



# WESTFIELD SCHOOL POLICY AND PROCEDURE

## Attendance Policy

MOST RECENT UPDATE: June 2025

Review Date: May 2028

# ***WESTFIELD SCHOOL***

## ***POLICY DOCUMENT***

### ***ATTENDANCE POLICY***

#### *Rationale*

Westfield School believes good attendance is crucial in helping students to fulfil their academic potential and emotional well-being.

The Department for Education (DfE) expects schools and local authorities to:

- Build strong relationships and work jointly with families, listening to and understanding barriers to attendance and working in partnership with families to remove them.
- Develop and maintain a whole school culture that promotes the benefits of high attendance.
- Have a clear school attendance policy which all staff, pupils and parents understand.
- Accurately complete admission and, with the exception of schools where all pupils are boarders, attendance registers and have effective day to day processes in place to follow-up absence.
- Regularly monitor and analyse attendance and absence data to identify pupils or cohorts that require support with their attendance and put effective strategies in place.
- 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.
- Be particularly mindful of pupils absent from school due to mental or physical ill health or their special educational needs and/or disabilities, and provide them with additional support.

*'DfE: Working together to improve school attendance' (August 2024)*

#### *AIMS of this policy*

To ensure the safety and wellbeing of all pupils.

- To promote outstanding progress towards pupils' individual outcomes.
- To support pupils to have the best attendance possible (based on individual needs and circumstance)
- To support families in making sure their child has the best attendance possible

## Context

As a special school Westfield recognises that managing the attendance of children and young people needs to be carried out on an individual basis. Decisions taken will be based on the needs of pupils, and in line with individual health and care needs. The school will work in partnership with families and other professionals to make decisions about how best to support children and young people to achieve the highest possible attendance levels at school.

Westfield is committed to the continuous raising of achievement of all students. Regular attendance is critical if students are to be successful and benefit from the opportunities presented to them. Attendance is encouraged through a variety of awards and incentives, thus achieving progress in line with predicted targets. The curriculum is planned in a progressive way; periods of absence prevent learners from making links between ideas, skills and concepts, as well as embedding taught skills.

## Expectations of parents/carers:

- To support their child/young person to come to school daily. Recent guidance states that “... their child must attend every day that the school is open, except in a small number of allowable circumstances such as being too ill to attend or being given permission for an absence in advance from the school”
- To inform the school **in person** as soon as possible if their child will not be attending, providing a reason for their absence
- To discuss any medical needs their child has with the Health Team, school nurse and/or class team so that strategies can be setup to enable them to attend school as frequently as possible.
- To engage with the school attendance procedures; including
  - Whenever possible, scheduling routine medical/dental appointments during the school holidays, or after school;
  - Using the official form to request all appointments attended during school time (attached, and also available on our school website) accompanied by the letter confirming the appointment. Ensure that their child attends school before and/or after the appointment wherever possible; appointments with no form completed in advance will be marked as unauthorised on the register
  - Respecting the registration times of 9.00am and 1.15pm, and the end of the school day at 3.15pm; Procedures for late arrivals are included on our website section for parents.
  - To take holidays during the 14 weeks when school is closed across the year, unless there are truly exceptional circumstances: any such requests must be in person, in advance, and will be referred to governors for consideration; NB: the most recent guidance no longer includes a code for ‘authorised family holiday’.

## Expectations of school:

The Governors, Headteacher and Staff promote full attendance at Westfield through;

- Regular, efficient and accurate recording of attendance.
- Consistent, clear communication with parents and pupils about the importance of regular, prompt, attendance.
- Training staff to meet the medical needs of individual pupils to enable them to be in school as much as possible
- Carrying out first day monitoring for pupils who are absent from school and to ask parents/carers to provide a reason for the absence
- Working with pupils and their families to improve attendance through
  - Meetings
  - Attendance targets
  - Attendance contracts
  - Parenting groups
  - Working with other professionals to support long term absence due to prolonged illness/hospital stay i.e home or blended learning tasks
- Providing parents with termly updates on their child's level of attendance
- Publishing attendance figures annually to the Local Authority and the DfE

The school responds to non-attendance by:

