



Attendance and punctuality policy

Rationale for good attendance at school

At Frogwell Primary School we understand that regular school attendance and punctuality is the key to enabling children and young people to maximise the educational opportunities available to them and become emotionally resilient, confident adults who are able to realise their full potential and make a positive contribution to their community. School is the foundation for preparing children and young people for life as adults. Good attendance is essential for pupils to get the most out of their school experience, including their attainment, wellbeing, and wider life chances. National attainment data over time shows that the pupils with the highest attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 (end of Year 6) and Key Stage 4 (end of Year 11) have higher rates of attendance over the key stage compared to those with the lowest attainment.

All schools have a continuing responsibility to proactively manage and improve attendance across their school community.

There are 190 days of learning in a school year and every one is important. Regular attendance is an essential foundation of raising pupil attainment and progress. Absence from school can seriously disrupt pupils' continuity of learning; not only do they miss out on taught lessons, but many children find it difficult to catch up academically and socially when they return to school.

- 95% attendance equates to half a day off every two weeks for a whole year
- 90% attendance equates to a full day off every two weeks for a whole year
- 85% attendance equates to one and a half days off every two weeks for a whole year
- 80% attendance equates to one whole day off every week for a whole year
- A secondary age pupil whose attendance is 80% will have missed ONE WHOLE YEAR of education by the time they leave school.

Research shows that poor or irregular attendance places children at risk and in some cases can result in them being drawn into patterns of anti-social or criminal behaviour. It is widely recognised that children missing education can act as a vital warning sign to a range of safeguarding issues including neglect, sexual abuse and child sexual and criminal exploitation

(see <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/understanding-the-educational-background-of-young-offenders-summary-report> for research evidence).

The Department for Education (DfE) recognises that some pupils find it harder than others to attend school and that the best outcomes for pupils will be achieved when all parties work together to secure excellent attendance.

This policy represents our school's commitment to support all pupils to achieve excellent attendance and punctuality. It sets out the principles, procedures and practice the school will undertake, as well as the strategies to improve attendance and rewards and benefits of good attendance. The sanctions and possible legal consequences of poor attendance and punctuality are also detailed. This policy will

be reviewed, amended as necessary and published annually in accordance with current legislation and guidance.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the August 2024 Department for Education document 'Working together to improve school attendance: Statutory guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools, and local authorities'.

To manage and improve attendance effectively, all schools are expected by the Department for Education to:

- develop and maintain a whole school culture that promotes the benefits of high attendance
- have a clear school attendance policy which all staff, pupils and parents understand
- accurately complete admission and attendance registers and have effective day to day processes in place to follow up absence
- regularly monitor and analyse attendance, absence and lateness data to identify pupils or cohorts that require support with their attendance and put effective strategies in place
- share attendance and absence information for all pupils daily with the Local Authority and/or Department for Education
- build strong relationships with families, listen to and understand barriers to attendance and work with families to remove them
- share information and work collaboratively with other schools in the area, local authorities, and other partners when absence is at risk of becoming persistent or severe

Aims of this policy

- To ensure that everyone within the school community understands their responsibilities in promoting excellent attendance and punctuality
- To make the school's expectations for attendance and punctuality clear to parent/carers and explain the rules around absence and lateness
- To outline what parents/carers need to do when they want to request an exceptional absence from school
- To outline what parents/carers need to do when absence from school is unavoidable (how to report absence and what to expect the school to do in response)
- To outline what the school will do when absence is not satisfactorily explained by parents/carers
- To outline what the school will do when a child's attendance / lateness is a cause for concern
- To explain the roles and responsibilities of the Local Authority (LA) and the Education Welfare Service (EWS)

The school's expectations for attendance and punctuality

Where parents decide to have their child registered at school, they have a legal duty to ensure their child attends that school regularly. Frogwell Primary School, and the law, expects all pupils to attend school on time every day the school is open, except in a very small number of allowable circumstances such as being too ill to attend or being given permission for an absence in advance from the school.

