



## Westfield Primary Community School

### Policy on Attendance

<b>Approved By:</b>	School Improvement Committee
<b>Date:</b>	October 2022
<b>Review Date:</b>	October 2025

### ***Vision for Westfield***

*Together we strive to:*

***Inspire*** a love for our community through mutual respect, teamwork and the shared belief that anything is possible

***Create*** a learning culture which recognises potential, celebrates achievement and respects individuality

***Nurture*** strong relationships in a safe and secure environment, where opinions are valued and kindness is the core

### Why does attendance matter?

Children need to attend school regularly if they are to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them. Good attendance allows children to become confident learners, strengthens their sense of belonging and forms good habits which will be required in future employment.

Research clearly demonstrates the link between regular attendance and pupils' progress and attainment.

### Working Together

Parents, carers and school staff should work together to make education a success and allow all children to have full and equal access to everything the school has to offer. Under the 1996 Education Act, parents / carers have a legal responsibility for ensuring their children attend school regularly and punctually. As a school, we will encourage parents/carers to make sure their child achieves the best possible attendance and that any problems that prevent this are identified and acted on promptly.

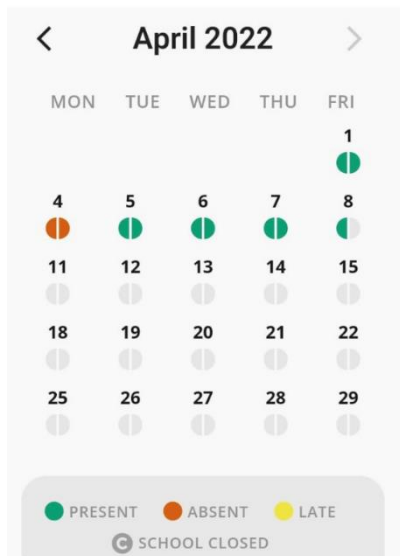
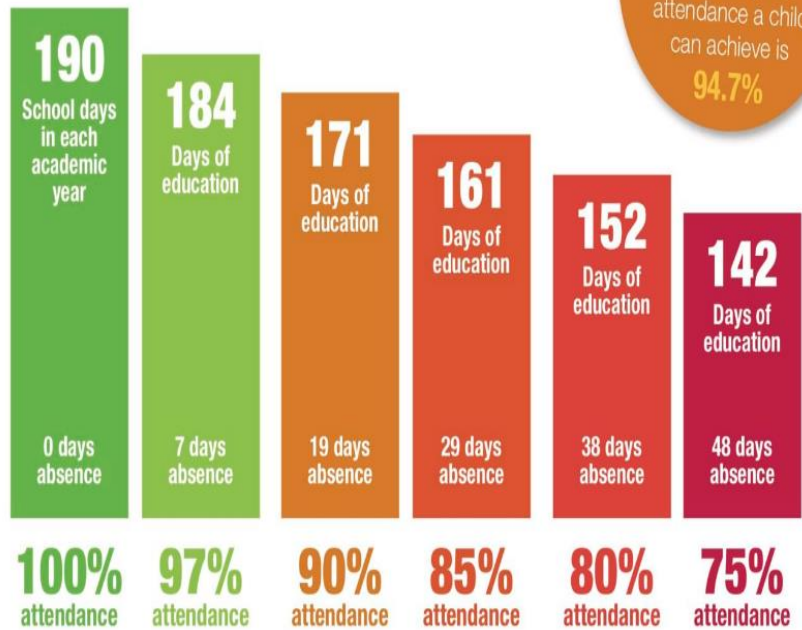
Attendance will always be discussed as part of Parents' Evenings and reported in the children's annual written school reports. Parents are able to monitor their children's attendance at any time via the ScholarPack App.

