



Westgate Academy

Attendance Policy

Date approved: November 2024

Date for review: July 2025

Approved by: Headteacher

To be read in conjunction with the Safeguarding policy.

Introduction

Westgate Academy is committed to providing a full and rewarding education for all pupils. The academy believes that all children benefit from the education that it provides and therefore from regular school attendance. To this end, the school will do as much as they can to maximise all possible attendance. Any problems/issues affecting attendance will be dealt with as quickly as possible and where appropriate support will be given to improve attendance.

The Government states that an attendance rate of less than 95% will have a detrimental effect on a child's education. It is therefore the school's aim that each of our pupils should have an attendance rate as high as possible; this being in excess of 95% each academic year unless there are exceptional circumstances, out of the child's control, that affect their attendance at school. If this is the case, the school will support the child and their family to ensure their attendance rate is as high as it can possible be.

Our Aims

It is recognised that:

- all pupils of statutory school age have an equal right to access an education in accordance with the National Curriculum regulations
- no pupils should be deprived of their opportunity to receive an education that meets their needs and personal development
- in the first instance, it is the responsibility of pupils and their parents/carers to ensure attendance at school as required by law
- Some parents may need the support of the school in order to meet their attendance obligations.
- situations beyond the control of children and/or parents/carers may impact on attendance. We will, with the agreement and support of parents, work in partnership with external agencies to resolve these
- the vast majority of pupils want to attend school to learn, to socialise with their peer group and to prepare themselves fully to take their place in society as well-rounded and responsible citizens with the skills, knowledge and understanding necessary to contribute to the life and culture of their communities.

As stated in the document Working Together to Improve School Attendance (August 2024) "Successfully treating the root causes of absence and removing barriers to attendance, at home, in school or more broadly requires schools and local partners to work collaboratively in partnership with, not against families."

We will aim to achieve this by:

- Expect: aspiring to high standards, building a culture where we all want to be in school and ready to learn.
- Monitor: rigorously using attendance data to identify patterns for individuals and groups in aim to resolve any difficulties.

- Listen and understand: working with our families to identify barriers to attendance and agree how to resolve them.
- Facilitate support: attempting to remove barriers and helping families to access the support to overcome these barriers.
- Formalise support: explaining the consequences clearly and support through attendance contracts if required.
- Enforce: where all other avenues have been exhausted. This will be in line with statutory guidance.

Our Expectations

We expect the following from all our pupils:

- that they will attend school regularly – our target is at least 96%
- that they will arrive on time and be appropriately prepared for the day
- that they will tell a member of staff about any problem or reason that may prevent them from attending school

We expect the following from all our parents/carers:

- to ensure their children attend school regularly and punctually. **Gates open at 8.45am and close at 9am. Registers are taken by 9.05am.**
- to ensure that they contact the school that if their child is to absent from school for any unavoidable reason, as soon as possible, preferably **before 9:00am** on the first morning of absence, providing a reason for absence. This may be done by **calling the school office on 01522 528 308 or emailing: enquiries@westgate.lincs.sch.uk**
- to ensure that their children arrive in school well prepared for the school day
- to contact the school in confidence whenever any problem occurs that may affect their child's attendance or performance
- to attempt to make all medical and dental appointments during school holidays or after school hours where possible
- to understand that holidays in term time have a detrimental effect on a child's education and will avoid arranging family holidays in term time
- Work with the school to help us to understand any barriers to attendance and proactively engage with the support offered to improve attendance.

Parents/carers and pupils can expect the following from our school:

- regular, efficient and accurate recording of attendance
- first day absence contact with parents/carers, when a pupil fails to attend school without providing good reason
- follow up absence contact with parents/carers to gain an update on the child's absence
- review attendance half termly therefore:
 - a)the parents of any child whose attendance falls below 95%, without a reasonable explanation, will be notified of the school's concern by letter
 - b)the parents of any child whose attendance is in danger of dropping below 90% will be contacted by the pastoral team
 - c)the parents of any child whose attendance falls below 90%, persistent absence, will be asked to attend a meeting to discuss tailored intervention/support strategies. Attendance will then be closely monitored.
 - d)the parents of any child whose attendance falls below 80%, at risk of severe absence, will be asked to attend monthly attendance reviews to decide actions, support and targets.
- proactive use of data to monitor attendance for groups and individuals and inform work with families to understand and address barriers to attendance in a supportive way. This may include signposting families to further support when the barriers are out of school.