The Frogwell school day is 08:45 until 15:15 (gates and classrooms are opened for arrival from 08:40).

Each school day consists of two sessions (morning and afternoon). Schools must take the attendance register at the start of each morning session of each school day and once during each afternoon session. On each occasion they must record whether every pupil is present, attending an approved educational activity, absent, or unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

Who to contact at school regarding attendance and punctuality

If you have concerns about your child's attendance or punctuality and need some support or advice, please contact any of the following people:

- your child's class teacher for an initial discussion
- our Pastoral Support Assistant, Miss Wakeham (via the school office or via email on attendance@frogwell.wilts.sch.uk)

The school's senior leader with strategic responsibility for championing attendance and improvement and overseeing school policy is the Headteacher, Ms Rachel Neville. Ms Neville's role is not generally in the day-to-day management of absence, but for overall leadership responsibility for the school's work on absence and attendance (contact via the school office).

How will school celebrate good attendance?

The school will not present individual certificates/awards for 100%; this is because the reasons for absence are rarely down to children alone at primary age, and also because we feel it is unfair to penalise children who have illness or genuine absence reasons in front of their peers.

We will use class-average attendance data to celebrate the highest-attending classes each week, at the end of each term and the end of the school year. The class with the highest attendance will win a simple reward such as a few minutes' extra playtime, and a bigger prize for the class with the highest attendance each term or the year.

Where attendance has been a concern and the family have made significant improvements over time, we will recognise this wherever possible through means such as letters home.

Keeping parents/carers informed about their child's attendance

We will send attendance summary reports to all parents/carers each term. This will help parents see how much school, if any, their child has missed and any lateness information. Please be aware that this will include all types of absence, including legitimate illness. The aim of these reports is to keep you up to date. School is aware when they send this information out that a small amount of illness absence early in the school year disproportionately lowers the overall attendance percentage.

We are also required to include attendance and absence information in children's annual school reports.

Late arrivals at school

School starts at 08.45 and the register closes at 09.10. There are two types of 'late' mark in the register:

1. Children arriving between 08:45 and 09:10 will be marked as 'late before the register closes'.
2. When a child is late after the register is closed (after 09.10), then this is legally classed as a session of unauthorised absence.

If a child arrives at school late after the gates have been closed, the parent/carer is required to sign them in at the school office and provide the reason for the lateness, which will be recorded. If the child arrives after 08.45 but is still able to get in through the gate, a note will be made at the gate of their name and arrival time so they can be marked in as 'late before the register closes'; this includes those who are even just a couple of minutes late after the 08.45 start time.

However, the consequences of a child being late for school are far more than just a mark in the register. Any child walking into a class late can feel:

- anxious because they know they have missed whatever has already happened in the first few minutes of the day
- embarrassed because they have to be seen arriving late (possibly again) by their peers
- anxious that they have missed the input and cannot understand what is expected of them and the teacher cannot stop and go through it again as there are 20+ others who were in class on time
- angry because it may not have been their fault but they have the consequence of the lateness to deal with

All of these things are upsetting and unsettling for a child of any age.

If a child arrives 15 minutes late every day for a year they may well have missed a full year of phonics teaching, spellings or mental maths.

Parents/carers should be aware that the national threshold for consideration of a Penalty Notice for non-attendance is 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks. Each school day contains two sessions. 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 (e.g. 4 sessions of holiday taken in term time plus 6 sessions of arriving late after the register closes all within 10 school weeks). 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 one week and then one per week for the next 4 weeks). The period of 10 school weeks can also span different terms or school years (e.g. 2 sessions of unauthorised absence in the Summer Term and a further 8 within the Autumn Term).

Unauthorised absence within 10 rolling weeks also carries over from previous schools or local authorities where a child has joined the school mid-year; it is not 'reset' when the child moves schools.

