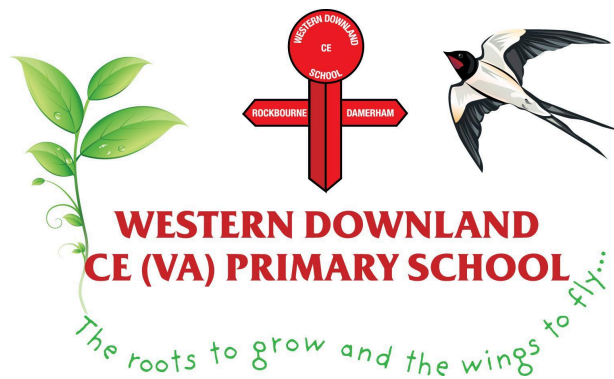


Attendance Policy

Western Downland CE VA Primary School



Approved by:	Alice Tubbs	Date: August 2024
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“Central to raising standards in education and ensuring all pupils can fulfil their potential is an assumption so widely understood that it is insufficiently stated – pupils need to attend school regularly to benefit from their education. Missing out on lessons leaves children vulnerable to falling behind. Children with poor attendance tend to achieve less in both primary and secondary school.”

DFE November 2016

1. Aims

We are committed to meeting our obligations with regards to school attendance by:

- Promoting good attendance and reducing absence, including persistent absence
- Ensuring every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled
- Acting early to address patterns of absence

We will also support parents to perform their legal duty to ensure their children of compulsory school age attend regularly, and will promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

2. Legislation and guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the Working together to improve school attendance from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE’s statutory guidance on school attendance parental responsibility measures. 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
- The Crime and Disorder Act 1998
- The Children Act 1989
- The Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003

- The Sentencing Act 2020
- The Education (Parenting Contracts and Parenting Orders) (England) Regulations 2007

This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the school census, which explains the persistent absence threshold.

3. Roles and responsibilities

3.1 The governing board

The Governing board is responsible for:

- Recognise the importance of school attendance and promote it across the school's ethos and policies.
- Ensuring school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties.
- Regularly reviewing attendance data, discussing, and challenging trends, and helping school leaders focus improvement efforts on the individual pupils or cohorts who need it most.
- Ensure school staff receive adequate training on attendance.

3.2 The headteacher

The headteacher is responsible for:

- Developing and maintaining a whole school culture that promotes the benefits of high attendance.
- Implementing this policy; ensuring it is understood by all staff, pupils and parents
- Regularly monitoring and analysing attendance and absence data to identify pupils or cohorts that require support with their attendance and putting effective strategies in place.
- Building strong relationships with families, listening to and understanding barriers to attendance and working with families to remove them.
- Sharing information and working collaboratively with other schools in the area, local authorities, and other partners when absence is at risk of becoming persistent or severe.
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils
- Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary
- Ensuring that attendance issues are identified at an early stage and that support is put in place to deal with any difficulties
- Overseeing, directing and coordinating the school's work in promoting regular and improved attendance

3.3 The attendance officer/admin staff (Wendy Bullen, Louise Lambert)

The school attendance officer:

- Produces attendance data across the school, cohort and at an individual pupil level
- Reports concerns about attendance to the headteacher
- Arranges calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues
- Advises the headteacher when to issue fixed-penalty notices
- Accurately completes admission and attendance registers and follows day to day processes to follow-up absence.
- Takes calls from parents about absence and records it on the school system.

- Contacts home before 9.30am if a child's reason for absence is unknown

3.4 Class teachers

Class teachers are responsible for:

- Recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the school office.
- Liaising with the headteacher on matters of attendance and punctuality.
- Communicating any concerns or underlying problems that may account for a child's absence.
- Supporting pupils with absence to engage with their learning once they are back in school.

3.5 Parents/Carers

It is the legal responsibility of every parent to make sure their child receives that education either by attendance at a school or by education otherwise than at a school.

Where parents decide to have their child registered at school, they have an additional legal duty to ensure their child attends that school regularly (Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act). This means their child must attend every day that the school is open, except in a small number of allowable circumstances such as being too ill to attend or being given permission for an absence in advance from the school. Permitting absence from school that is not authorised by the school creates an offence in law.

