

Attendance Policy

West Rainton Primary School



We thrive where we belong

Academic year 25-26



Attendance Policy

West Rainton Primary School

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Author of document:	Alison McDonough	Job role:	Headteacher
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Attendance Key Contacts

Please find the details of those with overall responsibility for attendance, attendance support and attendance improvement within our school below.

Name	Role	Contact details
Alison McDonough	Head Teacher	0191 5843805
Alison McDonough	Designated senior leader with responsibility for attendance	a.mcdonough101@westraintonprimary.durham.sch.uk
Rev Michael Beck	Lead governor for attendance	M.Beck600@durhamlearning.net
Susan Firth	SENDCo and Inclusion Lead	s.firth200@westraintonprimary.durham.sch.uk
Kirstin McGowan	School Business Manager	westrainton@durhamlearning.net

If a pupil is going to be absent from school the person who should be informed is: Mrs Kirstin McGowan, School Business Manager, 0191 5843805

Pupil absence should be reported daily via the telephone line above. It is a fundamental part of safeguarding our pupils, that we know where they are each day and why they are not in school. Mrs McGowan and Mrs McDonough are also here to support families in improving attendance and/or reducing barriers to ensure children are in school as regularly as possible.

If a pupil, parent or family is having difficulty with attending school and requires advice, help or support then they can contact:

Name	Role / type of help	Contact details
Alison McDonough	Head Teacher	0191 5843805
Alison McDonough	Designated senior leader with responsibility for attendance	a.mcdonough101@westraintonprimary.durham.sch.uk
Rev Michael Beck	Lead governor for attendance	M.Beck600@durhamlearning.net
Susan Firth	SENDCo and Inclusion Lead	s.firth200@westraintonprimary.durham.sch.uk
Kirstin McGowan	School Business Manager	westrainton@durhamlearning.net

In addition, all class teachers are available to support with attendance.

Help & Support

Where help or support is needed with attendance the sooner school know about this, the quicker people can work together to support with this. Where needed this can involve other services to make sure that pupils and their families get the right support, at the right time from the right people.

Children Missing from Education

If pupil's whereabouts are not known following enquiries schools can legally remove pupils from the admission register (the school roll) after 20 school days of unauthorised absence. It is **vital that parents keep school informed of any change of details** and regularly update them if details change. A pupil's place in school is at risk if whereabouts are not known. Children Missing from Education must be reported to the Local Authority and the matter may be treated as a safeguarding issue.

Introduction to our school attendance vision and ethos

West Rainton Primary School seeks to ensure that all its pupils receive an education which maximises opportunities for each pupil to realise their true potential. The school will strive to provide a calm, orderly, safe, and supportive environment where all pupils want to be and are keen and ready to learn within a culture that promotes the benefits of high attendance.

Regular school attendance plays a vital role in children's wellbeing and their education, ensuring that their current learning needs are being met but also building their future ability to learn.

Attendance is the essential foundation to positive outcomes for all pupils. Improving attendance is everyone's business and a concerted effort across all teaching and nonteaching staff in school, the trust or governing body, the local authority, and other local partners is required.

Some pupils find it harder than others to attend school and the school and partners will work with pupils and parents to remove any barriers to attendance by building strong and trusting relationships and working together to put the right support in place.

Specific roles and responsibilities have been published in the [Working Together to improve school attendance statutory](#) guidance.

We recognise the link between regular attendance and the well-being, development and achievement of our students / pupils. To benefit from the learning and pastoral opportunities and support we offer we expect all pupils to attend every session they are able to attend.

Communication with our parents and pupils is vital to working together to support attendance.

We ask that parents check the contact details, address and emergency contact information held by the school are up-to-date and changes are communicated to school as soon as possible. It is extremely important that school can contact parents in an emergency, keep parents informed of events and progress or discuss any concerns at the earliest opportunity.

The school day

The school day is from 8:30am until 3:10pm

Pupils can enter school from 8:30am and our doors close at 8:40am. After this time, pupils can only enter school through the main entrance at the office. **All pupils** also have the option of our FREE breakfast club provision from 7:40am every day.

Registration is at 8:45am The register will close at 9:15am

Pupils must be in school for the start of registration to receive a present mark, otherwise another appropriate code will be used (Attendance codes appended). Pupils arriving late for registration, but before the register has closed will be recorded as late (**Code L**).

The DfE states that pupils must not be recorded as present if they are not in school during registration.

Pupils who arrive after the registers close will be recorded as a **Code U** unless the reason means another code is more appropriate. The U code is an unauthorised absence. It is still essential to come to school even if you are arriving after the registers close.

