Attendance Policy

2026-2027

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Designated Senior Leader for Attendance	Mrs Doolin
Reviewing Committee	Full Governing Board (FGB)
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Using this policy

This policy sets out Westacre Middle School's expectations and procedures. Detailed operational guidance, individual case records and local authority referral forms are maintained separately so that this policy remains clear and accessible.

1. Purpose and principles

Westacre Middle School believes that regular attendance is essential to pupils' learning, wellbeing, safeguarding and sense of belonging. Pupils are most likely to flourish when school, families and partner agencies work together to understand and remove barriers to attendance.

The school will maintain high expectations while responding to individual circumstances with empathy, consistency and appropriate support. Formal intervention will be considered where support has not secured improvement, is not engaged with, or is not appropriate.

1.1 Aims

- create a calm, safe, welcoming and inclusive school where pupils want to attend and are ready to learn;
- promote strong attendance and punctuality as a shared responsibility;
- ensure accurate registration and prompt follow-up of absence;
- identify emerging concerns early, including patterns affecting vulnerable groups;
- listen to pupils and families and provide proportionate, individualised support;
- reduce persistent and severe absence;
- integrate attendance with safeguarding, SEND, medical and pastoral practice; and
- use legal intervention fairly and only when support has not worked, has not been engaged with, or is unsuitable.

1.2 Key definitions

Term	Meaning
Persistent absence	A pupil misses 10% or more of possible sessions, whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised.
Severe absence	A pupil misses 50% or more of possible sessions.
Authorised absence	The school has granted leave or accepted a statutory reason for absence.
Unauthorised absence	The school has not granted leave and no statutory reason applies.
Parent	Any person who has parental responsibility or who has day-to-day care of the pupil for attendance law purposes.

2. Legal and statutory framework

This policy reflects the legal duties placed on schools and parents and the Department for Education's statutory guidance. It should be read alongside the school's safeguarding, SEND, behaviour, medical needs and data protection policies.

2.1 Principal legislation and guidance

- Education Act 1996, including parents' duty to secure suitable education and offences relating to irregular attendance;
- Education Act 2002 and Children Acts 1989 and 2004;
- Equality Act 2010;
- School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024;
- Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007, as amended;
- DfE Working Together to Improve School Attendance, statutory guidance updated July 2026;
- Keeping Children Safe in Education and Working Together to Safeguard Children;

- Children Missing Education statutory guidance;
- SEND Code of Practice: 0–25 years; and
- DfE guidance on mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance.

Support first
The school will work with pupils and families to understand barriers and agree support. This does not remove parents' legal responsibility to ensure regular attendance, nor prevent timely formal action where it is necessary and proportionate.

2.2 Equality and inclusion

Attendance procedures will be applied fairly and with due regard to the Equality Act 2010. The school will consider reasonable adjustments where disability, SEND, medical conditions, mental health needs or other protected characteristics affect attendance. Adjustments will support access to education and will be reviewed regularly; they will not create a blanket expectation of reduced attendance.

3. Roles and responsibilities

3.1 Governing Board

- set and champion a clear attendance ethos;
- hold leaders to account for implementation and impact;
- review attendance information, including vulnerable groups, persistent absence and severe absence;
- ensure staff have appropriate training and resources; and
- approve and review this policy at least annually.

3.2 Headteacher

- ensure the policy is implemented consistently;
- ensure statutory register, data-sharing and safeguarding duties are met;
- grant or refuse leave of absence in accordance with regulations;
- authorise requests to the local authority for legal intervention where appropriate; and
- report attendance priorities and impact to governors.

3.3 Designated Senior Leader for Attendance

- lead the school's strategic approach to attendance;
- analyse attendance and absence data and identify priorities;
- coordinate support for pupils and families;
- ensure attendance procedures are integrated with safeguarding and inclusion;
- liaise with Worcestershire County Council and partner agencies, including participation in Targeting Support Meetings where appropriate;
- quality-assure coding, records and casework; and
- provide staff training and governor reports.

Attendance contacts

Senior Attendance Champion: Mrs Catherine Doolin - 01905 772795 - office@westacre.worcs.sch.uk

Day-to-day attendance enquiries and absence reporting: School Office - 01905 772795 - office@westacre.worcs.sch.uk. For more detailed attendance support, parents and pupils may contact the School Office and ask for Mrs Catherine Doolin or Mrs Carly Hunt.

3.4 Attendance and office staff

- maintain accurate registers and contact details;
- carry out first-day absence procedures;
- record communication and apply codes accurately;
- monitor punctuality and emerging patterns; and

- refer concerns promptly to the Attendance Lead or DSL.