- The admin team contacts parents on the first day of an absence if no reason or notification has been received after the close of registration at 9.15am. Contact will be by telephone.
- If there is no response to the telephone call an email or text will be sent. We may also telephone emergency contacts.
- If there is no response to the first contact a member of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) may do a home visit in the interests of safeguarding. It may be necessary for the class teacher or headteacher to accompany her on this visit.
- Where a pattern of non-attendance is emerging, parents/carers will be invited to work with school staff to help resolve the difficulties

Pupils with significant health conditions may require extended periods of absence, for surgery and/ or recovery; these situations can always be explained and evidenced. In addition, many pupils attend a variety of medical appointments with different specialists due to their diagnoses. We also acknowledge the requirement for a 48-hour symptom free period following any episode of gastroenteritis, in accordance with Department of Health guidance.

- **All** absences, whether authorised or unauthorised, are recoded as absences. A list of all reasons for absence is detailed within Appendix 2. If the reason provided by parents/carers does not feature on this list, eg. visiting relatives, birthdays etc, then the absence will be deemed unauthorised, even if the school has been informed.

Authorised and Unauthorised Absence

Any absence request should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated and, where possible at least 2 weeks before the absence and recorded on a pupil planned absence form, accessible

via your class teacher or school office, a copy of which features in Appendix 1. We may require evidence to support your request for leave of absence.

Authorised absences are morning or afternoon sessions away from school

For valid reasons such as:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments
- 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'/ carers' 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).

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

Students are also permitted to be absent from the school site for certain educational activities, or to attend other schools or settings. Leave of absence will be granted to a pupil during term time if the request meets the following specific circumstances set out in the 2024 school attendance regulations:

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

'Exceptional circumstances' are defined as one where the need for time off is significant e.g. to attend a family wedding or funeral, the child's SEND impacts when and where holidays can be taken.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, considering the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request. A leave of absence is

granted entirely at the Headteacher's discretion, including the length of time the pupil is requesting to be absent.

Unauthorised absence is recorded when no reason has been given for an absence, or when time off school has no valid reason ie, birthday, or family holiday, (which we are not permitted to authorise).

### Strategies for Promoting Attendance

Through regular monitoring attendance issues are picked up early and highlighted to parents and carers via letter. If there is no improvement, attendance meetings with parents and carers are set up and targets set to get attendance back to good levels.

The promotion of regular attendance is the responsibility of parents/carers, pupils, all members of staff at Westfield School, including governors, and the local authority. We ensure attendance is discussed within regular parent/carer communication e.g., Annual Reviews, parent's/carers evenings. As a school we will continue to discuss monthly attendance in monitoring progress meetings, discussions with the class teachers, pastoral support team and termly with Herefordshire Council Attendance Team.

### Supporting pupils who are absent or returning to school

We recognise that for some pupils who are absent from school or returning to school, certain pupil specific strategies may be considered, and may relate to pupils who are:

- absent due to complex barriers to attendance.
- absent due to mental or physical ill health or SEND.
- returning to school after a lengthy or unavoidable period of absence.

Where we are supporting pupils in returning to school we may need to consider:

- a phased return plan, which has a clear time frame and monitoring schedule;
- a re-integration meeting to discuss the return to school and to set the planned steps to pupils returning to school along with any expectations or agreements which need to be made. A follow-up meeting may also be arranged as part of the re-integration plan.
- Working with parents, carers, the pupils and wider professionals to ensure the return to school is appropriate for the individual, e.g. following a significant medical procedure we may need advice and support from health professionals or when supporting a pupil with anxiety or mental health related difficulties we may need support and input from services such as CAMHS.
- 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.

## Attendance Monitoring and Attendance Benchmarks

- Pupils are expected to attend every session the school is open to pupils, unless their absence has been authorised.
- Pupils whose attendance falls between 90% and 94.9% will be monitored by the attendance officer who will work with parents and carers to offer advice and support about improving attendance. A pupil who has attendance at the lower end will have missed 18 days of school.
- Pupils whose attendance falls below 90% will be considered a high-level concern unless absence is linked to their identified areas of need. These pupils are persistently absent from school, missing more than 18 days which will have a significant impact on their progress and achieving positive outcomes. Work will be completed with parents/ carers and pupils and further action may be taken if attendance does not improve including:
  - Referrals to the safeguarding team
  - Issuing of penalty notices
  - Court action

The Local Authority attendance officer monitors pupil absence monthly, and this is discussed with the school attendance leads on a termly basis.

