



WESTLANDS SCHOOL

Attendance Policy

Equalities Statement

In our Trust we work to ensure that there is equality of opportunity for all members of our community who hold a range of protected characteristics as defined by the Equality Act 2010, as well as having regard to other factors which have the potential to cause inequality, such as, socio-economic factors. For further information, please see our Equalities Policy.

Document Management

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Approved by: Governing Body

Responsible for review: Miss C Honess, Headteacher



Principles

Westlands School's aim is that all pupils attend school regularly and where there has been absence, pupils will be supported in returning to school. We, at Westlands School, will do all we can to support young people into school and offer guidance, support and signposting of further help if required.

Westlands School expects every student to have a 100% attendance. We want all our young people to attend regularly and arrive to lessons on time, in order to take full advantage and access the full-time educational opportunities they are entitled to. Barriers such as poor attendance will hinder, delay or stop their progress.

Studies have shown that frequent absence from school can have a serious negative impact on your child's education. There is a perception from both students and parents that 90% attendance is good, however, 90% attendance is the equivalent of one half-day off every week.

Your child should be in school by 8.30am every day as lessons start at 8.35am. Any student arriving at school after 8.35am is deemed late. If a student arrives after 9.30am when the register closes, this is recorded as an Unauthorised Absence and marked as a U Code. The school day finishes at 3:05pm.

In order to achieve excellent attendance, Westlands School provides a welcoming, safe and secure environment where students feel valued. In addition, the school works hard to create a stimulating and accessible curriculum with high quality teaching for every student, together with a wide range of extra-curricular activities.

Why Regular Attendance is Important

Learning and Achievement

There is a clear link between high attendance and high achievement. Students with higher rates of attainment have higher attendance levels in comparison to students with lower levels of attendance. We expect all students and parents/carers to know their attendance/absence rates from school. This can be found on My Child at School and the Student Portal.

Evidence suggests that:

- students who have an overall absence rate of 8.8% or more have a much higher chance of not achieving grades 9 to 4 in English and mathematics;
- students with an absence rate of 5.2% achieved a grade 4;



- the overall absence rate of students not achieving grades 9 to 4 was twice as high as those achieving grade 9 to 5 (8.8% absence rate in comparison to 3.7% absence rate);
- for the most vulnerable students 90% of young offenders had been persistently absent from school - attendance less than 90%.

Safeguarding

A child may be at risk of harm if they do not attend school regularly. Safeguarding the interests of each student is everyone's responsibility and within the context of our school, promoting the welfare and life opportunities for a child encompasses:

- Attendance;
- Behaviour Management;
- Health and Safety;
- Access to the Curriculum;
- Anti-bullying;
- Mental Health and Wellbeing;
- SEND.

Failing to attend our school on a regular basis will be considered as a safeguarding matter which can result in a welfare check, SouthEastern Attendance Advisory Service (SEAAS) involvement or a Police check being carried out. If persistent absence continues, this can result in a referral to the SouthEastern Attendance Advisory Service or referral to external agencies (Social Services).

The Designated Safeguarding Lead at Westlands School is Mrs Giles. If there are concerns about student wellbeing and safety, she can be contacted by email adelle.giles@swale.at

Roles and Responsibility

Responsibilities of the Local Governing Body

The Local Governing Body is responsible for the following:

- Setting high expectations for all school leaders, staff, pupils, and parents;
- ensuring school leaders meet expectations and statutory duties, including:
 - accurately recording attendance in the register and sharing required information with the DfE and local authority;
 - collaborating with local partners to remove attendance barriers and keeping them informed about specific pupils when appropriate.
- Recognising and promoting the importance of school attendance across policies and ethos;



- effectively delivering attendance management processes and providing consistent support to pupils in need by prioritising staff and resources;
- maintaining high aspirations for all pupils while adapting processes and support to individual needs;
- regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data to help school leaders focus on improving attendance for specific pupils or cohorts;
- collaborating with school leaders to set attendance goals and provide support and challenge;
- monitoring overall school attendance figures and continually evaluating the effectiveness of attendance processes and improvement efforts to meet pupils needs;
- developing comprehensive action plans with school leaders to improve attendance when necessary;
- providing adequate training on attendance to all staff as part of continued professional development;
- offering dedicated training to staff with specific attendance roles, including interpreting and analysing attendance data.

Responsibilities of the Headteacher

Miss Honess or her designate, Mrs Arculus-Pennells, will oversee the attendance school strategy and implementation. The headteacher will, (in addition to Mrs Arculus-Pennells), be responsible for:

- implementation of this policy at the school;
- monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors;
- supporting staff in monitoring the attendance of individual pupils;
- assessing the impact of any implemented attendance strategies;
- request fixed-penalty notices when necessary, and/or authorising the senior attendance lead and attendance officers to do so;
- collaborating with the parents/carers of pupils with special educational needs (SEND) and/or disabilities to develop specific support approaches for attendance, addressing issues such as missed school transport and in-school barriers;
- communicating with the local authority regarding attendance concerns for pupils with education, health, and care (EHC) plans, or when barriers to attendance relate to the pupil's needs;
- regularly conveying the schools high expectations for attendance and punctuality to pupils and parents through all available channels.



Responsibilities of the School's Attendance Leader

Mrs Arculus-Pennells will oversee, direct and co-ordinate the school's work in promoting regular and improved attendance and will ensure the attendance policy is consistently applied throughout the school, ensuring that attendance is both recorded accurately and analysed. They will ensure that attendance issues are identified at an early stage and work with other professionals to support them with any difficulties.

If absence is frequent or continuous, except where a child is clearly unwell, staff will discuss with parents/carers the need and reasons for their child's absence and will encourage them to keep absences to a minimum. A note or explanation from a pupil's home does not mean an absence becomes authorised. The decision whether or not to authorise an absence will always rest with the school attendance lead.

