West Hill School

Aiming High Since 1927

Attendance Policy

Item	Author/Owner	Date Written	Approved by	Date Approved
1	J Watt/S Sykes	May 2025	SSI Committee	18 June 2025
2	J Watt/ S Sykes	December 2025	Full Board of Trustees	10 December 2025
3	J Watt	June 2026	Full Board of Trustees	8th July 2026

Key Changes

- Legislative and guidance changes
- Roles and Responsibilities of Attendance Officer
- Roles and Responsibilities, addition of Deputy Headteacher
- Attendance register coding in line with DFE guidance
- Lateness and Punctuality including register close times
- Legal Sanctions
- Information on prosecutions

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1. Aims

West Hill School aims to develop confident and ambitious young men, equipped with the skills and qualifications to thrive in a changing world. Good attendance at school is fundamental to achieving academic success. Conversely, poor attendance is a barrier to accessing the curriculum, and West Hill School aims for every student to be a committed learner, able to grasp every opportunity to enrich their lives, free from barriers. Every student at West Hill School should embody the characteristics of the West Hill boy, and uphold our values of Readiness for learning, Respect and Responsibility. Good attendance at school is vital to fulfilling the character development we strive to instil in every student.

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

- Promoting good attendance and reducing absence, including persistent absence
- Ensuring every student 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.

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2. Legislation and Guidance

This document is drawn from legislation and statutory guidance setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

The Education Act 1996

The Equality Act 2010

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (as amended)

DfE 'Working together to improve attendance' 2022

DfE 'Children missing in education' 2016

DfE 'Keeping children safe in education' 2022

DfE 'Providing remote education' 2023

3. Roles and Responsibilities

3.1 The Board of Trustees

The Board of Trustees are responsible for monitoring attendance figures for the whole school on at least a termly basis. It also holds the Headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy.

3.2 The Headteacher

The Headteacher is responsible for:

- Implementation of this policy at the school
- Appointing a member of the SLT to the attendance lead role
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to the Trustees
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual students
- Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary.

3.3 The Deputy Headteacher (Attendance Lead)

The Deputy Headteacher is responsible for:

- The overall strategic approach to attendance in school
- Line management of relevant pastoral staff
- Developing a clear vision for improving school attendance.

3.4 The Attendance Officer

The school Attendance Officer:

- Monitors attendance data across the school and at an individual student-level
- Reports concerns about attendance to the Headteacher and Deputy Headteacher
- Works with Education Welfare Officers to tackle persistent absence

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- Arranges calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues
- Carries out investigation and case work on attendance absence cases
- Advises the Headteacher when to issue fixed-penalty notices or consider prosecution

3.5 Class Teachers/Form Tutors

Class teachers/form tutors are responsible for recording attendance daily, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the school office.

3.6 School Office Staff

School office staff are expected to take calls from parents about absence and record it on the school system.

3.7 Parents/Carers

Parents or carers are responsible for:

- Providing the school with accurate contact details
- Informing school of any changes to their contact details
- The attendance and punctuality of their child(ren) at school
- Promoting good attendance and punctuality with their child(ren).

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 start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. It will mark whether every student is:

- Present
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity
- Absent
- 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 DfE ‘Working together to improve school attendance’ guidance for codes.

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

Students must arrive in school by 8:40am on each school day for the start of registration.

The register for the morning session will be taken at 8:40am and will be kept open until 9.10am, after 9.10am the first session will be coded as unauthorised (U code). The register for the afternoon session will be taken at 1pm (period 4).

4.2 Unplanned Absence

The student's parent/carer must notify the school on the first day of an unplanned absence by 8:30am or as soon as practically possible.

These are the following ways parents/carers can report a child as absent:

- Ring school on 0161 338 2193 (select option 1)
- Email school on absence@westhillschool.co.uk
- Send a message via the West Hill App via Reach More Parents.

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 student'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 you have received an attendance alert letter, or school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as 'unauthorised', unless satisfactory evidence is provided.

4.3 Planned Absence

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the student's parent/carer notifies the school in advance of the appointment.

Please be aware if you have received an attendance letter – medical evidence will need to be seen to confirm the authorised absence for the appointment.

However, we encourage parents/carers to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the student should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

The student'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 student who arrives late:

- On site, before the register has closed between 8:41 am and 9:11am will be marked as late, using the appropriate code
- After the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate 'U' code

- Parents/carers will receive a message via our West Hill App to make them aware if their child is late for school each morning
- Sanctions put in place for lateness – see Behaviour Policy.

Students who are late to school on a regular basis will be monitored and placed on a late report by their Head of Year. If the lateness continues whilst on the report, parents may be asked in school for a meeting regarding patterns, reasons for lateness and solutions.

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:
    - West Hill School app message will be sent out via text and email each morning after registration has closed
    - If school do not receive a response, school will attempt to make contact via the phone to enquire further
    - If school have still not managed to obtain a reason for the absence after the above, school may contact additional emergency contacts or conduct a home visit when considered appropriate
    - If school are unsuccessful in locating the child after 10 school days, a Child Missing in Education referral would be made to the local authority
    - Ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary
    - Identify whether the absence is approved or not
    - Identify the correct attendance code to use.

4.6 Absences Due to a Medical Condition or Ill-Health

If a student is absent from school for 15 school days' or more due to a medical condition or ill health – then the Attendance Officer will submit a medical referral to the Education Welfare Team. This will then be reviewed by a medical panel and intervention will be put in place for the family.

4.7 Reporting to Parents/Carers

Parents will receive notification of their child's attendance percentage in termly progress assessment reports. Parents can also request for a copy of the attendance certificate by contacting the school's Attendance Officer.

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. The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request.

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 student is attending educational provision.

  Parents who want to request a term-time absence must make a written request to the Attendance Officer as far in advance of the leave as possible stating:

  - Student's name and form group
  - The first day of absence and the return to school date
  - The reason behind the request, giving as much detail as possible
  - Providing supporting evidence where available.

5.2 Reducing Persistent Absence

When a student's attendance falls below our minimum expected attendance target of 96%, they are at risk of becoming a persistent absentee.

When this occurs a series of events will take place, to help encourage an increase in attendance:

- The parent/carer will receive an attendance letter – making them aware that school will no longer be authorising absences (unless medical evidence is provided)
- If attendance does not improve after this, the parent/carer might receive a call or home visit by the Attendance Officer
- Following this if improvement is still not yet noticeable then parents/carers will be invited into school for an attendance meeting with the school's Attendance Officer and relevant staff
- Eventually, after all steps have taken place and attendance is still low or decreasing then school will submit an Educational Notice to Improve/Penalty Warning.

5.3 Legal Sanctions

5.3.1 Penalty Notices

Section 444(1) of the Education Act 1996 empowers the local authority to issue Penalty Notices in cases of unauthorised absence from school. This means that when a student has unauthorised absence of 10 sessions (5 days) or more, in a 10-week period (where no acceptable reason has been given for the absence) or if their child persistently arrives late for school after the close of registration, their parents may receive a Penalty Notice. The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2024 states that:

- For the first offence committed, the rate of a Penalty Notice is £160 if paid within 28 days, reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days
- For the second offence committed, the rate of a Penalty Notice is £160 with no option for the second offence to be discharged at the lower rate of £80
- There is a limit of two Penalty Notices that can be issued to a parent/carer for the same child within a rolling 3-year period. If there is a third offence, committed within this timeframe, another tool will be considered such as prosecution to answer an offence under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996: failure to ensure regular attendance. Conviction of an offence under section 444(1) may result in a fine of £1000. Under section 444(1A), convictions may result in a fine of £2,500, a community order, electronic tagging or a custodial sentence and a criminal conviction recorded.

The Penalty Notice will need to be paid in full before 28 days of the notice being served. Failure to pay a Penalty Notice may result in prosecution as detailed above. Please note the issuing of a Penalty Notice is an alternative to issuing proceedings at court.

Parents/carers may also receive a Penalty Notice for the offence of failing to secure regular school attendance under the following circumstances:

- Their child is stopped on a truancy sweep
- Where the absence is recorded as an unauthorised leave of absence for a minimum of 10 sessions (5 school days) in a 10-week period.

The Education and Inspections Act 2006 also makes it an offence if a parent/carer fails to ensure that their child is not in a public place during the first 5 days of a fixed-term or permanent exclusion. Penalty Notices may be issued for such an offence.

5.3.2 Prosecution

School absence is often a symptom of wider issues a family is facing, school will always work together with other local partners to understand the barriers to attendance and provide support. Where that is not successful, or is not engaged with, the law protects students' right to an education and provides a range of legal interventions to formalise attendance improvement efforts, and where all other avenues have been exhausted, school may enforce it through prosecuting parents/carers.

Under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996: failure to ensure regular attendance. Conviction of an offence under section 444(1) may result in a fine of £1000. Under section 444(1A), convictions may result in a fine of £2,500, a community order, electronic tagging or a custodial sentence and a criminal conviction recorded. The school will take advice from Education Welfare at Tameside authority where required.

6. Attendance Monitoring

The Attendance Officer at our school monitors student absence on a daily basis.

A student'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).

Parents/carers are expected to contact the school daily if their child is going to be absent from school.

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If a student's absence goes above 3 days, the school will contact the parent/carer of the student to discuss the reasons for this.

If a student's absence continues to rise after contacting their parent/carer, we will consider involving an Education Welfare Officer.

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

Student-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 Board of Trustees.

7. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the local authority or DfE is updated, annually by the Deputy Headteacher, in consultation with the Headteacher. At every review, the policy will be approved by the Full Board of Trustees.

8. Links with Other Policies

This policy links to the following policies:

- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- SEND Policy
- Complaints Policy

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