



# ATTENDANCE POLICY

## Wightwick Hall School

<b>Last Review Date:</b>		Summer Term 2023
<b>Next Review Date:</b>		Summer Term 2024
<b>Committee:</b>		Curriculum & Learning Local Governing Committee
<b>Review Cycle:</b>		1 YEAR
<b>Statutory Policy:</b>		Yes
<b>Date</b>	<b>Version</b>	<b>Reason for change</b>
21.06.2023	V1.0	Scheduled Review

## **1. Aims**

We are committed to meeting our obligation with regards to school attendance through our whole-school culture and ethos that values good attendance, including:

- Promoting good attendance
- Reducing absence, including persistent and severe absence
- Ensuring every student 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 students have the support in place to attend school

We will also promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

## **2. Legislation and Guidance**

This policy meets the requirements of the [Working Together to Improve School Attendance](#) 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 \(and 2010, 2011, 2013, 2016 amendments\)](#)
- [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)

This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the school census, which explains the persistent absence threshold.

## **3. Roles and Responsibilities:**

### **The Local Governing Board**

The Local Governing Board is responsible for:

- Promoting the importance of school attendance across the school's policies and ethos

- Making sure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties
- Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data
- Monitoring attendance figures for the whole school
- Making sure staff receive adequate training on attendance
- Holding the Headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy

### **The Headteacher: Mrs Ceri Rowley**

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 students
- Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies
- Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary

### **The Designated Senior Leader Responsible for Attendance**

The Designated Senior Leader is responsible for:

- Leading attendance across the school
- Offering a clear vision for attendance improvement
- Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes
- Benchmarking attendance data to identify areas of focus for improvement
- Providing regular attendance reports to school staff and reporting concerns about attendance to the Headteacher
- Monitoring and analysing attendance data
- Working with Education Welfare Officers to tackle persistent absence and when to issue fixed penalty notices
- Devising specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data
- Arranging calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues
- Delivering targeted intervention and support to students and families

The Designated Senior Leader responsible for attendance is Miss Gina Higgs and can be contacted via 01902 761889

## **Form tutors**

Form tutors are responsible for:

- Recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the school office each morning

## **Attendance Administrator**

The Attendance Administrator:

- Takes calls from parents about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the school system
- Transfers calls from parents to the form tutor/senior leader in order to provide them with more detailed support on attendance

The Attendance Office Administrator is Mrs N Smith and can be contacted on 01902 761889

## **Parents/Carers**

Parents/carers are expected to:

- Make sure their child attends every day on time
- Call the school to report their child's absence before 9am on the day of the absence and each subsequent day of absence, and advise when they are expected to return
- Provide the school with more than 1 emergency contact number for their child
- Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day

## **Working Together**

Parents/carers are encouraged to speak to school staff as soon as possible if they become aware of an issue that can affect their child's wellbeing or attendance at school.

We operate an 'open door' policy for anyone wishing to speak to a member of the Leadership Team and will readily attempt to schedule meetings to fit around family/carers commitments. Home visits are also an option in some circumstances. In some cases, it may be necessary to involve representatives of other agencies that work with the school such as the School Nurse or representatives of the Local Support Team (LST). We may use the Early Help Assessment process to support this.

Wherever possible the school will take action to improve a student's attendance and address any underlying causes of problems before requesting intervention from the Local Authority.

## **4. Recording Attendance**

### **Attendance Register**

We will keep an Attendance Register, and place all students 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 whether every student 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 student is attending an approved educational activity
- The nature of circumstances where a student 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.

Students must arrive in school by 8:50am on each school day.

The register for the first session will be taken at 8:50am and will be kept open until 9:10am. The register for the second session will be taken at 1pm and will be kept open until 1:05pm.

## **5. Expected First Day of Attendance**

The school will enter students on the Admission Register and Attendance Register from the beginning of the first day on which the school has agreed, or been notified, that the student will be attending the school. For most students the expected first day of attendance is the first day of the school year.