Responsibilities include:

- leading, championing, and improving attendance across the school;
- setting a clear vision for enhancing and maintaining good attendance;
- evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes;
- having a strong understanding and oversight of absence data and its analysis;
- regularly monitoring and assessing progress in attendance;
- establishing and maintaining effective systems for addressing absence, ensuring they are followed by all staff;
- liaising with pupils, parents/carers, and external agencies as needed;
- building close, productive relationships with parents/carers to discuss and resolve attendance issues;
- overseeing intervention or reintegration plans in collaboration with pupils and their parents/carers;
- co-ordinating targeted intervention and support to pupils and families.

Responsibilities of the Attendance Team

The school attendance officer is responsible for:

- Carefully monitoring the attendance and punctuality of all students;
- identify any attendance barriers and students that are at risk of persistent absence;
- liaise closely with the pastoral and safeguarding staff as well as senior leadership to support attendance and punctuality initiatives;



- ensure class teachers liaise proactively with the team to help identify and address attendance issues ;
- take relevant action where attendance is a cause for concern, e.g. telephone parents/carers to discuss the problem, make home visits, refer to SEAAS, organise meetings with parents/carers to decide on the appropriate intervention;
- in the case of students who refuse to attend school, home visits are carried out in an attempt to ascertain reasons for absence;
- pursue enforcement action where no significant improvement has been made to attendance, in line with the process agreed by the Local Authority;
- on discovering truancy, inform the student's parents/carers and Year Team the same day and ensure appropriate sanctions are applied.

Contact details for the attendance office team are as follows:

- Attendance Officer - Melanie Bassett - melanie.bassett@swale.at
- Attendance Assistant – Faye Howard - faye.howard@swale.at
- Attendance Assistant - Julie Matson - julie.matson@swale.at
- The South Eastern Attendance and Advisory Service (SEAAS) liaison - Tina Morris - tinamorris@seaas.co.uk

If you wish to discuss any pastoral concerns linked to attendance, please contact the year group team in the first instance. All pastoral contact details can be found on the website [here](#) under community structure.

Responsibilities of School Staff

The school staff are responsible for:

- Ensuring accurate registration of all pupils;
- promoting and rewarding good attendance at every appropriate opportunity;
- liaising with the year group community and attendance leader regarding attendance matters;
- communicating any concerns or underlying issues that may explain a child's absence;
- supporting pupils in re-engaging with their learning upon returning to school after an absence;
- keeping attendance and lateness records up to date;
- Ensuring appropriate attendance code is entered into the register (see National Attendance Codes);
- Informing parents termly of the child's attendance figure via either a percentage or days missed with the year to date.



Student responsibility

To ensure that every student achieves their potential, students:

- Must ensure that they arrive promptly, attend all morning and afternoon sessions and timetabled lessons punctually;
- discuss promptly with the their year group community team or attendance team any problems that may affect their attendance;
- attend school appropriately prepared for the day;
- provide medical evidence for any appointments that result in an absence.

Parents/Carers Responsibility

The parents/carers are responsible for:

- Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school as this is a parent/carer's legal responsibility (Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act) and permitting absence from school that is not authorised by the school creates an offence in law.

Where this policy refers to a parent/carer, it refers to the adult the school and/or local authority decides is most appropriate to work with, including:

- All natural parents, whether they are married or not
- All those who have parental responsibility for a child or young person
- Those who have day-to-day responsibility for the child (i.e. lives with and looks after them)

Parents/carers are expected to:

- Ensure their child attends school on time every day;
- call the school to report their child's absence before 8.30a.m. on the day of the absence and each subsequent day, and inform the school when the child is expected to return;
- provide the school with more than one emergency contact number for their child;
- schedule medical appointments for their child outside of school hours whenever possible;
- adhere to any attendance contracts made with the school and/or local authority;
- only request leave of absence for exceptional circumstances;



- seek support, where necessary, for maintaining good attendance, by contacting the attendance team, who can be contacted via telephone 01795 413 920 or emailing wss-attendanceoffice@swale.at.

Absence Procedures

Parents/carers must contact the school to report their child's absence by calling the Attendance Office on 01795 413 920 or emailing wss-attendanceoffice@swale.at at the earliest opportunity (by 8:30am), giving a reason for the absence and a date when the child or young person is expected to return. Parents/carers should contact the school on each subsequent day of absence. Please note the Attendance Office does not open until 8am. Please leave a voicemail with a detailed reason for absence should you not be able to get through to a member of the Attendance Team.

Westlands School will only authorise 5 days of illness per academic year provided contact has been made by the parent/carer and the reason deemed acceptable. All further absences will be unauthorised unless medical evidence is provided. Please note the following are acceptable as medical evidence; appointment card, letter, doctors note, appointment text or prescribed medication including the label. On the provision that SEAAS are involved, a home visit can be organised to authorise the absence if medical evidence cannot be obtained.

All unauthorised absences will result in a text message/email being generated by our system to parents/carers. Westlands School understands the difficulty of obtaining same-day GP appointments, however there are a number of walk-in clinics who provide confirmation of emergency appointments. For symptoms such as headaches or being generally unwell, we advise your child to take suitable medication in the morning and attend school. We are unwilling to authorise a whole day's absence due to a 'headache' or feeling 'generally unwell'.

Understanding types of absences

Unauthorised absence

Every half-day absence from our school has to be classified by the Attendance Officer (not by parents/carers), as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required, preferably in writing. If no explanation is received, absences will not be authorised.

Absence (for example leave for holidays) during term time can only be approved in "exceptional circumstances".



The following reasons are examples of absence that will not be authorised:

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily (persistent nonspecific illness e.g. poorly/unwell/headache/sore throat);
- absence for illness when attendance is below 95% unless medical evidence is provided;
- medical/dental appointments of more than half a day without very good reason (distance is taken into consideration);
- absence of siblings if one child is ill;
- truancy before or during the school day;
- absences which have not been properly explained via email/telephone/message;
- children who report their own absence;
- children who arrive at school after registration has closed and are too late to get a mark without good reason i.e. oversleeping, missing the bus;
- shopping, looking after other children or birthdays;
- day trips and holidays in term time which have not been agreed;
- weddings;
- moving house;
- inadequate clothing/uniform;
- confusion over school dates.