Arriving late to school can be disruptive and unsettling to the child and the rest of their class. Parents should contact the school office 0191 5843805 if there are any issues which are affecting a pupil's ability to attend school on time.

If your child is late for school:

All children arriving late at school will be asked the **reason for their lateness** and this will be recorded on the electronic version of the register.

If a child is late (after registers close) for school on a number of occasions

School will contact parents/carers to establish reasons why lateness is a frequent occurrence and support to remove those barriers. The free breakfast club facility is a useful resource to ease busy morning routines.

If the school continues to have concerns about a child's punctuality

The school will take a range of steps to address this depending on the circumstances, including: free breakfast club offers; specific responsibilities for a child on a morning; a meeting to discuss concerns, expectations and support or possible referral to the local authority for action if the absences continue and are unauthorised (U code)

Term dates and planned Inset days

Details of where parents can find term dates, Inset days etc are on every half termly newsletter and on our school calendar on the home page of the website.

Leave of Absence in Term Time

All schools can grant a leave of absence when a pupil needs to be absent from school with permission, however Head teachers are expected to restrict leave of absence in term-time to the specific circumstances in [regulation 11 of the School Attendance \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2024](#). There is discretion to consider exceptional circumstances based on the individual facts, circumstances and background behind the request. Permission should be (academies)/ must be (maintained schools and non-maintained special schools) requested in advance by a parent the pupil normally lives with completing the form. Parents/carers must make their leave of absence request in writing using our form which can be requested at the office.

Where a leave of absence is granted, the head teacher will determine the number of days a pupil can be away from school.

A leave of absence is granted entirely at the head teacher's discretion. If an application is not made for leave, then the absence will be recorded as unauthorised regardless of circumstances.

The DfE have stated that generally they do not consider the need or desire for a holiday or other absence for leisure or recreation to be an exceptional circumstance.

Our day-to-day processes for managing attendance include first day phonecalls in the first instance. If this is unsuccessful, other means of communication will be used and this could even include a home visit for safeguarding purposes.

On the first day of absence

If a pupil is to be absent for any reason, parents or carers are expected to contact the School via telephone 0191 5843805 providing a reason for the absence. If a pupil is absent from school and there is no contact from parents/carers then school will contact home to find out why the pupil not in school. This will be done by 9:30am on each day of absence. If contact cannot be made, a home visit may even be conducted for safeguarding purposes.

Appointments should be made outside of school time where possible. If this is not possible, your child should miss the minimum amount of school time necessary. Attending school before an appointment is advised. If they are well enough to come back to school following the appointment they should do.

Periods of extended absence

If a pupil has a 48hr absence (for example for a stomach bug) then this process will resume on the 3rd day of absence if no communication has been received.

If a pupil is on holiday and the period of time has been confirmed, the process will resume on the next day of absence. For example, if a holiday has been reported as being 5 school days, the process will restart if the pupil is not in on the 6th day.

No reason for absence provided

The school must follow a process to ascertain a reason for absence if there is no contact from home (e.g. a text or phone call to notify the parent that the pupil has not arrived at school for registration and to request a reason for absence). This may be escalated if there are welfare/safeguarding concerns through methods including further phone calls, contacting other emergency contacts, home visits or welfare concern reports to police.

If the school do not receive a reason for any absence, it will be recorded as unauthorised. Regular absence and unauthorised absences could result in more formal action.

Where 10 or more unauthorised absences are recorded in any 10 rolling school week period the school must consider whether a penalty notice may be appropriate for irregular attendance and, if so, the matter will be referred to the local authority.

Absence authorisation

The High Court has confirmed that the school's Head Teacher authorises absences.

We want to support all our pupils to ensure they can access their education and will take a support first approach. This will sometimes require communications and conversations to better understand the circumstances which may lead to absence.

In the majority of cases a parent's notification that their child is too ill to attend school will count as that evidence and can be accepted without question or concern.

Only where the school has genuine and reasonable doubt about the authenticity of the illness should medical evidence be requested to support the absence. This will be requested when there is a need for clarification to accurately record absence in the attendance register – i.e. making a decision that code I is the absence code that accurately describes the reason the pupil is not in school.

Promoting good attendance and punctuality

There is not a day goes by at West Rainton Primary where good attendance is not recognised by all staff and for all pupils. We have many varied ways of promoting good attendance and punctuality.