Parents/Carers will:

- Inform the school on the first day of absence
- Discuss with the class teacher and headteacher any planned absences well in advance
- Support the school with their child in aiming for 100% attendance each year
- Call the school to report their child's absence before 8.45am on the day of the absence (and each subsequent day of absence), and advise when they are expected to return
- Provide the school with more than one emergency contact number for their child
- Avoid taking their child out of school for non-urgent medical or dental appointments
- Attend attendance meetings if invited to do so by letter, contacting the school if you are unable to attend
- Only request leave of absence if it is for an exceptional circumstance.

4. Recording attendance

4.1 Attendance register

We will keep an attendance register, and place all pupils onto this register.

We will take our attendance register at the beginning of each morning session and once during each afternoon session. On each occasion we will record whether every pupil is:

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

We will also record:

- Whether the absence is authorised or not
- The nature of the activity if a pupil is attending an approved educational activity
- The nature of the circumstances where a pupil is unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

Any amendment to the attendance register 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.

We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

Pupils must arrive in school by 9am juniors, 8.45am infants on each school day.

The register for the first session will be taken at 8.45am infants and 9am juniors and will be kept open until 8.50am infants, 9.05am juniors. The register for the second session will be taken at 1pm infants, 1.20pm juniors and will be kept open until 1.05pm infants, 1.25pm juniors.

4.2 Unplanned absence

The pupil's parent/carer must notify the school on the first day of an unplanned absence by 9am or as soon as practically possible (see also section 7).

Infant: 01725518293

Junior: 01725518233

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. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

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.

4.3 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.

Infant: 01725518293

Junior: 01725518233

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.

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. Go to section 5 to find out which term-time absences the school can authorise.

4.4 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 will be monitored half termly by the Headteacher. Parents, guardians or carers of pupils who have patterns of lateness will be contacted to discuss the importance of good time keeping and attendance and how this might be achieved.

4.5 Following up absence

Where any child we expect to attend school does not attend, or stops attending, the school will:

- Follow up on their absence with their parent/carer to ascertain the reason, by 9.30am via telephone. If the school cannot reach a parent/carer, we will attempt to contact the pupil's other emergency contacts.
- Ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not
- Identify the correct attendance code to use and input it as soon as the reason for absence is ascertained- this will be no later than 5 working days after the session.
- Call the parent/carer on each day that the absence continues without explanation to ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary. If absence continues, the school will consider involving an education welfare officer

4.6 Reporting to parents

The school reports to parents on their child's attendance annually in children's written end-of-year report. Letters will be sent home to any pupil whose attendance falls below 95% without the school being aware of any mitigating circumstances.

5. Authorised and unauthorised absence

5.1 Approval for term-time absence

The headteacher will only grant a leave of absence to pupils during term time if they consider there to be '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.

The fundamental principles for defining exceptional are rare, significant, or unavoidable, which means the event could not reasonably be scheduled at another time. There are no rules on this as circumstances vary from school to school and family to family. The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request. There is, however, no legal entitlement for time off in school term time to go on holiday and in the majority of cases holiday will not be authorised. Parents/carers wishing to apply for leave of absence need to send a written request in advance and before making any travel arrangements. Children have 13 weeks annual holiday from school and school holiday dates are published well in advance online. As such, all parents/carers are expected wherever possible to plan and take their family holidays at this time so as not to disrupt their children's education.

Authorised absence is when the school has accepted the explanation offered as satisfactory justification for the absence or given approval in advance for such an absence. If no explanation is received, absences cannot be authorised. Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments (see sections 4.2 and 4.3 for more detail)
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart
- 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) and New Travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a Traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision

For further advice and guidance on attendance and Gypsy, Roma, Traveller and Showman families, see [Hampshire County Council guidance](#)

- Absence through child participation in public performances, including theatre, film or television work and modelling- parents of a child performer can seek leave of absence from school for their child to take part in

a performance. They must contact the headteacher to discuss the nature and frequency of the work, whether the child has a valid performance licence and whether education will be provided by the employer during any future leave of absence. It is, however, down to the headteacher's discretion as to whether to authorise this and they will wish to discuss with you the nature and frequency of the absence and how learning will continue if absence occurs. Any absence recorded as part of a child's participation in a public performance is recorded as C, an authorised absence.

