use the provided contact list in order to try and establish a reason for absence. If we cannot establish a reason to our satisfaction then we may instigate a school welfare visit or police welfare check.

It is vital that the school has an up-to-date contact list for each child. Parents will be asked to supply details of at least three people who can be contacted in an emergency, and these details will be reviewed by us annually. However, if there is a change in the interim it is vital that parents provide new details to the school.

Where any pupil we expect to attend school does not attend, or stops attending, without reason, the school will:

- Call the pupil's parent on the morning of the first day of unexplained absence to ascertain the reason. If the school cannot reach any of the pupil's emergency contacts, the school may consider measures such as sending our PFSA for a home visit/welfare check / contacting the police and other agencies should we have concerns for the welfare of the child.
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not
- Identify the correct attendance code to use and input it as soon as the reason for absence is ascertained – this will be no later than 5 working days after the session(s) for which the pupil was absent
- Call the parent on each day that the absence continues without explanation, to make sure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary. If absence continues, the school will consider involving an education welfare officer

- Where relevant, report the unexplained absence to the pupil's youth offending team officer
- Where appropriate, offer support to the pupil and/or their parents to improve attendance
- Identify whether the pupil needs support from wider partners, as quickly as possible, and make the necessary referrals
- Where support is not appropriate, not successful, or not engaged with: issue a notice to improve, penalty notice or other legal intervention (see section 7.2 below), as appropriate.

6.6 Reporting to parents

Attendance of all pupils is examined regularly – usually once a fortnight. If there is a frequent pattern of absence or lateness, the Headteacher or designated attendance lead will contact the parents/carers to inform them of the problem. Attendance letters will be sent to any child whose attendance is causing concern (for example through repeated lateness, high levels of absence or suspicious attendance patterns). Class attendance data is generally looked at once a week in order to give assembly rewards and praise. Whole school attendance data (including vulnerable groups) is reported to governors at each meeting. This includes benchmarking against other schools.

The school will also inform parents about their child's attendance through formal reporting procedures throughout the year, such as within the end-of-term autumn reports.

7. AUTHORISED AND UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE

7.1 Approval for term-time absence

The headteacher will allow pupils to be absent from the school site for certain educational activities, or to attend other schools or settings.

The headteacher will only grant a **leave of absence** to a pupil during term time if the request meets the specific circumstances set out in the [2024 school attendance regulations](#). These circumstances are:

- Taking part in a regulated performance, or regulated employment abroad
- Attending an interview
- Study leave
- A temporary, time-limited part-time timetable
- Exceptional circumstances

A leave of absence is granted at the headteacher's discretion, including the length of time the pupil is authorised to be absent for.

Leave of absence will not be granted for a pupil to take part in protest activity during school hours.

As a leave of absence will only be granted in exceptional circumstances, it is unlikely a leave of absence will be granted for the purposes of a family holiday.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant background context behind the request.

Any request should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated and, where possible, at least a week before the absence, and in accordance with any leave of absence request form, accessible from Miss Touchin in the school office. The headteacher may require evidence to support any request for leave of absence.

Other valid reasons for **authorised absence** include (but are not limited to):

- Illness (including mental-health illness) and medical/dental appointments (see sections 4.2 and 4.3 for more detail)
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parent(s) belong(s). If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parent's religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart
- Parent(s) travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh gypsies, Irish and Scottish travellers, showmen (fairground people) and circus people, bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and new travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school, but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision
- If the pupil is currently suspended or excluded from school (and no alternative provision has been made)

Other reasons the school may allow a pupil to be absent from the school site, which are not classified as absences, include (but are not limited to):

- Attending an offsite approved educational activity, sporting activity or visit or trip arranged by the school
- Attending another school at which the pupil is also registered (dual registration)
- Attending provision arranged by the local authority
- Attending work experience
- If there is any other unavoidable cause for the pupil not to attend school, such as disruption to travel caused by an emergency, a lack of access arrangements, or because the school premises are closed

"It is the legal responsibility of every parent to make sure their child receives that education either by attendance at a school or by education otherwise than at a school. Where parents decide to have their child registered at school, they have an additional legal duty to ensure their child attends that school regularly. This means their child must attend every day that the school is open, except in a small number of allowable circumstances such as being too ill to attend or being given permission for an absence in advance from the school" (Working together to improve school attendance, Department for Education, August 2024).