- Clarity and consistency of the school policy on attendance is the very first step. All pupils, and parents, joining the school hear, read about and experience how we achieve this.
- On each day where all pupils (from reception to Year 6) are in school, a whole-school conga takes place either in assembly or outside!
- In each Friday assembly, the headteacher gives the children an update on attendance and the top three classes are celebrated; the first placed one receiving the attendance trophy to keep in class for the week.
- A simple, visual display of our whole-school 96% attendance target is visible in the hall. It is referred to in Friday's celebration assembly and, at the end of each month, children wait with baited breath to hear if our collective figure is above the target.
- If this collective whole-school target of 96% is met by the end of the academic year, all children participate in a reward day. In recent years, this has included inflatable slides and ice cream!
- For every completed week of perfect attendance, each child adds their own raffle ticket to a box. In the final week of each term, (December, March and July) a huge prize draw, funded by our PTA, takes place.
- Monthly and termly updates on attendance for parents/carers include letters, postcards or certificates for pupils with good, improving or perfect attendance.

Attendance data

The school monitors attendance figures and trends daily to target attendance improvement efforts to the pupils or pupil cohorts who need it most at the earliest opportunity.

The school will rigorously use attendance data to identify patterns of poor attendance (at individual and cohort level) as soon as possible so all parties can work together to resolve them before they become entrenched including through, attendance improvement letters, attendance meetings in school, regular monitoring of individual attendance targets and by use of formal sanctions for non-improvement in line with local authority guidance.

We will regularly analyse attendance and absence data to identify pupils and cohorts that require support with their attendance. This will be at a whole school, year group, form/class and individual pupil level. We will look at historic and emerging patterns across the school and develop strategies to address them.

We will also consider pupil cohorts such as those who have free school meals; special educational needs or disabilities; pupil premium; children with a social worker; children in care etc to identify where additional support may be required.

We will use the information to inform what we do to support and aid discussions between staff, pupils and families.

We will monitor the data to understand the impact of what we do.

We will communicate information to parents/carers, staff and external agencies through a range of methods including formal meetings such as team around the family meetings, core groups and conferences.

Absence concerns

Parents may identify concerns about school attendance early if there is a change in their child's attitude to school or in their willingness to attend. If this is the case, concerns should be shared with school so that everyone can work together to ensure that school attendance does not decline. The earlier concerns are identified and shared, the quicker they may be resolved.

Persistent absence

Pupils who miss 10% or more of their sessions at school are persistently absent. This equates to 20 days or more absence in a school year and significantly impacts on academic and personal progress. Another way to look at this is to think that if a child was allowed to maintain 90% attendance, consistently from reception to the end of year 4, they will, in fact, have missed **HALF A YEAR** of school.

The school will contact parents/carers in the first instance where a child is showing patterns of being at risk of persistent absence. Together, we will look at reasons for the absences and come up with solutions to improve. If this is not successful, a more formal planning meeting will take place with an ambitious but achievable attendance target set. More formal action, following local authority guidance will take place after this if attendance does not improve.

Severe absence

Pupils who miss 50% or more of their sessions at school are severely absent

The school will work with pupils, parents/carers and partner services and agencies to provide additional support through a more formal, planned approach in conjunction with the local authority to prevent severe absence (persistently absent pupils 70% or below) – review Attendance Support Meeting involving the School Attendance Champion.

National framework for penalty notices and other legal intervention

To improve consistency of practice across the country there is a national framework for penalty notices.

At the point where there are 10 unauthorised absence sessions recorded in any 10 rolling school week period, schools must consider if:

- further support is appropriate.
- support is appropriate but is not being engaged with.
- support is appropriate but is not improving attendance.
- support is not needed, such as in cases of term-time leave of absence.

If support is appropriate, it should continue.

If support is appropriate but is not improving attendance or is not being engaged with, then a referral for consideration of legal intervention should be made to the local authority. This can include, but is not limited to, a Notice to Improve, an application for an Education Supervision Order, Fixed Penalty Notice or Offence Investigation Interview (PACE caution).

If support is not appropriate, such as where a holiday in term-time has taken place, a referral for a penalty notice will be made. ([DCC - Penalty Notice Code of Conduct](#))

Penalty notices offer the opportunity to deal with an irregular attendance offence without the need to go to court. Penalty notices are issued at a rate of £160, reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days.

There is an escalation policy which means that if a second notice is issued within a three-year period, the second notice will only be payable at the rate of £160. Further offences will not be eligible for the offer of a penalty notice and parents may be prosecuted in court. ([DCC - Penalty Notice Leaflet](#))

If penalty notices are not paid, then a prosecution for the original irregular attendance offence will take place.

If convicted at court under section 444 of the Education Act for failing to secure the regular attendance of a registered pupil at school, a parent may be fined up to £1000 for each offence. If there is evidence that a parent knowingly failed to secure the attendance and there is no reasonable justification for this, they can be fined up to £2500 and/or face up to 3 months in prison, be subject to probation supervision or have a curfew imposed as maximum sentences.

