

Attendance Policy

Wheelwright Lane Primary School



Learning For Life

September 2024
Review September 2026

Introduction and Aims

The purpose of this policy is to state clearly what our expectations are and that attendance and punctuality can only be achieved where home and school are mutually supportive. The government document "*Working Together to Improve School Attendance*" (August 2024) sets out further guidance around school attendance and is used, in school, in conjunction with our attendance policy.

At Wheelwright Lane we are committed to ensuring that every child accesses a rich and diverse school curriculum. In order for children to fulfil their potential they need to attend school every day, on time. We have ensured that all our staff have a good understanding of the impact poor attendance can have on children well being and pupil outcomes. Therefore, we have designated attendance champions and leads to support our children and families to access school every day. All of our staff know that attendance forms part of our safeguarding culture.

At Wheelwright Lane everyone views attendance as a protective factor for each child. All staff are responsible for ensuring children attend school every day. Our most vulnerable pupil's attendance is closely monitored and families can be supported through the Early Help pathway led by our Senior Attendance Champions

In school our Senior Attendance Champions are:

Mrs Perry - Head Teacher

Admin2021@welearn365.com

Mrs Rowe - Learning mentor and pastoral support

rowe.d1@welearn365.com

Mrs Rowe can be contacted for additional support with attendance needs.

All our teachers and teaching assistants act as champions for good attendance in school. Governors are regularly informed about school attendance and work closely with us to monitor the impact of attendance strategies.

Support

We recognise that children and families need 'The right support at the right time'. With this in mind our Senior Attendance Champions are available to support throughout the school week. Mrs Perry and Mrs Rowe are available at the school door each morning and are office staff assist via the school office and telephone lines. For some families, the Early Help Pathway is available and additional signposting where appropriate. There are two types of support available:

Universal Support

- Graduated Response - Assess, Plan, Do, Review, all plans of intervention at each stage including offers of support either formal or informal
- Support pupils' parents and carers by working together to address any in-school barriers to attendance.

- Where barriers are outside of the school's control, we will discuss and offer support to parents, carers and pupils also signposting to the right voluntary support.

Where referrals are required for voluntary support, gain parent, carer and child voice prior to referral to services and organisations.

- Meet with pupils their parents or carers who are at risk of persistent or severe absence at the earliest opportunity, should be a minimum expectation. This will support greater understanding of the barriers to being in school and agreeing actions or interventions to address them.

Additional Support:

- Some pupils find it harder than others to attend school and will need targeted or specialist support. Wheelwright Lane will work with pupils and parents or carers to provide support to remove barriers to attendance by building stronger relationships and putting the right support in place at the right time.'
- The 'EBSA Pathway' seeks to respond to the growing number of children and young people who experience emotional challenges in attending school, an increase which has been seen both in Warwickshire and nationally. Should you require any additional support Please contact ebesa@warwickshire.gov.uk
- Staff engage with children and their families to explore attendance issues. We aim to listen and understand through 2-way dialogue, this may be through meetings, telephone calls or home visits.
- In some cases Individual plans may be used to monitor impact and outcomes and in some cases referrals to the local authority may be necessary
- Senior attendance champions review school attendance data on a weekly basis to look for trends and patterns. Action is taken promptly with respect of children who are beginning to show signs of persistent attendance.
- Daily Routines
- The DfE 'Working Together to Improve School Attendance' 2024 attendance guidance on day-to-day processes:
- "Alongside accurate recording of attendance and absence, effective schools have robust day to day processes to track and follow up absence and poor punctuality which are rigorously applied across the school. All schools are expected to develop processes that meet the needs of their pupils and contexts".

Our day to day attendance checks:

Office staff to check absence line messages from 8:30am

Office staff to call any pupils not in school by 9:30am

Office staff to ask for medical evidence for pupils absent beyond 3 days for illness

Office staff will liaise with Senior Attendance Champions regarding daily absence list

Senior Attendance Champion will call families where there are safeguarding concerns or growing attendance concerns.

Attendance letters will be sent out on a half termly basis for pupils below 93 %

Positive attendance letters and certificates are given to children who have improving attendance / consistently good attendance.

Best class attendance award is given each Friday for the class with the best attendance

Types of Absence:

There is a legal obligation to make sure that children attend school regularly.

