



# Attendance and Punctuality Policy

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Agreed by Whitchurch Primary School & Nursery Governing Body	Name
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Version	Creation Date	Updates
1	Spring 2022	Updated Policy
2	Summer 2023	Updated to included criteria applied when issuing EPNs.

3	Summer 2024	<p>Review and update adopted from Harrow LA model policy, changes include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Removal of legislation linked to previous number of authorised days leave families are entitled to during term time</li> <li>- Increased responsibilities for governing board</li> <li>- Increased responsibilities for the headteacher</li> <li>- Amended timings linked to when the school gates are open in the morning</li> <li>- Included some examples of criteria which may enable the school to authorize an exceptional leave request</li> <li>- Updated changes shared by Harrow LA linked to EPNs</li> <li>- Updated the list of attendance codes used to record attendance and punctuality</li> <li>- Added an explanation for how the school supports pupils who are absent or returning to school from a lengthy period of absence</li> </ul>
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## Attendance and Punctuality Policy

### 'Every Day Counts'

Whitchurch Primary School & Nursery recognises that punctual and regular school attendance are central to raising standards in education and contributes significantly to pupil's progress. Absence from lessons can result in children falling behind in their learning and may also put their safety at risk. Children with regular poor attendance are vulnerable and more likely to underachieve in both primary and secondary school.

Whitchurch Primary School & Nursery promotes 100% school attendance and punctuality for every child. We are committed to equal opportunities and we support pupils and their families in achieving this goal. We want all our pupils and their families to feel valued and welcome.

The SLT, AAO and family liaison officer will use every opportunity to convey to pupils and their parents or carers, the importance of regular and punctual attendance.

Regular and punctual attendance at school is both a legal requirement and an essential component of our safeguarding practice.

This Attendance and Punctuality Policy reflects our statutory responsibilities.

### 1. Aims



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:

- 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. 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 Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)

It also refers to:

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

## 3. Roles and responsibilities

### 3.1 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

### **3.2 The Headteacher**

The Headteacher is responsible for:

- 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
- 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

### **3.3 The designated senior leader responsible for attendance**

The designated senior leader (also known as the 'senior attendance champion') 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 Martin Thompson-Lawrie and can be contacted via 02089515380 and/or email: [mthompson-lawrie@whitchurchprimary.harrow.sch.uk](mailto:mthompson-lawrie@whitchurchprimary.harrow.sch.uk)

### **3.4 Assistant Head teachers and Year Team Leaders are responsible for:**

- Monitoring attendance and punctuality on a daily basis, including liaising with/responding to parental enquiries
- Meeting with the Deputy Headteacher and Admissions and Attendance Officer (AAO) to monitor systems and structures, ensuring they are having an impact on pupil attendance and punctuality
- Undertaking phone calls and/or meetings with parents/carers to discuss concerns related to pupils' attendance
- Ensuring that incentives for attendance and punctuality are being used
- Revising and amending the policy as required with SLT

### **3.5 Sims Administrator for Attendance (Receptionist), Admissions & Attendance Officer (AAO) and Family Liaison Officer (FLO) are responsible for:**

The school attendance officer is responsible for:

- Conducting and recording the outcome of first day calls when a child does not arrive at school and when no reason has been received
- Sending out text messages to parents who have not reported their child absent by 10.00am each day. This is followed up by a phone call, if no reply is received by 11.00am. If there is no information about the child's whereabouts by 11am the Designated Safeguarding Lead (Deputy Headteacher) is notified.
- Monitoring weekly attendance data for all Year groups
- Checking the school's answer phone and taking messages from parents/carers about a pupil's absence

- Informing the Designated Safeguarding Lead (Deputy Headteacher) of any concerns relating to attendance/punctuality
- Producing weekly/termly/yearly data for AHTs/DHT/HT/GB to analyse.
- Benchmarking attendance data to identify areas of focus for improvement
- Recording reasons for absence and updating class registers
- Implementing the daily checking of electronic registers after the morning and afternoon registration sessions
- Maintaining SIMS attendance records in line with this policy
- Reporting to the London Borough of Harrow (LBH), as requested
- Working with education welfare officers to tackle persistent absence
- Maintaining clear communication channels with the SLT regarding attendance and punctuality within their Year groups
- Overseeing the admission and induction of new pupils
- Supporting the Designated Safeguarding Lead (Deputy Headteacher) with the promotion of excellent attendance and punctuality
- Ensuring staff are following the registration systems and structures in this policy
- Reminding parents/carers of school procedures when parents have not complied
- Advises the Headteacher and Deputy Headteacher when to issue fixed-penalty notices