Medical Appointments

- Where possible, medical appointments must be arranged outside of the school day
- Please inform the Attendance Office of any appointments prior to the date. For unavoidable appointments during the school day, we generally do not require letters from GPs, other than in exceptional circumstances, but any appointment letters, cards and/or prescribed medicine labels will be acceptable
- Please ensure your child has either a note from yourself or a copy of the appointment documentation on their person to allow them to be dismissed from lesson

Illness during the school day

- In the event of a student being genuinely unwell and unable to continue with the school day, contact will be made with the parent/carer;
- in the interest of safeguarding the students, arrangements will be made for the student to be collected by parent/carer or other nominated family member;



- no student should leave the school premises due to medical reasons without staff permission (based on whether contact has been made with a parent/carer at home).

Actions on Absence

- Please let the Attendance Office know if your child is going to be absent from school by calling the Attendance Office on (01795 413920) or emailing wss-attendanceoffice@swale.at and update them on each day of absence thereafter. If the school is not contacted, the absence will be deemed unauthorised and a SMS communication will be sent home for clarification;
- Westlands School will authorise up to 5 days per academic year for absence due to illness. For any further absences, we will require a form of medical documentation;
- unless medical evidence is provided, Westlands School will not authorise a whole day of absence for reasons such as headache;
- if mental health is given as the reason for absence please refer to our parent leaflet on page 17 as well as appendix three for support that is available;
- if mental health is given as the reason and is preventing school attendance, parents must seek medical advice;
- Westlands School will not accept the term 'generally unwell' or similar language to describe your child's absence. The use of such vocabulary will result in the period of absence being recorded as unauthorised. Please provide specific ailments of the illness;
- absences, where the attendance office has not been informed of the reason for absence will be recorded as unauthorised. On the first day of unauthorised absence, Westlands School will send a text message to parents to prompt them to contact the school;
- on the second day of unauthorised absence, a phone call will be made to all contacts to establish the reasons for absence;
- on the third day of unauthorised absence staff may conduct a home visit to establish the reason for absence and to ensure the welfare of the young person. A calling card will be left at the home requesting that parents contact the school;
- on the fourth day of unauthorised absence with no contact, Westlands School may raise the young person to Social Services through the Digital Front Door.

Throughout the year, attendance data is kept and analysed with relevant actions taking place as necessary. Pupils may be targeted for attendance intervention and support where attendance is below the expected level. Where a young person's attendance is a concern, the school may discuss this with Kent County Council.



Punctuality

We will keep an electronic attendance register, and place all pupils 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, using the appropriate national attendance and absence codes from the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024, whether every pupil is:

- Present;
- attending an approved off-site educational activity;
- absent;
- unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

In addition the following is recorded:

- Records of any amendments with the reason are recorded including the date of the alteration;
- whether the absence is authorised or not;
- the nature of the activity, where a pupil is attending an approved educational activity;
- the nature of circumstances, where a pupil is unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances;
- we will keep every entry on the attendance register for 6 years after the date on which the entry was made;
- the school day starts at 8:30am and ends at 3.05pm;
- pupils must arrive in school by 8:30am on each school day;
- the register for the first session will be taken at the beginning of the period and will be kept open until the end of this period. Pupils will be marked as late including the number of minutes within the period, any pupil arriving after this time will be registered as a U code.

See Appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes.

Action on Lateness

- Please contact the Attendance Office via email or phone if you know your child is going to be late;
- your child should be in school by 8.30am every day ready for lessons to start at 8.35am;
- any student arriving at school after 8.35am, with no valid reason, is deemed late and a detention will be issued;



- if a student arrives after 30 minutes from the start of the session, this is recorded as an unauthorised absence and sanctions will be issued, unless a valid reason can be given.

Sixth Form students should 'tap in' and 'tap out' with their ID badges at the front reception. Students that are working in the Sixth Form centre are required to sign in and out at the front reception by using their ID badges. Sixth Form students must attend all timetabled lessons.

Authorising Absence

The headteacher will allow pupils to be absent from the school site for certain educational activities, or to attend other schools or settings.

The headteacher will only grant a leave of absence to a pupil during term time if the request meets the specific circumstances set out in the [2024 school attendance regulations](#).

These circumstances are:

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

A leave of absence is granted at the headteacher's discretion, including the length of time the pupil is authorised to be absent for.

We define 'exceptional circumstances' as "one off events which are unavoidable". The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant background context behind the request.

As a leave of absence will only be granted in exceptional circumstances, it is unlikely a leave of absence will be granted for the purposes of a family holiday. Parents/carers must apply through the [Leave of Absence Form](#) on the website to take a student out of school for a holiday. This form will need to be downloaded, completed fully and returned to the Attendance Office at least 3 weeks prior to the holiday taking place. The Attendance Team will notify the parent in writing of the decision to refuse/grant permission and will code accordingly. Parents/carers who disregard this and still take their child on holiday will receive a letter informing them of a request for a Fixed Penalty Notice.



Action on Holidays

- No holidays during term-time will be authorised;
- fixed Penalty Notices may be requested for unauthorised holidays;
- we expect parents to notify us if they have booked a holiday, using the [Leave of Absence Form](#) which can be found on our website;
- if there are exceptional circumstances the headteacher may agree to authorise the absence, but this is very rare.

Supporting pupils who are absent or returning to school

We acknowledge that some students will experience barriers to both attending school or returning from a leave of absence; either authorised or unauthorised. These barriers can also be more complex for students suffering from long term physical or mental health or have special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). The school aims to work with families to improve attendance and remove the barriers these students face and put additional support in place where necessary to allow them to access full time education.

This can include:

- Organising meetings to develop a good understanding of the needs of the student and family;
- making reasonable adjustments for the individual student;
- working in partnership with the pupil and family to put in-school support in place and working with other the local authority and other agencies where external support is needed (and available);
- regularly reviewing and updating the support approach to make sure it continues to meet individual needs.

