



Attendance Policy

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Policy to go on website: Yes	Review Cycle/ Next Review:	Annual/ Autumn 26

Date	Amendment	Actioned by
22.10.25	This policy has been significantly altered to more clearly state legal protocols	Hilary
	Appendix 2 Updated leave of absence request form	

1. Aims

This policy demonstrates our commitment to improving and maintaining high levels of school attendance. We are committed to meeting our obligations regarding school attendance, in line with the statutory guidance [Working together to improve school attendance](#) from the Department for Education (DfE).

We aim to do this through our whole-school culture and ethos that values good attendance, including:

- Setting high expectations for attendance and punctuality for 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 ensure pupils have the support in place to attend school

We will also promote and support punctuality in attending school.

2. Legislation and guidance

This policy is based on the DfE's statutory guidance on [Working together to improve school attendance](#) 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](#)
- Maintained schools: part 3 of the Education Act 2022
- Part 7 of the [Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)
- [The School Attendance \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2024](#)
- [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)
- The [Equality Act 2010](#)

It also refers to:

- [School census guidance](#)
- [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#)
- [Mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance: guidance for schools](#)
- [Ofsted's 2025 framework toolkit](#)

3. Roles and responsibilities

3.1 The governors are responsible for:

- Setting high expectations of all school leaders, staff, pupils and parents/carers. Making sure school fulfils expectations, statutory duties and comply with the law on attendance, 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'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
- Monitoring attendance data and evaluating the effectiveness of the school's processes and improvement efforts to make sure they are meeting pupils' needs
- Making sure appropriate staff receive 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

3.2 The headteacher

The headteacher is responsible for:

- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting to governors
- Monitoring attendance and the impact of any implemented attendance strategies
- Delegating role of issuing penalty notices, where necessary, and/or authorising when required
- Facilitating with the parents/carers of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) to develop specific support approaches for attendance, including where school transport is regularly being missed, and where pupils with SEND face in-school barriers
- Ensuring that the local authority are informed 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/carers through all available channels
- Sharing information from the school register with the local authority, including:
 - Notifying the local authority when a pupil's name is added to or deleted from the school admission register outside of standard transition times
 - Providing the local authority with the details of pupils who fail to attend school regularly, or who have been marked with an unauthorised absence for a continuous period of 10 school days or other specified incidents

- Providing the local authority with the details of pupils who the school believes will miss 15 days consecutively or cumulatively because of sickness

3.3 The Family Workers/ Deputy Designated Senior Lead are responsible for:

- Leading, championing and improving attendance across the school
- Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes
- Having a strong grasp of absence data and oversight of absence data analysis
- 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/carers to discuss and tackle attendance issues
- Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families with persistent or complex attendance challenges

3.4 The School Attendance Officer is responsible for:

- Following up unexplained absences promptly
- Monitoring and analysing attendance data using online portal (Studybugs)
- Benchmarking attendance data to identify areas of focus for improvement
- Providing regular attendance reports to school staff and reporting concerns about attendance to the DSL responsible for attendance and the head teacher
- Attend attendance safeguarding meeting
- Working with the school's family workers to tackle persistent absence
- Work with EWO to improve attendance
- Issuing fixed-penalty notices when authorised by head teacher as per policy
- Following up issues with register codes with individual classes

The **Education Welfare Officer** is **employee of** ewo.attendandthrive@gmail.com

3.5 Class teachers are responsible for:

- Recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes. Registers should be completed before 9.30am and between 1.15 – 1.30pm
- Communicating to the family workers those pupils whose attendance is a cause for concern

3.6 Family Workers are responsible for:

- Specific communications with parents/carers about absence and record this information on CPOMS.
- Liaising with school attendance officer and leading and/or attend attendance mtgs

3.7 Parents/carers are expected to:

- Make sure their child attends every day on time, school starts at 9.00am
- Report their child's absence before 9.00am preferable via Studybugs app on the day of the absence and each subsequent day of absence, and advise when they are expected to return.
- Parents are required to provide proof of appointments
- 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
- Where appointments cannot be made outside of the school day and are local i.e. in Luton/Dunstable area, parents/carers are expected to ensure their child is collected/ returned to school before and/or after the appointment so that they miss the minimum amount of school.
- Ensure that where a pupil is refusing to attend school, parents/carers continue to contact school on a daily basis to inform them of this type of absence.
- To request any adjustments to school attendance in writing to head teacher