### **3.6 Class Teachers are responsible for:**

- Ensuring quality first teaching every day, with lessons that are well planned and resourced so that they challenge, inspire and meet their learners' needs
- Taking a formal register of all pupils twice a day. This should be done on SIMS or on a paper record when SIMS is not available
- Reminding children and parents about the importance of good attendance
- Providing a safe and welcoming environment which encourages attendance and promotes pupils' well-being
- Establishing effective communication links with parents/carers and working collaboratively to meet the child's needs. If required, to work with external agencies/professionals to assist them in fulfilling all statutory duties (for example, child protection, identifying barriers to good attendance etc.)
- Reporting poor or persistent absences to the delegated Assistant Headteacher or Deputy Headteacher
- Reporting pupil attendance and punctuality to parents/carers at parent consultation meetings and formally in school reports.

### **3.7 Parents/carers are expected to:**

Where this policy refers to a parent/carer, 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:

- Ensure their child attends school and arrives on time every day
- Promote a good attitude to learning by ensuring their child attends school in the correct uniform and with the basic equipment required for lessons
- Arrange medical and dental appointments outside of school time whenever possible
- Provide the school with more than one emergency contact number for their child
- Telephone to inform the school on the first day of their child's absence before 8.30am and each subsequent day of absence(s), and advise when they are expect their child to return to school
- Provide a written explanation of absence electronically and handwritten explanations are accepted, including dates of absence as soon as their child returns to school
- Work in partnership with the school and other agencies in the best interests of their child. This includes informing the school about significant influences and changes in their child's life that may have an impact on their learning or well-being
- Seek support, where necessary, for maintaining good attendance, by contacting the Deputy Headteacher, who can be contacted via 02089515380.

### **3.8 Pupils**

Pupils are expected to attend school every day on time.

## **4. Recording Attendance**

### **4.1 Attendance register**

We will keep an attendance register, and place all pupils onto this register.

We will take our attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. It 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 if 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 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

Pupils must arrive in school by 8.45am on each school day.

The register for the first session will be taken at 8.45am and will be kept open until 9.05am. The register for the second session will be taken at 1.00pm for Reception and Years One to Four and will be kept open until 1.15pm. The register for the second session will be taken at 1.30pm for Years Five and Six and will be kept open until 1.45pm

Nursery: the register for the first session will be taken at 8.30am and will be kept open until 8.45am. The register for the second session will be taken at 12.30pm and will be kept open until 12.45pm.

#### 4.2 Unplanned absence

The pupil's parent/carer must notify the school on the first day of an unplanned absence by 8.45am or as soon as practically possible by calling the school office staff (see also section 7).

Daily procedures	By whom	Outcomes/Action
Parents ensure pupils arrive at school on time	Parents/carers	
Parents inform the school by 8.30am if their child is absent on that day	Parents/carers	SIMs Administrator (SA) update registration codes
Pupils arriving late to school are registered at reception	SA /reception staff	Absence mark on SIMS amended to a late mark by SA
Class teachers record attendance using SIMS at:  Nursery: 8.30 and 12.30  Reception, Years 1-4: 8.45am and 1.00pm Years 5-6: 8.45am and 1.30pm  Completed registers must be sent to the office by 9.05am and 1.30pm	Class teachers/TAs or Supply staff	A paper register is used if SIMS is not available  CTs take responsibility for informing SA/AHT (Inclusion & Safeguarding) of any concerns
1 <sup>st</sup> day of absence: in the absence of a note, email or phone call from the parent:	SA DSL	SA updates attendance codes.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 10.00am – text message sent out to all parents whose child has an unexplained absence</li> <li>● 10.30am – phone call made to any parents who have not responded to the text message.</li> <li>● 11.00am – DSL to be informed of any remaining unexplained absences.</li> <li>● DSL to try all contacts on record.</li> <li>● If unable to make contact, DSL to email parents regarding safeguarding concern.</li> <li>● 1.30pm – if there is still no contact by parents, DSL + one other member of staff to carry out a home visit if required.</li> <li>● 2.00pm – The situation is escalated to the head Teacher where the decision may be made to contact the police.</li> </ul>		
<p>On occasions a written note may be provided by Parents, which should include dates and reason for absence upon the child’s return to school.</p>	<p>Parents/carers</p>	<p>These are collected and filed by SA</p>

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.