Additional points to note:

Mental Health and Wellbeing: Parents who have concerns about their child's mental wellbeing can contact our school's Designated Safeguarding Lead for further information on the support available. Parents should also contact their GP or the NHS Helpline by phoning telephone number 111 for advice if they are concerned. In case of emergency parents should dial 999.

Pupils taken ill during the school day: If a pupil needs to be sent home due to illness, this should be by agreement with an appropriately authorised member of school staff. In such circumstances, the pupil must be collected from the school office by a parent or another authorised adult. No pupil will be allowed to leave the school site without parental confirmation.

7.2 Sanctions

Our school will make use of the full range of potential sanctions – including, but not limited to, those listed below – to tackle poor attendance. Decisions will be made on an individual, case-by-case basis.

Penalty notices

The headteacher (or someone authorised by them), local authority or the police can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age, by issuing a penalty notice.

If the school issues a penalty notice, it will check with the local authority before doing so, and send it a copy of any penalty notice issued.

Before issuing a penalty notice, the school will consider the individual case, including:

- Whether the national threshold for considering a penalty notice has been met (10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks)
- Whether a penalty notice is the best available tool to improve attendance for that pupil
- Whether further support, a notice to improve or another legal intervention would be a more appropriate solution
- Whether any obligations that the school has under the Equality Act 2010 make issuing a penalty notice inappropriate

Each parent who is liable for the pupil's offence(s) can be issued with a penalty notice, but this will usually only be the parent/parents who allowed the absence.

The payment must be made directly to the local authority, regardless of who issues the notice. If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute or withdraw the notice.

If issued with a **first** penalty notice, the parent must pay £80 within 21 days, or £160 within 28 days.

If a **second** penalty notice is issued to the same parent in respect of the same pupil, the parent must pay £160 if paid within 28 days.

A **third** penalty notice cannot be issued to the same parent in respect of the same child within 3 years of the date of the issue of the first penalty notice. In a case where the national threshold is met for a third time within those 3 years, alternative action will be taken instead.

A penalty notice may also be issued where parents allow their child to be present in a public place during school hours without reasonable justification, during the first 5 days of a suspension or exclusion (where the school has notified the parents that the pupil must not be present in a public place on that day). These penalty notices are not included in the National Framework, not subject to the same considerations about support being provided, and do not count towards the limit as part of the escalation process.

In these cases, the parent must pay £60 within 21 days, or £120.

Notices to improve

If the national threshold has been met and support is appropriate, but parents do not engage with offers of support, the school may offer a notice to improve to give parents a final chance to engage with support.

Notices to improve will be issued in line with processes set out in the local code of conduct for the local authority area in which the pupil attends school.

They will include:

- Details of the pupil's attendance record and of the offences
- The benefits of regular attendance and the duty of parents under [section 7 of the Education Act 1996](#)
- Details of the support provided so far
- Opportunities for further support, or to access previously provided support that was not engaged with

- A clear warning that a penalty notice may be issued if attendance doesn't improve within the improvement period, along with details of what sufficient improvement looks like, which will be decided on a case-by-case basis
- A clear timeframe of between 3 and 6 weeks for the improvement period
- The grounds on which a penalty notice may be issued before the end of the improvement period

8. Strategies for promoting attendance

The importance of good attendance is highlighted in RSHE lessons and assemblies.

Class and whole-school attendance records are collated on a weekly basis and shared with parents and carers as part of our Friday newsletter.

Parents/carers are kept informed of the child's attendance through parents' evenings and end-of-year reports.

9. Supporting pupils who are absent or returning to school

9.1 Pupils absent due to complex barriers to attendance

We encourage parents and pupils to be open and honest with us about the reason for the pupil's absence. If a child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or for a parent to give in to pressure to let the child stay at home. This can give the impression to the child that attendance does not matter and can make things worse. As a school, we need to understand the reasons why a pupil is reluctant to attend in order to be able to support pupils and parents in the best way.

Where attendance patterns do not improve, more letters may be issued. These will include offers of support from the school in order that we can work together to improve the situation. If we have concerns around the level or pattern of absence related to illness, we will request that parents provide medical evidence. This measure is only executed after several other interventions in order to avoid placing unnecessary burden on the medical system. If there is a continuing problem then attendance meetings may be called where parents are asked into the school to discuss the barriers to their child(ren)'s good attendance. We are always keen to work alongside parents and children to successfully address any attendance concerns. However, if parents do not make use of the support offered and improve their child's attendance to an acceptable level, this will result in further external agency involvement and may lead to a penalty notice being applied.

