



North Westminster Federation

Working Together to Grow Our Future

Attendance Policy

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Introduction

The law requires every child of compulsory school age to an efficient, full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude, and any special educational need they may have. Good attendance is essential for pupils to get the most out of their school experience, including their attainment, wellbeing, and wider life chances. Missing out on lessons leaves pupils vulnerable to falling behind. Pupils with poor attendance tend to achieve less in both primary and secondary school.

The North Westminster Federation (NWF) expects the highest standards of attendance and punctuality from all pupils, at all times. It is the responsibility of parents/carers to ensure that this happens and the responsibility of the school to monitor attendance and punctuality, whilst offering support where appropriate.

At the NWF, we are continuously working towards our goal of 100% attendance for all pupils.

The Legal Framework

This policy is based on the Department for Education's (DfE's) **statutory** guidance which is a government directive 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](#)
- Working together to improve school attendance Statutory guidance, August 2024 [Working together to improve school attendance - GOV.UK](#)
- [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](#)

Aims

- Ensure that every pupil is safeguarded and their right to education is protected;
- Ensure the school attendance target is achieved, through rewards and incentives for good attendance and punctuality;
- Raise standards and ensure every pupil makes good progress, through a high level of school attendance and punctuality;

- Ensure all the stakeholders, governors, parents, pupils and staff receive regular communication about the importance of good attendance and punctuality;
- Keep accurate, up-to-date records and have a robust and rigorous system for analysing attendance;
- Identify causes of low attendance/punctuality with individual pupils, classes and groups of pupils and address them;
- Work with external agencies, in order to address barriers to attendance and overcome them.

Roles and Responsibilities

Governing Board are responsible for:

- Holding the Head of School/Executive Head to account for the implementation of this policy;
- Recognising and promoting the importance of attendance across the school's policies and ethos;
- Monitoring attendance figures for the whole Federation on a termly basis and working with school leaders to set goals or areas of focus for attendance and providing support and challenge;
- Evaluate the effectiveness of the Federation's processes and improvement efforts to make sure they are meeting pupils needs.

Executive Headteacher/Head of School

The Executive Headteacher/Head of School (also known as the 'senior attendance champion') is responsible for the overall management and implementation of the policy.

The Executive Headteacher/Head of School is responsible for:

- Leading, championing and improving attendance across the federation/school;
- Regularly evaluating and monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors
- Establishing and maintaining effective systems for tackling absence, and making sure they are followed by all staff;
- Supporting staff with liaising with individual pupils, parents/carers and external agencies, where needed;
- Celebrating good attendance with attendance certificates and prizes during assemblies;
- Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary;
- Carrying out home visits to safeguard pupils, where necessary.

Welfare Officer (WO) is responsible for:

- Taking responsibility for attendance/punctuality, on a day-to-day basis, including liaising with and responding to parental enquires;
- Contacting parents in the event that no information has been received for a child's absence;

- Monitoring attendance data across the school, for groups and at an individual pupil level;
- Liaising with the Administrative Officer (AO) to monitor daily absences;
- Producing data for Head of School/ Executive Head to analyse and maintain communication regarding attendance and punctuality through regular whole school attendance meetings
- Liaising with external agencies such as Early Help and make referrals where necessary;
- Ensuring that action plans are implemented where there is a cause for concern regarding attendance;
- Working with the teachers, to plan for the reintegration of pupils after long-term absence;
- Advising parents on Federation procedures and attendance policy where necessary;
- Monitoring reasons for absence and updates class registers;
- Arranging calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues;
- Advising the Head of School/Executive Head when to issue fixed-penalty notices;
- Carrying out home visits to safeguard pupils, where necessary.

Administrative Officer (AO) is responsible for:

- Checking morning and afternoon registers have been completed with the correct codes and adding additional information to the register including late codes;
- Checking the school answer phone and take messages from parents/carers about pupil absence; records all messages on SIMS;
- Carrying out first day calling if absence has not been reported, including calling all available numbers listed for a child if there is no answer, records the outcome on SIMS;
- Informing the WO promptly, if there are any concerns relating to attendance/punctuality;
- Maintaining SIMS attendance records in line with this policy;
- Ensuring staff are following the registration systems and structures in this policy;
- Informing parents of school procedures, when parents have failed to inform the school, request evidence of appointments when necessary.

Teachers are responsible for:

- Keeping accurate and up-to-date daily records of pupil attendance through the electronic register system;
- Taking a formal register of all pupils twice a day. This is done on the school's SIMs system at 8.55am and at the start of the afternoon session for their class;
- Regularly remind pupils and parents about the importance of good attendance;
- Providing a welcoming and safe environment for pupils; establish good and effective communication links with parents/carers;
- Working collaboratively with staff, pupils, families and other agencies where attendance and punctuality is a concern, identifying barriers to good attendance;
- Informing the WO, of pupils who persist with poor attendance or punctuality;
- Feeding back to parents about pupil attendance and punctuality.