There are two types of absence:

- Authorised - This is where the school can approve the absence.
- Unauthorised - Where the school will not approve the absence.

Routine medical/educational absence.

Days or half days taken for medical needs are authorised. Visits to other schools for exam purposes, lessons or transition arrangements are also allowed. These must be in consultation with the Head Teacher or a member of staff, and parents/carers need to inform the school in advance. Longer absences for the purpose of educational residential visits (eg Manor Adventure) are also authorised.

All other absences that are for more than 1 day need to be authorised by the Head teacher.

Persistent Absence & Severe Absence

• A pupil is defined by the Government as a '**persistent absentee**' when they miss 10% of their possible attendance (equivalent to 1 day or more a fortnight across a full school year) and as a '**severe absentee**' when they miss 50% of their possible attendance or more schooling throughout the school year for any reason; this can be authorised or unauthorised absence.

• Where absence escalates and pupils, Wheelwright Lane and the local authority are expected to work together to put additional targeted support in place to remove any barriers to attendance and reengage these pupils. In doing so, we will sensitively consider some of the reasons for absence and understand the importance of school as a place of safety and support for children who might be facing difficulties, rather than reaching immediately for punitive approaches.

• Particular focus will be given by all partners to pupils who are absent from school more than they are present (those missing 50% or more of school). These severely absent pupils may find it more difficult to be in school or face bigger barriers to their regular attendance and as such are likely to need more intensive support across a range of partners. A concerted effort is therefore needed across all relevant services to prioritise them. All partners will work together to make this group the top priority for support - this may include specific support with attendance or a whole family plan.

Leave of Absence

The DfE 'Working Together to Improve School Attendance' 2024 attendance guidance states:

"Generally, the DfE does not consider the need or desire for a holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure and recreation to be an exceptional circumstance "

Leave of Absence

- The law states a leave of absence may only be granted by a school if an application is made in advance and if it considers there are exceptional circumstances relating to the application.

Expectations

- A leave of absence is granted entirely at the school's discretion. Permission for a Leave of Absence from a school may only be given by a person who the school's proprietor has authorised to do so (an authorised person).
- Schools must judge each application individually considering the specific facts and circumstances and relevant background context behind each request.
- Generally, a need or desire for a holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure and recreation would not constitute an exceptional circumstance.
- Where a leave of absence is granted, the school will determine the number of days a pupil can be absent from school.
- When making an application for Leave of Absence parents are advised to give sufficient information and time to allow the Head teacher the opportunity to consider all the exceptional circumstances and to notify the parents of their decision. The school may also request further information on the application and supporting documentation where appropriate.
- It is advised that if the resident parent has not received notification or a response regarding the leave of absence application, it is their responsibility to ascertain if the leave is authorised prior to the start of the leave.
- The school can only consider applications for Leave of Absence which are made by the resident parent. i.e the parent with whom the child normally resides.
- Where applications for Leave of Absences are made in advance and refused, the child is expected to be in school on the dates set out in the application. If the child is absent during that period, it will be recorded as an "unauthorised" absence. Where a leave of absence is requested but additional days take either prior to or after the request, they may be considered as part of the leave of absence.
- Leave of Absences which are not made in advance cannot be authorised in line with legislation. This will result in the absence being recorded as 'unauthorised'.
- All matters of unauthorised absence relating to a Leave of Absence will be referred to the Warwickshire Attendance Service of Warwickshire County Council. Penalty notices are issued in accordance with Warwickshire County Council's Code of Conduct for Penalty Notices and in the first instance, as an alternative to prosecution proceedings.
- Where a Penalty Notice is not paid within the timeframe set out in that Notice, the matter will be referred to Warwickshire County Council's Legal Services to consider instigating criminal prosecution proceedings under S444 of Education Act 1996.

Leave of Absence taken in the academic year 2024-25

The law relating to Penalty Notices changed with effect from 19 August 2024. Therefore, Penalty Notices issued for Leave of Absence taken from September 2024 will be issued in accordance with the updated legislation.

Penalty Notices are issued to each parent of each absent child, (for example 2 children and 2 parents, means each parent will receive 2 invoices - 4 in total).

