



West Somerset Education Partnership

Attendance Policy

Updated October 2017

The following policy has been agreed by **all** schools in West Somerset in order to improve the overall attendance percentage to above 96% and ensure there is consistent approach in all West Somerset schools.

Rationale:

The West Somerset Education Partnership (WSEP) is committed to encouraging all pupils to attend school on a regular basis. We consider satisfactory attendance at school to be defined as above 95% and want to support pupils to attend for 100% of their schooling. Regular attendance is essential to ensure that pupils' learning is not seriously interrupted and their level of attainment affected. Poor or irregular attendance places children at risk and in some cases can result in them being drawn into patterns of anti-social behaviour.

Aims and Objectives:

- The WSEP aims to establish, maintain and improve the attendance of all pupils. This will allow each pupil to have continuity of learning and therefore the opportunity to fulfil his or her potential.
- The WSEP ensures that all absences are followed up swiftly and consistently, in accordance with guidelines.
- It is the responsibility of each of the schools in the WSEP to encourage attendance and take seriously any problems that may lead to non-attendance. We will support any pupils with difficulties in order that they can sustain their attendance. In such circumstances, the WSEP will work closely with the Education Attendance Service and other outside agencies.
- Very good attendance and improved attendance are recognised and rewarded termly.
- The WSEP sets annual targets together with the Educational Welfare Officer to reflect its commitment to regular attendance of all pupils. **The agreed Whole-WSEP Attendance Target for the 2017-2018 Academic Year is greater than 96%.**

Responsibilities of Staff:

- It is the Headteacher's role to improve and maintain good attendance within their own school.
- Staff will support parents and carers to ensure regular and punctual attendance by dealing with any attendance issues in a sensitive way.
- There will be a named member of the leadership team responsible for general attendance policy and procedure, plus an oversight of the production of attendance returns. They will ensure that School Governors are made aware of information and issues relevant to attendance via the Headteacher's Report to their school's governors.
- The Headteacher is responsible for maintaining a high level of attendance in their school and for raising awareness through sharing information with pastoral colleagues, assemblies, target setting, regular meetings with the Education Welfare Officer and parental contact and attendance clinics for pupil and parents.
- Teachers are responsible for the day to day administration including the accurate registration of morning and afternoon attendance, the collection of attendance notes. Schools will challenge any absences that may require follow-up work
- Senior members of staff will also help with monitoring and challenging pupils about attendance. This will include communication with parents and carers about a child's attendance and regular meetings with teachers.
- Each school within the WSEP will have staff that support the Headteacher in ensuring attendance is monitored effectively. This could include reception staff and other members of the administration team responsible for tasks such as SIMs support and writing letters.

Parental Responsibilities:

- It is the legal responsibility of the parent/carer to ensure that their child attends school.
- Parents should ensure that children arrive at school on time and are ready for the school day.
- If there is some unavoidable reason for a child's absence then parents are asked to inform the school either by telephone before the start of lesson one on the first and then any subsequent day of illness absence. This could also be in the form of a letter in advance so that the reason for non-attendance can be noted in the registers. If a parent/carer cannot or doesn't supply a note or specific explanation for any illness absence, the school will classify it as unauthorised.
- Medical appointments are expected to be made out of school hours or during school holidays; if the appointment is on a school day during the morning, then your child is expected to attend afternoon school.
- When your child is unwell, it can be hard deciding whether to keep them off school. These simple guidelines should help, please see **NHS Choices – is my child too ill for school?** www.nhs.uk/Livewell/Yourchildatschool/Pages/Illness
- Obviously genuine reasons for illness absence and medical appointments will be taken into account. However, we may request that you provide medical evidence. A GP letter is not

necessary to support illness absences, medical verification could include an appointment card, prescription, hospital letter or even a pharmacy note.

- Our aspiration is 100% attendance for all children. Normally, we will write to those parents whose child's attendance falls below 95% regardless of whether absence is due to holiday, illness or any other reason and whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised.
- Parents and carers should work in partnership with their school to help their child/children understand the importance of attending school regularly. (
- Parents and carers should work in partnership with their school and outside agencies to resolve issues relating to non-attendance.
- Parents should keep their school fully informed with regards to medical issues that prevent good attendance and support the school in ensuring that work is completed at home, or a flexible timetable is maintained, whenever appropriate.
- In cases of planned term time absence requests, parents and carers should apply directly to the Headteacher of their WSEP school through the completion of an Absence Request Form at least 6 weeks before the absence. (See Appendix 2)

Governor Responsibilities:

- The Governing Body of each school has a responsibility to have an overview of their school's attendance and to monitor this via the Headteacher's Report to Governors each term.
- Governors are to scrutinize attendance figures particularly for vulnerable groups.
- In conjunction with the headteacher, determine targets and the impact of the attendance policies and approaches regularly.