Whilst any child or young person may be off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents/carers and the young person. If a young person is reluctant to attend, it is never a good idea to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. Condoning absence, particularly at an early age, can lead to habitual patterns of non-attendance and can give students the impression that attendance does not matter.

If a parent feels further support to attend or return to school is needed, please contact the attendance team by telephone on 01795 413 920 or emailing wss-attendanceoffice@swale.at



Rewards and Incentives

At Westlands we celebrate and acknowledge excellent, regular and improved attendance in school assemblies and through our rewards system (see table below). Students will receive recognition for achieving excellent and improved attendance each term. The Pastoral Team and Senior Leaders may also use extra - curricular school events and activities or trips to incentivise attendance.

0 lates in a week	Positive communication sent home praising students for arriving at every lesson on time
100% attendance in a week	1 achievement point will be awarded
100% attendance in a term	5 achievement points will be awarded. Students will also be entered in a termly raffle to receive additional rewards
Rewards assemblies	Assemblies will be used to reward students for excellent or improved attendance and punctuality
Attendance badges - Bronze, Silver and Gold	Students will receive a bronze badge for two terms of consistent full attendance, a silver badge for four terms of consistent full attendance and a gold badge for a full academic year of 100% attendance
Attendance trips	Students will be invited to a range of trips and reward events to celebrate excellent or improved attendance and punctuality

Analysing Attendance

The school will:

- Analyse attendance and absence data regularly to identify pupils, groups or cohorts that need additional support with their attendance;
- identify pupils whose absences may be a cause for concern, especially those who demonstrate patterns of persistent or severe absence;
- conduct thorough analysis of half-termly, termly, and full-year data to identify patterns and trends;
- look at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence, and then develop strategies to address these patterns.

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 that it has identified via data analysis;
- provide targeted support to the pupils it has identified whose absences may be a cause for concern, especially those who demonstrate patterns of persistent or severed absence, and their families;
- provide regular attendance reports, to facilitate discussions with pupils and families, and to the governing body and school leaders (including special educational needs co-ordinators, designated safeguarding leads and pupil premium leads);
- 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 the 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.

Reducing Persistent and Severe Absence

The government defines a student a Persistent Absentee when their attendance falls to 90%, below 50% is a Severe Absentee. Absence at this level will cause considerable damage to any child or young person's educational prospects and the fullest support and cooperation is needed from parents/carers to tackle this.

The school will:

- Use attendance data to find 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 the parents/carers of pupils who the school (and/or local authority) considers to be vulnerable or at risk of persistent or severe absence, or who are persistently or severely absent, to:
 - Discuss attendance and engagement at school;
 - listen, and understand barriers to attendance;
 - explain the help that is available;
 - explain the potential consequences of, and sanctions for, persistent and severe absence;
 - review any existing actions or interventions;
 - provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance, in conjunction with the local authority, where relevant;
 - consider alternative support that could be put in place to remove any barriers to attendance and re-engage students. In doing so, the school will sensitively consider some of the reasons for absence;



- implement sanctions, where necessary.

Any case that is seen to have reached the persistent absent mark or at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority; parents/carers will be informed of this immediately. Action will likely mean working with The South Eastern Attendance Advisory Service alongside any other external agencies to put support in place before legal action is discussed.

Fixed Penalty Notices may be requested by Westlands School if a pupil's attendance continues to decline, despite support, by the school and other agencies, or shows no sign of improvement over a specific set period of time.

South Eastern Advisory Attendance Services

SEAAS are an outside company employed by Swale Academies Trust to monitor students concerning attendance levels. The Attendance Officer will have access to the school's information system, Bromcom. The Attendance Officer from SEAAS will work with year teams weekly to highlight students who fall below the expected 100% level attendance. A pre-referral letter will be sent to parents/carers informing them that SEAAS will now be monitoring the attendance of their child.

SEAAS will liaise with parents and carers as well as the pupil's year group team in order to encourage good attendance. Where there are persistent or prolonged periods of sickness, the school may refer the matter to SEAAS so that the correct advice and assistance can be put in place to support families. Our SEAAS officer will actively support a student to improve their attendance level, which may require parents/carers to attend meetings at the school in the first instance. Home visits may also be arranged; either planned in advance or unannounced if there is a concern. SEAAS may liaise with the local authority, KCC, if improvements do not occur.

Prosecution Procedure

Reducing unauthorised absence from school is a key priority nationally and locally because missing school damages a student's attainment levels, disrupts school routines and learning of others.

Truancing can also leave a student vulnerable to antisocial behaviour and youth crime. Truancing lessons during the school day is non-negotiable at this school and will result in students spending a period of time in our Consequence and Intervention Room as well as having an After School Detention.

Under existing legislation, parents/carers commit an offence if a child or young person fails to attend school regularly and the absences are classed as unauthorised (absences without a valid reason). Parents/carers are legally responsible for making



sure their child attends regularly and punctually. This applies even if children are missing school without the knowledge of their parent/carer.

Penalty Notices

Penalty notices are issued in accordance with the Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2024 and Kent County Council's Education Penalty Notices Code of Conduct.

If the school issues a penalty notice, it will check with the local authority before doing so, and send a copy of any penalty notice issued.

Before issuing 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;
- whether any obligations that the school has under the Equality Act 2010 make issuing a penalty notice inappropriate.

A penalty notice may also be issued where parents allow their child to be present in a public place during school hours without reasonable justification, during the first 5 days of a suspension or exclusion (where the school has notified the parents that the pupil must not be present in a public place on that day).

Each parent who is liable for the pupil's offence(s) can be issued with a penalty notice, but this will usually only be the parent/parents who allowed the absence.

The payment must be made directly to the local authority, regardless of who issues the notice. 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 must pay £80 within 21 days, or £160 within 28 Days.