# Good Attendance means...

Being in school at least 97% of the time or 184 to 190 days

**Remember**  
Education is important - don't miss out!

**Did you know?**  
A two week holiday in term-time means that the highest attendance a child can achieve is **94.7%**



We expect that pupils will:

- Be in school every day unless they are too unwell or exceptional circumstances mean they cannot attend
- Arrive at school on time and enter via their playground doors
- Come prepared for the day, dressed appropriately and with their PE kit available.

We ask that parents/carers will:

- Be aware of their legal responsibilities and make sure their child attends school every day, unless they are too unwell or exceptional circumstances means they cannot attend
- Be prepared for school so children arrive on time and with their PE kit, reading record and reading book
- Contact the school daily of any absence, before 9:00am
- Notify school of any changes to emergency contact details
- Regularly talk to and praise their child about school. Children are more likely to want to attend and learn if they feel supported
- Arrange visits, trips and holidays outside of term time
- Arrange any non-urgent or medical or dental appointments outside of the school day
- Inform the school of any planned absences (including term time holidays)
- Respond to contact from the school when following up unexplained absences

Our class teachers and teaching assistants will:

- Build good relationships with all children so they know they are valued, respected, listened to, and want to come to school
- Provide a safe and welcoming environment which the children want to be part of
- Deliver engaging and worthwhile learning experiences that inspire children to attend
- Encourage good attendance through regular and ongoing conversations with their pupils and families
- Ensure that registers are correctly and promptly completed
- Make contact with parents when concerns arise and discuss children's attendance as a matter of course at Parents' Evenings

As a school we will:

- Provide a safe and welcoming environment which children want to be a part of
- Have a clear strategy in place to improve attendance and ensure its high priority across school
- Give attendance the high profile it requires by encouraging good attendance and punctuality through school systems, incentives and positive recognition
- Meet the legal requirements set out by Government and consistently record authorised and unauthorised absences within statutory guidance
- Follow procedures for contacting parents when a child fails to attend and where no message has been received to explain the absence
- Monitor individual pupils attendance and punctuality
- Identify, follow up and record unauthorised absence, patterns of absence and parent condoned absence
- Hold regular conversations and offer support to families of children with poor attendance.
- Work with the Local Authority to issue fixed penalty notices to families where pupil attendance is unacceptable

- Make referrals to Children's Services when there are significant concerns around pupil attendance
- Effectively support, and make reasonable adjustments for pupils with additional needs.
- Encourage open communication between families and school
- Provide regular updates about attendance and punctuality to the Governing Body

## Attendance Routines and Procedures in School

### Timings of the School Day

- Reception: 8:50am – 3:00pm
- Key Stage 1: 8:50am – 3:00pm
- Key Stage 2: 8:50am – 3:15pm

### Registration Procedures

Registers are taken twice a day: once at the start of the school day at 9:00am, and again at the start of the afternoon session at 12:45pm (EYFS and KS1) and 1:00pm (KS2). Class teachers take the register and submit these to the office. The registers remain open for 30 minutes. Pupils arriving at school after 9:00am but before the end of the registration period, will be given an L code in the register (late before registers close). The number of minutes late will be recorded in the register with a reason why. Pupils arriving after the registers have closed will be coded U (late after registers close) which counts as an unauthorised absence for the session. Further information on punctuality procedures are detailed on page 7.

### First Day Absence Contact

Parents are expected to notify the school if their child is unable to attend school. If the school does not receive notification, it will send a text message by 9:15am requesting parents / carers telephone the school immediately. If there is no response to this within 15 minutes, school will telephone the first emergency contact. If school is unable to make contact, they will then call the other emergency contacts listed for the pupil. First day contact will be carried out as early as possible in the school day, in order to notify parents whose children may have set off for school, but not arrived, as quickly as possible.

### Continuing Absence Procedures

In the event of an absence of two or more days without contact from the family, the Children's Champions / SLT will make a home visit to check on the welfare of the child. A decision will be made following this whether additional services need to become involved. In some circumstances, home visits may be made on the first day of absence.

