Attendance at school policy

Reviewed: July 2025

Next review date: July 2026

Introduction and core principles

Every pupil has a right to a full-time education and high attendance expectations should be set for all pupils.

The policy should be applied fairly and consistently but, in doing so, schools should always consider the individual needs of pupils and their families who have specific barriers to attendance. In development and implementation of such policies, schools should consider their obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

An effective whole school culture of high attendance is underpinned by clear expectations, procedures and responsibilities. To ensure all leaders, staff, pupils and parents understand these expectations, this attendance policy has been drafted and adopted based on the expectations set out in 'Working Together to Improve School Attendance'.

At Walkington Primary School, our school community strives to provide a safe, warm and caring environment where pupils and teachers can work together to achieve high standards in every area of school life. Our school ethos underpins these principles and supports staff, pupils and families in maintaining a good level of attendance through a variety of ways that are outlined in this policy. We recognise that good attendance is essential for high standards and pupil attainment, therefore expect our pupils to attend school regularly and on time in order to maximise their learning and reach their potential. Evidence shows that children who attend school regularly are more likely to make better progress academically and socially, find school routines and school work easier to cope with and maintain close friendships with other children.

Walkington Primary School are committed to meeting our obligations with regards to school attendance through our whole-school culture and ethos, by:

- Promoting good attendance and reducing absence, including persistent and severe absence
- Ensuring every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled
- Acting early to address patterns of absence
- Achieving attendance levels of 95%+ across the school
- Building strong relationships with families to ensure pupils have the support in place to attend school

Attendance matters because across one school year:

- Less than 5 days absence = 97.3% attendance
- 14 days absence (approx.) = 92.6% attendance
- 20 days absence (approx.) = 89.4% attendance
- 30 days absence (approx.) = 84.2% attendance

If a child achieves only 80% attendance this means that they have missed approximately 39 days of education over the academic year, averaging 1 day per week.

Legislation and guidance

This policy meets the requirements of 'Working Together to Improve School Attendance' document from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on parental responsibility relating to school attendance. 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.

Roles and responsibilities

The governing board is responsible for:

- Promoting the importance of school attendance through 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 is responsible for:

- Implementation of this policy
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils
- Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies
- Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary

The administration officer is responsible for:

- Maintaining accurate daily attendance records for all pupils
- Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes
- Having an oversight of data analysis
- Arranging calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues

- Taking calls from parents about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the school system

Parents/carers are expected to:

- Make sure their child attends school every day on time
- Call or email the school to report their child's absence before 9am on the day of the 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
- Collect their child promptly at the end of the school day, noting that it can be distressing for a child if they are left waiting for collection
- Inform the school by 3.15 pm if their child is to be collected by anyone not normally scheduled for a particular day
- Inform the school if arrangements have been made for their child to be collected by an out of school club/childminder and if the arrangements change, advise the teacher or the school office.

Education Welfare Service EWS are responsible for:

- Providing a dedicated Education Welfare Officer who will work in the school (as per service level agreement)
- Supporting school staff in identifying attendance concerns and becoming familiar with the procedures and documentation required for referring attendance concerns to the Education Welfare Service
- Advising on policy, strategies and legal requirements
- Providing area Education Welfare Officers who will liaise with school staff following referral to the service

Attendance register

We will keep an accurate daily attendance register, and ensure this accurately reflects the school roll. We will take our attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day and also at the start of the afternoon session.

It will mark whether every pupil is:

- Present
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity
- Absent
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

Any amendment to the attendance register must be agreed with the headteacher and 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)

Children should arrive at school by 8:45am, with registers being taken between 8:50am and 9:00am. Whilst the school gates are opened before 8am to allow access to the school wrap-around care provision, we kindly ask that children who are not attending this provision do not enter the school grounds before 8:30am. The school does not offer supervision to pupils prior to the classroom doors opening at 8:45am.

Unplanned absence

The pupil's parent/carer must notify the school of the reason for the absence on the first day of an unplanned absence by 8:50am or as soon as practically possible. They can phone the school office, email the school or leave a message on the school's answer phone. The school telephone number is 01482 861115.

We will mark absence due to illness as authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness. If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may ask the pupil's parent/carer to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents/carers will be notified of this in advance.

The school will usually, where circumstances allow, make a 'keeping in touch' call to check on pupils from the third day of absence relating to illness.

Planned absence

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the pupil's parent/carer notifies the school in advance of the appointment and provides proof of appointment (this can be a text message or appointment letter/card). However, we encourage parents/carers to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary. Where possible and practical, pupils are expected to return to school following an appointment. The pupil's parent/carer must also apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence.

Lateness and punctuality

A pupil who arrives late:

- Before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code
- After the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code

Lateness and punctuality are monitored by senior leaders, admin officers and governors.

Children arriving after classroom doors have closed need to enter the school through the main office entrance. Registers are marked by 9am and pupils will receive a late mark if they are not in school by that time. At 9:10am the register will close. If a pupil arrives after this time, they will receive a mark which shows they are in school but in accordance with regulations it will be recorded as an unauthorised absence (U code). This means that if lateness persists a family may face the possibility of receiving a penalty notice.

The afternoon session begins at 1:10pm and the register is taken once children are back in class. Pupils arriving between 1:10pm and 1:20pm will be marked as late. Any pupil arriving after the close of register at 1:20pm will be marked as an unauthorised absence.

