The Wilnecote School

Title of Policy:
Attendance Policy

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Approved at SLT	December 2022
Policy approval at Governing Body	December 2022
Policy review cycle	Annually
Policy review date	December 2023

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1. Introduction

For any student to meet their full potential academically, a high level of attendance is crucial. At The Wilnecote School, our aim is to ensure the highest possible levels of attendance for all, in order to enable every student to take full advantage of the educational opportunities, both academic and social, which are available to them.

In line with our ethos, The Wilnecote School is committed to providing the best possible education for our students, ensuring equal opportunities for all. Our intention is that each student feels valued and supported and our emphasis on building excellent working relationships with students is a key feature in the way in which we promote excellent attendance.

This policy outlines the various strategies we employ to promote outstanding attendance which include creating a pleasant working environment, engaging and motivating students, ensuring early intervention when attendance begins to raise concerns and instigating further intervention when attendance is poor, including working with external agencies where necessary. Furthermore, this policy outlines our procedures for monitoring attendance and addressing persistent non-attendance, focusing closely on that of disadvantaged students.

This policy runs alongside, and should be read in conjunction with, the CAT Attendance Strategy.

2. Legal requirements

This policy conforms to the legal requirements as detailed in The Education Act 1996, which states:

> 'The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him to receive efficient full-time education suitable:
>
> - to his age, ability and aptitude and
> - to any special educational needs he may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.'

For educational purposes the term 'parent' is used to include those that have parental responsibility and/or those that have the day to day care of the child.

The Act also contains the details of when an offence is committed if a child fails to attend school stating:

> 'If a child of compulsory school age who is a registered student at a school fails to attend regularly at the school, his parent is guilty of an offence.
>
> If in the circumstances mentioned [above] the parent knows that his child is failing to attend regularly at the school and fails without reasonable justification to cause him to do so, he is guilty of an offence.'

This policy also addresses and conforms to the requirements outlined in the later document entitled 'School attendance - Guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities'. (September 2018)

3. Roles and Responsibilities

Ensuring students attend school regularly is the responsibility of all members of our school community, including all staff, the students themselves and their parents/carers. At Wilnecote High School the specific responsibilities of staff are as follows:

All staff members are expected to lead by example, modelling excellent attendance and punctuality, thereby conveying a message about the importance we attach to this matter. In line with our 'Ensuring Excellence' document, all staff aim to create a positive atmosphere, developing excellent working relationships with students which are supportive and encouraging.

All teachers have high expectations of good attendance and punctuality which are praised and rewarded regularly. Non-attendance and lateness are both followed up rapidly through first day of absence automated text messages. Reasons for absence are established and recorded electronically on the school's computerised registration system (SIMS) to arrive late into school after the official register is closed, sign in with the Attendance Clerk, located in Student Services, before attending their lesson. After every third recorded late, a student will receive an after school detention and will spend time with pastoral staff focusing on ways to improve their attendance, including, where appropriate, setting short and longer term attendance targets.

For safeguarding and legal purposes, it is vital that the school has an accurate register of students which is completed promptly at the start of Period 1 and Period 4. Teaching staff

are expected to prioritise this task at these times. Teachers are also asked to complete electronic registers on SIMS for every lesson so that all students can be tracked from lesson to lesson.

All teachers regularly review their class registers for individual lessons and it is expected that class teachers report all attendance concerns to their Head of Department, the Attendance Clerk and the appropriate Head of House as soon as concerns arise.

The **SIMS Manager** maintains the school's Admission Register ensuring that students are on roll on their first day in school and that all leavers are taken off roll only when the school is certain of their destination. The SIMS Manager ensures that all relevant members of staff are informed of starters and leavers and that the official register, in terms of students on roll, is accurate.

Form Tutors are the members of staff who see their tutees every day of the week. As such, the Form Tutor is responsible, along with the Pastoral House Officers, for monitoring the attendance of all the students in their group. Form Tutors should address attendance and/or punctuality concerns directly with students and should liaise closely with the Pastoral House Officers in sharing their concerns.

Pastoral House Officers are the lead members of pastoral staff responsible for ensuring that attendance of Years 7-11 students in their House is monitored and that intervention takes place wherever necessary, when attendance is low or in decline. Pastoral House Officers are responsible for following up unauthorised absences and lates and for planning/actioning interventions, including liaising with parents, students and Anita Gray Education Services where necessary, to help address attendance concerns.