### Absence without Reason

When children are absent from school, a reason must be provided. If a child returns to school from being absent and no reason has been given, the office will continue to make contact to obtain this information. If these efforts are unsuccessful, parents will be asked to collect their child from the school office at the end of the day so the reason for absence can be discussed.

### Vulnerable Children

Children who are Looked After, subject to a Child Protection Plan, Child in Need plan, and other pupils the school have identified as vulnerable, will be known to the administration team and the Attendance Officer. The Children's Champions will regularly update the list of vulnerable pupils held

by the admin team. Each day, a member of the admin team will email the Headteacher, Deputy Headteacher, Children's Champions and Attendance Officer with the details of any vulnerable pupils absent from school. This will be followed up immediately by a telephone call home, a home visit or a call to Children's Services (01905 551900).

### Authorised and Unauthorised Absences

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by the parent/carer), as either authorised or unauthorised. This is why information about the cause of absence is always required. Each half-day is known as a session.

**Authorised absences** are morning or afternoon sessions away from school for a genuine reason such as illness (you may be asked to provide medical evidence for your child before this can be authorised), medical or dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, religious observance, emergencies or other unavoidable circumstances.

**Unauthorised absences** are those which the school does not consider reasonable or necessary. Unauthorised absence includes, but is not limited to:

- Keeping children off school unnecessarily e.g. they have a non-infectious illness or injury that would not affect their ability to learn.
- children who arrive at school after registers close and are marked with a 'U'
- shopping trips / visiting friends / day trips
- feeling tired / have had a late night
- looking after other children or accompanying siblings/parents to appointments
- staying at home because a parent / sibling is unwell
- own or family birthdays
- unauthorised holidays (more detail below)
- truancy / school refusal
- absences which have not been properly explained or agreed

Unauthorised absences can lead to the Local Authority issuing each parent with a Penalty Notice or referring the matter to the Magistrates Court. Further information about this is detailed on page 7.

Children attend school for 190 days a year. That means 175 days a year are not spent in school. This allows plenty of time for appointments, holidays, visits to family and friends and everything else.

### Medical Appointments

**Dental appointments:** Children typically attend the dentist for routine appointments twice a year. Routine appointments can be made in advance and therefore should be made in school holidays or outside of school hours.

**Medical appointments:** Non urgent medical appointments can also be made outside of school hours. We understand that some appointments, such as consultant and specialist appointments, will fall within school hours. Where children are required to attend appointments in the school day, it is expected that they will attend school both before and after appointment, if they are well enough to do so.

Parents / carers are required to provide the school office with proof for all medical and dental appointments. This can be in the form of a letter, text message or appointment card.

## Holidays in Term Time

Children have 13 weeks when they do not attend school each year. It is expected that parents / carers planning family holidays will arrange these during the 13 weeks and not within term time.

If parents plan to take their children out of school for a holiday, they must contact the school office to discuss the request and complete a leave of absence request form. The office will advise families that they may be issued with a penalty notice if the request is not authorised.

Once received, the individual requests will be considered on a case-by-case basis, whilst applying government recommendations to determine if the request will be authorised or unauthorised.

Exceptional circumstances may include:

- Service personnel and other employees who are prevented from taking holidays outside term time if the holiday will have minimal disruption to the pupil's education.
- When a family needs to spend time together to support each other during or after a crisis.

Exceptional circumstances do not include:

- Availability of cheap holidays
- Availability of desired accommodation
- Poor weather experienced in school holiday periods
- Overlap with the beginning or end of term / INSET days

In circumstances where a request from a parent / carer for an absence is not authorised, school will respond to the request directly. This response will constitute a valid warning to the parent / carer about a potential penalty notice. Penalty notices can be issued when a minimum of 10 sessions in total (five school days) of absence have been accrued. The absences will be recorded as a 'G' code (unauthorised holiday) in the attendance register. A copy of the absence request returned to the parent or carer, advising them that they are at risk of being issued with penalty notice, will be kept on the pupil's school file.