- maintain the same ambition for attendance for all children including those with SEND, working with children and their families to maximise attendance.
- work with families to offer support as needed and overcome any barriers to attendance together.
- inform a child's social worker if there are any unexplained absences or concerns.
- liaise with the local authority where intervention and support has not resulted in improvements to attendance.
- follow government policy not to authorise holidays during term time; holidays will only be authorised in exceptional circumstances
- celebrate classes who have the best attendance each week
- recognition for excellent / improving attendance each term
- Initial contact will be made by a member of the school office. If attendance becomes a concern then the Family Support Worker, Miss Howlett, will contact the family. If Issues persist then the Deputy Headteacher, Mrs Cross, will co ordinate a strategic approach to supporting attendance.

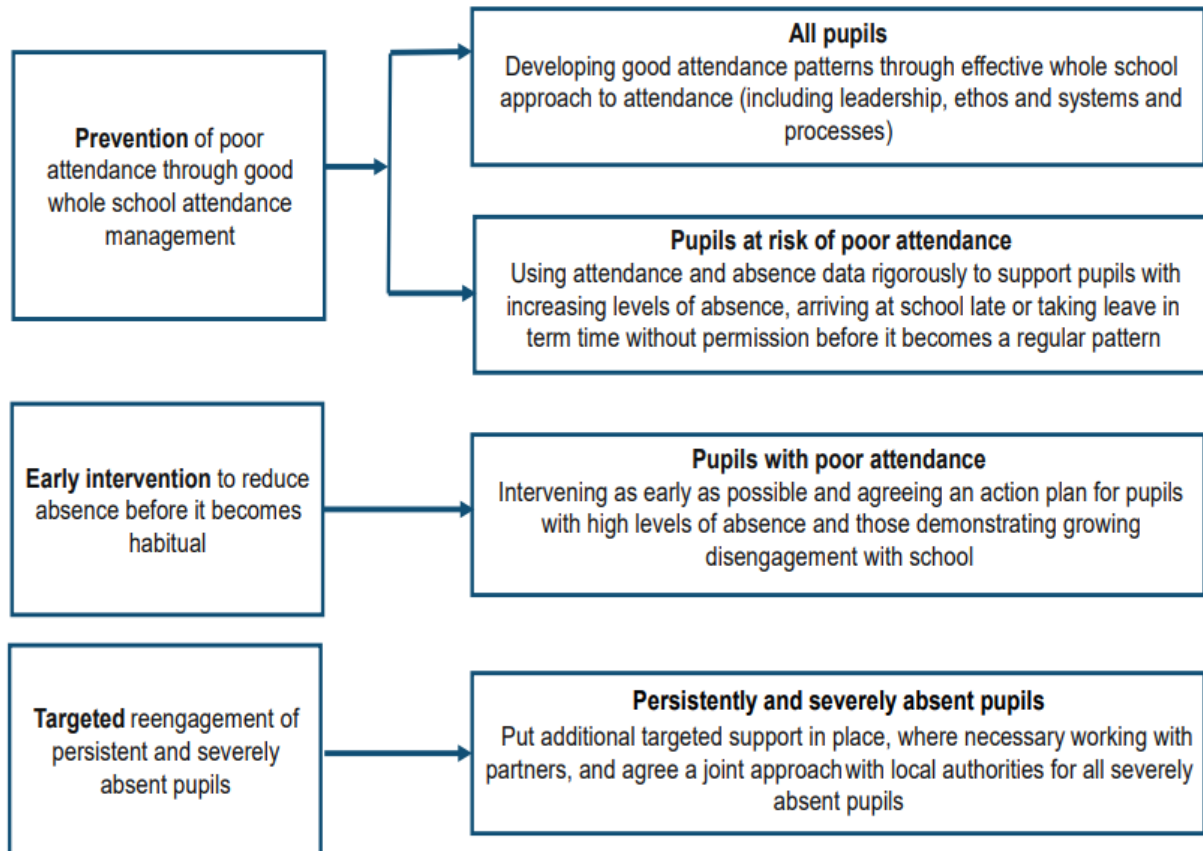
Leadership and Management

Our Senior Attendance Champion is Mrs Anna Cross, Deputy Head. She is supported in this role by the Headteacher, Family Support Worker team and Attendance Administrator. It is the Senior Attendance Champions responsibility to regularly monitor and evaluate progress, strategies and processes.