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.

#### 4.3 Planned absence

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

However, we encourage parents/carers 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/carer must also apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence. Go to section 5 to find out which term-time absences the school can authorise.

#### 4.4 Absence notes

Parents/carers are expected to write to or email the school and explain the reason for their child's absence. Notes received from parents/carers explaining absence is kept for the remainder of the academic year. Parents/carers can also use the space provided in their child's diary and/or home-school link book. If there are attendance concerns about the pupil that may require further investigation, then the notes may need to be retained for a longer period.

#### 4.5 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

The AAO and SLT monitor lateness of pupils as being punctual for school is crucial. Lateness into school causes disruption to that individual's learning and to that of the other pupils in the class. It is paramount therefore that all pupils arrive at school on time. The gates open at 8.35 a.m. for all year groups and close at 8:55am so there is a window of 20 minutes where the children can come into school.

School attendance is mandatory for all pupils of compulsory school age and it is a priority to ensure that as many children as possible regularly attend school. The registers are completed as the children come into class and close 5 minutes after the gates are closed.

The school day starts after the gates close at 8.55a.m. for all year groups. Pupils who arrive after these times will be recorded as late to school (L code). The Registers close at 8.45am (Nursery) and 9.30am (Reception to Year Six) and after this, lateness is recorded as an unauthorised absence (U code). The Afternoon begins at 12.30pm for Nursery, 1:00 pm for Reception and Years 1 to 4, and 1.30pm for Years Five and Six. Pupils who arrive after this will be recorded as late to school (L code). Registers close at 12.45pm (Nursery) 1:15pm (Reception to Year 4). and 1:45 pm (Years Five and Six) respectively. After this, lateness is recorded as an unauthorised absence (U code).

Where there are concerns about punctuality, the school will make verbal contact with parents/carers. If the concerns persist, the Headteacher or Deputy Headteacher will write to the parents/carers about punctuality, including a copy of the child's registration certificate, and stating the total minutes late over a determined period.

If there is no improvement, the school will arrange a meeting with the parent/carer. In the event of persistent lateness, the school may make a formal referral to Harrow Attendance Services.

#### 4.6 Following up absence

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

- Call the pupil's parents/carers 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 contact Harrow's Children's Services and/or the police if we consider it to be safeguarding concern;
- 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/carer 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 the school may issue a notice to improve, penalty notice or other legal intervention (see section 5.2 below), as appropriate.

#### 4.7 Reporting to parents

The school will regularly inform parents/carers (see definition of 'parent', as used in this policy, in section 3.7 above) about their child's attendance and absence levels as part of each pupil's annual school report.

### 5. Authorised and unauthorised absence

#### 5.1. Holidays in term time

Holidays during term time are not authorised. Parents/carers who wish to take their child out of school during term time for any reason other than illness or medical appointment, must complete an **Exceptional Leave of Absence** request in advance. This request can be authorised **ONLY** by the Deputy Headteacher. Only requests that the Deputy Headteacher deems as exceptional circumstances and backed up by relevant supporting evidence, will be authorised. Parents/carers who take their child out of school during term time without authorisation may receive an EPN (Education Penalty Notice) from the Local Authority.

#### 5.2 Approval for term-time absence

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

The Deputy 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 Deputy Headteacher's discretion, including the length of time the pupil is authorised to be absent for.

The criteria we apply to 'exceptional circumstances' (although this is not an exhaustive list) could be any of the following affecting the pupil directly: bereavement, attendance at a funeral, respite care of a looked after child, or a housing crisis preventing attendance as examples.

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

Each exceptional leave request is unique, the school's decision in each instance cannot be directly compared with decisions made by the school in the past, and nor does it set a precedent.

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

Any request should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated and, where possible, at least three weeks before the absence, and in accordance with any leave of absence request form, accessible via the school office. The Deputy 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

### 5.3 Reducing persistent absence

The school follows set procedures (see table below) to track and monitor attendance and ensure consistency with how attendance is analysed and addressed where there are concerns with a pupil's attendance.