3.5 Designated Safeguarding Lead and SENDCo

The DSL will consider attendance alongside all available safeguarding information and coordinate referrals or Children Missing Education procedures where required. The SENDCo will help identify SEND-related barriers, advise on reasonable adjustments and ensure attendance support is aligned with the graduated approach and relevant plans.

3.6 Teaching and pastoral staff

- complete registers accurately and promptly;
- welcome pupils positively and promote belonging;
- notice and report patterns or changes;
- avoid comments or practices that stigmatise absence;
- contribute to individual support, reintegration and review; and
- raise safeguarding concerns without delay.

3.7 Parents and carers

- ensure their child attends every session when required and arrives on time;
- contact the school before 8.40 a.m. on each day of absence unless otherwise agreed;
- provide an accurate reason for absence and requested evidence where reasonable;
- keep contact details up to date;
- avoid arranging appointments and holidays during school time wherever possible; and
- engage with meetings, plans and support intended to improve attendance.

3.8 Pupils

- attend regularly and arrive on time;
- take increasing responsibility for routines and readiness to learn;
- speak to a trusted adult about difficulties; and
- contribute honestly to attendance plans and reviews.

4. The school day and attendance register

Event	Time
School opens	8.15 a.m.
Morning register opens	8.25 a.m.
Morning register closes	8.45 a.m.
Afternoon register	1.05 p.m.
End of school day	2.55 p.m.

Pupils should arrive in sufficient time to be in class and ready when the register is taken. A pupil arriving after the register opens but before it closes will be recorded as late (L). A pupil arriving after the register has closed without an authorised reason will be recorded as unauthorised late (U).

4.1 Taking the register

- The attendance register will be kept electronically.
- A mark will be entered for every pupil on roll at the start of the morning session and once during the afternoon session. The register will be taken at the same time for all registered pupils in each session.
- Only national attendance and absence codes will be used.
- Changes will preserve the original entry, amended entry, reason, date and person making the amendment.
- Register data will be retained for the statutory period and shared as required by law.

4.2 Approved educational activity

A pupil will be recorded as attending an approved educational activity only where the activity is educational, approved by the school, supervised as required and the school has confirmed that the pupil is present. The school will have arrangements to receive timely attendance information from alternative provision or off-site providers and will follow up any unexplained absence immediately.

5. Reporting and responding to absence

5.1 Parent notification

Parents must telephone the school office or use the school's published attendance email address before 8.40 a.m. on the first day of absence. Unless a different arrangement has been agreed, parents should update the school on each subsequent day. The reason must be sufficiently clear for the school to decide the appropriate code.

5.2 First-day response

1. Where no reason has been received, the school will attempt to contact parents and, where necessary, other emergency contacts.
2. The school will establish the reason for absence, expected return date and whether support is needed.
3. Attendance and safeguarding information will be considered together.
4. Where contact cannot be made or concerns exist, the matter will be escalated to the Attendance Lead and/or DSL.
5. Further action may include a home visit, contact with professionals, a welfare check request, local authority advice or a safeguarding referral.

5.3 Evidence

The school will not routinely request medical evidence for every illness. Evidence may be requested where there are repeated or extended absences, where the reason is unclear, or where support and coding decisions require additional information. Evidence may include an appointment card, prescription information or confirmation from a relevant professional. Each case will be considered individually and sensitively.

5.4 Returning to school

Pupils will be welcomed back without blame. Where needed, the school will agree practical reintegration arrangements, identify missed learning that must be prioritised and review any support plan. The response will be proportionate to the pupil's needs and length or pattern of absence.

6. Authorised and unauthorised absence

6.1 Illness and medical appointments

Absence may be authorised where a pupil is unable to attend because of illness. Routine medical and dental appointments should be arranged outside school hours whenever possible. Where this is not possible, pupils should attend before and/or after the appointment and provide appointment information when requested.

6.2 Leave of absence

The Headteacher may grant leave only in the specific circumstances permitted by the 2024 Regulations. Requests must be made in advance using the school's procedure. Each request will be considered individually; previous decisions do not create a precedent.

- Term-time holidays will not be authorised.
- Absence taken without permission will be unauthorised.
- The school may request a penalty notice where the national threshold and Worcestershire requirements are met.
- Where exceptional circumstances are claimed, parents should provide relevant information at the time of application.

6.3 Religious observance

Absence will be authorised for a day set apart exclusively for religious observance by the relevant religious body. Additional days may be considered only where another permitted leave category applies.