Our first step when dealing with any concern is always to work with the family to address any underlying problems that may be causing the attendance issue. This may be through the Headteacher, PFSA or SENDCo. Attendance meetings may include targets being set for children's future attendance, an Attendance Contract being drawn up or support from the Team Around the School being offered.

We will not usually request legal sanctions from the Local Authority in cases where poor attendance is symptomatic of complex family circumstances. In such circumstances, our school will take a holistic approach to the issue, and involve other agencies as necessary. The exception to this will be where parents fail to accept or engage with support offered by the school and/or other agencies, or fail to implement the suggested changes. Where appropriate the school will involve the Education Safeguarding Service in these proceedings. This may include the initiation of a warning period or the issuing of penalty notices.

If our school has safeguarding concerns about a pupil who is absent, we will share information with other agencies as we deem necessary.

The school may send attendance reminder letters to pupils under the age of 5. This is to help them form good attendance and punctuality habits at an early stage.

Escalation of Concern: Lateness	
No concerns	
Several late marks or a pattern in lateness identified	Informal letter to highlight the problem Offers of school support
No improvement after letter	Formal letter to express concerns and consequences Offers of school support
No improvement after letter	Request parent meeting to address concerns
No improvement after school intervention or no engagement with school	Referral to TAS/ESS
Improvement in punctuality after a warning	Thank you acknowledgement letter

Escalation of Concern: Attendance	
No concerns	
Attendance below 4 days / 8 sessions or a number of sporadic absences in a short time or any unexplained absences or suspicious attendance patterns	Informal letter or a call from the Class Teacher to highlight the problem Offers of school support
No improvement after letter (attendance below 7-9 days / 14 - 18 sessions)	Formal letter to express concerns and consequences Offers of school support
Repeated sporadic illness without evidence	Request for medical evidence
No improvement after letter	Request parent meeting to address concerns
No improvement after school intervention or no engagement with school	Referral to TAS/ESS
Improvement in attendance after warning	Thank you acknowledgement letter

9.2 Pupils absent due to mental or physical ill health or SEND

Where a child has a pattern of illness related absence that causes concern then the school will make a request for medical evidence to be provided before any further illness or medical appointment related absence can be authorised. Parents will be notified of the initiation of this process by letter and the letter will outline the reason why this measure has been taken and what constitutes appropriate medical evidence.

As a general outline Westonzoyland will accept medical appointment letters, appointment cards (with the child's name and date), prescriptions in the child's name, doctor's letters, or stamped and signed compliments slips – again with the child's name on.

It is the responsibility of the parents/carers to provide this evidence, not of the school to seek it out. Although we acknowledge that there are some instances where medical evidence is difficult to obtain; it should be remembered that this measure is only put in place where there are already concerns around a child's attendance. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily. In some instances the school may ask the parent to obtain a letter from a GP, or the school may seek parental permission to contact the pupil's GP directly.

The reporting of absence due to illness remains the responsibility of the parent. Absences due to illness which have **not** been reported to the school by the parent on the first day of absence may not be authorised.

If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised. When a medical evidence request is made it remains in place for the rest of the academic year.

Where a pupil has an education health and care (EHC) plan and their attendance falls, or the school becomes aware of barriers to attendance that related to the pupil's needs, the school will inform the local authority.

9.3 Pupils returning to school after a lengthy or unavoidable period of absence

Westonzoyland continues to provide as much education as the child's medical condition allows to keep up the momentum of their learning.

Educational support, including the provision of work and materials is provided for those pupils who are absent from school, with medical conditions for more than 5 days. The teaching staff liaise with medical advisers, and/or home tuition providers so that, during prolonged absence, pupils receive suitable work for their age and ability group.

The reintegration of children into school after a long absence through ill health is considered a high priority. The school consults parents about general concerns, medical issues and the timing and pace of return. Staff, including the class teacher, teaching assistants, and Home or Hospital tutor meet to discuss the return to school. Friends and other pupils are encouraged to help the child settle back into school. Extra support is provided (subject to available resources) after an analysis of the child's needs.