Parents

A child should only be kept at home if they have a serious illness or injury. If this is the case, parents should contact the school first thing. If a child has a minor illness, parents should inform the school and bring them in. If they don't get any better at school, the school will contact parents straight away, to collect them. If your child is absent from school for more than three consecutive days you will be asked to provide medical evidence (such as medical appointment card, prescription, text appointment or similar) to cover these absences in order for the school to authorise those absences.

We expect parents to make medical or any other appointments outside of school hours. If a child has a dental, clinic or hospital appointment during school hours, parents should let the school know in advance and provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. For any other appointments, supporting documents will still be required.

A child should be brought back to school after appointments and should miss as little school time as possible.

If a child is absent before and/or after school holidays, parents will be asked to provide evidence to cover the absences. In the event no evidence is provided, the leave may not be authorised and could potentially lead to a penalty notice being issued by the local authority.

Parents are expected to:

- Ensure their child attends school and arrives on time every day no later than 8.55am;
- Promote a good attitude to learning by ensuring their child attends school in the correct uniform and with the basic equipment required for lessons;
- Wherever possible arrange medical and dental appointments out of school time;
- Telephone/ email/ text the school by 8:40am at the latest or earlier if possible on the first day of their child's absence and every day thereafter that their child* remains absent from school;
- Provide an explanation of the absence, including any documents requested by school upon their child's returns to school;
- Work in partnership with the school and other agencies in the best interests of their child; this includes informing the school about significant influences and changes in the pupil's life, which may impact on their learning;
- Ensure the school has up-to-date contact details for nominated contacts of the child.

****In the event that a parent does not contact the school to report absence, and a child continues to be absent, this may be considered as a child missing in education. In such cases, the school will undertake welfare checks. This can include an unannounced home visit or even referral on to other children services for support.***

Reducing persistent and severe absence

Persistent absence is where a pupil misses 10% or more of school, and severe absence is where a pupil misses 50% or more of school. Reducing persistent and severe absence is central to the Federation's strategy for improving attendance.

The school will:

- Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence;
- Consider potential safeguarding issues and, where suspected or present, address them in line with Keeping Children Safe in Education;
- Hold regular meetings with the parents of pupils who the school (and/or local authority) considers to be vulnerable or at risk of persistent or severe absence, or who are persistently or severely absent, to:
 - Discuss attendance and engagement at school, consider attendance contracts between parent and school
 - Listen, and understand barriers to attendance
 - Explain the help that is available
 - Explain the potential consequences of, and sanctions for, persistent and severe absence
 - Review any existing actions or interventions
 - Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance, in conjunction with the local authority, or consider alternative support where relevant.
 - Implement sanctions, where necessary
 - Agree a joint approach with all severely absent pupils with the Local Authority.

Support for pupils with medical conditions or SEND with poor attendance

The school will maintain the same ambition for attendance for all pupils and we will work with pupils and parents/carers to maximise attendance.

The SENDCo and Welfare Officer regularly monitor attendance for pupils with an EHCP and those receiving SEND support or have a medical condition.

Where required, the school will put in place additional support and adjustments. The school will consider additional support from wider services and external partners and make referrals when needed.

Thresholds for monitoring attendance

	Attendance %	Action	Monitoring period	Expectations
Stage 1	Under 94%	Monitor	6 weeks	• Improvement shown - no further action taken • No improvement or continues to decrease - progress to stage 2
Stage2	Under 90 %	Initial phone call and or letter/email Meeting with WO – action plan (AP) implemented	6 weeks	• Improvement shown - review AP, continue to monitor for a further 3 weeks • No improvement – progress to stage 3
Stage 3	No further improvements	Meeting with WO and Exec HT, Head of	3 weeks	• Meet for review, if improvements shown

		School or Assistant HT in their absence		revert back to stage 2 and set new targets • No improvement-progress to stage 4
Stage 4	Under 85%	Referral to Early Help (EH)		• Engagement/referral with EH to help improve attendance

The Local Authority, through the Early Help, is expected to

- Support the school in improving attendance, through whole school initiatives and individual pupil interventions;
- Work with families and other agencies to remove barriers to good attendance;
- Ensure that parents are informed of their responsibilities in relation to attendance;
- Uphold and enforce the law in respect of attendance, pupil employment, involvement in entertainment and pupil protection.

Authorised and unauthorised absence

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.

Essendine Primary School: Pupils must arrive in school between 8:45 and 8:55 am on each school day.

Hallfield Primary School: Pupils must arrive in school between 8:40 and 8:55 am on each school day.