If a **second** penalty notice is issued to the same parent in respect of the same pupil, the parent must pay £160 if paid within 28 days.

A **third** penalty notice cannot be issued to the same parent 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 instead.

Notices to improve

If the national threshold has been met and support is appropriate, but parents do not engage with offers of support, the school may offer a notice to improve to give parents a final chance to engage with support.

Notices to improve will be issued in line with processes set out in the local code of conduct for the local authority area in which the pupil attends school.

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.

Leaving Westlands School

We are always sad to say goodbye to our students. If a student is leaving Westlands School because they are relocating or they are changing schools, please inform us. We need the student's new address and the details of the new school, including school name, address and start date. This safeguarding procedure means that we know that the student is still in education, safe and well. If a parent/carer decides to home school their child, it is essential that you inform us in writing. This can be via an email to wss-attendanceoffice@swale.at.

Legislation and guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the School Attendance Guidance from the Department for Education (DfE): Working Together to Improve School Attendance with the most recent publication being issued in February 2024, the DfE's Statutory Guidance on School Attendance Parental Responsibility Measures and refers to the DfE's Guidance on the School Census which explains the persistent absence threshold.



These are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

The Education Act 1996

The Children Act 1989

The Crime and Disorder Act 1998

The Education Act 2002

The Education and Inspections Act 2006

The Anti-social behaviour Act 2003

The Education (Student Registration) (England) Regulations 2006

The Education (Student Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2010

The Education (Student Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2011

The Education (Student Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013

The Education (Student Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2016

The Education (Parenting Contract and Parenting Orders) (England) Regulations 2007

The Sentencing Act (2020) The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (2007)

The Westlands Policies:

Westlands School Safeguarding and Child protection Policy

Swale Academies Trust - Health and Safety Policy

Westlands School Behaviour and Uniform Policy



Appendices

Appendix One: Department for Education Attendance Codes

Attending the school	
/ \	Present at the school / = morning session \ = afternoon session
L	Late arrival before the register is closed
K	Attending education provision arranged by the local authority
V	Attending an educational visit or trip
P	Participating in a sporting activity
W	Attending work experience
B	Attending any other approved educational activity
D	Dual registered at another school
A1	In school with PSM/HoY/Other Staff Member
A2	In school but not in lesson or with staff
A3	In school but in IPSP or CIR
Absent – Leave of absence	
C	Leave of absence for exceptional circumstance
C1	Leave of absence for the purpose of participating in a regulated performance or undertaking regulated employment abroad.
C2	Leave of absence for a compulsory school age pupil subject to a part-time timetable
M	Leave of absence for the purpose of attending a medical or dental appointment
J1	Leave of absence for the purpose of attending an interview for employment or for admission to another educational institution
S	Leave of absence for the purpose of studying for a public examination
X	Non-compulsory school age pupil not required to attend school
Absent – other authorised reasons	
T	Parent travelling for occupational purposes
R	Religious observance
I	Illness (not medical or dental appointment)
E	Suspended or permanently excluded and no alternative provision made
Absent – unable to attend school because of unavoidable causes	
Q	Unable to attend the school because of a lack of access arrangements
Y1	Unable to attend due to transport normally provided not being available
Y2	Unable to attend due to widespread disruption to travel
Y3	Unable to attend due to part of the school premises being closed
Y4	Unable to attend due to the whole school site being unexpectedly closed
Y5	Unable to attend as pupil is in criminal justice detention
Y6	Unable to attend in accordance with public health guidance or law
Y7	Unable to attend because of any other unavoidable cause



Absent – unauthorised absence	
G	Holiday not granted by the school
N	Reason for absence not yet established
O	Absent in other or unknown circumstances
U	Arrived in school after registration closed - end of period 1 registration
Administrative Codes	
Z	Prospective pupil not on admission register
#	Planned whole school closure



Appendix Two: Westlands School Attendance Leaflet for Parents/Carers

Why is school attendance important?

Pupils with good attendance are more likely to do well at school. When pupils miss school, even if the time period is very short, it can lead to gaps in their learning which might make future lessons more difficult for them. Regular attendance helps pupils to feel part of the school community and enables them to develop good relationships with their peers and other members of the school community. This can have a positive impact on their wellbeing and help them to feel more settled in school.

For older children, school attendance may be taken into account by Post-16 providers. Pupils with high levels of unexplained absence might find it more difficult to secure a place on their chosen further or higher education course. When a pupil attends school everyday, it helps to establish good routines and habits for their later life.

What does the law say?

It is a legal requirement for schools to keep a record of attendance and the reasons for any absences. There are clear guidelines set out by the government about how schools should manage attendance and schools are expected to follow these.

Parents and carers should provide reasons for absences to enable the school to decide whether or not to authorise the absence based on government guidelines. Parents and carers must ensure that their child attends school regularly. Failure to do so, without good reason, is an offence, even if they are missing school without your knowledge. Parents and carers of children with unauthorised absences may be subject to a fixed penalty notice/legal action.

What are the different types of absence?

There are two broad categories of absence:

Authorised absence: This is an absence that has been authorised by the school for a legitimate medical, emergency or unavoidable situation.

Typical examples of authorised absence include:

- Illness that means a child is too unwell to come to school;
- following NHS advice regarding remaining off school following a period of illness (in the case of certain infectious illnesses);
- an emergency medical or dental appointment;



- the recent death of a close family member;
- religious observance, as long as certain conditions are met.

Authorised absence still impacts present percentage attendance

Unauthorised absence: This is where a pupil's absence is for a reason deemed to be unacceptable by the school or where the reason for a pupil's absence has not been provided and cannot be established.

Some examples of unauthorised absence include:

- Looking after a younger sibling;
- time off for birthday celebrations;
- a family holiday (unless there are exceptional circumstances);
- oversleeping;
- shopping trips or days out;
- waiting in the house for a delivery.

Unauthorised absence will affect the present percentage attendance of your child.

How does occasional absence affect my child?