6.4 Traveller pupils

Authorised occupational travel will be recorded using code T only where statutory conditions are met. The school will work with the family and local authority to maintain continuity of education and accurate registration.

6.5 Other permitted circumstances

The school will apply the appropriate national code for approved performances or regulated employment, interviews, study leave where applicable, suspension or permanent exclusion, inability to attend because of unavoidable circumstances, and other statutory categories. Full code descriptions are included in Appendix 1.

6.6 Unauthorised absence

- term-time holidays or leave taken without permission;
- absence where no acceptable reason has been established;
- absence where the school is not satisfied that a statutory reason applies; and
- arrival after the register has closed without an authorised reason.

7. Promoting attendance and punctuality

Strong attendance is built through effective teaching, trusted relationships, clear communication and a sense of belonging. The school will make attendance visible as a whole-school priority without creating anxiety or unfairness for pupils whose absence is linked to illness, disability or significant adversity.

7.1 Universal provision

- a welcoming start to the day and consistent routines;
- high-quality teaching and appropriate curriculum pathways;
- safe, respectful relationships and effective anti-bullying practice;
- early pastoral and SEND support;
- regular communication with families;
- pupil voice about barriers and belonging; and
- staff training on attendance, safeguarding and inclusive practice.

7.2 Recognition

Recognition will focus on positive habits, improvement, punctuality, resilience and engagement rather than relying solely on 100% attendance awards. Recognition will be inclusive, proportionate and will not disadvantage pupils for unavoidable or protected absence.

7.3 Communication with families

The school will explain attendance expectations, the impact of absence and available support in clear, respectful language. Attendance information may be shared through reports, letters, meetings and school communications. Where attendance declines, communication will be timely, specific and solution-focused.

8. Supporting pupils and removing barriers

8.1 Early support

The school will respond to patterns and changes rather than waiting for a fixed percentage. Staff will seek to understand what is happening, what is within the family's control, what the school can change and whether other services should contribute.

- conversation with the pupil and parent;
- named adult check-ins or mentoring;

- adapted arrival, transition or reintegration arrangements;
- pastoral, SEND or mental health support;
- support with bullying, friendship or safety concerns;
- curriculum or reasonable adjustments;
- help to access transport, uniform, food or wider family support where available;
- an Attendance Support Plan with clear actions and review dates; and
- Early Help or multi-agency involvement.

8.2 Pupils with SEND, disability or medical needs

Support will be coordinated with the SENDCo and relevant professionals. The school will consider reasonable adjustments, medical advice, individual healthcare plans, risk assessments and the graduated approach. Where a pupil cannot attend because of health needs, the school will work with the local authority so that statutory education duties are considered promptly. Part-time timetables will be used only in exceptional circumstances, for the shortest necessary period, with parental agreement, safeguarding oversight, a clear plan to increase attendance and regular review. Where the school has reasonable grounds to believe that a pupil will miss 15 school days consecutively or cumulatively during the school year because of illness, the school will make the required sickness return to Worcestershire County Council and work with the local authority to consider appropriate educational provision.

8.3 Mental health and emotionally based school avoidance

Anxiety or emotionally based barriers will be treated as genuine difficulties requiring careful assessment and support. The school will listen to the pupil, identify triggers and protective factors, agree manageable steps and maintain connection with learning and trusted adults. The aim will be a supported return to full-time attendance, informed by professional advice where appropriate.

8.3.1 Remote education

Remote education will not normally be used as an alternative to regular school attendance. Where it is appropriate for an absent pupil, it will be used only as a last resort and as part of a temporary support or reintegration plan, with the clear aim of returning the pupil to regular face-to-face education.

8.4 Persistent absence

When a pupil is at risk of, or becomes, persistently absent, the Attendance Lead will coordinate targeted action. This will normally include a barrier analysis, review of existing support, an agreed plan, a named lead professional, frequent monitoring and escalation where improvement is not secured.

8.5 Severe absence

Severe absence is a safeguarding and educational priority. The school will intensify support, work jointly with the local authority and relevant partners, and ensure that senior leaders and the DSL maintain oversight. Where voluntary support is insufficient or not engaged with, formal measures will be considered without unnecessary delay.

9. Monitoring, intervention and legal action

9.1 Monitoring and analysis

- daily review of unexplained absence and safeguarding concerns;
- regular monitoring of individual pupils, cohorts and vulnerable groups, including disadvantaged pupils, pupils with SEND, pupils with a social worker or youth justice worker, looked-after children, young carers and pupils experiencing mental or physical health difficulties;
- analysis of persistent absence, severe absence, punctuality, days and sessions missed, reasons and repeat patterns;
- comparison over time and, where available, with local and national data;
- evaluation of support and interventions; and
- regular reporting to senior leaders and governors.