The Pastoral Team Leader will support the Pastoral House Officers in leading attendance intervention in their House. In line with the Attendance Strategy, the Pastoral Team Leader and the Pastoral House Officers will identify key students to mentor and will regularly meet with these students over an agreed period of time, to support them in improving their attendance and in maintaining that level of attendance in the future.

The **Attendance Officer** is responsible for monitoring whole school attendance on a daily basis, ensuring all registers are completed accurately and on time for all periods. The Attendance Officer also ensures that the parents of non-attenders are notified by text message on the first day and any subsequent days of absence and that reasons for absences are provided by parents after each period of absence.

In order to address lateness, the Attendance Officer and a nominated Pastoral House Officers, meets late students at Student Services every morning during the first ten minutes of the day to record their arrival time and reasons for absence. This enables conversations to take place and repeat offenders to be targeted more easily for intervention.

The Attendance Officer meets regularly with each Pastoral House Officer and the Pastoral Team Leader to plan intervention strategies for persistent non-attenders with a particular focus on disadvantaged students; these strategies may include parental meetings, home visits, involvement of key students in intervention groups or referral to Anita Gray Education Services for target setting or ultimately prosecution, where necessary.

The Attendance Officer ensures the official register is accurate and provides regular printouts of data to support the Pastoral Team and the Leadership Team in their analysis of

attendance trends.

Assistant Headteacher - The Deputy Headteacher maintains overall responsibility for attendance, ensuring compliance with the procedures outlined in this document. Non-compliance is followed up and rectified as appropriate. The Assistant Headteacher regularly analyses attendance patterns, ensuring that in circumstances where attendance continues to be a concern, Anita Gray Education Services are engaged and pre-legal targets are set. The Assistant Headteacher regularly analyses attendance data, keeping parents, students, school leaders and governors informed of issues relating to attendance and punctuality, either via newsletters, Assemblies, verbal feedback or written reports.

The Assistant Headteacher has direct line management responsibility for the Attendance Clerk and ensures that all absences are followed up rapidly, that registers are completed accurately every lesson and that the Pastoral House Officers are fully supported by the Attendance Clerk to enable them to meet their attendance responsibilities.

The Assistant Headteacher meets monthly with each Pastoral House Officer, to monitor attendance trends, discussing persistent non-attenders and agreeing intervention strategies, as required.

Headteacher – The Headteacher ensures that the school complies with the attendance procedures outlined in this policy. Regular meetings between the Headteacher and the Deputy Headteacher responsible for attendance ensure high standards of attendance and punctuality are expected and maintained.

Parents and Carers have a legal duty to ensure their child attends school or receives an appropriate education. The school regularly clarifies, via the website, Student Planners and the termly Warbler, the timings of the school day, as well as term dates and dates of planned closures, such as training days.

Parents/carers should inform the school by letter, telephone or in person when their child is absent from school, preferably in advance. A student's absence will be viewed as unauthorised until a satisfactory explanation is provided by parents/carers. In cases of persistent absence, parental support will be expected and where attendance levels do not improve, WAS will be engaged to set attendance targets, for which parents/carers will be held responsible.

All students are expected to attend school regularly and punctually. Students whose attendance is a concern will be supported initially by their form tutor and where necessary, their Pastoral House Officer, Pastoral Lead or the Assistant Headteacher and the Attendance Clerk.

Students are expected to take responsibility for catching up on all work missed due to absence.

4. Monitoring and Evaluation

The Assistant Headteacher responsible for attendance reports at least termly to Governors on attendance, comparing data with that of previous years for the same period and annually with national data. Form Tutors, Pastoral House Officer, Pastoral Lead, the Attendance Officer and the Assistant Headteacher, all monitor the attendance and punctuality of students under their remit.

5. Registration Procedures

The school uses a computerised system called SIMS to monitor and record absences. Morning registers are taken at the start of period 1 at 8.30am every day. Students who are late to period 1 should go to Student Services or Reception where the register will be amended to a late (L) if they arrive before 9.30am and to an unauthorised U code, which counts as absent, if they arrive after 9.30am. Students who arrive late after period 1 must sign in at Student Services or Reception before going to their lessons, where they will be marked as unauthorised (U), having arrived in school after registration has closed.