- **First Leave of Absence Offence:** The amount of £160 to be paid within 28 days, this is reduced to £80 each child if paid within 21 days.
- **Second Leave of Absence Offence within a 3 year period** (from the date of issue of the first penalty notice): The amount of £160 paid within 28 days. No reduced amount.
- **Third Leave of Absence offence within a 3 year period** (from the date of issue of the first penalty notice). A Penalty Notice will not be issued and the matter will be referred to Warwickshire County Council's Legal Services to consider instigating criminal prosecution proceedings under S444 of Education Act 1996.

Each application for a Leave of Absence will be considered on a case by case basis and on its own merits.

Leave of Absence Application forms must be completed along with a covering letter explaining the exceptional circumstances. Forms can be collected from the school's office.

All requests will be confirmed by letter either authorising the request or not.

Escalation of Procedures.

- Weekly attendance checks will be carried out to check for children whose attendance is falling below 90%. We will communicate our concerns either by directly contacting parents or by letter or both. In this way parents will be made aware of attendance procedures. Parents will be informed that we will be monitoring attendance and will be giving the opportunity to discuss matters with the Head or Learning Mentor
- Where the pattern of attendance has still not improved, parents will be sent a target letter outlining an achievable % attendance. If attendance continues to decline we will send a review letter with an invitation to meet to discuss the reasons with the Head teacher or Mrs Rowe. Parents will be made aware that a referral may be sent to the Warwickshire Attendance Service (WAS). Education Entitlement Team will be the next step in our procedures.
- Early Help will be offered at each stage of the Escalation process.

The Warwickshire Attendance Service: Formalising support & Legal Interventions

Wheelwright Lane is responsible for liaising closely with the Local Authority's Warwickshire Attendance Service and will follow their standard approaches in managing attendance issues.

- Where all voluntary support options have not been successful, or have not engaged with, the law protects pupils' right to an education and provides a range of legal interventions to formalise attendance improvement efforts, and where all other avenues have been exhausted, enforce it through prosecuting parents.
- Warwickshire Attendance Service can use the following legal interventions/formalised support; Attendance Contracts, Notice to Improve, issue of Penalty Notices, Education Supervision Orders, Attendance Prosecution, consideration of application of Parenting Orders.
- Warwickshire Attendance Service will decide which intervention will be most appropriate, however only after considering the individual circumstances of a family.
- The above voluntary support options are not appropriate for an unauthorised Leave of Absence in term time. Prosecutions for non-school attendance must be conducted in line with the [Warwickshire County Council Non-school attendance and Penalty Notice code of conduct](#) and the Code for Crown Prosecutors and must pass the evidential and public interest tests.

Attendance and Punctuality expectations of pupils and parents.

- A very close check is kept on lateness and how this is recorded. It is really important that pupils are in school for the start of the day so that they do not miss the introduction to lessons.
- The formal registration period in the morning runs from 8.45am until 8.55am, although registers in the classrooms are kept open until 9.05am. This gives a period of 5 minutes during which children will be marked as present but late (code L). **At 9.05am the classroom registers will close, however children arriving at the school office will still be recorded as late using the L code until 9.25am. Children arriving after 9.25am will need to inform office staff, who will record their arrival and the reasons for their lateness.** This will ensure that, if appropriate, we have a record to authorise the absence at registration. If no valid reason for the lateness is offered, children will be recorded using the U code which is an unauthorised absence for the session.
- We are required to keep accurate records of lateness/absence and whether or not this is authorised and these are closely monitored. Should there be an unavoidable delay, e.g. a traffic delay, the Head Teacher has the discretion to extend the registration period.
- Where a child is late for school on three occasions over a half term, parents will be notified in writing. Regular lateness will be recorded on the pupil's reports and may be included as a comment in any future reference.
- Collection for the end of the day is 3:15. We expect children to remain in school until the end of the day. Parents are expected to collect their child(ren) promptly at 3:15pm.
- Adaptations can be made for pupils with additional needs where appropriate and necessary.
- We offer wrap around care from 7:45am - 6pm which is available to all families. This can support with ensuring that children arrive in class on time when school starts.