Should a student fail to attend on the agreed or notified date, then the school will establish contact with the parents/carers to ascertain the reason for this. Deletions from the Admission Register will only occur on the grounds prescribed in Regulation 8 of the Education (Student Registration) (England) Regulations 2006.

The school will notify the Local Authority within 5 days, as required by Government Guidance, of students who have been added to the Admissions Register other than at standard transition points.

## **6. Children Missing from Education**

Wightwick Hall School will inform the Local Authority of all deletions from the Admissions Register as stated in Regulation 8 of the Education (Student Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, apart from at standard transition points.

Should a student meet the criteria of being deleted from the Admissions Register and their whereabouts are unknown, as stated in the grounds for deleting a student from the school Admission Register, Section 6 and 8, then the school will make reasonable enquiries to ascertain where the student is.

The Children Missing Education Officers, at the Local Authority, will be informed that enquiries into the whereabouts of students as stated in the above criteria. Wightwick Hall School will remove the student from the Admissions Register, following the guidance, and the CTF file will be retained until further advice is provided from the Children Missing Education Officers.

## 7. In School Procedures at Wightwick Hall School Overview

The member of SLT responsible for attendance is Miss G Higgs. The following 'inschool' procedure is followed for monitoring student's attendance.

- The Attendance Officer Administrator produces a weekly printout of students whose attendance is less than 90% since the start of the academic year. The Attendance Team will closely monitor patterns of absences.
  - Stage 1 – When there are initial concerns regarding attendance, the form tutor will contact parents/carers to open a dialogue about their child's attendance to understand any barriers there may be.
  - Stage 2 – If, where appropriate, a student's attendance falls below 90% parents/carers will receive a letter and be invited in to meet with their child's school Education Welfare Officer in order to discuss barriers to attending school on a regular basis.
  - Stage 3 – Should there be no, or limited improvement in attendance, parents/carers will be invited in for a formal meeting with a member of the Attendance Team or a member of SLT to discuss further support and actions if necessary. At this stage the school may decide to only authorise absences when we receive medical evidence. Medical evidence can be in a form of an appointment card or prescription, for example. Slips are available from the school office for parents/carers to take to the pharmacy, doctors, or other relevant health professionals to sign as proof of appointment. These can be returned to the school office and may be seemed sufficient for absences to be authorised.
  - Stage 4 – Should absences remain at the level below the target agreed, the school will invite parents/carers to a formal meeting. In the absence of relevant information regarding poor attendance, school may take external advice and may consider statutory action.
- Where there is persistent unauthorised absence then a Penalty Notice may be considered. The Staffordshire County Council Code of Conduct changed in January 2018. From this date, a Penalty Notice can be considered where there are 20 sessions (10 days) of unauthorised absence in the previous 12 school weeks, excluding holidays. The absences do not need to be consecutive. In the situation of persistent unauthorised absence, the parent/carer will only receive one warning notice period in the academic year. Should there be a subsequent period of absence, the Local Authority can automatically consider other statutory action.
- Should Local Authority involvement be required, the Attendance Lead from Wightwick Hall School will provide appropriate records to the Local



Authority for them to fulfil their statutory functions should the Staffordshire County Council Code of Conduct threshold be met. This could result in a fixed Penalty Notice being issued. In some cases, referral to Children's Social Care may be considered if there are safeguarding concerns.

- Further information on legal interventions can be found in 'Working Together to Improve School Attendance' DFE Sept 2022. ([publishing.service.gov.uk](https://publishing.service.gov.uk))
- Wightwick Hall School will already have attempted to provide support that avoids such action being taken and will continue to engage with families both during and after any legal action has commenced. Such action is the final resort undertaken by the Local Authority and it is a legal requirement.
- Wightwick Hall School will make every effort to successfully reintegrate students at any stage prior to, during or following legal proceedings and we will work in partnership with parents/carers and all involved parties to bring about a positive outcome.

## **General Absences**

The school applies the following procedures in deciding how to deal with individual absences.