Weekly procedures	By whom	Outcomes/action
Attendance/punctuality statistics produced to provide an overview of all pupils' attendance	AAO	Data entered into Attendance Overview for monitoring and analysis
Attendance data shared in the school newsletter	AAO and DHT	Parents are able to monitor attendance by classes
Absence codes for individual pupils are updated to show reasons for absence	SA & AAO	Information provided here can be used to inform targeted interventions if appropriate
Half Termly & Termly procedures	By whom	Outcomes/action
Analyse attendance and punctuality data to identify trends and monitor progress against target	AAO, family liaison officer, AHTs & DHT	Identify pupils that require either support or a meeting with a member of staff to discuss their child's attendance
Analyse attendance/punctuality data and information to identify cases of concern and develop appropriate interventions	YTLs & SLT	Targeted intervention for individual concerns
Review success and impact of attendance/punctuality strategies for the term	YTLs & SLT	Amend and refine interventions as appropriate
<p>Intervention for persistent low attendance</p> <p>1. At the end of each half term, the parents of children whose attendance has dropped below 96% will be sent a letter by the school and a copy emailed to DSL, AAO (Attendance and Admissions Officer).</p> <p>2. If attendance falls below 90% a meeting should be arranged with a member of SLT</p>	<p>YTL &amp; family liaison officer to send letter home.</p> <p>AAO &amp; SLT to arrange meeting.</p>	<p>Mentoring and advice on attendance/punctuality issues provided to all families. Letter includes reference to an EPN, should persistent unauthorised absences continue.</p> <p>Targeted intervention for individual concerns</p> <p>AAO/DH/HT to arrange meeting.</p>

<p>3. Where persistent attendance continues to remain below 90% and an attendance meeting has already been held during the academic year, an additional meeting should be set up on this occasion with the Deputy Headteacher/Headteacher. Parents will also be informed at this meeting that the school will also require documentary medical evidence to support any future absences due to illness. A letter will be given which outlines the above.</p> <p>4. If attendance continues to fall and is below 90%, the DHT contacts <b>School Attendance Liaison and Elective Home Education Officer for involvement and advice.</b> Class teachers and Assistant Headteachers should raise attendance concerns with parents at parent teacher consultation meetings - a list should be sent by the Admissions &amp; Attendance Administrator to class teachers prior to parents' evenings.</p>	<p>AAO/DH/HT to arrange meeting.</p> <p>AAO &amp; DHT</p> <p>AAO &amp; DHT</p> <p>AHT/CT</p>	<p>Medical evidence letter to be passed to parents.</p> <p>Headteacher to be informed.</p> <p>DHT to inform SLT and AAO of the advice given.</p> <p>DHT to act on advice given.</p>
<p><b>Unauthorised absences, which are taken by parents immediately before or after school holidays.</b></p> <p>A letter is sent to parents by the AAO which informs parents that the school requires either:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● medical evidence of the child's illness if this was the reason given for the absenteeism.</li> <li>● flight ticket confirmation if the reason for absenteeism be due to delayed flights.</li> </ul> <p>This letter also informs parents that without such evidence an EPN will be issued.</p>	<p>AAO</p>	<p>Medical evidence or flight ticket confirmation letter to be sent.</p> <p>Follow up once evidence is received.</p> <p>Action EPN should no evidence become available from parents.</p>

## 5.4 Legal 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 Deputy 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

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).

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.

### 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

### **5.5 Children Missing in Education (CME)**

In line with Local Authority Guidance, Whitchurch Primary School and Nursery will monitor pupils' attendance through their daily register. We will inform the local authority the details of pupils who fail to attend regularly, or have missed ten school days or more without permission. Where a pupil has not returned to school for ten days after an authorised absence or is absent from school without authorisation for twenty consecutive school days, the pupil may be removed from the admission register when the school and the local authority have failed, after jointly making reasonable enquiries, to establish the whereabouts of the child. This only applies if Whitchurch Primary & Nursery does not have reasonable grounds to believe that the pupil is unable to attend because of sickness or unavoidable cause.

## **6. Strategies for Promoting Attendance**

The school believes that by promoting good attendance frequently we will highlight its importance and achieve our target. There is at least one termly formal whole-school assembly, with year groups using additional presentations during the year to promote good attendance.

Our attendance and punctuality policy is discussed with families at parents' coffee mornings and consultation evenings held termly. Reminders about attendance are featured in school newsletters.

Pupils are rewarded termly for excellent attendance on a term-by-term basis.