If a pupil's absence goes above 10%, we will contact the parents/ carers to discuss the reasons for this unless we know of medical reasons such as hospitalisation for this high level of absence. Pupil-level absence data is 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. We compare our attendance data to the national average and share this with the governing body. When monitoring levels of absence, the attendance of advantaged and disadvantaged pupils is compared, and the data is acted on accordingly.

## Legal Sanctions

Westfield School is maintained by Herefordshire Children Services who can fine parents and carers for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age. Before actioning 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.

The payment must be made directly to the local authority. 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/ carer must pay £80 within 21 days, or £160 within 28 days. If a second penalty notice is issued to the same parent/ carer in respect of the same pupil, the parent/ carer must pay £160 if paid within 28 days. A third penalty notice cannot be issued to the same parent/ carer 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.

### Notices to improve

If the national threshold has been met and support is appropriate, but parents/ carers do not engage with offers of support, the school may offer a notice to improve to give parents/ carers a final chance to engage with support. Notices to improve will be issued in line with processes set out in the national guidance.

They will include:

- Details of the pupil's attendance record and of the offences.
- The benefits of regular attendance and the duty of parents/ carers 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.

### Monitoring and Evaluation analysing attendance.

Our Attendance policy and procedures will be monitored and evaluated by Zoe Burge and Kate Newby, the school attendance leads.

Analysis of Attendance Data;

- Completion of the annual safeguarding audit by DSL and Safeguarding Governor to include attendance;
- Completion and return to The Local Authority (LA)/ Herefordshire Safeguarding Children's

Partnership (HSCP) of the annual safeguarding report to the Governors;

- Pupil surveys and questionnaires;
- Discussions with pupils and staff;
- Scrutiny of data and risk assessments.

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 identified via data analysis.



- Provide targeted support to the pupils and their families where it has identified whose absences may be a cause for concern, especially those who demonstrate patterns of persistent or severe absence, and their families.
- 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 and 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.
- Look at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence and develop strategies to address these patterns.

#### Reducing persistent and severe absence

Persistent absence is when a pupil misses 10% or more of school, and severe absence is when a pupil misses 50% or more of school

The school will:

- Use attendance data to identify 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 parents/carers of pupils who the school and/or local authority consider to be vulnerable, or are persistently or severely absent, to discuss attendance and engagement with school.
- Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers of attending school.
- 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.
- Offer Attendance Contracts to monitor attendance together with parents/carers and pupil.

The Attendance Policy will be reviewed every three years, unless circumstances dictate that it should be reviewed sooner.

This policy is linked to the following policies:

- Safeguarding Policy Westfield School
- Behaviour Policy Westfield School

This policy was presented to the Children's Families and Community Governor on 1<sup>st</sup> July 2025 and subsequently adopted by the Governing Body. To be reviewed annually

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Andy James (Chair of Governors)

Nicki Gilbert (Headteacher)

### Legislation

This policy meets the requirements of 'Working together to improve school attendance 2024' from the Department for Education (DfE) and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on school attendance parental responsibility measures. These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting 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(2010,2011,2013,2016 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

## Pupil Leave Request Appointments

<b>Date of request:</b>			
<b>Name:</b>			
<b>Date of absence:</b>			
<b>Reason for request: (Appointment letters must be attached)</b>			
<b>Time you wish to collect your child:</b>			
<b>Time of appointment:</b>			
<b>Time expected to return to school:</b>			
<b>Signed:</b>			
<b>Date:</b>			

### To be completed by the class teacher

<b>Recorded on MIS:</b>			
<b>Signature:</b>			
<b>Date:</b>			

### To be completed by the Head Teacher

<b>Authorised:</b>	Yes/ No		
<b>Signature:</b>			
<b>Date:</b>			

### Contents of Attendance Register

Schools must take the attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. Morning Registration closes at 9.15am, and afternoon registration at 1.30pm.

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>
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<b>C1</b>	Participating in a regulated performance or undertaking regulated employment abroad	Pupil is undertaking employment (paid or unpaid) during school hours, approved by the school
<b>M</b>	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	<p>Pupil is unable to attend as they are:</p> <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