Missing occasional days from school may seem unimportant at the time; however, this can have a significant impact on your child in the long term:

Time measurement in regards to school	Number of school days missed	Equivalent attendance percentage	Remaining attendance
Day	1	0.5%	99.5%
Week	5	2.6%	97.4%
Month	20	10%	90%

Regular absences can result in poorer outcomes over time. Research shows that pupils who miss between 10% and 20% of school (which is between half and one day per week on average) stand only a 35% chance of achieving five or more good GCSEs, compared to 73% of those who miss fewer than 5% of school days.

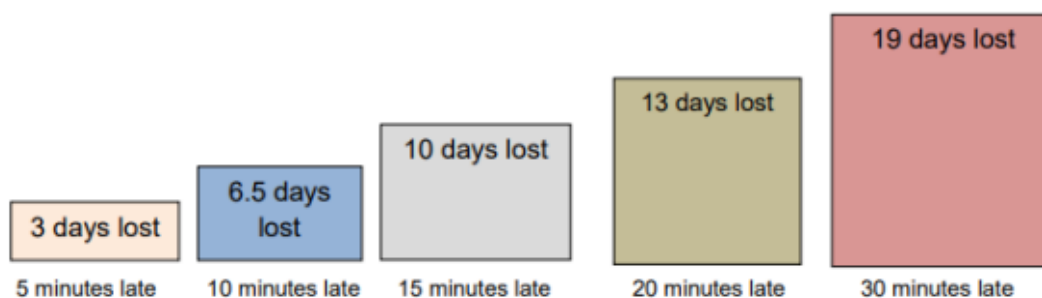


Why is it important that my child is on time each day?

When children are late to school, they may initially feel unsettled and they might miss important information and activities. Schools are required to record late arrivals. If pupils arrive after the start of the school day but when the register is still open, it will be recorded as a late mark. If pupils arrive after the register closes, then their morning mark will be recorded as an unauthorised absence, unless evidence can be provided that there are exceptional circumstances that led to the late arrival.

How does lateness affect my child's learning?

Arriving late to lessons adds up over time. Being 10 minutes late each day adds up to two weeks (60 lessons) of lost learning time over the whole school year.



What about medical appointments?

We understand that pupils need to attend medical and dental appointments and that it is not always possible to arrange this outside of school time. However, we would request that any non-emergency appointments are made for outside of the school day as this keeps the disruption to a minimum and ensures that they do not miss important lessons.

Why won't the school usually authorise absence for a family holiday?

We recognise that family vacations during the school holidays can be expensive and that booking a cheaper term-time holiday might be tempting. However, headteachers can only authorise leave during term time if there are exceptional circumstances, even if your child has an excellent attendance record or if you believe that the reason for the absence is justified.

Parents and carers should plan their holidays during school holidays and avoid asking for permission to take their children out of school unless it is absolutely



unavoidable. If there are exceptional circumstances the headteacher may agree to authorise the absence, but this is very rare. Parents/carers must apply through the [Leave of Absence Form](#) on the website to take a student out of school for a holiday. This form will need to be downloaded, completed fully and returned to the Attendance Office at least 3 weeks prior to the holiday taking place. The Attendance Team will notify the parent in writing of this decision to refuse/grant permission and will code accordingly.

Requests for term-time absences should be made as soon as possible before the absence is due to take place. However, we recognise that in some rare instances, this will not always be possible.

Requests for term-time absences will be considered on a case-by-case basis taking the facts, circumstances and any supporting evidence into consideration. Leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances is at the discretion of the headteacher. This includes the length of time that the leave will be granted for.

What is school refusal?

If your child is refusing to go to school, this is known as 'school refusal'. There are a number of different reasons for school refusal, including general anxiety, worries about leaving home, problems with friends or peers, academic problems and depression. Sometimes, the cause can be a combination of different factors.

If your child is refusing to attend school, you should let us know immediately so that we can work together to put a plan in place to deal with any underlying issues and get your child back into school. The longer school refusal goes on, the more difficult it is to address and more likely it is that they will not return to school. The school will follow the statutory process set out by Kent County Council Pupil Inclusion Service if attendance does not improve.

How do I request an absence in advance?

If you want to request authorisation for a planned absence, please email wss-attendanceoffice@swale.at with all details of the request.

Please submit any requests as early as possible as we may need to ask for additional information before we can consider your request. Please do not make any plans until you have been told the outcome of your request. Please be aware that we can only approve absences that are for exceptional circumstances so will be unable to authorise family holidays in most cases.



How do I report an unplanned absence to the school?

Unexpected absences should be reported to school as early as possible by phone on 01795 413920 or emailing wss-attendanceoffice@swale.at. Please report any absences prior to 8.30am or as soon as you become aware that your child will be absent.

In the case of illness, five absences will be authorised unless there are grounds for concern that the illness may not be genuine or that it might not be sufficient to require time off school. In these cases, the school may ask for additional evidence or after five absences, such as a doctor's note, appointment card, prescription, hospital letter or medical report. The school will not ask for this additional evidence unnecessarily.

If you do not provide a reason for your child's absence, we will make contact with you to find out why they are not in school. Unexplained absences will be recorded as unauthorised. Both types of absence will decrease the students present percentage attendance.

Who should I contact if I have any questions or concerns about my child's attendance?

Please contact wss-attendanceoffice@swale.at with any queries including the name of your child, their year group community and your question. We will endeavour to reply within two working days (48 hours).

How will you reward good or improved attendance?

Through assemblies and our rewards system (see table below). Students will receive recognition for achieving excellent and improved attendance each term. The Pastoral Team and Senior Leaders may also use extra - curricular school events and activities or trips to incentivise attendance.



0 lates in a week	Positive communication sent home praising students for arriving at every lesson on time.
100% attendance in a week	1 achievement point will be awarded
100% attendance in a term	5 achievement points will be awarded. Students will also be entered in a termly raffle to receive additional rewards.
Rewards assemblies	Assemblies will be used to reward students for excellent or improved attendance and punctuality
Attendance badges - Bronze, Silver and Gold	Students will receive a bronze badge for two terms of consistent full attendance, a silver badge for four terms of consistent full attendance and a gold badge for a full academic year of 100% attendance
Attendance trips	Students will be invited to a range of trip and reward events to celebrate excellent or improved attendance and punctuality.