Non-compulsory age pupils

Although there is no legal requirement for a pupil to attend nursery, it is widely acknowledged establishing routines including good attendance in early years reaps benefits when children become of compulsory age.

The DfE have now advised in the Working together to improve school attendance that:

- On each occasion the register is taken the appropriate national attendance and absence code must be entered for every pupil (of both compulsory and non-compulsory school age) whose name is listed in the admission register at the time .
- The codes enable schools to record and monitor attendance and absence in a consistent way and are used to collect statistics. The data helps schools, local authorities, and the government gain a greater understanding of the delivery of education and the level of, and reason for, absence.

Legal responsibilities

Legal Framework

The Education Act 1996 requires parents/carers or guardians to ensure their children receive efficient full-time education suitable to their age, ability and aptitude; to any special educational needs he may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise. A child is of compulsory school age at the beginning of the term following their 5th birthday.

Under the Education Act 1996, the Local Authority has a statutory responsibility to ensure that parents secure education for children of compulsory school age and where necessary, use legal enforcement.

Parents/carers and guardians have a legal responsibility to ensure their children receive efficient, full-time education by regular attendance at school or otherwise under section 7 of the Education Act 1996.

Section 576 Education Act 1996 defines 'parent' as:

- Any natural parent, whether married or not;
- Any parent who, although not a natural parent, has parental responsibility as defined in the Children Act (1989) for a child or young person;

- Any person who, although not a natural parent, has care of a child or young person.

If a child of compulsory school age fails to regularly attend the school which he/she is registered at, then the parent/guardian is guilty of an offence under section 444 of the Education Act 1996.

Schools must take the attendance register at the beginning of each morning session and once during each afternoon session.

On each occasion they must record whether every pupil is:

- present;
- absent;
- attending an approved educational activity; or
- unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

The school will record absences in line with the DfE Attendance coding guidance.

Child Missing Education

Leaders have ensured response to the guidance in Keeping Children Safe in Education (2024) leaders have ensured that:

- Staff understand what to do when children do not attend regularly.
- Appropriate policies, procedures and responses for students who go missing from education (especially on repeat occasions) are in place.
- Staff know that travelling to conflict zones could be an indicator of FGM and forced marriage.
- Procedures are in place to ensure that the local authority is always informed if pupils:
 - leave the school to be home educated
 - move away from the school location
 - remain medically unfit beyond compulsory school age
 - are in custody for four months or more (and will not return to school afterwards); or are permanently excluded
 - Schools will ensure that students who are expected to attend the school but fail to take up the place will be referred to the local authority.
 - When a student leaves, schools will record the name of the student's new school and their expected start date.

Deletions from the register

The school will only delete a pupil from their register in accordance with The School Attendance (Pupil registration) (England) Regulations 2024 the local Authority will be notified of this removal. Our school will inform Children's Service when a child with safeguarding concerns is due to be removed from the school register.

Data & Monitoring

The school's strategy for using data is to target attendance using improvement efforts to the pupils or pupil cohorts who need it most and explain how the school plans to reduce persistent and severe absence.

Wheelwright Lane use data to:

- Monitor weekly attendance
- Track patterns and trends
- Monitor pupils at risk of persistent absence
- Monitor persistent and severely absent pupils
- Share attendance figures at parent meetings and with school governors
- Share with local authority attendance leads where appropriate

Parent Partnership

What can parents do to help?

- Try to make appointments outside school time
- Inform the school on the first day of any absence
- Do not book family holidays during term time
- Work with school staff and any outside agencies, such as the school nurse/Early Help, to resolve any issues highlighted by our monitoring of attendance
- Come and discuss any issues or potential problems regarding attendance with school staff before there is an impact on attendance and learning.

Lateness - What can parents do to help?

- Let the school know by telephone if you know that your child will be late.
- If you know that you will be late in advance, let us know what time your child will be arriving and the reason for their lateness as soon as possible. The school office number is 02476364505
- Arrive before school begins (8.40-9.00am) so your child doesn't have to walk into class after everyone else and is ready to start work at their allotted time
- By arriving on time you also help us with being able to provide the dinner numbers for the staff in the kitchen.
- If you arrive after 9.00am, then you must report to the office.

This Policy was ratified by Governors on September 2024

This policy will be reviewed every two years