- If applicable, parents should also inform the taxi/minibus company that transports their child about the child's absence and contact them again when the child will return. Messages about a child's absence should not be relayed to school via transport staff

3.8 Pupils

Pupils are expected to:

- Attend school every day
- Where possible speak to staff if they are having difficulties in school which may lead to absence

4. Recording attendance

4.1 Attendance register

School keeps an attendance register, and place all pupils onto this register. At Lady Zia Wernher we use an electronic register which links to our Information Management System, SIMS, which links to Studybugs to monitor and analyse data

Attendance registers are taken twice a day; at start of school day and after lunch, approx. 1.15pm
It will mark 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 following:

- 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 6 years after the date on which the entry was made.

4.2 Unplanned absence

Under normal circumstances, the only reason that pupils should be absent from school is if they are too ill to attend or if that have unavoidable medical appointments (see 4.3 below).

Sometimes children become unwell at school, in this instance, a phone call will be made to the parent/carer informing them that their child is ill and that they are expected to come to school to collect them.

The pupil's parent/carer must notify the school of the reason for the absence on the first day of an unplanned absence by 9.00am, or as soon as practically possible preferable by Studybugs app or contacting school office

School attendance officer or receptionist records information on SIMS and CPOMS and update the registers as appropriate.

Medical evidence may be requested, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

Where the absence is longer than 5 days or more 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.

4.3 Planned absence

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised. Advance notice is best practice. Evidence may be required.

We encourage parents/carers to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours. 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 Lateness and punctuality

A pupil who arrives late:

- Before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code i.e. arriving after 9.00am but before 9.30am.
- After the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code i.e. arriving after 9.30am

Teachers should raise concerns about lateness and punctuality with the family work team.

The family work team will follow up with parents initially.

Persistent lateness and punctuality may be escalated to the EWO and social care, if appropriate.

4.5 Following up unexplained absence

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

- Contact the pupil's parent/carer on the morning of the first day of unexplained absence to ascertain the reason. If no response the pupil's emergency contacts may be used and the school may do a doorstep visit
- 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
- Contact the parent/carer on each day that the absence continues without explanation to ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary.
- Where relevant, report the unexplained absence to the pupil's social worker
- 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
- If contact cannot be made with the family or if the absence continues, the school will escalate the issue to the appropriate agency e.g. Children's services, MASH, Bedfordshire police, the education welfare officer and request a welfare call.

4.6 Reporting to parents/carers

The school will inform parents about their child's attendance and absence levels at EHCP meetings. Where absence is a cause for concern (persistent absence, below 95% and where there is a pattern in absence), a meeting may be held with parents and pupils (where appropriate) with the relevant professionals.

5. Authorised and unauthorised absence

Every half day absence from school has to be classified by the school as authorised or unauthorised. In order to do this we require information about the reason for each absence.

5.1 Approval for term-time absence

The head teacher will only grant a leave of absence to a pupil during term time if the request meets 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 for employment or for admission to another educational institution
- Study leave
- A temporary, time-limited part-time timetable
- Exceptional circumstances

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

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

We define 'exceptional circumstances' as rare and unexpected circumstances which are unlikely to reoccur. Examples include:

- Medical emergencies
- Family emergencies (e.g. death of a relative)

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.

Please note that there is no legal entitlement to holidays in term time. Holidays during term time are not considered exceptional circumstances and this should be avoided where possible.

Any request should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated and, where possible, at least 2 weeks before the absence, and in accordance with any Pupil Leave of Absence request form (Appendix 2), accessible via the school website or by requesting a paper version from the school office. The head teacher may require evidence to support any request for leave of absence.

5.2 Other reasons for authorised absence can include:

- 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 parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart
- Traveller pupils 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)

5.3 Absences from the school site (which are not classified as absences)

The headteacher will allow pupils to be absent from the school site for certain educational activities, or to attend other schools or settings. These are not classified as absences. Reasons 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

6. Strategies for promoting attendance

The school will:

- Work with families and young people to encourage and promote good attendance and to identify and remove any barriers to this.
- Acknowledge that for some of our pupils, attendance may be difficult due to their complex medical needs. As a result we do not celebrate good attendance in assemblies or on displays.