Timeline of Staged Attendance Intervention Process

Wave	% Attendance	Examples of support provided
0	100 - 97.0% Excellent or Good Attendance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognition in termly rewards raffle and school assemblies; • positive points awarded each week and term; • bronze, silver and gold attendance badges awarded; • call home on the first day of any absence to check in with the student/family.
1	96.9 - 94.0% Attendance is at a worrying level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication with parents/carers and students to identify barriers so support can be put in place; • weekly attendance reports available via My Child at School for parents/carers and students to monitor improvements; • possible outside agency involvement or referrals made; • mentoring provided to meet and agree future actions.
2	93.9 - 91.0% Attendance is a serious cause for concern	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting with Learning Leader and parents/carers with actions to support improvement in attendance; • Pastoral Support Plans are put in place ; • SEAAS involvement with possible KCC pathway started; • continued monitoring with attendance targets and actions.
3	90.9% - 51.0% Persistent Absence - urgent action is required	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SEAAS to meet parents/carers with students in school for a Fast Track meeting.; • Fast Track meeting creates an attendance contract in the form of a plan, do and review cycle; • involvement of external agencies; • KCC involvement to improve attendance.
4	<50.9% Severe Absence - urgent action is required	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support from external agencies to set actions to increase attendance; • KCC statutory pathway executed; • Home visits.



Appendix Three: Mental Health Support

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

Take care of your physical health - Remember, the body and mind are intertwined. Have regular meals and discover a enjoyable exercise routine that fits your schedule and preferences.

Make sure to allocate some time for enjoyable activities or self-care - positive emotions can serve as a shield against stress.

Indulge in an activity that brings you joy - be it painting, playing music, or picking up a new sport.

Reach out to someone - confide in a trusted family member or friend about your emotions, or engage in an online conversation on a support platform; Childline or The Mix.

THINGS TO AVOID

Excessive consumption of caffeine, sugar, or other stimulants - can provide a temporary boost but may lead to increased stress in the long run.

Avoiding Overworking - Take the time to unwind by incorporating short, regular breaks into your study, work, or revision routine.

Pursuing perfection - can lead to unrealistic expectations. It's unfair to measure yourself, as a complete individual, against the selective social media highlights of someone else's life.

Excessive screen time - can disrupt your sleep. Remember to take breaks, avoid feeling the need to constantly engage in reading, watching, or playing activities.

Keeping emotions bottled up is not a solution - assuming they will disappear on their own can exacerbate the situation in the long term.



Kooth - www.kooth.com

Online chat-based support services for young individuals provided by qualified counsellors for free.

Mental Health and Behaviour in Schools - www.gov.uk/government/publications/mental-health-and-behaviour-in-schools--2

The Department for Education (DfE) has created a set of guidance and practical tools to assist schools in enhancing student mental health, identifying and supporting students with more complex needs, and making appropriate referrals to specialized agencies when necessary.

Mental Health Foundation - www.mentalhealth.org.uk

A UK charity committed to uncovering and addressing the root causes of mental health challenges. It offers information, research, resources, and a helpful A-Z glossary of mental health terms.

Mind - www.mind.org.uk

A national charity that delivers information, advice, and advocacy to promote and safeguard good mental health for all.

MindEd - www.minded.org.uk

A free educational resource on mental health for children and young people designed for all adults. MindEd for Families provides online guidance from trusted sources to help understand and address early issues and provide optimal support for children. It also offers e-learning resources for professionals and volunteers.

Mindfulness in Schools Project training courses - www.mindfulnessinschools.org/courses

A charity dedicated to promoting, supporting, and researching the teaching of secular mindfulness in schools.

MindUP - www.mindup.org/u-k

An educational program for teachers and students focusing on positive psychology and mindfulness.

The Mix - www.themix.org.uk | Tel: 0808 808 4994

A prominent digital support service covering various issues affecting the well-being of young individuals, including mental health, finances, homelessness, employment, relationships, and substance abuse. The website offers online chat support and a crisis messenger.

myHappyMind - www.myhappymind.org

A curriculum designed to help schools cultivate resilient children who value themselves and others, develop positive relationships, and flourish. It supports schools in fostering a positive and growth-oriented school culture.



Support available

Place2Be - place2be.org.uk

Provides counselling support to young individuals in schools, assisting them in handling a variety of complex social issues such as bullying, bereavement, domestic violence, family breakdown, neglect, and trauma.

Reading Well Books on Prescription - www.reading-well.org.uk/books/books-on-prescription/young-people-mental-health

A selection of mental health books for 13-18-year-olds, accessible in local libraries. Offers guidance on topics like anxiety, stress, OCD, and challenging situations such as bullying and exams.

Rethink Mental Illness - www.rethink.org

A national mental health charity that aids individuals affected by severe mental illness in achieving a better quality of life through services, information, and support.

Rise Above for Schools - www.campaignresources.phe.gov.uk/schools/topics/rise-above/overview

Provides educational resources for teaching PSHE curriculum topics to KS3 and KS4 students, including flexible lesson plans, slide decks, and video content covering various well-being issues like bullying, cyberbullying, alcohol, exam stress, and body image.

Royal College of Psychiatrists - www.rcpsych.ac.uk

Offers accessible and well-researched mental health information for parents, teachers, and young people.

Samaritans - www.samaritans.org

A confidential emotional support service available 24/7 for individuals in the UK and Ireland experiencing distress or despair, including feelings that may lead to suicide.

Student Minds - www.studentminds.org.uk

A charity collaborating with students, professionals, and academics to enhance student mental health through information and support.

Switchboard - www.switchboard.lgbt

Provides confidential support and information for the lesbian, gay, bi, and trans community.