## **7. Supporting pupils who are absent or returning to school**

### **7.1 Pupils absent due to complex barriers to attendance**

When pupils are unable to attend school due to complex barriers, the school will arrange a meeting with parents/carers to discuss how we can support the pupil, either through remote learning (as per the school's remote learning provision statement) and/or through a reduced timetable guided by the needs and capacity for the pupil to engage in their learning.

### **7.2 Pupils absent due to mental or physical ill health or SEND**

Please see our school policy on supporting pupils with medical conditions and our school policy on children with health needs who cannot attend school to provide an outline of how we can support pupils unable to attend school due to mental or physical ill health or SEND.

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.

### **7.3 Pupils returning to school after a lengthy or unavoidable period of absence**

When a pupil has been absent from school for a lengthy or unavoidable period of absence, throughout the absence school will have maintained contact with the family and the pupil. A senior leader will work in partnership with families to gradually reintegrate the pupil back into school (dependent on the circumstance and the context of the period of absence) which is reviewed regularly as the pupil resumes to accessing their full entitlement linked to education.

### **8.1 Attendance Monitoring**

The school will set attendance targets each year. The target for attendance for Whitchurch Primary School and Nursery is to remain in-line with National attendance figures as a minimum.

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.

The school has granted the DfE access to its management information system so the data can be accessed regularly and securely.

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.

### **8.2 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

### 8.3 Using data to improve attendance

The school 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 the special educational needs co-ordinator and designated safeguarding lead and 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

### 8.4 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 5.4, above)

## **9. Monitoring arrangements**

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the local authority or DfE is updated, and as a minimum at least every two years by the Deputy Headteacher. At every review, the policy will be approved by the Headteacher and the full governing board.

## **10. Links with other policies**

This policy links to the following policies:

- Child protection and safeguarding policy
- Behaviour and Relationships policy
- Remote Learning Provision Statement
- Supporting Pupil with Medical Conditions
- Children with Health Needs unable to attend School

## Appendix 1: attendance codes

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

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	Pupil is present at morning registration
\	Present (pm)	Pupil is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Pupil arrives late before register has closed
<b>Attending a place other than the school</b>		
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
<b>Absent – leave of absence</b>		
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

<b>J1</b>	Interview	Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
<b>S</b>	Study leave	Pupil has been granted leave of absence to study for a public examination
<b>X</b>	Not required to be in school	Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
<b>C2</b>	Part-time timetable	Pupil is not in school due to having a part-time timetable
<b>C</b>	Exceptional circumstances	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
<b>Absent – other authorised reasons</b>		
<b>T</b>	Parent travelling for occupational purposes	Pupil is a ‘mobile child’ who is travelling with their parent(s) who are travelling for occupational purposes
<b>R</b>	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance
<b>I</b>	Illness (not medical or dental appointment)	Pupil is unable to attend due to illness (either related to physical or mental health)
<b>E</b>	Suspended or excluded	Pupil has been suspended or excluded from school and no alternative provision has been made
<b>Absent – unable to attend school because of unavoidable cause</b>		
<b>Q</b>	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
<b>Y1</b>	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

<b>Y2</b>	Widespread disruption to travel	Pupil is unable to attend because of widespread disruption to travel caused by a local, national or international emergency
<b>Y3</b>	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
<b>Y4</b>	Whole school site unexpectedly closed	Every pupil absent as the school is closed unexpectedly (e.g. due to adverse weather)
<b>Y5</b>	Criminal justice detention	Pupil is unable to attend as they are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● In police detention</li> <li>● Remanded to youth detention, awaiting trial or sentencing, or</li> <li>● Detained under a sentence of detention</li> </ul>
<b>Y6</b>	Public health guidance or law	Pupil's travel to or attendance at the school would be prohibited under public health guidance or law
<b>Y7</b>	Any other unavoidable cause	To be used where an unavoidable cause is not covered by the other codes
<b>Absent – unauthorised absence</b>		
<b>G</b>	Holiday not granted by the school	Pupil is absent for the purpose of a holiday, not approved by the school
<b>N</b>	Reason for absence not yet established	Reason for absence has not been established before the register closes
<b>O</b>	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
<b>U</b>	Arrived in school after registration closed	Pupil has arrived late, after the register has closed but before the end of session
<b>Administrative codes</b>		

<b>Z</b>	Prospective pupil not on admission register	Pupil has not joined school yet but has been registered
<b>#</b>	Planned whole-school closure	Whole-school closures that are known and planned in advance, including school holidays