- Absence through competing at regional, county or national level for sport- parents of able sportsmen and women can seek leave of absence from school for their child to take part in regional, county, national and international events and competitions. It is, however, down to the headteacher's discretion as to whether to authorise this and they will wish to discuss with you the nature and frequency of the absence and how learning will continue if absence occurs. Permission for your child to leave early or arrive late to attend coaching and training sessions is also at the discretion of the headteacher and is not likely to be approved if it is a regular event, unless the sports club or association is providing an education tutor as part of their coaching.

Unauthorised absence is when the school has not received a reason for absence or has not approved a child's leave absence from school after a parent's request. This includes:

- Parents giving their children permission to be off school unnecessarily, such as for shopping, birthdays, family days, absences which have not been explained.

A school can, if needed, change an authorised absence to an unauthorised absence and vice versa if new information is presented. Any changes will be communicated to parents/carers.

5.2 Reducing persistent absence

In order to reduce persistent absence the school will follow the below process:

- Parents/carers of pupils whose attendance falls below the expected school attendance target of 95% will receive an initial letter of concern
- Attendance will be closely monitored over the following six weeks
- If attendance continues to decline, parents/carers of pupils will receive a second letter explaining that the pupil is at risk of becoming a persistent absentee
- Attendance will continue to be closely monitored over the following six weeks
- If attendance declines further, a third letter will be sent inviting parents/carers to meet with the headteacher to discuss attendance and possible next steps
- Attendance will continue to be closely monitored
- If attendance declines further still, a final letter will be sent to parents/carers explaining that since attendance has not improved despite various support measures, they will be reported to the local authority

5.3 Legal sanctions

Hampshire schools and Hampshire County Council will use the full range of legal measures to secure good attendance. Legal measures will only be considered when there is unauthorised absence and:

1. the child or family do not require the support from any agency to improve the attendance
2. the child has 10 or more sessions of unauthorised absence and parents are complicit in the child's absence

The following legal measure will be used for pupils of compulsory school age who are registered at a school:

- Parenting contracts set at Education Planning Meetings
- Parenting orders
- Penalty Notices
- Education Supervision Orders
- Prosecution

Where a child has unauthorised absence the school must enforce Hampshire County Council's Code of conduct: issuing Penalty Notices for unauthorised absence from schools or follow its guidance on other legal

measures for non-attendance. The Code of conduct is a statutory document that ensures that powers for legal sanctions are applied consistently and fairly across all schools and their families within the authority.

A copy is available from:

[Information on Penalty Notices for non-attendance at school](#)

The Code of conduct states that schools or Hampshire County Council will issue a Penalty Notice for any unauthorised absence where the pupil has been:

- absent for 10 or more half-day sessions (five school days) of unauthorised absence during any 100 possible school sessions – these do not need to be consecutive
- persistently late (coded U) for up to 10 sessions (five days) after the register has closed
- persistently late before the close of the register (coded L), but the school has met with parents and has clearly communicated that they will categorise as unauthorised any
- further lateness (code O), and where the threshold of 10 sessions (five days) has been
- met absent for any public examinations of which dates are published in advance
- absent for any formal school assessments, tests or examinations where the dates have been published in advance

Unless the issuing of a Penalty Notice would conflict with other intervention strategies in place or other sanctions already being processed.

If a child's unauthorised absence meets any of the above criteria and the family or child do not require any agency support to improve the attendance then a Penalty Notice is issued for either:

1. Ten sessions of unauthorised absence or lateness in any 10 week school period

2 One or more sessions of unauthorised absence during a public exam, formal school assessment or testing where dates are published in advance.

This includes where a pupil has unauthorised absence due to either:

- non-approval of a parent/carer's request for leave of absence, or
- a holiday that has been taken without permission.

Parents and carers will be warned of the likelihood of a Penalty Notice being issued for unauthorised absence via a letter or through the school's attendance policy and website.