Absence from school

There are only a very small number of acceptable reasons for children to be absent from school.

1. When the child is genuinely too ill to attend (low-level coughs and colds should not generally require an absence)
2. When the Headteacher has granted a leave of absence in exceptional circumstances

Absences requested in advance

There is no entitlement for any leave of absence in term time. Absence can only be authorised by the Headteacher in exceptional circumstances, such as:

- immediate family bereavement
- religious observance (the pupil is absent on a day that is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body the parent(s) belong to, not the parents themselves)
- wedding or funeral of an immediate family member
- **urgent** medical or dental appointment (every effort should be made to secure routine appointments and check-ups out of school hours or during the school holidays)
- absence, within reason, for an external exam such as instrument grades or ballet and to participate in specific elite events e.g. National Youth Orchestra or a representative sporting event
- Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence (where a pupil's parent belongs to a community covered by this absence code and is travelling for occupational purposes, the parent will be expected to request a leave of absence for their child at least two weeks in advance. Absences will not

be granted for pupils from these communities under this code for reasons other than travel for occupational purposes.)

All requests for leave of absence must be made at least two weeks before the proposed start date of the leave of absence using the standard school form which can be obtained from the school office, providing the reason for the proposed absence and the dates during which the absence is expected to occur. For urgent medical or dental appointments, it may not always be possible to provide two weeks' notice but advance application in writing is still expected.

Leave of absence can only be applied for by the parent the pupil usually lives with.

Any requests for leave during term time will be considered on an individual basis and the pupil's previous attendance record will be taken into account. Where the absence is granted, the headteacher will determine the length of time that the pupil can be away from school. The school may liaise with the schools attended by any siblings to discuss their views of the leave request and co-ordinate a response.

Please note that family holidays will not count as a reason to authorise absence in term time due to the impact they have on pupils' learning. Armed forces personnel on leave from active service in this situation must still apply for leave in advance using the standard form. The Department for Education does not consider a need or desire for a holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure and recreation to be an exceptional circumstance.

Requests for leave will not be granted in the following circumstances:

- immediately before and during statutory assessment periods
- when a pupil's attendance record shows any form of unauthorised absence
- where a pupil's authorised absence record is already above 10 percent for any reason

If term-time leave is not granted, taking a pupil out of school will be recorded as an unauthorised absence and may result in sanctions, such as a penalty notice. The school cannot grant leaves of absence retrospectively; therefore, any absences that were not approved by the school in advance will automatically be marked as unauthorised.

The school may ask to see evidence of external exams/elite event participation as part of the authorisation process, e.g. piano grade exam letter etc.

Absence for healthcare appointments

Parents/carers are expected to make routine medical or dental appointments / check-ups outside of school hours. Where this is not possible (e.g. hospital appointments), parents/carers are expected to obtain approval for their child's absence to attend such appointments as far in advance as is practicable. Parents/carers are responsible for ensuring their child misses only the amount of time necessary to attend the appointment (e.g. attending school before/after the appointment rather than automatically being absent all day).

The school may ask to see evidence of medical/dental appointments as part of the authorisation process, e.g. appointment letter/card, text messages confirming the appointment, etc.

Illness absence

In general, children who are too ill to attend school should stay at home while they recover; absences in these cases will be coded as 'I' in the register (illness) which is an authorised absence.

Very minor ailments such as mild coughs and colds should not usually require a child to be away from school. Where a child has had a poor night's sleep as a result of illness and is therefore unable to attend

the morning school session, parents/carers should make every attempt to bring them in later in the day once they have rested to minimise the amount of learning time missed.

Sickness and diarrhoea is a common illness that keeps children away from school. Where sickness and/or diarrhoea is severe and prolonged (i.e. repeated vomiting), the child should stay away from school for 48 hours. One-off episodes of vomiting (e.g. as a result of a migraine or coughing) where it is clear there is no 'bug' or infection risk to others can be treated differently and the child can return to school as soon as they are well enough.