Afternoon registration takes place at the start of period 4. Students who are late to period 4 should go straight to their lesson where their teacher will amend the register to a late mark (L) or to a U mark if more than half an hour late.

Punctuality - The school wants all students to appreciate the importance of punctuality and as such, every Year 7-11 student who is late on three occasions receives an after school detention. For each subsequent 3 late marks, they receive a further detention. On each occasion a student is late, parents will receive a text to advise them of this and encourage them to discuss the punctuality with the students. Parents will be advised by letter and phone call when lateness becomes a persistent concern. During their detention, students will discuss the reasons for their lateness with a member of the pastoral team and support will be put in place as appropriate to help them with their timekeeping. All late detentions are logged and the parents of persistent offenders will be contacted to discuss the issues behind the lateness. Parents are informed that further lateness, after registers have closed and for which an acceptable reason is not forthcoming, will be recorded as an unauthorised absence and if ongoing, may result in prosecution.

The school emphasises its expectations regarding attendance and punctuality to parents/carers via newsletters and the school website. Patterns of absence and lateness are closely monitored to assess the impact on learning and where attendance concerns become critical, the school considers engaging outside agencies to ensure the students concerned have the best possible chance of achieving and continue to have access to an appropriate curriculum.

6. Authorised and Unauthorised Absences

The school decides how attendance and absence should be recorded, using national codes which comply with the regulations as outlined in 'School attendance - Guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities'. (September 2018)

The codes are:

- Present **/** (am) or **** (pm)
- Late arrival before registration is closed **L**
- Off-site educational activity **B**
- Dual registered at another educational establishment **D**
- The student is on an interview for a job or a place at another school **J**
- Participating in a supervised sporting activity **P**
- Participating in an approved educational trip or visit **V**

- Attending approved Work Experience **W**
- Leave of absence authorised by the school (exceptional circumstances only) **C**
- Excluded without alternative provision **E**
- Holiday authorised by the School (exceptional circumstances only) **H**
- Illness (not medical or dental appointments) **I**
- Medical or dental appointments **M**
- Religious observance **R**
- Study leave (this must be 'used sparingly') **S**
- Gypsy, Traveller and Roma absence **T**

Unauthorised absences are coded as follows:

- The reason for absence not yet provided **N**
- Unauthorised family holiday **G**
- Absent without authorisation/the School is dissatisfied with explanation **O**
- Arrived into school after registration closed **U**

Unauthorised absence includes the following circumstances:

- The student stays at home to mind the house or to look after siblings
- The student is shopping during school hours
- The student is absent for unexceptional special occasions (e.g. a birthday)
- The student is away from the school on a family holiday during term times without authorisation from the school

A full list of codes and definitions can be found in 'School attendance - Guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities'. (September 2018).

Leave of absence - The Government issued the following regulations in September 2016 *regarding 'Leave of Absence: The Education (Pupil Regulations) (England) Regulations 2006 as amended by Education (Pupil Regulations) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2016'.* These regulations stipulate the following:

- Headteachers shall not grant any Leave of Absence during term time unless they consider there are exceptional circumstances relating to the application.
- Parents do not have any entitlement to take their children on holiday during term time. Any application for leave must establish that there are exceptional circumstances and the Headteacher must be satisfied that the circumstances warrant the granting of leave.
- Headteachers will determine how many school days a child may be absent from school if the leave is granted.
- Applications for Leave of Absence must be made in advance and failure to do so will result in the absence being unauthorised.
- Applications for Leave of Absence which are made in advance and refused will result in the absence being unauthorised which may result in legal action against the parent, by Fixed Penalty Notice, if the child is absent from school during that period.
- If a Fixed Penalty Notice is issued and is not paid within the timeframe set out in that Notice, the matter will be referred to Staffordshire County Council's Legal

Services to consider instigating criminal prosecution proceedings under S444 of Education Act 1996.

- Each application for a Leave of Absence will be considered on a case by case basis and on its own merits.