Lateness and punctuality

A pupil who arrives late:

- Before the register has closed (up to and including 9:15am) will be marked as late, using the appropriate code- L.
- After the register has closed (9:16am onwards) will be marked as an unauthorised absence, using the appropriate code- U.
- If your child is late three times or more within a two week period, you will receive a letter informing you of this.
- If your child continues to be late after receiving this letter, you will be invited for a meeting to discuss strategies to support punctuality including attending breakfast club. If your child is recorded as late after the register has closed 10 times within a ten week period, the school *will work with the local authority to determine if a Penalty Charge Notice should be issued.*

Following up absence

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

- Call their parent/carer on the first day of absence to ascertain the reason

- Identify whether the absence is approved or not and identify the correct attendance code to use
- Ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary
- In cases where it is not possible to contact the parent/carer, the school will call other contacts listed for the child. The school may email the parent/carer as well, if there is no response. If no contact has been made, a home visit may be carried out by the WO and a member of SLT to ensure the safety and well-being of the child/ren. Where necessary, the school may liaise with children social care and/or children missing education team.

Children Missing in Education (CME)

A child going missing from school is a potential indicator of abuse or neglect and, as such, these children are increasingly at risk of being victims of harm, exploitation or radicalisation.

Staff will monitor pupils that go missing from the school, particularly on repeat occasions, and report them to the Designated Safeguarding Lead following normal safeguarding procedures.

If a child is missing from school and the school has not been contacted as to reason for the absence the school will:

- Make on-going attempts, beginning on day one of any unexplained absence, to contact the pupil's parents/carers either by telephone, School Comms app or email;
- Make further attempts to contact the parents/carers, either by letter or by carrying out a home visit;
- Contact any other schools where the pupil or their siblings are known to have been pupils e.g. secondary schools/nursery settings etc.;
- Sensitively check with the pupil's peer group to ascertain if they are aware of any change in the pupil's place of residency;
- Contact any relevant agency, for example children's services;
- Notify the local authority – CME team regarding the child's on-going absence.

Approval for term-time absence

If you need to request leave from school during term time for your child, you will need to complete the term time leave form (available from the school office) and provide any additional evidence, which will then be considered by the Head of School. This form should be completed a minimum of two weeks prior to the requested leave period.

The Executive Head / Head of School 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 only granted at the Head of School's/ Executive Head's discretion, including the length of time the pupil is authorised to be absent for.

The school considers each application individually, considering the specific facts, circumstances and relevant background context of the request.

In the event of exceptional circumstances, leave of absence will only be granted for 2 days.

Exceptional leave is NOT:

- Availability of cheap flights and/or holidays.
- Parent/carer work commitments.
- Overlap with the beginning or end of term, half term.

- Visiting relatives abroad – attending special occasions

Exceptional leave MAY be:

- Where an absence from school is recommended by a health professional as part of a child's rehabilitation from a medical, emotional or mental health issue.
- The death or terminal illness of a child's parent or sibling.
- The birth of a sibling.
- The Headteacher will only authorise leave if they are satisfied that the circumstances are truly exceptional. Evidence would be required in each case.

When considering exceptional term time leave requests, the following factors may be taken into consideration:

- Time of the academic year when the leave has been requested.
- Duration of the absence – number of school days being missed.
- The child's current and previous attendance and punctuality rate.
- Exceptional term time leave taken in previous academic years.
- Whether parent/carers have considered limiting the amount of time the child would be absent and have alternative care arrangements been considered.
- Impact on the child and any interventions, assessments or referrals being undertaken with the child or family e.g. family support, social care assessments, CAMHS, SEN.
- Whether it falls within any key stage national tests or during transition.
- Failure to complete a request for leave form before the leave has been taken will result in the leave automatically being marked as unauthorised leading to a potential fine from the Local Authority.

Valid reasons for authorised absence include:

- Illness; medical/dental/mental health appointments.
- Religious observance –as per Government directive, 1 day's leave per term may be authorised for any individual occasion of Religious Observance.
- If there is any other unavoidable cause for the pupil not to attend school, such as disruption to travel caused by an emergency, a lack of access arrangements, or because the school premises are closed.
- Attending alternative provision arranged by the school/local authority.

Sanctions

Our Federation 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 Executive Headteacher/Head of School (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 £80 within 21 days, or £160.

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

Strategies for promoting and rewarding excellent attendance

To ensure good attendance and punctuality is regularly promoted and remains high profile across school.