In general, the school will not routinely request that parents provide formal medical evidence / 'proof' to support illness absences. In most cases, we will only need to seek clarification from parents/carers of the nature of the illness to accurately record the absence. However, where the school has genuine and reasonable doubt about the authenticity of the illness, or where there are concerns about a child's attendance pattern due to repetitive absences as a result of illnesses, medical evidence may be requested to support the absence.

Where a pupil's health need means they need reasonable adjustments or support because it is complex or long term, schools can seek medical evidence to better understand the needs of the pupil and identify the most suitable provision in line with the statutory guidance in 'Supporting pupils at school with medical conditions' or 'Arranging education for children who cannot attend school because of health needs'.

Reasons for absence which will not be authorised

Absences will be classed as unauthorised in the following cases (not an exhaustive list):

- any absence where no reason is given, or the reason given is unacceptable to the school
- shopping trips
- absences for a birthday
- minding other younger children in the family
- illness or death of a pet
- staying at home because other members in the family are unwell
- absence due to the illness of the parent/carer
- absence due to community relations problems
- transport reasons (other than where the pupil is on Local Authority transport)
- where an illness absence has been reported but it is later discovered that the pupil was on a holiday / break
- any absence immediately before and during statutory assessment periods without evidence from a medical professional
- any absence from school on the day immediately before or after a school holiday period without evidence from a medical professional

NB: it is the Headteacher's decision whether any absence is authorised or unauthorised. If in doubt about whether an absence would be authorised or not, please do check with the school in advance by applying for absence.

Pupils with medical conditions or special educational needs and disabilities

Many children will experience normal but difficult emotions that make them nervous about attending school, such as worries about friendships, schoolwork, assessments/tests or variable moods. It is important to note that these pupils are still expected to attend school regularly - in many instances, attendance at school may serve to help with the underlying issue as being away from school might exacerbate it, and a prolonged period of absence may heighten anxious feelings about attending in future.

The school recognises that some pupils with SEND and/or health conditions, including more serious mental health issues, may face greater barriers to attendance than their peers, and will incorporate procedures to support pupils who find attending school difficult. The school will seek to put in place reasonable adjustments for disabled pupils to reduce barriers to attendance, in line with any Education Health and Care plans or Individual Health Plans that have been implemented. The school will seek additional support from external partners to help bolster attendance where appropriate.

Where the school has concerns that a pupil's non-attendance may be related to mental health issues, parents will be contacted to discuss the issue and whether there are any contributory factors to their child's lack of attendance. Where staff have a mental health concern about a pupil that is also a safeguarding concern, they will inform the DSL and the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy will be followed.

If a pupil is unable to attend school for long periods of time due to their health, the school will:

- inform the LA Education Welfare Service if a pupil is likely to be away from the school for more than 15 school days
- provide the LA with information about the pupil's needs, capabilities and programme of work
- help the pupil reintegrate at school when they return
- where appropriate, encourage the pupil to stay in contact with other pupils/staff during their absence (e.g. through home-school communication)

To support the attendance of pupils with SEND and/or health issues, the school will consider:

- holding termly meetings to evaluate any implemented reasonable adjustments
- implementing a pastoral support plan
- identifying pupils' unmet needs through an early support assessment
- using an internal or external specialist
- enabling a pupil to have a reduced timetable
- ensuring a pupil can have somewhere quiet to spend lunch and breaktimes
- implementing a system whereby pupils can request to leave a classroom if they feel they need time out
- temporary late starts or early finishes
- phased returns to school where there has been a long absence
- small group work to support catch-up
- tailored support to meet their individual needs

School absence management procedures – day to day systems

Parent/carer absence reporting

Parents/carers are expected to report all absences to the school using the methods outlined below. Please do not use verbal messages to staff on the door/playground as absence reporting and follow-up is managed via the school's pastoral and admin teams, plus busy duty staff do not have the time to pass messages along.