7. Procedures and Follow up Absences

- The school uses an automated text message service to inform parents of their child's absence from school on the morning of that absence. The message requests that parents contact the school immediately to provide a reason for absence.
- Once a parent contacts school with a reason for absence this is logged on to the SIMS system, which authorises the absence. If the school is not satisfied with the reason provided for absence, an unauthorised absence is recorded.
- If a student is persistently (or intermittently) absent, the Pastoral House Officer will contact parents/carers to discuss these concerns. Medical evidence may be requested to support high levels of absence due to illness. Parents may be invited into school to meet with relevant members of the pastoral team to resolve any issues which are resulting in poor attendance. The Assistant Headteacher may be involved in cases considered to be of serious concern.
- If a student in Years 7-11 is persistently absent or late and the school's efforts to effect an improvement have been unsuccessful, the situation will be referred to Anita Gray Education Services during their consultation visits to the school, who will consider whether prosecution is necessary.
- Notes from parents/carers are forwarded to the Attendance Officer for inclusion on the computerised registers and students' records. Similarly, all telephone messages and emails regarding absence/lateness are logged on the computerised registers as part of the student's records.
- If a Year 7-11 student is absent for ten days without the school being able to ascertain the reason for that absence, the case will immediately be referred to the Children Missing from Education (CME) team by the Attendance Clerk, following liaison with Pastoral House Officer and Pastoral Team Leader.

8. Promoting Excellent Attendance

At The Wilnecote School, all staff work hard to create a positive working environment for our students in which they feel safe and supported. The school believes that students have the best opportunity to achieve if they feel happy and valued. This approach is at the heart of our pastoral care. In order for a student to meet their potential, they need to have full access to their lessons and the school aims to encourage students to have the highest levels of attendance through a range of strategies including the following:

- Providing a varied and flexible curriculum to meet the needs of all students, challenging the most-able and supporting the students who struggle with their learning.
- Regularly collecting and analysing attendance data by identifying patterns, correlating attendance with achievement and setting short, medium and longer term targets to support and inform policy/practice.

- Setting personal targets for students whose attendance is a cause for concern. The Form Tutor or Pastoral House Officer will monitor and review these targets. It may be that assistance with this matter is required from Anita Gray Education Services.
- Providing individually tailored re-integration programmes, when appropriate, for students who have been absent for an extended period.
- Reporting at least termly to the Local Governing Body on attendance matters.
- Liaising, when appropriate, with other agencies including the Educational Psychology Service, Children's Services, the Flexible Learning Team, Priority Families, CAMHS and Anita Gray Education Services when this may serve to support and assist students who are experiencing attendance difficulties.
- Making regular visits to feeder Primary Schools in order to ensure the smoothest possible Secondary transfer. Discussions with Primary School teachers will seek to identify those students who may require extra support during this process.
- Holding regular Celebration Assemblies and Celebration Brunches which reward/recognise students who have excellent attendance.
- Ensuring, in partnership with Anita Gray Education Services, that regular pre-legal meetings are held to support parents and students in raising their attendance levels in order to avoid prosecution.

Pre Legal Meetings

Pre-legal meetings take place for Year 7-11 students where, despite interventions, as outlined in the CAT Attendance Strategy, attendance has continued to decline. The pre-legal meetings are attended by the student, parents/carers, a representative from Anita Gray Education Services, the Pastoral House Officer. If no mitigating circumstances come to light in the meeting to explain the poor attendance, it is likely that an external legal target will be set for improvement.

Failure to meet the external legal target may lead to court proceedings.

9. Data Collection

Attendance data is collected, collated, analysed, published and used to focus and motivate teachers, students and parents/carers. It is used to show attendance improvements for individuals and groups of people as well as to identify trends.

Data is used to:

- Monitor absence or lateness of students so that appropriate action can be taken;
- Monitor patterns of absence and lateness across the school to identify trends in relation to:
    - Houses/Year groups
    - Individual students;

    This information is made available within school and to CAT and the Local Authority in order to plan effective responses and to set targets for improvement.

- Inform future schools of previous attendance levels for students in order for them to work effectively with their students from the beginning;
- Inform parents/carers of their own children's attendance details;

- Enable the school to publish data in relation to levels of absenteeism for Governors and parents;
- Assist the school in setting challenging but realistic attendance targets for the future.