Pupils with specific needs

Some pupils, with specific needs, may have valid reasons for absence. Through the rigorous and regular reviews held by our school SENDCo and parents/carers, these reasons will be explored and documented appropriately in school. For example, these may include: absence for appointments above and beyond universal medical needs, absence to attend therapeutic sessions and/or absence to recover from specific medical episodes such as epilepsy.

Similarly, some pupils may have additional responsibilities as young carers at home where the needs of the family can become a barrier to attendance. It is important that the school is made aware of circumstances like this as soon as possible, to ensure the right support for all is in place.

As evidenced in our Inclusion Quality Mark Flagsip status, key staff have strong awareness of their obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. This ensures that policies, such as this, can be applied fairly for all pupils and families.

This policy is supported by our policies on:

Safeguarding, bullying, behaviour, inclusion, pupil wellbeing.

The school and all partners will work together to:

EXPECT

Aspire to high aspirations of attendance from all pupils and parents and build a culture where all can, and want to, be in school and ready to learn by prioritising attendance improvement across the school.



MONITOR

Rigorously use attendance data to identify patterns of poor attendance (at individual and cohort level) as soon as possible so all parties can work together to resolve them before they become entrenched.



LISTEN AND UNDERSTAND

When a pattern is spotted, discuss with pupils and parents to listen to understand barriers to attendance and agree how all partners can work together to resolve them.



FACILITATE SUPPORT

Remove barriers in school and help pupils and parents to access the support they need to overcome the barriers outside of school. This might include an early help or whole school family plan where absence is a symptom of wider issues.



FORMALISE SUPPORT

Where absence persists and voluntary support is not working or not being engaged with, partners should work together to explain the consequences clearly and ensure support is also in place to enable families to respond. Depending on the circumstances this may include formalising support through an attendance or education supervision order.



ENFORCE

Where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or not being engaged with, enforce attendance through statutory intervention or prosecution to protect the pupil's right to an education.

Expect

We recognise that the relationship between attendance and achievement of our students is inextricably linked.

Regular school attendance is crucial to maximise pupil progress and enjoyment of learning, and for this reason the school is dedicated to ensuring its attendance policy is adhered to.

We will ensure that:

- All students have an equal right, and access to, an education in accordance with the national curriculum, or agreed alternative.
- Attendance is a priority across the school.
- Aspire to high standards on attendance.
- Students will not be deprived of their education opportunities by, either their own absence or lateness, or that of students.
- Action is taken where necessary to secure an improvement in attendance.
- We continually provide a vibrant offer, within the classroom curriculum, extra-curricular opportunities and 'hidden' curriculum so that pupils simply don't want to miss out.
- All staff and governors buy into our championing of attendance so that we lead by example.

Monitor

In school, our attendance is monitored daily. Our pupils love nothing more than a whole-school conga on every 100% day!

First-day phonecalls are made for every absence and follow-up calls are made in a timely and supportive manner.

Parents are kept in touch with attendance figures, at the end of each month and term, through clear letters explaining our observations on any concerns, patterns, achievements and improvements. It also offers holistic advice going forward to the whole school population.

More concerning absence data are more regularly and rigorously assessed so that all parties can come together swiftly to resolve issues before they become entrenched.

Listening to and understanding barriers to attendance

When an absence pattern is spotted, the school will discuss this with pupils and parents to listen to and understand barriers to attendance and make a plan / otherwise agree how all partners can work together to resolve them.

We find, in most cases, this level of support is often enough to see significant changes.

Facilitate support

Often, in those initial conversations, simple solutions can be sought and tried, in order to improve attendance. Understanding that a full education is a fundamental right that all children are entitled to becomes a shared understanding for all involved.

Support offered at West Rainton has included access to wraparound care; communication with all caregivers to ensure approaches are consistent; external specialist support for wellbeing; planning for travelling or holidays; collection from home by senior staff.

Where further support may be needed, the school may suggest an early help referral or whole family plan to strengthen knowledge through other agencies about wider issues affecting attendance.

Formalise support

Where absence persists and voluntary support is not working, or not being engaged with, partners will work together to explain the consequences clearly and ensure support is also in place to enable families to respond. We do recognise that each case of absence is individual so, depending on the circumstances, this may include formalising support through a parenting contract or education supervision order.

At this point, we work very closely with families, and with our designated attendance improvement officer, to carry out a timely and appropriate process to secure improvement.

Enforce

Where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or not being engaged with, attendance may be enforced where necessary, through statutory intervention, or prosecution, to protect the pupil's right to an education.

This is a last resort approach in our relentless drive to champion attendance for every pupil.