All absences must be reported electronically by 09:00:

- 1) Via the school website www.frogwell.co.uk and choose the 'REPORT AN ABSENCE' shortcut in the bottom left hand corner of the homepage. This will take you directly to a simple online form where you will fill in your child's name, class, the date and give the reason for the absence.
- 2) Via email to the dedicated email address attendance@frogwell.wilts.sch.uk

It is essential that a clear and specific reason for the absence is given, not just "my child is ill/sick".

Parents/carers need to inform the school if a child's absence is due to a traumatic event which the school needs to deal with sensitively on the child's return.

Phone calls to the office should only be used if the above options have failed for some reason because voice mails are often unclear and hard to understand.

School follow up

- Where the parent/carer has contacted the school using the proper channels (see above), they can then expect a follow-up phone call from a member of the school's pastoral or admin team later in the day. The purpose of this call is to check on the child's welfare, offer any necessary support, discuss a likely return date and agree contact arrangements between home and school for subsequent days of absence.
- Where the parent/carer has not contacted the school, a text message will be sent informing the parent that the child is not in school and requesting that they make contact immediately.
- School will continue to attempt to make contact with the parent/carer if no response is forthcoming.
- If no contact can be made after a reasonable period of time, the school may carry out a home visit to check on pupil welfare as part of our safeguarding responsibilities. This is particularly likely where there have been concerns about a child's poor attendance in the past, where there is current or recent Social Care involvement, or where the family has specific vulnerabilities known to the school.

What the school will do when absence is not satisfactorily explained by parents/carers

If absence is not explained satisfactorily by parents/carers, it will automatically be recorded as unauthorised.

What the school will do when a child's attendance / lateness is a cause for concern

The school monitors attendance rates throughout the year and will analyse where pupils have attendance rates that are too low. 'Good' attendance is considered to be 96% and above. School will send routine attendance letters to parents/carers of all children periodically throughout the year, even where attendance is good or where the reasons for absence are known and genuine. This is to ensure parents are kept informed and are aware of their own child's attendance levels.

We will contact parents to address and improve attendance and/or punctuality where:

- a pupil's attendance falls below 95%
- a pupil has more than 3 weeks where they haven't achieved full attendance in a term – not having full attendance in a week is known as a 'broken week' and broken weeks are known to have substantial impact on children's education (in Wiltshire there are 6 terms in an academic year)
- a pupil has more than 4 recorded lates in a term
- a pupil has a regular pattern of absence or lateness
- there is any other cause for concern about the pupil's absence or lateness

Where attendance drops to 95% or lower, the school will send a letter to alert you to this. By sending you a letter we are simply notifying you in order to raise your awareness. This is "best practice" and gives you

the opportunity to consider whether there is an issue that needs addressing or whether your child has simply had several incidents of unavoidable illness and you feel confident that the attendance will improve without support. At this stage, the school will aim to work with the family to provide appropriate support and intervention in order to bring about improvement to the child's attendance rate.

This might involve:

- Parents/carers (and sometimes pupils) meeting with the pastoral and/or teaching staff to work together to address any in-school barriers to good attendance
- Referrals to services and organisations that can provide support for barriers beyond the school's control
- Agreeing actions and targets for improvement and reviewing these regularly

Concern for the welfare / safety of a child connected to absence

If we cannot speak directly with parents/carers when a child is absent, then we will make contact with the nominated emergency contacts to establish the reason for absence; this is in line with school safeguarding procedures.

If after 3 days of absence, your child has not been seen and no contact has been made with the school, a home visit (doorstep only) may be made by school staff, to ascertain the safety and wellbeing of your child and establish the reason for absence from school; this will take place sooner than 3 days if the child has a social worker or there are other known vulnerabilities, possibly on the first day of absence.

After 10 days of unexplained absence and no contact with the school, we are obliged to notify the Local Authority. The Local Authority will follow their procedures for Children Missing from Education (CME) and parents should expect contact and visits from an Education Welfare Officer to ascertain the wellbeing and safety of your child.