Time to Change - www.time-to-change.org.uk

An anti-stigma campaign by mental health charities Mind and Rethink Mental Illness, offering resources for combating mental health stigma and discrimination.

Winston's Wish - www.winstonswish.org.uk

Offers specialist child bereavement support services across the UK, including therapeutic assistance in various settings.

Young Minds - www.youngminds.org.uk

A UK charity dedicated to enhancing the emotional well-being and mental health of children and young people, as well as supporting their parents and carers.



Action for Happiness - www.actionforhappiness.org

A non-profit organization that offers resources and evidence-based suggestions for actions to enhance happiness and support mental well-being on a personal level, in communities, workplaces, and schools.

Anna Freud Centre - www.annafreud.org | Tel: 02077 942313 | Email: info@annafreud.org

A charity focusing on children's mental health, providing specialized assistance, research, and training for children, youth, families, and schools.

Association for Young People's Health (AYPH) - www.YoungPeoplesHealth.org.uk

A charitable organization and membership platform dedicated to advancing the health and well-being of individuals aged 10-24.

Barnardo's - www.barnardos.org.uk

A leading children's charity that delivers services, research, and guidance on various issues affecting children's well-being, such as child poverty, sexual exploitation, disability, and domestic violence.

Charlie Waller Memorial Trust - www.cwmt.org.uk

Offers awareness, information, and resources for young people dealing with depression, along with training for families, schools, colleges, universities, workplaces, and GPs.

Childline - www.childline.org.uk | Tel: 0800 1111

A counselling service for parents, children, and young people, providing free and confidential assistance. It also offers multilingual support for South Asian communities in the UK, including Bengali/Sylheti, Gujarati, Hindi, Punjabi, Urdu, and English.

Family Links - www.familylinks.org.uk

Provides programs for parents of children from -9 months to 18+, equipping adults and children with skills for emotionally healthy lives, resilience, empathy, self-esteem, and positive relationships. Specialized programs cover parenting with Islamic Values, working with parents in prison, and supporting parents of children with disabilities or special needs.

Heads Together - www.headstogether.org.uk

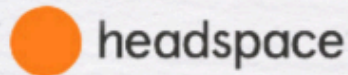
An initiative to combat mental health stigma led by the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge.

Hub of Hope - www.hubofhope.co.uk

A national database of organizations and charities, offering easy access to mental health support and advice from organizations of all sizes.



Available Well-being Apps



HeadSpace

HeadSpace is an application offering guided meditation sessions and mindfulness training focusing on stress, anxiety, sleep, and various emotions. You can explore the trial features of the app for free.

Smiling Mind

Is a free app offering programs by psychologists for various age groups and specific settings like sports, education, and the workplace to manage stress and challenges.



Self-Help Anxiety Management

SAM has been developed by a university team of psychologists, computer scientists & student users. The app lets users self-monitor anxiety and graph this. Users are encouraged to build their own Anxiety Toolkit of SAM resources and to draw on this for regular practice in managing anxious situations. The app is not text-heavy and highly visual.

Cove

Cove is an app that was designed for individuals who find it hard to express themselves verbally. In this app, young people can capture their mood or express how they feel by making music and storing it in a personal journal. Entire app is free.



thinkNinja

Think Ninja

Think Ninja is an app that educates 10-18-year-olds on mental health and well-being, addressing stress, anxiety, and low mood. It offers tools for resilience, guided by the Wise Ninja combining AI and psychology.

Stop Breathe and Think Kids

Users select how they feel upon opening the app. Depending on their choices, they are then given a 'mission' to launch. Each mission is a few minutes long and missions range from watching mindful cartoons, to being guided through relaxation exercises in the form of cartoons. Free app with options to purchase more.



Available Well-being Apps



Mood Tools

Mood Tools allows users to input their mood, watch helpful videos, keep a thought diary, choose activities to do and make safety plans.

Daylio

Allows users to keep a free private diary and capture their mood and day without having to write anything. All responses are made by clicking visual icons.



Daylio



Relax Melodies

An app designed to aid sleep. Users can create their own soundscape, add meditations or listen to a bedtime story.

KOOTH

Kooth is a free, online, anonymous well-being support community for young people. The kooth website allows you to access magazines for information, join a discussion, chat with a member of the team and keep a daily journal.



Catch it

Catch It was a joint app project between the University of Liverpool and University of Manchester. It is designed to help people capture their mood and create a diary. The idea behind the app is to turn your negative emotions into positive experiences.

Calm

Calm is the perfect meditation app for beginners, but also includes hundreds of programs for intermediate and advanced users. Guided meditation sessions are available in various lengths between 5-25 minutes. The app also includes sleep stories to support sleep and breathing exercises.



Available Well-being Apps

Super-Stretch Yoga

Users have fun & get fit learning yoga poses from animated superhero characters. Go from start to finish or pick a pose, from up to 60 combinations. The app aims to teach breathing, play and mindfulness to children through yoga fitness.



Plazma

A free app that acts as a virtual lava lamp to provide a visual, calming sensory stimuli. Users can simply watch the lava float or swipe their finger over the screen to manually move the lava around.

Sandbox Colouring

A mindfulness app offering virtual colouring by numbers. It provides free colouring pages for users to enjoy without purchasing any paid ones. Users can zoom in to colour by numbers and watch a video of their completed colouring.



Feeling Good Teens

A program for 10-15-year-olds to enhance self-esteem, resilience, and motivation. It includes 11 tracks focusing on relaxation, self-confidence, coping with stress, and improving sleep, using a blend of relaxation, positive psychology, and sports coaching techniques aimed at boosting core non-cognitive skills.

Clear Fear

An app which helps manage anxiety symptoms using Cognitive Behavioural techniques, developed collaboratively with young people. It targets anxious thoughts, emotions, and behaviours, includes anxiety presentations, resources, and a resilience section. Recommended for ages 11-19, but younger users can use it with adult support.



Disclaimer - These applications are not intended to be a replacement for treatment nor any sort of medical intervention.