- In the event of an unavoidable absence, parents/carers are asked to contact the school before 8:40am on 01902 761889 and stating:
  - The name of the person calling
  - Student's name
  - Reason for absence
- A telephone call to the number above to the office clearly stating your child's name, date of absence and reason for absence, is required for each day your child is unable to attend.
- Should the absence reach five or more days, we will require medical evidence to authorise such a prolonged period of time.
- Office staff will make efforts to contact the parents/carers of any student who is absent if there has been no information received during the morning. Should no reason for absence have been ascertained, a home visit may take place to gain the reason for the absence. A home visit may also be completed should the school receive any other information or the staff are concerned about the student's absence from school. Appropriate support agencies will be informed if there

continues to be no contact, as this is deemed as a safeguarding concern.

- If there is no response to messages and no explanation is received upon the child's return to school or within two weeks from an absence, the Attendance Lead will attempt to contact parents/carers to seek explanation for the absence. If this is not successful a letter requesting information will be sent to the parent/carer. The student's absence will be marked as UNAUTHORISED until an acceptable reason for the absence has been provided.

## **8. Lateness**

All students should be on site for 8:50am.

Morning registration closes at 9:10am

Arrival to the form group after 9:10am will be considered as late and students will receive a late mark on the register (L).

The registers close at 9:30am. Students arriving after this time will be marked as 'Late After Register Closes' (U) and will be considered unauthorised, unless there is an acceptable reason verified by the parent/carer.

Students arriving by contracted transport will be marked present but are required to sign in at reception. This may be done by a member of the office staff.

If persistent lateness is deemed an issue the Attendance Lead will become involved and actions may be taken to overcome any barriers. Ultimately, continued unauthorised lateness could result in statutory action being taken by the Local Authority.

## **9. Absence for Medical Appointments**

Where possible, doctors and dental appointments are made outside of the school day. If this is not possible please inform the School Office as soon as possible. Evidence of the appointment may be required in order for the absence to be authorised. Following this your child's attendance record will be marked as 'M'.

Medical evidence can be in the form of prescriptions, appointment cards or letters signed by medical professionals. If this is not possible, medical evidence cards are available from the School Reception. These can be signed by medical professionals and returned to school and may be used as evidence of appointment.

For ongoing medical appointments, we may request a letter from the medical professional stating that the time off is required.

We will not authorise full day absences unless a reasonable explanation is given. Parents/carers should make every effort to ensure their child comes to school before and returns after an appointment.

Please be aware that students will not be allowed to leave the school site without a parent coming to collect them. If a student is going with another adult, the school will require consent from the parent/carer to authorise the student leaving with the adult.

For ongoing illness parents/carers will be expected to complete a Medical Healthcare Plan.

## **10. Planned Absence**

The Governors' policy is to fully comply with Government regulations. Statutory guidelines state 'Headteachers may not grant leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances'. Requests for leave in exceptional circumstances should be made in advance of the event and on the 'exceptional leave of absence form'. This can be requested from the school office. Specific details will be required in order to consider the application. If a leave of absence is granted, then it will be for a fixed period of time. Regulations are clear that any lateness in the return to school may be deemed as unauthorised leave of absence. An application for a Penalty Notice to be issued from Staffordshire County Council will be made for any unauthorised leave of absence of six or more sessions in the current or previous half term. Should a leave of absence be granted, regulations are clear that any lateness in the return to school from the granted period, may be recorded as unauthorised leave of absence.

Unauthorised leave of absence presents a risk of a Penalty Notice being issued. Please note that:

- A parent/carer can receive more than one Penalty Notice per academic year:
- The school will follow the Staffordshire County Code of Conduct for issuing Penalty Notices.

If a parent/carer does not apply for leave but we believe that the student has been taken on holiday, then we will write to the parent/carer to express out concern. The parent/carer will be expected to provide contrary evidence to support the absence and school should receive this by a

specified date. Should the supporting documentation not be provided then the absence will be coded as unauthorised leave of absence and the relevant procedures will be applied. Retrospective approval for absence cannot be granted.