It is essential that parents / carers inform us if pupils are going on holiday in term time. If we are unaware and unable to make contact to establish why the child is absent, we will follow up the absence with home visits and may involve other agencies such as the Police and Children's Services to ensure the welfare of the child. If parents have not requested leave for a holiday in advance then, by default the absence is not agreed, as leave of absence cannot be approved retrospectively.

To minimise the impact of term time holidays on pupils' learning, work to complete will be sent home for the child to complete.

## Religious Observance

The DfE recommends the use of Code 'R' when children are absent from school to take part in any day set aside exclusively for religious observance by the religious body to which the parents belong, including religious festivals. Parents are encouraged to give advance notice. This is interpreted to mean that if the parent's religious organisation sets the day as a religious festival then the school must authorise the absence. Where necessary, schools should seek advice from the parent's religious body about whether it has set the day apart for religious observance. If the religious body has not set the day apart there is no requirement for the school to approve the absence or grant a



leave absence. Additional holidays and days off linked to the religious festival but not “exclusively set aside for religious observance” by the religious body are not marked using Code ‘R’.

### Children Missing in Education

We have a duty to notify the local authority when we are about to remove a pupil’s name from the school admission register. This does not apply when the pupil has completed the final year of education normally provided by the school. When removing a pupil’s name, the notification to the local authority must include: (a) the full name of the pupil, (b) the full name and address of any parent with whom the pupil normally resides, (c) at least one telephone number of the parent, (d) the pupil’s future address and destination school (DfE Children Missing Education, Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities, September 2016).

When pupils leave and parents have not provided the school with the above information, and the school cannot contact the parents, then the child is considered to be a ‘Child Missing Education’. This means that the school and Local Authority have a legal duty to carry out investigations, which may include liaising with Children’s Services (formerly Social Services), the Police and other agencies, to try to track and locate the child. By providing us the above information, unnecessary investigations can be avoided.

### Encouraging Good Attendance

At Westfield, incentives are used to raise the profile of good attendance. These incentives include:

- Recognition at Parents’ Evenings and in pupils’ school reports
- Phone calls / discussions with parents to recognise good attendance and improving patterns
- Sticker charts / small prizes for individual children, where necessary
- Encouragement and celebration of class attendance in weekly assemblies

### When Attendance Causes Concern

The Attendance Officer monitors pupil absence daily. As a result, when absence begins to cause concern, swift action is taken.

The class teacher will raise concerns with parents / carers in the first instance. They will share the pupil’s current attendance record, establish the reasons for absence and offer support. The impact absence is having on learning will be discussed. Class teachers will outline the expectations of pupil attendance and will inform parents / carers that absence will continue to be monitored closely. These conversations will take place as soon as concerns over a pupil’s attendance arise so that support can be put in place before absence rates have a significant impact on learning and progress.

**Stage 1:** The class teacher will update the Attendance Officer about the discussions held and a CPOMS record will be kept. The Attendance Officer will continue to monitor absence rates for the next 15 school days.

**Stage 2:** Should the pattern of poor attendance continue, the Attendance Officer will then make further contact. The parents / carers will be invited in for an informal attendance meeting during which:

- Pupil attendance / absence information will be shared
- The impact of absence on learning and progress will be discussed
- A target will be set with a clear timescale for improvement

- Consequences of failing to improve attendance will be outlined
- Parents / carers will be informed that future absences may not be authorised without medical proof
- The City of York Council Fast Track system will be explained
- Further discussions around the support the family needs to make improvements will be held

A record of the conversation will be kept on CPOMS

**Stage 3:** Attendance will be monitored for a further 15 school days. If little or no improvement is seen then parents / carers will be invited in for a formal attendance panel meeting. The aim of the meeting will always be to secure an improvement in attendance, however, parents / carers will be reminded that the LA may decide to issue a Penalty Notice if there is no improvement in the child's attendance. A further target for attendance will be agreed, and a review date set. Parents will be written to following the meeting and a record of the conversation made on CPOMS.