As a leadership team we ensure:

- We have a clear vision and high expectations regarding attendance and this is communicated to and understood by all staff and all families.
- Through our safeguarding training, staff are made aware that absence from school is a potential safeguarding risk.
- We recognise attendance as an important area of school improvement and have effective systems in place for monitoring this.
- Our governors have an accurate view of school attendance and engage in escalation procedures, as appropriate. The Headteacher will make termly reports to the school's governing body on the issues of attendance and punctuality.

Effective school attendance improvement and management



School Procedures for Managing Attendance

Punctuality

- Parents/carers have a legal duty to ensure that their child attends school punctually. Lateness to registration (after 09:05am) is indicated by code L in the register. If a child fails to arrive in school after registers close (after 09:30am), this is indicated by an unauthorised mark for that session.
- The school gate will be closed promptly at 09:00. Any child late needs to be accompanied by their parent to the school office where they will be signed in.
- If a child frequently fails to attend punctually, parents/carers will be contacted by school.
- In the event that punctuality does not improve, parents/carers will be contacted to discuss the matter and to offer support as necessary.
- Failure to improve punctuality could lead to further action being taken with the school issuing a fixed penalty warning and/or notice.

Illness

- At the start of each new school year, parents will be informed of the NHS guidance explaining when their child should be fit to return to school following illness.
- Failure to contact school during the absence will result in a Safe and Well visit from Senior Leaders/Pastoral Staff or referral to the Police or Children's Services
- Where children have high level of regular absence (including illness) which causes the school has a serious concern, a letter will be sent to parents/carers informing them that the Headteacher will no longer authorise any absence for medical reasons unless supported by medical evidence.
- Pupils will be supported back into school following a lengthy or unavoidable period of absence in order to build confidence and bridge gaps.

Medical Appointments

- Medical appointments during school hours may not be authorised unless an appointment card, hospital letter or text from the GP/Hospital/Dentist is forwarded to school. Providing these retrospectively is acceptable. Absence will only be authorised for the duration of the appointment plus any reasonable travel time.

Holidays

- Holidays during term time are actively discouraged. Due to the link between attendance and attainment, the government has put a priority on reducing all forms of absence.
- As a result, a request for leave of absence will not be granted for the purpose of a holiday unless deemed exceptional circumstances.
- If parents/carers wish to seek approval for any request of absence from school for their child, then they must apply in writing to the Headteacher, at least TWO weeks in advance of the period of absence. They should only then remove their child if the absence has been authorised, and once they have been notified in writing.
- If parents/carers then choose to take their child out of school during term time and it is not deemed to be exceptional circumstances, and/or has not been approved by the school, then this will be coded as an unauthorised absence. An application to Lincolnshire County Council may then be made for a Fixed Penalty Notice to be issued for the period of absence. Failure to pay the Fixed Penalty may result in further legal action being taken against them..

Encouraging Attendance through Good Practice

Attendance will be encouraged in the following ways:

- Accurate completion of the registers at the beginning of each morning and afternoon
- Attendance checks being completed at appropriate times (weekly for targeted pupils, ½ termly for all pupils)
- Recording of attendance on individual reports
- The efficient use of a computerised registration system (Arbor) to provide valuable year group, class, individual, vulnerable groups attendance data which can assist speedy analysis and timely response by the school
- Establishing a mechanism and offering support to those parents/carers who are concerned that their child may be experiencing difficulty in school
- Identifying (Early Help Assessment) and taking a team approach (TAC) towards supporting children and families who have attendance problems
- The benefits of good attendance are promoted by Senior Leaders in school assemblies
- All school staff know the importance of good attendance and are consistent in their communication with parents and pupils.
- School staff create positive classroom environments, build positive relationships with children and families and recognise individual achievements and needs.