How the school will respond to Persistent Absence or cases where absence has increased

At Frogwell Primary School we will always aim to work with you to address any attendance concerns at an early a stage as possible. This is likely to involve parents/carers attending a School Attendance Meeting (SAM) with a member of the pastoral team or teacher. These meetings will clearly explain the consequences of persistent and severe absence to the pupil and family and the potential need for legal intervention in future, but should also be an opportunity for school to continue to listen to and understand the barriers to attendance and explain the help that is available to avoid those consequences.

Absence becomes 'Persistent Absence' when attendance falls to below 90%. While 90% may sound high (in an exam we would be thrilled with 90%!), 90% in the context of attendance is very low and equates to roughly 20 school days missed across the whole year. We monitor all children for Persistent Absence in order to identify it as quickly as possible in the school year. Between September and Christmas, if a pupil misses roughly 14 school sessions (7 days), their attendance will drop to below 90% and will be legally classed as Persistent Absence.

Where absence intensifies, so should the support provided, which will require the school to work in tandem with the Local Authority and other relevant partners. Where this level of absence is not explained by genuine illness or authorised exceptional circumstance, a referral will likely be made to the Education Welfare Service.

- Where the needs are wider and a whole family response is more appropriate, this is likely to include a voluntary Early Help Assessment (Team Around the Child / Family process).
- Where engagement in earlier support is proving challenging, the school may hold more formal meetings with the parents, and the pupil where they are old enough to understand. This is likely to be led by a senior leader and may include the Local Authority Education Welfare Officer. These meetings will clearly explain the consequences of persistent and severe absence to the pupil and family and the potential need for legal intervention in future, but should also be an opportunity to continue to listen to and understand the barriers to attendance and explain the help that is available to avoid those consequences.

Parents/carers should be aware that if a pupil accumulates 10 or more sessions of unauthorised absence or unauthorised leave of absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks, the school will notify the Local Authority and a Penalty Notice will be issued by the LA to each parent for each child where that applies (e.g. two parents with two children who take a holiday in term time can expect to receive four penalty notices).

Where voluntary support has not been effective or engaged with and absence is severe or prolonged

Where voluntary support has not been effective and/or has not been engaged with, the school will work with the Local Authority to:

- put formal support in place in the form of an Attendance Contract or an Education Supervision Order.
- issue a fixed penalty notice where support would not be appropriate or has not been successful or engaged with and it is likely to change the parents' behaviour.
- intensify support through statutory children's social care involvement where there are safeguarding concerns, especially where absence becomes severe (Severe Absence is below 50% attendance).
- prosecute parents where all other routes have failed or are not deemed appropriate. This could include making the case for a community or parenting order where the parent is convicted to secure engagement with support.

In all cases, the school will monitor the impact of any intervention(s) and make adjustments where necessary in discussion with the pupil, parents and any other partners involved as part of any whole family plan or team around the child/family. Where interventions are failing, all parties should work together to identify the reasons why and either adjust or change the approach.

The new national framework allows for parents to receive a maximum of 2 penalty notices for each of their children in a 3-year period:

- the first penalty notice issued in respect of an individual child will be in the sum of £160 to be paid within 28 days, reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days
- the second penalty notice issued in respect of the same child within 3 years shall be in the sum of £160
- if the national threshold is met on a third or subsequent occasion in 3 years then the local authority may present the matter to the magistrates' court
- NB: there is no right of appeal against a penalty notice

Alternatively, the Local Authority may initiate court action under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996, which could lead to fines of up to £2,500, imposition of orders such as Parenting Orders or even imprisonment. In some cases, action may be taken under the Children Act 1989 to protect the welfare and development of the child.

Roles and responsibilities

Responsibilities of parents/carers

Parents are responsible in law for ensuring that their children of compulsory school age receive an efficient education suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs which they may have. Most parents choose to fulfil this responsibility by registering children at a school.