**Stage 4:** This will be held at the agreed date following Stage 3. If at the review there has been no acceptable improvement in the child's attendance then discussion should take place with the Headteacher, Attendance Officer and Local Authority's Attendance Advisor. If it is decided that a Penalty Notice should be issued then the school will request this from the Local Authority's School's Attendance Advisor.

A penalty notice would mean the parents/carers have to make a payment of either £60.00 or £120.00 per parent, per child depending on when they pay the penalty notice.

If parents do not pay penalty notice fines it is likely they will be prosecuted by the Local Authority as parents have a duty to ensure their child receives an appropriate full time education. If they fail in this duty they may be guilty of an offence under Section 444(1A) of the Education Act 1996 and liable to prosecution. If convicted parents, can be fined up to a maximum of £2500 per parent and/or receive a custodial sentence of up to 3 months.

### Persistent Absence

The Department for Education defines any pupil with attendance of less than 90% as a 'persistent absentee'. This means they have missed **10%** or more of the available sessions, regardless of whether or not these absences have been authorised. Pupils who are persistent absentees are at particular risk of achieving poor outcomes at school and beyond.

### Punctuality

Punctuality to school is essential. Lateness into school causes disruption to your child's learning and to that of the other pupils in the class. Arriving late means your child may miss out on essential information about the day, miss key learning points, feel embarrassed about walking in when their peers are all settled and miss out on the time to talk with their friends and teachers before learning begins. It is paramount that all pupils arrive at school on time.

Parents/carers should note that children who arrive after 9:20am are given a 'U' code, which is the equivalent of an unauthorised absence and this will affect the child's attendance figures.

Children who repeatedly arrive at school late (after 9:00am) will be brought to the attention of the Attendance Officer. They will make contact with you to establish the reasons for persistent



lateness and offer support. The punctuality of your child will then be monitored closely. The process below summarises the action that will be taken.

1. Registers reviewed daily and children who arrive late identified
2. After three occasions of lateness, a phone call or conversation will be held and support will be offered.
3. Should lateness continue, after six occasions a warning letter will be sent home. The letter will share the pupil's lateness record, set expectations of attendance and punctuality, and offer support. It will be explained that the pupil will be monitored for the next 15 school days. The consequences of failure to improve punctuality will be outlined.
4. If punctuality improves during these 15 school days, monitoring will continue with no further action at this point
5. If punctuality does not improve during these 15 school days, parents will be invited in for an attendance panel meeting. A period of a further 15 schools days will be given to effect the improvement.
6. If persistent lateness continues, a penalty notice can be issued.

### **Late Collection**

Parents / carers should call the school if they are going to be late to collect their child at the end of the school day. A member of staff will supervise children for ten minutes after the school day. If the child is not collected, we will look after them in The Den (Westfield's After School Club). This is open until 5:30pm and could incur a charge of up to £6.00.

### **Monitoring Attendance Data to Ensure Improvements**

Pupil attendance is continually monitored and analysed so trends can quickly be identified. This monitoring includes, but is not limited to:

- Daily monitoring of vulnerable pupils and pupils whose attendance is causing concern
- Weekly comparisons of whole school attendance to FFT nationals
- Fortnightly monitoring of Persistent Absentees
- Fortnightly monitoring of late codes
- Half termly monitoring and comparisons of pupil groups
- Half termly analysis of attendance codes to understand reasons for absence
- Termly register reviews for all pupils

### **Support Available**

Whilst parents are legally responsible for ensuring their child attends school regularly, school will always support families where possible. Parents can speak to their child's class teacher or contact the Children's Champions via the school office to arrange a time to talk through any attendance or punctuality concerns. The school may also seek guidance and support from MASH (Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub) and the School Health service where necessary.

All staff know the importance of good attendance and have a responsibility to consistently communicate and promote this. Class teachers, teaching assistants, Children's Champions, the office team and senior leaders all have a role to play supporting families to ensure good attendance. Claire Gomez, Deputy Headteacher, is the senior leader responsible for the strategic approach to attendance in school.