10. Attendance monitoring

10.1 Monitoring attendance

Attendance of all pupils is examined regularly – usually once a fortnight. If there is a frequent pattern of absence or lateness, the Headteacher or designated attendance lead will contact the parents/carers to inform them of the problem. Attendance letters will be sent to any child whose attendance is causing concern (for example through repeated lateness, high levels of absence or suspicious attendance patterns). Class attendance data is generally looked at once a week in order to give assembly rewards and praise. Whole school attendance data (including vulnerable groups) is reported to governors at each meeting.

In addition, the school will monitor attendance and absence data (including punctuality) half-termly, termly and yearly across the school and at an individual pupil, year group and cohort level.

Specific pupil information will be shared with the DfE on request.

Data will be collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics.

The school will benchmark its attendance data at whole school, year group and cohort level against local, regional, and national levels to identify areas of focus for improvement, and share this with the governing board.

10.2 Analysing attendance

The school will:

- Analyse attendance and absence data regularly to identify pupils, groups or cohorts that need additional support with their attendance, and
- Identify pupils whose absences may be a cause for concern, especially those who demonstrate patterns of persistent or severe absence
- Conduct thorough analysis of half-termly, termly, and full-year data to identify patterns and trends
- Look at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence, and then develop strategies to address these patterns

10.3 Using data to improve attendance

At Westonzoyland Primary School we will:

- Develop targeted actions to address patterns of absence (of all severities) of individual pupils, groups or cohorts that it has identified via data analysis
- Provide targeted support to the pupils it has identified whose absences may be a cause for concern, especially those who demonstrate patterns of persistent or severe absence, and their families (see section 8.4 below)
- Provide regular attendance reports to class teachers, to facilitate discussions with pupils and families, and to the governing board and school leaders (including special educational needs co-ordinators, designated safeguarding leads and the pupil premium lead.
- Use data to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place in order to modify them and inform future strategies
- Share information and work collaboratively with other schools in the area, local authorities and other partners where a pupil's absence is at risk of becoming persistent or severe, including keeping them informed regarding specific pupils, where appropriate

10.4 Reducing persistent and severe absence

Persistent absence is where a pupil misses 10% or more of school, and severe absence is where a pupil misses 50% or more of school. Reducing persistent and severe absence is central to the school's strategy for improving attendance.

The school will:

- Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence
- Consider potential safeguarding issues and, where suspected or present, address them in line with Keeping Children Safe in Education
- Hold regular meetings with the parents of pupils who the school (and/or local authority) considers to be vulnerable or at risk of persistent or severe absence, or who are persistently or severely absent, to:
 - Discuss attendance and engagement at school
 - Listen, and understand barriers to attendance
 - Explain the help that is available
 - Explain the potential consequences of, and sanctions for, persistent and severe absence
 - Review any existing actions or interventions
- Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance, in conjunction with the local authority, where relevant
- Consider alternative support that could be put in place to remove any barriers to attendance and re-engage these pupils. In doing so, the school will sensitively consider some of the reasons for absence
- Implement sanctions, where necessary (see section 7.2, above)

11. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Headteacher or more frequently if there are changes to legislation and guidance. At every review, the policy will be shared with the governing body.

12. Links with other policies

This policy links to the following policies:

- Child protection and safeguarding policy
- Behaviour policy

Appendix 1 – The Support-First Approach to Attendance

We have high aspirations for all our pupils. Where there are barriers to attendance, we will work with pupils, their families and other support services to ensure support is available to improve attendance. Where this support is not engaged with or fails, we will work with the Local Authority to consider formalised support and the appropriate use of statutory frameworks, including prosecution, to improve attendance.

This support-first framework forms part of the statutory guidance to support good school attendance.

EXPECT	Aspire to high standards of attendance for all pupils and parents and build a culture where all can, and want to, be in school ready to learn by prioritising attendance improvement across the school.
MONITOR	Rigorously use attendance data to identify patterns or poor attendance (at individual and cohort level) as soon as possible so all parties can work together to resolve them before they become entrenched.
LISTEN AND UNDERSTAND	When a pattern is spotted, discuss with pupils and parents to listen and understand barriers to attendance and agree how all partners can work together to resolve them.
FACILITATE SUPPORT	Remove barriers in school and help pupils and parents to access the support they need to overcome the barriers outside school. This might include an early help or whole family plan where absence is a symptom of wider issues.
FORMALISE SUPPORT	Where absence persists and voluntary support is not working or being engaged with, partners should work together to explain the consequences clearly and ensure support is also in place to enable families to respond. Depending on the circumstances this may include formalising support through a parenting contract or education supervision order.
ENFORCE	Where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or being engaged with, enforce attendance through statutory intervention or prosecution to protect the child's right to education.