To achieve high levels of attendance and punctuality by rewarding good attendance and punctuality through:

1. **Weekly celebration assemblies** - Classes with the highest attendance and punctuality receive Attendance awards and praise.
2. **School newsletter** - Each month, the school newsletter is used to highlight the importance of good attendance and punctuality and publishes the best classes for these.
3. **Breakfast Club** - to support parents by opening the school at 8.00am and offering children a breakfast and structured play time, ensuring they are on time for school.
4. **Staff promoting good attendance** - it is important that teachers are regularly promoting good attendance with their classes. Good class attendance is celebrated weekly.
5. **End of term attendance rewards** - At the end of each term there is a special reward for pupils who have achieved attendance at 100%. The WO and Head of School organise and lead on the end of term attendance celebrations and share attendance data. Pupils are informed on a weekly basis of attendance/punctuality achievements. This develops healthy competition between year groups to improve attendance. It also engages the teacher in conversation with their classes about attendance.
6. **The school sends out letters/emails** to communicate with parents about poor attendance and punctuality. If attendance or punctuality does not improve following a letter, parents are invited in to school, to discuss the concerns with the WO and Head of School and plan for a way forward. If attendance or lateness does not improve following the meeting, then the family will be referred to the local authority / children's services who will offer support to parents. This service will make any subsequent decisions failing an improvement in a child's school attendance.

IMPORTANT: Child protection and safeguarding concerns must be acted on immediately, in line with the School Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

7. **First day calling of absence** - If a pupil is absent from school and the school has not received a phone call or other message from the parent or carer, the Administrative Officer (AO) will follow the first day calling procedures:
 - Establish a reason for every absence. No absence should be left on the system as an 'N' (no reason given) code;

- Phone parents' contact number(s); If applicable phone emergency contact number(s) to get an up-to-date contact number for the parent/carer and update the school system accordingly; if no response is received then follow up with sending a school comms message.
- When contact is made, the parent or carer is asked to provide a reason as to why the pupil is not in school. The absence reason is recorded next to the pupil's name on the first day absence.
- If no contact is still not made, the school will continue to make pursue all other means of liaising with parents either by phone, school comms or email.
- In the event of concerns regarding a child's absence, the school may undertake a home visit and/or other professionals as deemed necessary
- When no contact is made the absence will be recorded as 'O' (unauthorised) if no reason is given for absence.

Medical Appointments during the School Day

In the case of a child attending a dental, clinic or hospital appointment, typically we would expect any such appointment to be made after school or as close to the end of the school day, as is possible. However, we also understand that sometimes you will have no control about the appointment times you are offered. Therefore, if a child has a dental, clinic or hospital appointment, parents should let the school know well in advance.

Remember:

- Give the school as much advance notice as possible, you can email the school at attendance@hallfieldschool.org.uk or office@essendine.org.uk
- Please provide evidence of the appointment, this can be in the form of a letter, email or text reminder.
- If the appointment is made on the same day, please phone ahead to the school to let us know so that the class teacher can be notified.
- Please plan your journey, a short journey to a nearby clinic, dentist or hospital will only require a short travel time meaning children will miss as little time at school as possible.
- Ensure that as little time as possible is missed at school by bringing your child back straight after an appointment.

Please also be reminded that punctuality is regularly monitored. Should the school feel this is a concern; parents will be invited into school to discuss the concerns with and plan for a way forward.

Attendance monitoring

Monitoring attendance

The school will monitor attendance and absence data (including punctuality) half-termly, termly and yearly across the school and at an individual pupil, year group and cohort level.

Specific pupil information will be shared with the DfE on request.

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 benchmark its attendance data at whole school, year group and cohort level against local, regional, and national levels to identify areas of focus for improvement, and share this with the governing board.

Analysing attendance

The school will:

- Analyse attendance and absence data regularly to identify pupils, groups or cohorts that need additional support with their attendance;
- Identify pupils whose absences may be a cause for concern, especially those who demonstrate patterns of persistent or severe absence;
- Conduct thorough analysis of half-termly, termly, and full-year data to identify patterns and trends;
- Look at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence, and then develop strategies to address these patterns.

Using data to improve attendance

The school will:

- Develop targeted actions to address patterns of absence (of all severities) of individual pupils, groups or cohorts that it has identified via data analysis;
- Provide targeted support to the pupils it has identified whose absences may be a cause for concern, especially those who demonstrate patterns of persistent or severe absence, and their families;
- Provide regular attendance reports to, to facilitate discussions with pupils and families, and to the governing board and school leaders (including special educational needs co-ordinators, designated safeguarding leads and pupil premium leads);
- Use data to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place in order to modify them and inform future strategies;
- Share information and work collaboratively with other schools in the area, local authorities and other partners where a pupil's absence is at risk of becoming persistent or severe, including keeping them informed regarding specific pupils, where appropriate.

The people responsible for attendance matters in the North Westminster Federation are:

- Aaron Sumner, Executive Headteacher
- Claire Dunnet and Lisa Mafrica, Heads of Hallfield and Essendine Primary Schools
- Nabila El-Ahmadi and Nairuz Breich, Welfare Officers and Designated Safeguarding Leads for Hallfield and Essendine Primary School
- Early Help, Westminster City Council.