Attendance percentages will not be considered in isolation. Leaders will also examine context, pattern, duration, safeguarding information, engagement with support and whether school practices may be creating barriers.

9.2 Graduated response

Stage	Typical response
Universal	Clear expectations, inclusive provision, accurate registration and positive communication.
Emerging concern	Early conversation, barrier identification, practical support and closer monitoring.
Targeted support	Formal Attendance Support Plan, named lead, review meetings and partner-agency involvement.
Formalisation	Attendance contract or notice to improve where support needs clearer expectations and accountability.
Legal intervention	Penalty notice, prosecution or other statutory action considered with Worcestershire County Council when support has failed, is not engaged with, or is inappropriate.

9.3 Attendance contracts and notices to improve

An attendance contract is a voluntary written agreement setting out actions for the parent, pupil, school and other services. A notice to improve may be issued as a final opportunity to engage with support before a penalty notice is considered, where required by the national framework. The school will keep clear records of offers, actions, reviews and outcomes.

9.4 Penalty notices

The national threshold is 10 sessions of unauthorised absence within a rolling period of 10 school weeks. The school will consider whether a penalty notice is appropriate in the individual case and will follow Worcestershire County Council's Code of Conduct. A first penalty notice is £160 per parent, per child, reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days. A second notice within three years is £160 with no reduced rate. A third offence within three years will not normally result in a further notice and other legal action will be considered.

Meeting the threshold does not automatically require a penalty notice. The school and local authority will consider support, engagement, the reason and pattern of absence, and whether another intervention is more appropriate. For unauthorised holiday absence, a notice to improve may not be appropriate.

9.5 Other legal interventions

Where appropriate, the local authority may consider prosecution under section 444 of the Education Act 1996, an Education Supervision Order, a Parenting Order or other statutory action. The school will provide accurate evidence and continue to support the pupil's education and welfare throughout any process.

10. Safeguarding, children missing education and data protection

10.1 Safeguarding

Absence may indicate abuse, neglect, exploitation, mental ill-health, family crisis or other risk. Staff must follow the safeguarding policy whenever attendance information causes concern. The school will make prompt enquiries, share information lawfully and escalate risk to the DSL. Attendance action will never replace a safeguarding response.

10.2 Children Missing Education

Where a pupil's whereabouts are unknown, the family appears to have moved, or a pupil may not be receiving suitable education, the school will follow Worcestershire Children Missing Education procedures and the current statutory guidance. A pupil will not be removed from the admission register unless a lawful ground applies and the required enquiries, notifications and joint working have been completed.

10.3 Pupils with a social worker or youth justice worker

The school will inform the relevant social worker or youth justice worker of unexplained absence and significant patterns in accordance with statutory guidance and local arrangements. Attendance support will be aligned with the pupil's wider plan.

10.4 Data protection and information sharing

Attendance information is personal data and will be processed in accordance with UK GDPR, the Data Protection Act 2018 and the school's privacy notices. Information will be shared where there is a lawful basis, including statutory reporting, safeguarding, local authority functions and coordinated support. Records will be accurate, relevant, secure and retained for the required period.

11. Monitoring and review

The Designated Senior Leader for Attendance will review implementation throughout the year. The Governing Board will receive regular information about whole-school attendance, persistent and severe absence, punctuality, vulnerable groups, intervention impact and statutory compliance.

This policy will be reviewed annually and sooner where legislation, DfE guidance, local authority procedures or school needs change. The school will seek the views of pupils and parents when reviewing attendance arrangements where appropriate. Following approval, the policy will be published on the school website, shared with staff, provided or signposted to parents when pupils join the school, and parents will be reminded of it at the beginning of each academic year and whenever it is updated.

11.1 Related school policies

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- SEND Policy and Accessibility Plan
- Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions Policy
- Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy
- Children Missing Education procedures
- Data Protection Policy and privacy notices
- Alternative Provision procedures

Appendix 1: National attendance and absence codes

The school will use the current national codes and the detailed definitions in DfE statutory guidance. This summary supports day-to-day understanding but does not replace the full statutory descriptions and conditions.