Appendix 2 – Information for Parents About Penalty Notices

Information for Parents about Penalty Notices for Unauthorised Absence from School

Following the introduction of the new National Framework for Penalty Notices, the following changes will come into force for Penalty Notices issued for unauthorised absences recorded after 19 August 2024. This information refers to penalty notices that are considered for irregular attendance and unauthorised term-time leave.

All penalty notices are issued within the [Somerset Penalty Notice Code of Conduct](#).

Who can be fined?

Penalty Notices can be issued to each parent/carer of each child whose unauthorised absence meets the national threshold.

For example, in a family with two parents and three children taking unauthorised term-time leave, each parent could receive a penalty notice for each child absent from school, resulting in six penalty notices being issued.

The National Threshold

Schools are required to consider whether a penalty notice is appropriate when a child has 10 sessions of unauthorised absence within a rolling 10 school week period. 10 sessions would typically be the equivalent of five days.

These sessions do not have to be consecutive and can be a combination of any unauthorised absence codes (G, O, N or U).

The rolling ten school week period can span terms, school years and schools.

The First Offence

The first time a parent is issued with a penalty notice in relation to a child's absence, they will be able to pay the reduced amount of £80 if they pay within 21 days, otherwise the full amount of £160 is payable within 28 days.

The Second Offence

If a parent is issued with a second penalty notice within three years the amount payable will be £160 within 28 days. The reduced amount will not be available.

The Third Offence

If a parent becomes eligible for a third (or more) penalty notice within three years of the first being issued, a penalty notice can not be issued and the Local Authority will consider other measures to address attendance concerns. This may include prosecution, which could result in a fine of up to £2,500 and the parent having a criminal record. If convicted, the offence will also show on any future DBS checks.

Not Paying a Penalty Notice

Penalty notices are only issued to parents when they have committed the offence of

The Law

Penalty notices are issued in line with Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 when a parent

failing to ensure their child's regular attendance at school.

A penalty notice gives the parent the chance to write the offence off without needing to go to court.

It is not an offence not to pay a penalty notice, but the Local Authority may then prosecute the parent for the original offence.

has failed to ensure their child's regular attendance at school.

Penalty notices can only be issued when:

- ✓ A child's absence meets the national threshold
- ✓ Support has been attempted (if appropriate)
- ✓ Issuing a penalty notice is compliant with the Somerset Penalty Notice Code of Conduct

Appendix 3 – Additional Resources to Support Attendance

Guidance for Parents on School Attendance

Here, the Children's Commissioner provides information and resources to support parents with school attendance and school applications.



[Visit the guidance for parents on school attendance website.](#)

Is my Child too ill for School?

This website supports parents to understand whether their child is too unwell to go to school, including things to look out for, basic health advice and links to further information.



[Visit Is my Child too ill for School on the NHS website.](#)

Supporting Absence as a Result of Illness

This document outlines how you can work with schools and other agencies to support a child that is absent due to illness.



[Open this PDF document on the Children's Commissioner website.](#)

Somerset Early Help Assessment

This document can – and should – be used to support children and families experiencing significant barriers to attendance.



[Open this Word document on the Professional Choices website.](#)

Working Together to Improve School Attendance

This statutory guidance outlines how parents, schools and local authorities should work together to support children and their families.



[Open this PDF document on the Department for Education website.](#)

Emotionally Based School Avoidance

This website provides support, training and advice for parents whose children are experiencing emotionally based school avoidance.



[Visit the Somerset website for Emotionally Based School Avoidance](#)

Connect Somerset

The Connect Somerset partnership provides a huge amount of information about the support available in your community and how to access it.



[Visit the Connect Somerset website for local support and information.](#)

Appendix 4: attendance codes

The following codes are taken from the DfE's [guidance on school attendance](#).