7. Supporting pupils with poor attendance

Our school will make use of the full range of support and 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.

7.1 Attendance plan

We use attendance plan as a form of attendance support. An attendance plan is a formal (can be written) agreement between a parent and the school to address irregular attendance at school. An attendance plan is not legally binding, but it provides a more formal route where previous support has not worked or would not have been appropriate.

Parents cannot be compelled to enter an attendance plan, and the school cannot agree an attendance plan in a parent's absence.

Where an attendance plan would be an appropriate form of support, the school will arrange a meeting with the parent (and pupil if they are old enough to understand) to discuss how we can work in partnership to improve the pupil's attendance.

Where parents fail to comply with an agreed attendance plan, the school may seek an alternative course of action. In the first instance, this will include discussions with the parents to seek explanations and determine whether the attendance plan remains useful. Where there is further non-compliance following these discussions, the school may take further action.

7.2 Notice 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.

A notice 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.

It 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, or prosecution considered, 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

7.4 Penalty notices

The headteacher, 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, we will check with the local authority before doing so, and send the local authority 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.

8. Supporting pupils who are absent or returning to school

8.1 Pupils absent due to complex barriers to attendance

If the school becomes aware of barriers that relate to the pupil's needs, we will inform the local authority.

- School will work closely with parents/carers to understand challenges, co-create strategies, and maintain regular communication.
- School will work collaboratively with external agencies, including the local authority, health professionals to provide support.
- School will offer adjustments within school such as timetable modifications, part-time reintegration plans.
- Attendance will be monitored, with potential review meetings involving families, staff, and relevant professionals.

8.2 Pupils absent due to barriers to attendance

- School will work in collaboration with families and maintain open and regular communication with parents/carers to understand challenges and co-create strategies to support attendance.
- Flexible timetables or phased reintegration will be considered as part of the process.
- School will work closely with social workers, local authority teams, health professionals, and voluntary services to remove barriers and provide holistic support.
- Reasonable adjustments will be considered to accommodate disabilities or SEND requirements.
- Where absences persist despite support, coordinate with the EWO, local authority, or other services to ensure pupils access education and appropriate safeguarding measures.
- Interventions consider the pupil's circumstances, ensuring support is timely, targeted, and appropriate

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

- School will communicate with parents/carers to set expectations, provide guidance, and offer reassurance during the reintegration process this may include a phased return and adjusted timetables.
- School will monitor engagement, and carry out regular check-ins.
- If barriers remain, coordinate with external services (EWO, local authority, health professionals, or social care) to provide additional support.
- Ensure that any safeguarding risks are assessed and addressed promptly, particularly for pupils returning after absence related to social care involvement or trauma.

9. Attendance monitoring

9.1 School will:

- Monitor & analyse attendance data half-termly, termly and yearly across the school, across cohorts and individual pupil levels
- Identify causes for concern across cohorts and plan for systemic and individual improvements
- Identify pupils whose absences *persistent or severe absence and establish next steps for improvement
- Publish data at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics portal.

9.2 Using data school will:

- Inform parents/carers of their pupil's attendance levels as part of the EHCP process.
- Develop targeted actions to address patterns of absence (of all severities) of individual pupils, groups or cohorts
- Monitor and evaluate the impact of interventions for future planning

*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.

10. Links with other policies:

- Child protection and safeguarding policy
- Behaviour policy
- Supporting pupils with medical conditions

Appendix 1: Attendance codes

DfE's states:

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
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: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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

Appendix 2: Leave of absence form

LADY ZIA WERNHER SCHOOL



Request for leave of absence from school during term time

Submit request prior to booking travel arrangements

To be completed by the parent/ carer

Pupil's full name		
Class		
Date of birth		
Dates of requested absence	From	to
Reason for absence		
Parents details: Name and mobile	1 st contact	
Parents details: Name and mobile	2 nd contact	
Travelling abroad?	Yes/No Return date: / /20	Country _____
Declaration	I have read and agree with Attendance Policy including guidance regarding Leave of Absence	
Signed	Date	
Office use only		
Current attendance		
No. term dates requested		
Details of previous requests		
Flight evidence	Yes/ No	Date of booking
Head teacher decision	Authorised/ Unauthorised	
Rationale		
Communication of decision to parents	Date	