Following up unexplained absence

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

- Call the pupil's parent/carer in the morning by 10:00am of the first day of unexplained absence to ascertain the reason
- If the school cannot reach any of the pupil's emergency contacts, the school may take a number of additional measures which could include making a home visit or calling the police
- Any unexplained absence will be shared with a member of the SLT, who will ensure safeguarding action is taken where necessary. A senior member of staff will at this stage identify the correct attendance code to use
- The school may also consider involving an education welfare officer

Reporting to parents/carers

Parents will be informed about their child's attendance through the following:

- Annual reports
- Through a letter/email in cases where the SLT/EWO have ongoing concerns about attendance levels - in these cases, a meeting may be held with the headteacher with an action plan being put in place.

Approval for term-time absence

The headteacher will only grant a leave of absence to a pupil during term time if they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances' in line with the current LA/national guidance. A leave of absence is granted at the headteacher's discretion, including the length of time the pupil is authorised to be absent for. The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request. Evidence may be required in order for absences to be authorised. Provision for headteachers to authorise absence purely for the purpose of a family holiday is not an exceptional circumstance. 'Absence from School Request Forms' can be found on the school

website or collected from the school office. Parents must return the absence request form in reasonable time prior to the planned absence via the school office.

If an absence is required at short notice, the parent must make every effort to contact the headteacher to discuss the planned absence. Where children are absent from school without a prior request being made to the headteacher, the absence when it occurs, cannot be authorised. The law now clearly states that no absence shall be retrospectively authorised.

Valid reasons for authorised absence include, but are not limited to:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the family belong - if necessary, the school will seek advice from the religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart
- The school at which the pupil is registered is not within walking distance of their home and no suitable arrangements have been made by the local authority for the pupil's transport to and from school in exceptional circumstances.
- 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) etc
- There is a family bereavement
- The pupil has a local authority licence to take part in a public performance and the school has given leave of absence
- The pupil is attending an interview for a place at another school
- The pupil is involved in an exceptional special occasion e.g. a family wedding

If a request meets the above exceptional circumstances but falls within the following times, the headteacher must be convinced that absence from school is the only option:

- The first half term of any academic year (applies to all pupils)
- Year six transition day (for pupils in year six)
- Year six SATs week (for pupils in year six)
- At any time specified by the school (this will be communicated to parents by each school)

Possible reasons for unauthorised absence coding include, but are not limited to:

- No explanation is forthcoming from the parent/carer
- The school is dissatisfied with the explanation
- The pupil is absent for unexceptional special occasions e.g. the pupil's birthday
- The pupil is on a family holiday

Reducing persistent absence

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

Contact is made with the families where a pattern and/or trends of absenteeism is seen or where absence falls below expected levels. Where a child is considered to be persistently absent, the administrator or senior leaders will contact the family and support them to address the barrier to the child attending school. This could potentially be through regular contact, referral to outside agency support or talking to the child directly. The strategies that will be put in place will be child specific so as to address the child's individual needs which could support the family and child in reducing the barrier such as financial, social, illness, family circumstance etc.

Legal sanctions

The local authority can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age. Penalty notices can be issued by the local authority officer or the police. Please see the link below for the latest guidance:

https://educationhub.blog.gov.uk/2024/02/29/fines-for-parents-for-taking-children-out-of-school-what-you-need-to-know/

The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice may take into account:

- The number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year
- One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission
- Where an excluded pupil is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason

Where a pupil has 10 consecutive school days of unexplained absence and all reasonable steps have been taken by the school to establish their whereabouts without success, the school will make an immediate referral to East Riding of Yorkshire Education Welfare. In such instances the case would be categorised as a Child Missing from Education.

Strategies for promoting attendance

The most vital part of encouraging good attendance is to ensure that the school is a place to which the children want to come; that the school is a place where:

- the children are treated with respect and feel valued
- their needs are recognised and being addressed
- all children can experience success within a rich, relevant and diversified curriculum

It is clear that children alone cannot ensure their regular attendance at school. From the outset, parents are encouraged to take an active interest in the work of the school and to build and support their children's enthusiasm for attending school. All staff make children aware of the importance of good attendance and children are praised. Each child's attendance record is shared with parents and attendance may be discussed at parent consultations. Individual records of attendance are kept and are passed onto subsequent schools.

Attendance monitoring

Walkington Primary School will:

- Monitor attendance and absence data half-termly, termly and yearly across the school and at an individual pupil level
- Identify whether or not there are particular groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern
- Log and add to CPOMS conversations and action plans
- Investigate all absences and persistent lateness. When the registers close the admin staff will check the messages and call parents of absent pupils when no reason has been given
- Analyse attendance and absence data regularly to identify pupils or cohorts that need additional support with their attendance, and use this analysis to provide targeted support to these pupils and their families
- Look at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence, and then develop strategies to address these patterns
- Use data to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place in order to modify them and inform future strategies

Pupil-level absence data will be collected and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The school will compare attendance data to the national average, and share this with the governing board via termly headteacher reports.

This policy links to the following policies:

- Child protection and safeguarding policy
- Behaviour policy

Appendix 1: Attendance codes

/Present (AM)
\Present (PM)
B Educated off site (not dual reg)
C Other authorised circumstances
D Dual registration
E Excluded
G Family holiday (not agreed)
H Family holiday (agreed)
I Illness
J Interview
L Late (before registers close)
M Medical/dental appointments
N No reason yet provided for absence
O Unauthorised Abs

P Approved sporting activity
R Religious observance
S Study leave
T Traveller absence
U Late (after registers close)
V Educational visit or trip
W Work Experience
Y Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances
X Non- Compulsory school age absence
- All should attend/No mark recorded
7 Illness due to Covid 19
8 Self isolating due to Covid 19
9 Shielding due to Covid 19