The Penalty Notice is a fine that is issued to each parent/ carer who condoned (or was responsible for the child) during the period of unauthorised absence for which the fine has been issued. For each case of unauthorised absence the school or Hampshire County Council will decide whether a Penalty Notice is issued to one or more parents/carers for each child. NB: This could mean four Penalty Notices for a family with two siblings, both with unauthorised absence for holiday, i.e. one Penalty Notice for each child to each parent.

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. If the fine remains unpaid Hampshire County Council will consider prosecution for the non-attendance.
- 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 should be taken instead. This will often include considering prosecution, but may include other tools such as one of the other attendance legal interventions.

Payment methods are detailed on the Penalty Notices themselves. Penalties are to be paid to Hampshire County Council and revenue resulting from payment of penalties is used by the County Council to help cover the costs of issuing Penalty Notices and/or the cost of prosecuting recipients who do not pay.

6. Strategies for promoting attendance

The school will promote and support good attendance by:

- providing information on all matters related to attendance in our regular/weekly homeschool bulletin/newsletter/website
- report to parents on how your child is performing in school, what their attendance and punctuality rate is and how this relates to their attainments
- reward improving attendance through letter and phone calls home
- set targets for the school and for classes and where appropriate for individuals

7. Attendance monitoring

The Headteacher at our school monitors pupil absence on a half termly basis.

A pupil's parent/carer is expected to call the school in the morning if their child is going to be absent due to ill health (see section 4.2).

If a pupil's absence goes above two days, the school will contact the parent/carer of the pupil to discuss the reasons for this.

If a pupil's absence continues to rise after contacting their parent/carer, we will consider involving an education welfare officer.

If a pupil has not been seen and contact has not been established with any of the named parents/carers, after three days of absence the school is required to start child missing in education procedures as set down by Hampshire County Council guidance. We will make all reasonable enquiries to establish contact with parents/carers and the pupil, including making enquiries to known friends and wider family.

We have a legal duty to report the absence of any pupil who is absent without explanation for ten consecutive days. If the child is not seen and contact has not been established with the named parent/carer then the local authority is notified that the child is at risk of missing. Children's Services staff will visit the last known address and alert key services to locate the child.

The persistent absence threshold is 10%. If a pupil's individual overall absence rate is greater than or equal to 10%, the pupil will be classified as a persistent absentee.

Pupil-level absence data will be collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. The school will compare attendance data to the national average, and share this with the governing board.

8. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the local authority or DfE is updated, and as a minimum annually by Alice Tubbs, Headteacher. At every review, the policy will be approved by the full governing board.

9. Links with other policies

This policy links to the following policies:

- Child protection and safeguarding policy
- Behaviour policy

Appendix 1: attendance codes

The following codes are taken from the DfE's guidance on school attendance.

Code	Definition	Scenario
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/	Present (am)	Pupil is present at morning registration
\	Present (pm)	Pupil is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Pupil arrives late before register has closed
B	Off-site educational activity	Pupil is at a supervised off-site educational activity approved by the school
D	Dual registered	Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
J	Interview	Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
P	Sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
V	Educational trip or visit	Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised, or approved, by the school
W	Work experience	Pupil is on a work experience placement

Code	Definition	Scenario
Authorised absence		
C	Authorised leave of absence	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
E	Excluded	Pupil has been excluded but no alternative provision has been made
H	Authorised holiday	Pupil has been allowed to go on holiday due to exceptional circumstances
I	Illness	School has been notified that a pupil will be absent due to illness
M	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment

R	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance
S	Study leave	Year 11 pupil is on study leave during their public examinations
T	Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence	Pupil from a Traveller community is travelling, as agreed with the school
Unauthorised absence		
G	Unauthorised holiday	Pupil is on a holiday that was not approved by the school
N	Reason not provided	Pupil is absent for an unknown reason (this code should be amended when the reason emerges, or replaced with code O if no reason for absence has been provided after a reasonable amount of time)
O	Unauthorised absence	School is not satisfied with reason for pupil's absence
U	Arrival after registration	Pupil arrived at school after the register closed

Code	Definition	Scenario
X	Not required to be in school	Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
Y	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances	School site is closed, there is disruption to travel as a result of a local/national emergency, or pupil is in custody
Z	Pupil not on admission register	Register set up but pupil has not yet joined the school
#	Planned school closure	Whole or partial school closure due to half-term/bank holiday/INSET day