Parents have a legal responsibility to ensure their child's regular attendance (s7 Education Act 1996).

Parental Responsibilities:

- Ensure that their child attends school every day, on time, appropriately dressed and in a 'condition to learn'. (i.e. not too tired or too hungry to learn.)
- Work in partnership with the school to help their child/children gain an appreciation of the importance of attending regular school attendance and punctuality.
- Work in partnership with the school to take an active interest in their child's school career, to support and reinforce school policies/arrangements on homework, behaviour and approach to learning, to attend parents' evenings and other meetings where necessary.
- Work in partnership with the school and other agencies (as and when appropriate) to resolve issues relating to non-attendance including engaging with formal support offered to prevent the need for legal intervention.
- To acknowledge that they have been in receipt of, and will support, the school's Attendance and Punctuality Policy.
- Notify the school if their child is absent, in line with the school's stated procedures.
- Parents are advised to avoid arranging medical or dental appointments during school hours unless there is an emergency.
- Parents must seek permission from their child's Headteacher (or authorised representative) by applying in advance of any request for leave of absence, using the school standard form. Frogwell Primary School's timescale is in line with the Local Authority recommendation that requests should be made at least 2 weeks in advance of the requested absence. Each request will be considered individually and should meet the circumstance of being 'exceptional' if authorisation is being considered. NB: It is the Headteacher's decision to register an absence as either authorised or unauthorised.

Responsibilities of the school

Schools are responsible for supporting the attendance of their pupils and for managing concerns or issues which may lead to non-attendance.

The DfE places the following expectations on schools as detailed in the DfE Statutory Guidance published August 2024 '*Working together to improve school attendance: Statutory guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools, and local authorities*':

- To develop and maintain a whole school culture that promotes the benefits of high attendance.
- To have a clear school attendance policy on the school website which all staff, pupils and parents understand.
- To accurately complete admission and attendance registers.
- To have robust daily processes to follow up absence (this should be understood by everyone in the school community and communicated to any cover staff to ensure procedures are consistently applied).
- To have a dedicated senior leader with overall responsibility for championing and improving attendance, setting a clear vision for improving and maintaining good attendance, having oversight of absence data analysis, evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes.

- To be proactive in identifying pupils at risk of poor attendance and work with each identified pupil and parents/carers to understand and address the reasons for absence. Schools should be sensitive to the needs of the individual pupil and parent. This should be reflected in the ways in which attendance issues are addressed. For example, schools should recognise that some parents have difficulty understanding written communications. They should also recognise the reluctance of some parents to come into school and work sensitively and proactively with parents to ensure a consistent approach to attendance management.
- To signpost and support access to services where out of school barriers to attendance are identified.
- To work with partners in the multi-agency effort to improve attendance.
- To hold formal conversations with parents where there is lack of engagement to improve attendance and be clear about the potential for legal intervention.
- To work with the local authority where legal intervention may be appropriate.
- To work with other schools in the area such as schools previously attended and the schools of any siblings and to share effective practice where there are common barriers to attendance.
- To maintain the same ambitions of attendance for pupils with medical conditions or SEND and work to maximise attendance.
- Where a pupil is open to social care to notify the pupil's social worker if there are unexplained absences and if the pupil's name is to be deleted from the register.