Code	Definition	Scenario
I	Present (am)	Pupil is present at morning registration
I	Present (pm)	Pupil is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Pupil arrives late before register has closed
Attending a place other than the school		
K	Attending education provision arranged by the local authority	Pupil is attending a place other than a school at which they are registered, for educational provision arranged by the local authority
V	Attending an educational visit or trip	Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised or approved by the school
P	Participating in a sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
W	Attending work experience	Pupil is on an approved work experience placement
B	Attending any other approved educational activity	Pupil is attending a place for an approved educational activity that is not a sporting activity or work experience
D	Dual registered	Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
Absent – leave of absence		
C1	Participating in a regulated performance or undertaking regulated employment abroad	Pupil is undertaking employment (paid or unpaid) during school hours, approved by the school
M	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment
J1	Interview	Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment

S	Study leave	Pupil has been granted leave of absence to study for a public examination
X	Not required to be in school	Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
C2	Part-time timetable	Pupil is not in school due to having a part-time timetable
C	Exceptional circumstances	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
Absent – other authorised reasons		
T	Parent travelling for occupational purposes	Pupil is a 'mobile child' who is travelling with their parent(s) who are travelling for occupational purposes
R	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance
I	Illness (not medical or dental appointment)	Pupil is unable to attend due to illness (either related to physical or mental health)
E	Suspended or excluded	Pupil has been suspended or excluded from school and no alternative provision has been made
Absent – unable to attend school because of unavoidable cause		
Q	Lack of access arrangements	Pupil is unable to attend school because the local authority has failed to make access arrangements to enable attendance at school
Y1	Transport not available	Pupil is unable to attend because school is not within walking distance of their home and the transport normally provided is not available
Y2	Widespread disruption to travel	Pupil is unable to attend because of widespread disruption to travel caused by a local, national or international emergency
Y3	Part of school premises closed	Pupil is unable to attend because they cannot practicably be accommodated in the part of the premises that remains open

Y4	Whole school site unexpectedly closed	Every pupil absent as the school is closed unexpectedly (e.g. due to adverse weather)
Y5	Criminal justice detention	Pupil is unable to attend as they are: • In police detention • Remanded to youth detention, awaiting trial or sentencing, or • Detained under a sentence of detention
Y6	Public health guidance or law	Pupil's travel to or attendance at the school would be prohibited under public health guidance or law
Y7	Any other unavoidable cause	To be used where an unavoidable cause is not covered by the other codes
Absent – unauthorised absence		
G	Holiday not granted by the school	Pupil is absent for the purpose of a holiday, not approved by the school
N	Reason for absence not yet established	Reason for absence has not been established before the register closes
O	Absent in other or unknown circumstances	No reason for absence has been established, or the school isn't satisfied that the reason given would be recorded using one of the codes for authorised absence
U	Arrived in school after registration closed	Pupil has arrived late, after the register has closed but before the end of session
Administrative codes		
Z	Prospective pupil not on admission register	Pupil has not joined school yet but has been registered
#	Planned whole-school closure	Whole-school closures that are known and planned in advance, including school holidays

REQUEST FOR AUTHORISATION FOR HOLIDAY DURING TERM TIME

(Attendance Policy Appendix 5)

Dear Parents / Carers,

The school is upholding its role in accordance with current legislation and Governmental strategy.

Please read the following important guidance before making a request:

The current law does not give any entitlements to parents/carers to take their children on holiday during term time. Absence from school without the Head Teachers permission will be classed as unauthorised absence (G Coded) and may lead to the issuing of a Penalty Notice (fine). A Penalty Notice will be issued to a parent where more than 10 sessions of absence are recorded in 10 school weeks (ie. 70 sessions). There are 2 sessions per day, one in the morning and one in the afternoon.

Further information on school attendance and Penalty Notices can be found on the Council website: [INSET days and term-time absence \(somerset.gov.uk\)](https://www.somerset.gov.uk/inset-days-and-term-time-absence)

TO THE HEADTEACHER

I wish to apply for my child(ren) to be authorised as being absent from school.

First day absence:

Last day of absence:

Name of children	Class

ANY EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES AS OUTLINED IN THE ACCOMPANYING LETTER?

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Name of Parent/Carer 1:	Name of Parent/Carer 2:
Signature of Parent/Carer 1:	Signature of Parent/Carer 2:
Date:	Date:

COMPLETED BY THE HEADTEACHER:

Does the absence represent an exceptional circumstance and so can be authorised in line with the guidance above?

Authorised: ☐

Unauthorised: ☐

Will a penalty notice be sought for this absence?

Yes: ☐ No: ☐ Not unless there are further absences: ☐

Date formed received:

Current attendance: %

Signed:

Date: