

# Attendance Policy



**WHITFIELD ST JAMES'**  
CE (VC) Primary School

Approved by:	Full governing body
Date:	February 2026
Frequency of review:	Annually
Next review by:	February 2027

At Whitfield St James', we work collaboratively to encourage every pupil to strive for excellence. Every child will be supported, challenged and valued. One way in which we strive to do this is by encouraging staff, parents and children to maximise the learning experience in order that all children reach their maximum potential. We are determined in encouraging the development of high self-esteem and for our children to take pride and ownership of their learning. In conjunction with this, we will continuously provide a clear framework for parents and staff as well as clear procedures for involving parents and/or external agencies where appropriate. Our policy applies to all children registered at this school and this policy is made available to all parents/carers of pupils that are registered at our school on the school website. Whitfield St James' encourages all parents/carers to work in partnership with the school in order to improve attendance and punctuality and recognises that "parents have the primary responsibility to ensure that pupils of compulsory school age attend school regularly" (DfE 1999).

### **Aims**

This policy aims to show our commitment to meeting our obligations with regards to school attendance, including those laid out in the Department for Education's (DfE's) statutory guidance on [working together to improve school attendance \(applies from 19 August 2024\)](#), through our whole-school culture and ethos that values good attendance, including:

- Setting high expectations for the attendance and punctuality of all pupils
- Promoting good attendance and the benefits of good attendance
- Reducing absence, including persistent and severe absence
- Ensuring every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled
- Acting early to address patterns of absence
- Building strong relationships with families to make sure pupils have the support in place to attend school
- We will also promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

### **Legislation and guidance**

This policy is based on the Department for Education's (DfE's) statutory guidance on [working together to improve school attendance \(applies from 19 August 2024\)](#) and [school attendance parental responsibility measures](#). The guidance is based on the following pieces of legislation, which set 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 \(and 2010, 2011, 2013, and 2016 amendments\)](#)
- [The School Attendance \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2024](#)
- [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013 and the 2024 amendment](#)

It also refers to:

- [School census guidance](#)
- [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#)
- [Mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance: guidance for schools](#)

### **Responsibility of Parents/Carers**

Children who are persistently late or absent soon fall behind with their learning. Children who are absent from school frequently develop large gaps in their learning which will impact on their progress and their ability to meet age related learning expectations. A child whose attendance drops to 90% each year will, over their time at primary school, have missed two whole terms of learning.

### **Punctuality**

It is the parent/carers responsibility:

-To ensure that their children arrive to school on time. The gate will open at 8.30am, close for 8.45am and register will be taken at 8.45am. This is sufficient time for all pupils to get to their classroom.

-To ensure children who are late after 8.45am report to the school office to sign in. Records are kept of the pupils that are late with an L code in the register. Any child who arrives after 9:15am will be marked with a U code, equivalent to an unauthorised absence.

-To ensure children are collected promptly at the end of the school day and that necessary arrangements are in place for the journey home. If these differ from the child's normal arrangements, the class teacher and school office should be made aware of this.

### **Persistent Latecomers**

Children who repeatedly attend school late after 8:45am will be brought to the attention of the Headteacher. Warning letters will be issued to the parents/carers of these children. Parents/carers should note that children who arrive late after 9:15am are given a 'U' code, which is the equivalent of an unauthorised absence and this will affect the child's attendance figures. Fixed penalty notices may be issued to parents/carers whose children persistently arrive after this time.

### **Absences**

It is the parent/carer's responsibility:

-To notify the school on the first day of absence before 9:15am or as soon as possible. Parents can report an absence by telephoning the school office (leaving a voice message) or emailing the school, using office@st-james.derbyshire.sch.uk or using the absence form on the school website.

-To provide medical evidence where possible, on the child's return to school.

-To ensure that as far as possible, medical appointments are arranged for outside school hours. Where this is not possible, parents are expected to provide evidence of the appointment in advance, and the child should attend school before/after the appointment.

-To liaise with the school as soon as possible regarding any specific issues that might cause absence or lateness, e.g. a sick parent/carer.

-Parents/carers of children for whom we do not know the reason for absence will be contacted after 9:15am.

### **Illness/Medical absences**

In addition to the points above, if a child is repeatedly absent due to illness, the school may request medical evidence for further absences. This can take the form of a GP appointment card, a consultant letter, a copy of a prescription etc.

### **Leave of Absence requests**

Parents/carers are not expected to take their children on holiday during the school term to minimise the impact of missing education. For any absences that are not medical or sickness, parents/carers must complete a leave of absence request form in advance of the absence (at least 2 school weeks prior). These requests will be considered on a case-by-case basis by the Headteacher, and they will use their discretion whilst applying government recommendations.

It is the parent/carer's responsibility:

-To obtain a leave of absence form from the school office.

-To complete and submit the form in advance of the period of absence (2 school weeks prior). If parents/carers decide to take leave without the Headteacher's authorisation, the child's absences will be marked as unauthorised.

In September 2013 the government introduced new regulations making it clear that Headteachers must not give approval for any leave of absence during term time, including holidays, unless there are exceptional circumstances.

Any requests for term time leave should be made on a Leave of absence request Form available from the school office and handed in two school weeks before the first date of the requested absence whenever possible. You must have received written authorisation before your child can be absent from school.

Parent/carers may be issued with a penalty notice fine or prosecution should leave of 5 days or more be taken which is not authorised by the Headteacher, or where repeated incidents of leave in term time for less than 5 days occur or where the

unauthorised absence contributes to wider poor attendance that meets the legal threshold. Absence deemed for the reason of unauthorised leave in term time will be marked in the register with the Attendance code G.

You may be issued with a Penalty Notice should leave be taken which is not authorised. If unpaid this could lead to prosecution under section 444(1) of The Education Act 1996.

### **Unexplained Absence**

When a child is repeatedly absent and no satisfactory reason is given, the parent/carers will be investigated and may be liable for prosecution and/or a fine from the Local Authority. Regular monitoring is carried out by the school. Children who have repeated unauthorised absences, holidays or otherwise, will be contacted by the school and may be invited in to an attendance meeting to discuss absences and any appropriate support.

### **Role of the School**

-To investigate absence which exceeds more than 10%, and to hold meetings with these parents as required. Parents will be invited to attend an Attendance Panel in school.

-To investigate lateness which exceeds more than 5%.

-To investigate any unexplained absence which exceeds more than 5 consecutive days.

-To ensure parents are aware of their legal duty under the Education Act to ensure their children attend school.

-To refer cases to the Local Authority for prosecution where persistent absenteeism has not improved despite thorough intervention and support from the Early Help Team.

-To report accurate whole school and individual attendance data when required.

### **Children Missing in Education**

If a child is absent (unexplained) for at least 5 consecutive days, our Early Help Service/ Family Worker will be notified. A home visit may be carried out. If the absence continues for a total of 10 days, the family will be referred as a CME case for the Local Authority.

Link for form below: <https://www.derbyshire.gov.uk/education/schools/welfare-services/missing-education/childrenmissing-from-education.aspx>

Our school will make use of the full range of potential sanctions – including, but not limited to, those listed below – to tackle poor attendance. Decisions will be made on an individual, case-by-case basis.

## **Penalty notices**

The headteacher (or someone authorised by them), local authority or the police can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age, by issuing a penalty notice.

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

Before issuing a penalty notice, the school will consider the individual case, including:

- Whether the national threshold for considering a penalty notice has been met (10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks)
- Whether a penalty notice is the best available tool to improve attendance for that pupil
- Whether further support, a notice to improve or another legal intervention would be a more appropriate solution
- Whether any obligations that the school has under the Equality Act 2010 make issuing a penalty notice inappropriate

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

The payment must be made directly to the local authority, regardless of who issues the notice. If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute or withdraw the notice.

If issued with a **first** penalty notice, the parent must pay £80 within 21 days, or £160 within 28 days.

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

A **third** penalty notice cannot be issued to the same parent in respect of the same child within 3 years of the date of the issue of the first penalty notice. In a case where the national threshold is met for a third time within those 3 years, alternative action will be taken instead.

A penalty notice may also be issued where parents allow their child to be present in a public place during school hours without reasonable justification, during the first 5 days of a suspension or exclusion (where the school has notified the parents that the pupil must not be present in a public place on that day). These penalty notices are not included in the National Framework, not subject to the same considerations about support being provided, and do not count towards the limit as part of the escalation process.

In these cases, the parent must pay £60 within 21 days, or £120.

## **Notices to improve**

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

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

They will include:

- Details of the pupil's attendance record and of the offences
- The benefits of regular attendance and the duty of parents under section 7 of the Education Act 1996
- Details of the support provided so far
- Opportunities for further support, or to access previously provided support that was not engaged with
- A clear warning that a penalty notice may be issued if attendance doesn't improve within the improvement period, along with details of what sufficient improvement looks like, which will be decided on a case-by-case basis
- A clear timeframe of between 3 and 6 weeks for the improvement period
- The grounds on which a penalty notice may be issued before the end of the improvement period