Responding to Non-Attendance

- If a note or telephone call is not received from parents, the parents will be contacted on the first day of absence by telephone.
- Where there is no response, other named contacts for the child will be called. If school can not ascertain the whereabouts of the child, there will be a visit from a member of the school staff to complete a Safe and Well Check.
- Records of Home Visits and Safe and Well checks will be logged on CPOMS and will include whether anyone appeared to be home when the visit was carried out and if the pupil was not in school that day at a time when they should be in attendance, whether the pupil appeared to be at home. If contact was made, a record will be made of what was discussed (including any explanation given for non-school attendance) and what advice was given.
- Staff are to raise any concerns they have about a child's attendance with Attendance admin and STAN in the first instance. The DHT is to be informed of any absence which:

- appears irregular;
- shows regular patterns e.g. repeated absence on the same day/s of each week;
- is unexplained or unauthorised.
- This may be referred to the Headteacher or Designated Safeguarding Lead.
- Attendance will be monitored by the school and reviewed each half term. If a pupil's attendance falls below 95% for any reason (including illness or holidays), they will be classed as poor attendance and a concern letter will be sent to parents/carers to make them aware of this.
- If attendance falls below 90% over a half term, this will be classed as persistent absence (PA) and parents/ carers will be invited to attend an Attendance Meeting. Targeted Support will be agreed which will aim to identify and understand barriers to being in school and agree actions and interventions to address them. Parent/carers are obliged to attend. Any measures that were agreed or expectations expressed by the school will be confirmed in writing to the parent.
- In the Autumn term, we take into account that 100% reflects fewer possible sessions attended and absence will appear as a larger percentage.

95% +	Good Attendance	Celebration Certificate
90-95%	Poor attendance	Concern Letter
92%	Risk of persistent absence	Pastoral support offered
80-90%	Persistent absent	Attendance Meeting and Targeted Support
50-80%	At risk of severe absence	Early Help and TAC offered.
50% -	Severe absence	Children's Social Care referral/ Notice to improve/Fixed Penalty Notice

- The case, and the impact of interventions, will continue to be monitored and if there is no improvement, an Attendance Contract will be agreed.
- When all other routes have failed or are not deemed appropriate then a fixed penalty warning letter will be issued.
- If the national threshold has been met and support is appropriate but offers of support have not been engaged with by the parent or have not worked, a Notice to Improve may be sent to give parents a final chance to engage in support. This will outline opportunities for further support and the option to access previously provided support that was not engaged with. It will warn that a penalty notice may be issued or prosecution considered if attendance improvement is not secured within the improvement period of 6 weeks.
- Since 31st October 2017, schools are expected to notify the Local Authority of all children missing education (CME) and pupils not attending regularly (PNAR).

Fixed Penalty Notices

- A Fixed Penalty Notice is a strategy used by schools to address the unacceptable levels of attendance of children at their school under the following legislation:
 - Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 places upon parents a duty to ensure that their child receives efficient full-time education by regular attendance at school
 - Where a child is a registered pupil at a school and the parent fails to ensure that child's regular attendance at school the parent is liable to be prosecuted for a criminal offence under Section 444 of the Education Act. In cases where this duty is not being fulfilled Section 444B of the same Act empowers the Local Authority to issue a Fixed Penalty. A penalty notice can be issued to each parent liable for the offence or offences.
 - The threshold is 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks. A school week means any week in which there is at least one school session. This can be met with any combination of unauthorised absence. These sessions can be consecutive (e.g. 10 sessions of holiday in one week) or not (e.g. 6 sessions of unauthorised absence taken in 1 week and 1 per week for the next 4 weeks). The period of 10 school weeks can also span different terms or school years.