Responsibilities of the school's Governing Board

The DfE places the following expectations on academy trustees and governing bodies as detailed in DfE Statutory Guidance published August 2024 '*Working together to improve school attendance: Statutory guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools, and local authorities*':

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

Responsibilities of the Local Authority

The DfE places the following expectations on local authorities as detailed in the DfE Statutory Guidance published August 2024 '*Working together to improve school attendance: Statutory guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools, and local authorities*':

- To rigorously track local attendance data
- To have a School Attendance Support Team which provides the following core functions free of charge to all schools regardless of type
 - Communication and advice – bringing schools together to communicate messages, provide advice and share best practice between school and trusts within the area
 - Targeting Support Meetings – hold termly (3 x per year) conversations with schools using attendance data to identify pupils and cohorts at risk of poor attendance and agree targeted actions and access to services for those pupils
 - Multi-disciplinary support for families – provide access to early help support workers to work intensively with families to provide practical whole family support and unblock barriers to attendance
 - Legal intervention – take forward legal intervention where voluntary support has not been successful or engaged with.
 - Monitor and improve the attendance of children with a social worker
- The local authority discharges its statutory duty to ensure regular school attendance through

Education Welfare Officers within the Education Welfare Service. In doing so it enables schools and parents to meet their respective responsibilities.

- The functions of the School Attendance Support Team will primarily sit within the Education Welfare Service although strategic support for attendance may also be provided by other local authority teams such as School Effectiveness.
- The primary responsibility of the Education Welfare Service is to promote the excellent attendance of all pupils in Wiltshire schools, thereby contributing to raising pupil attainment.
- The Education Welfare Service will work in close partnership with all maintained schools, independent schools and academies (subject to specific agreements) in Wiltshire and other statutory and voluntary agencies to promote regular school attendance and support schools to discharge their responsibilities to ensure regular attendance.
- All schools in Wiltshire will have a Targeting Support Meeting 3 times per academic year. Attendance data will be used to prioritise schools with higher numbers of persistent (less than 90% attendance) and severely absent (less than 50% attendance) pupils.
- Whilst each school will have access to a link Education Welfare Officer, the allocation of that resource will be targeted according to identified need using attendance data including persistent absence data.
- To enable the local authority to monitor and support the attendance of children with a social worker, attendance oversight and discussion will be mandatory in assessment and subsequent planning by social workers.
- The local authority will use the full range of parental responsibility measures available to support and enforce attendance where parents have not voluntarily engaged with the support from the school. This will include the use of parenting orders, education supervision orders, penalty notices and prosecution.

Children Missing Out of Education

Wiltshire LA has a Children Missing Out of Education (CMOE) panel which meets regularly throughout the academic year. The panel is made up of colleagues from Targeted Education Services, Children's Social Care, Young People's Service (YOT), Special Educational Needs and Disabilities team, Performance Management.

The purpose of the panel is to ensure that the LA is meeting its statutory obligations under s19 Education Act by ensuring that all pupils in Wiltshire have access to appropriate education and determining whether there is a LA duty to make provision in some cases.

The panel may also provide robust support and challenge to schools and professionals where it appears that pupils are not attending school regularly and in line with DfE guidance and best practice.

The panel will regularly review pupils who:

- Are known to have a reduced educational provision (REP) in place – particularly those who are subject to extended
- Have episodes of illness which exceeds 15 school days. It is important to note that Wiltshire secondary maintained and academy providers have a Service Level Agreement in place with the local authority which devolves funding for them to meet this element of the s19 Education Act duties.
- Experience multiple suspensions.
- Do not appear to be in receipt of suitable education under arrangements made for them by their parents (Electively Home Educated).

Communicating the contents of the Attendance and Punctuality Policy

- The policy is given to all new parents/carers when their child is first registered at the school.
- The policy is shared with all existing parents at the start of the year and published on the school website for continual reference.
- Parents'/Carers' attention will be regularly drawn to the Attendance and Punctuality Policy through mechanisms such as school newsletters. Whole-school and class attendance updates and celebrations will feature in the school newsletter and we will advise parents of any changes to policy and procedures.
- Aspects of the policy are raised regularly through school assemblies, staff training events etc.
- The policy is made known to new staff as part of their induction.

Monitoring arrangements

It is the responsibility of the Headteacher and Governors to monitor and review this policy annually, or sooner if there is any change to statutory requirements.

Policy agreed:	September 2024
Policy published:	September 2024
Next review:	September 2025