Code	Description	Summary
/ or \	Present	Present at the school for the session.
L	Late before register closes	Present but arrived after the register opened.
B	Off-site educational activity	Approved educational activity away from the school site; statutory conditions apply.
K	Education arranged by the local authority	Attending education arranged by the local authority.
P	Sporting activity	Approved sporting activity; statutory supervision conditions apply.
V	Educational visit or trip	Attending an approved educational visit or trip.
W	Work experience	Attending approved work experience.
C1	Regulated performance or employment abroad	Leave granted for a regulated performance or employment abroad.
C2	Part-time timetable	Temporary absence from a session under an agreed part-time timetable in exceptional circumstances.
D	Dual registered	Expected to attend another registered school.
E	Suspended or permanently excluded	Unable to attend because of suspension or permanent exclusion and no alternative provision is required for that session.
I	Illness	Unable to attend because of illness, including mental or physical ill health.
J1	Interview	Attending an interview for employment or admission to another educational institution.
M	Medical or dental appointment	Attending an appointment that could not reasonably be arranged outside school time.
R	Religious observance	Day exclusively set apart for religious observance by the relevant religious body.
S	Study leave	Study leave granted for a public examination, where applicable.
T	Parent travelling for occupational purposes	Authorised absence meeting the statutory conditions for a mobile child.
X	Not required to attend	Non-compulsory school-age pupil not required to attend for the session.
Q	Lack of access arrangements	Unable to attend because the local authority has not made necessary access arrangements.
Y1	Transport normally provided not available	Unable to attend because transport normally provided is unavailable.
Y2	Widespread disruption to travel	Unable to attend because of widespread travel disruption.
Y3	Part of school premises closed	Unable to attend because the relevant part of the site is closed.

Code	Description	Summary
Y4	Whole school unexpectedly closed	Unable to attend because the school is unexpectedly closed.
Y5	Criminal justice detention	Unable to attend because detained by police or under a court order.
Y6	Public health guidance or law	Unable to attend because attendance would breach public health guidance or law.
Y7	Other unavoidable cause	Unable to attend because of an unavoidable cause not covered by another code.
G	Holiday not granted	Term-time holiday taken without permission.
N	Reason not yet established	Temporary code while the school completes enquiries; replaced promptly.
O	Unauthorised absence	Absent without leave and no other code is appropriate.
U	Late after register closes	Arrived after the register closed without an authorised reason.
Z	Prospective pupil	Expected to join the school in future but not yet on roll for attendance purposes.
#	Planned whole-school closure	Session is not a possible attendance session because of planned closure.

Appendix 2: Westacre attendance support pathway

Stage	When used	School response	Intended outcome
1. Universal	All pupils	Welcoming environment; strong teaching; clear routines; accurate registers; positive communication; access to pastoral and SEND support.	Regular attendance and punctuality.
2. Emerging concern	Pattern changes, repeated lateness, rising absence or contextual concern	Contact family; listen to pupil; identify barriers; agree practical actions; monitor closely; consider pastoral/SEND adjustments.	Concern is resolved before absence becomes entrenched.
3. Targeted support	Attendance continues to decline or pupil is at risk of persistent absence	Attendance Support Plan; named lead; regular reviews; reasonable adjustments; Early Help or specialist involvement where appropriate.	Sustained improvement and reduced barriers.
4. Intensive support	Persistent or severe absence, complex barriers or limited improvement	Senior and DSL oversight; multi-agency plan; frequent contact; formal attendance contract or notice to improve where appropriate.	Coordinated improvement plan with clear accountability.
5. Legal intervention	Support has not worked, has not been engaged with, or is inappropriate	Referral to Worcestershire County Council; consider penalty notice, prosecution or other statutory action; continue welfare and education support.	Regular attendance secured and legal duties met.

Professional judgement
Percentages are indicators, not automatic triggers. The school may move to a higher or lower stage according to safeguarding risk, pattern, barriers, previous support and the urgency of the case.

Appendix 3: Summary of responsibilities

Role	Core responsibility
Governing Board	Strategic oversight, challenge, resources, policy approval and monitoring.
Headteacher	Accountability for implementation, leave decisions and legal referrals.
Attendance Lead	Strategy, data analysis, case coordination, quality assurance and partnership work.
DSL	Safeguarding assessment, referrals and CME oversight.
SENDCo	SEND-related barriers, graduated response and reasonable adjustments.
Office/attendance staff	Registers, first-day response, coding, records and routine communication.
Teachers and pastoral staff	Accurate registers, belonging, early identification and agreed support.
Parents/carers	Regular attendance, punctuality, prompt reporting and engagement with support.
Pupils	Attend, arrive on time, engage and share barriers with trusted adults.
Local authority and partners	Advice, targeted support, CME functions and legal intervention where appropriate.

Approved by the Full Governing Board: _____ Date: _____