- Only 2 penalty notices can be issued to the same parent in respect of the same child within a 3 year rolling period and any second notice within that period is charged at a higher rate:
- The first penalty notice issued to a parent in respect of a particular pupil will be charged at £160 if paid within 28 days. This will be reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days.
- A second penalty notice issued to the same parent in respect of the same pupil is charged at a flat rate of £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 issue of the first. In a case where the national threshold is met for a third time (or subsequent times) within those 3 years, alternative action would be taken instead. This will often include considering prosecution or other attendance legal interventions.
- Please note: A Fixed Penalty Notice can also be issued if your child is seen in a public place within the first 5 days of an exclusion from their school. Section 103 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 makes it a duty for parents in relation to pupils subject to a fixed period or permanent exclusion to ensure that their child is not present in a public place during school hours, without reasonable justification, during the first five days of any such exclusion. If a child is present in a public place during the first five days of an exclusion during school hours the parent may be guilty of an offence for which they can be prosecuted by the LA before a magistrates' court or issued with a Fixed Penalty Notice

Reintegration

Pupils with medical conditions or special educational needs and disabilities may face greater barriers to attendance than their peers. Additional support will be put in place where necessary to help them access their full-time education. For example, making reasonable adjustments where a pupil has a disability or putting in place an individual healthcare plan where needed.

The return to school for a student after a long-term absence requires special planning. For example, it may be appropriate to establish a Pastoral Support Programme.

The STAN (Pastoral Team) are responsible for deciding on the programme for return and for the management of that programme.

Programmes are tailored to meet individual needs and may involve phased, part-time re-entry with support in lessons as appropriate. Support from the SEND Team may be required.

Staff will be notified of the return of long-term absentees in advance of their return. The support of the Pastoral Support Programme will require the involvement of appropriate staff, other agencies, the pupil them self and their parent/carer. Such programmes should be amended as necessary.

School Organisation

Headteacher:

- To oversee and demonstrate ownership of the whole policy.
- To regularly report progress on attendance to governors, pupils and parents.
- To set challenging but achievable targets to reduce levels of absence.
- To promote high expectations for attendance and punctuality of all pupils and communicate this regularly to pupils and parents
- To oversee the work of the Attendance Champion and administrative staff

Deputy Headteacher/ Attendance Champion and Attendance Admin:

- To liaise, when necessary, the Lincolnshire Inclusion and Attendance Service
- To work with families to improve attendance and punctuality
- To track whole school attendance and absence data weekly, and produce half termly comparison and summary reports.
- To closely monitor the attendance of pupils who fall below 90% and 95%.
- To oversee the efficient operation of the attendance system and the collation and analysis of attendance data.

- Send regular attendance correspondence to parents notifying them of current attendance concerns, in percentage and days lost.
- To inform the Headteacher of any concerning cases regarding absence/poor attendance.
- To liaise with other agencies to improve attendance.
- To devise support plans and work with families to improve attendance.
- Inform Lincolnshire County Council of a Child Missing Education (CME) in the event a child being absent for 5 days and no contact being made with parents/carers
- Notify Lincolnshire County Council when a child has missed 10 consecutive days of unauthorised education via the PNAR.

Class Teacher:

- To complete registers accurately and promptly at the start of each morning and afternoon session
- To notify the DHT of suspicious or inappropriate reasons for absence.
- To inform DHT and pastoral staff of concerns in a timely manner.
- To inform Safeguarding Lead of any situation causing concern above and beyond normal expectations.
- To understand that attendance is a collective responsibility and requires a culture of vigilance
- To positively engage with children and parents and appreciate the importance of social connections and sense of belonging
- To understand the risk and protective factors and work with pastoral staff to address underlying causes of absence.

Office Staff:

- To follow-up immediately any unexplained absence by contacting parents
- To record all reasons for absence clearly in the register
- Maintain the central reporting of attendance on Arbor.
- All emails and calls between school and parents/ carers must be logged on Arbor. This should include the name of the staff member who was in contact with the parent, the date and time, the parents' response and any support offered.
- To maintain a late book

Parents/Carers:

- Contact school on each day of absence
- Provide notification or proof of absence as required
- Support their child in achieving maximum attendance
- Attend any meetings as requested

Governors:

- Request regular attendance progress reports for Governors' Meetings.
- Ensure school attendance policies and procedures are adhered to.

Liaising with External Agencies:

Other Agencies to be used where appropriate in individual cases.

- Behaviour Outreach Support Services
- Educational Psychologists
- Special Educational Needs Service
- Social Services
- Local police
- Early Help Workers
- School Nursing Team

- Lincolnshire County Council Ethnic Minority and Traveller Education Team
- Lincolnshire County Council Inclusion and Attendance Team

This policy will be reviewed bi-annually and any alterations that come from this review will be discussed and ratified by the full Governing Body.