10. Re-integration Strategies

Where students have been absent through sickness for any extended period of time, the school will discuss with parents/carers the most appropriate way to re-integrate their child back into school. For some students it may be appropriate to have work sent home to them to work on, with the understanding that appropriate support will be given by the school upon their return. In these circumstances, upon returning to the school, teachers will normally focus on work in the core subjects, identifying the priority needs of the student so as not to hinder future learning. Inclusion support will also be available, as appropriate.

For other students, a re-integration package may be necessary, whereby students return to school on a reduced timetable, building up to a full timetable, wherever possible, over the space of a fortnight.

In all of these circumstances, the focus is on supporting students to re-engage in their learning at the earliest possible opportunity.

11. Rewards and Sanctions

Good attendance is often closely linked to good behaviour. Effective approaches to promoting and maintaining good rates of attendance are characterised by good behaviour management systems with clear boundaries and a balance between sanctions and rewards. This policy should be seen alongside our whole school Behaviour and Discipline Policy.

Schools which are effective in promoting good attendance are also likely to have excellent special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) provision and high quality pastoral support. Students who have difficulties with school and feel unsupported are frequently those who do not attend.

Tackling attendance is the responsibility of all of our school community and is influenced by the whole curriculum and by teachers' awareness of students' response to it.

The following are examples of rewards, interventions and sanctions that the school use with regard to attendance:

Rewards - Certificates, Celebration Assemblies, Celebration brunches, class rewards, letters and postcards home, attendance prizes and VPs.

Interventions and Sanctions - Meetings with Pastoral House Officers and the Pastoral Team Leader, parental meetings with Assistant Headteacher/Anita Gray Education Services, detentions, attendance letters, late marks and attendance percentages recorded on permanent school records which may affect references for the future, involvement with the EWO service, potentially leading to prosecution.

Additionally, students who do not attend regularly invariably fall behind with work and may have difficulties catching up, often resulting in incomplete work and misbehaviour, which

carry their own sanctions.

12. The School Role – Admissions and Removals

Years 7-11

All schools are required to admit a student if it has a vacancy, even where that student has been excluded from another school. A decision as to whether the school can meet a particular student's needs, will be made, ideally within a week of having received relevant information from the student's previous school. When a child cannot be admitted, the school will give their reason for not doing so to the parents/carers as soon as possible after the decision has been made. The school will ensure that the LA Admissions Service is aware of all decisions.

Students should be taken off roll after an unexplained absence of six weeks, despite the school having made every reasonable effort to make contact or when the school is aware of a student's move to another school or locality. A student attending the school must be on the school roll. There cannot be any temporary placements. Students are admitted formally and if the placement breaks down, the usual exclusion procedures will be followed or alternative provision sought in liaison with the parents and the LA. A child may attend an off-site unit part-time and in these circumstances will be retained on the school roll.

13. Home Education

In line with best practice and DfE guidance, the school does not seek to persuade parents to educate their children at home as a way of avoiding an exclusion or because of poor attendance. The school does understand though that home education is a parental choice and that there is no requirement for parents to obtain the school's or the Local Authority's agreement to educate their child at home. As such, on receipt of written notification to home educate, the school will inform the LA that the pupil is to be deleted from the admission register.

14. Concluding Points

All of our attendance procedures are intended to ensure that:

- we have a consistent recording system of student attendance which enables us to meet legal requirements
- the security and safety of our students is a priority
- trends of lateness and absenteeism are identified and addressed

Our Attendance Policy is part of a wider set of policies and documents all aimed at ensuring that all of our students receive a broad, balanced education in a safe, caring environment. This ethos is reflected in the following related documents:

- Behaviour and Discipline Policy (including Anti–Bullying Policy)

- Safeguarding Policy
- Child Protection Policy
- Equal Opportunities Policy
- Ensuring Excellence document

- CAT Exclusions Policy
- CAT Attendance Strategy

This policy will be reviewed biennially and earlier if required.

Attendance Targets for 2020/2021 *(these have not been updated for 2021/22 in light of the impact of COVID on school attendance nationally)*

Attendance Target – 95%

National Average for 2018-19 – 94.5%

Persistent Absence Target – Under 13.9%

National Average for 2018-19 - 13.9%

Appendix re: Covid-19

In response to the COVID 19 pandemic,

we follow Government guidance in this

respect. This is regularly updated via

the GOV website.