Any request for planned absences for a student to participate in a sporting or other educational activity, should be made on the 'exceptional leave of absence form'. Details of the request should be outlined.

## **11. Monitoring Attendance**

Monitoring Attendance at Wightwick Hall School will:

- Monitor attendance and absence data half termly, termly and yearly across the school and at an individual student level.
- Identify whether or not there are particular groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern.
- Student level absence 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 compare attendance data to the national average, and share this with the Local Governing Board.

Analysing Attendance Wightwick Hall School will:

- Analyse attendance and absence data regularly to identify students or cohorts that need additional support with their attendance, and use this analysis to provide targeted support to these students and their families.
- Look at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence, and then develop strategies to address these patterns.

Using Data to improve attendance at Wightwick Hall School will:

- Provide regular attendance reports to form tutors and other school leaders, to facilitate discussions with students and families.
- Use data to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place in order to modify them and inform future strategies.

Reducing persistent and severe absences.

Persistent absences is where a student misses 10% or more of school, and severe absence is where a student misses 50% or more of school.

Wightwick Hall School will:

- Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence.
- Hold regular meetings with the parents/carers of students who the school (and/or local authority) considers to be vulnerable, or are persistently or severely absent, to discuss attendance and engagement at school.
- Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance.
- Severe absentees will be referred to the local authority and statutory action may be taken.

## **12. Other Circumstances**

School will not authorise absences for shopping, looking after other children, haircuts etc however leave may be granted in emergency (e.g bereavement).

## **13. School Attendance Targets for Wightwick Hall School:**

The attendance target for Wightwick Hall School for the academic year 2023-2024 is 92%

## **14. Persons responsible for Attendance**

Miss G Higgs (Assistant Headteacher – Attendance Lead) (Designated Safeguarding Lead)

Mrs S Owen (Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead/family liaison)

Mrs N Smith (Attendance Office Administrator)

## **15. Summary**

Wightwick Hall School has a duty to publish attendance figures to parents/carers and to promote good attendance. Equally, parents/carers have a legal duty to ensure their child's regular attendance at school. We remain committed to working together, thus ensuring we jointly achieve as good an attendance rate as possible.

## Appendix 1: Attendance Codes

The following codes are taken from the DfE's guidance on school attendance.

Code	Definition	Scenario
<b>/</b>	Present (am)	Pupil is present at morning registration
<b>\</b>	Present (pm)	Pupil is present at afternoon registration
<b>L</b>	Late arrival	Pupil arrives late before register has closed
<b>B</b>	Off-site educational activity	Pupil is at a supervised off-site educational activity approved by the school
<b>D</b>	Dual registered	Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
<b>J</b>	Interview	Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
<b>P</b>	Sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
<b>V</b>	Educational trip or visit	Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised, or approved, by the school
<b>W</b>	Work experience	Pupil is on a work experience placement

Code	Definition	Scenario
<b>Authorised absence</b>		
<b>C</b>	Authorised leave of absence	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
<b>E</b>	Excluded	Pupil has been excluded but no alternative provision has been made
<b>H</b>	Authorised holiday	Pupil has been allowed to go on holiday due to exceptional circumstances
<b>I</b>	Illness	School has been notified that a pupil will be absent due to illness
<b>M</b>	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment
<b>R</b>	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance
<b>S</b>	Study leave	Year 11 pupil is on study leave during their public examinations
<b>T</b>	Gypsy, Roma and traveller absence	Pupil from a traveller community is travelling, as agreed with the school
<b>Unauthorised absence</b>		
<b>G</b>	Unauthorised holiday	Pupil is on a holiday that was not approved by the school

<b>N</b>	Reason not provided	Pupil is absent for an unknown reason (this code should be amended when the reason emerges, or replaced with code O if no reason for absence has been provided after a reasonable amount of time)
<b>O</b>	Unauthorised absence	School is not satisfied with reason for pupil's absence
<b>U</b>	Arrival after registration	Pupil arrived at school after the register closed