Attendance Policy Procedure

Attendance registers are legal documents which may be required as evidence in court under the regulations governing pupil registration. Teachers are required to take an attendance register prior to morning and afternoon sessions, using the appropriate attendance codes that indicate whether each pupil is 'present', 'present at an approved educational activity', or 'absent'. (See Appendix 2)

Teachers and office staff are responsible for collecting absence information provided by parents via letter, e-mail or telephone message. If a pupil is absent for one day, without explanation from a parent or carer, the Administration Team is expected to contact home. The WSEP actively discourages holidays taken during term time. Parents should apply directly to the Headteacher of their child's school through the completion of an Absence Request Form (Appendix 1). Parents and carers are also discouraged from taking their child out of school for medical appointments.

Term-time Leave Requests, including holidays

Parents/carers have no entitlement to take their child out of school during term-time. Any requests for term-time leave, up to a maximum of 10 school sessions (one school day = 2 sessions AM/PM) in an academic year, must satisfy the following conditions before they will be considered by the Head:

- Exceptional circumstances apply – e.g. forces personnel; significant year round seasonal employment restrictions (a letter from the employer stating to this effect must be provided); unforeseen family circumstances etc. Financial reasons are NOT an exceptional circumstance.
- Requested in advance of leaving (at the earliest possible opportunity and at least two weeks' notice).
- A definite return date provided. Any child that fails to return on the expected date will be marked as having an O coded unauthorised absence. If a child has 10 sessions of absence from school in a 12 school week period. We may request involvement from the Education Welfare Officer. This may be A Warning Penalty Notice which may result in a Penalty fine being given. We may refer to the Education Welfare Officer and you may be invited to a meeting to discuss and address the attendance concerns.

The coding of any absence from school, for whatever reason(s) given, is ultimately at the sole discretion of the headteacher. Therefore the school may request sight of relevant evidence to support an absence of any length of time. **Headteachers will liaise over decisions when there are siblings in other WSEP schools.**

If a request has been authorised it will be coded as C/H on the child's attendance report, if the request is unauthorised, it will be coded as G on the child's attendance report. 10 sessions (5 days) of G coded absence may result in the issue of a Penalty Notice; however the child's previous attendance will be taken into consideration and the Headteacher may choose to monitor the child's attendance rather than request a Penalty Notice. During this monitoring period, if the child has any further unauthorised absence a Penalty Notice will be issued.).

It is the responsibility of the parent/carer to obtain the relevant evidence to support any absence from school.

Further guidance regarding term-time leave and details of the penalty notice process may be obtained from the Education Welfare Officer responsible to the WSEP (The Education Welfare Officers Contact details are available from each school).

If a member of staff is suspicious of a pupil's absence, the teacher and headteacher should be informed. Appropriate action should be taken by the teacher and/or headteacher. When a pupil returns from a long term absence, the school puts in place a variety of strategies to help in this reintegration process. These might include:

- A reduced, or flexible timetable
- Pastoral mentoring support
- Peer support
- Emotional Intelligence support
- Counselling
- Specific subject support, or catch-up sessions
- Tailored Education Welfare Officer support

All pupils who have been absent for a significant period of time are treated sensitively and given an individual plan allowing them to access the curriculum once again. A reduced timetable and alternative curriculum provision, monitoring by teachers and mentoring by staff or pupils are put in place in order to support and benefit the individual pupil.

Unauthorised absence is any absence that has not been agreed by the school or has not had a satisfactory explanation from parents or carers (the code O should be used in these cases).

An unauthorised absence will result in contact with home and the pupil's attendance will be monitored by the headteacher and the Education Welfare Officer. Lateness to school and to lessons is recorded by teaching staff and is monitored as part of our pastoral support system.

Lateness: Any pupil arriving late must report to Reception to sign in. A late mark (L) will be recorded for any pupil who arrives 10 minutes after the register has closed. Any pupil that arrives after this time but before morning break will be coded as 'Late after the registers have closed' (U); 10 U codes within a 12 week period will incur a WPN. If a pupil arrives after morning break they will be recorded as being absent for the whole session.

If a Middle School pupil accumulates 30 minutes of late marks, a letter will be sent home notifying parents or guardians of this and the possible sanctions for future lateness. If 60 minutes is accrued then the pupil will receive an after school detention. In First Schools lateness is normally the fault of the parent and this needs to be taken up with them directly and challenged by the school.

Pupils who need to leave the school site during the day must be collected by a parent or carer and sign out with the administration staff. Notification from parents is required in order for this to occur.

Any **unexplained absence** from lessons should be followed up by the relevant member of staff at the school. Members of the leadership and pastoral teams may be called upon to locate a pupil. Parents or carers will be contacted, should a pupil go off the school site without permission. We will have to inform the police to ensure our safeguarding duty is fulfilled. This contact is made by the pastoral or office team supported by a headteacher or deputy headteacher.

Persistent absence is set by the government at below 90%. Absence below this will result in school procedures being adopted. This will include; monitoring through the teacher, a senior member of staff and headteacher. The headteacher will send Attendance Letters to families whose children's attendance is of concern and attendance 'surgery' meetings will be held, to try and come to a recorded agreement regarding action and support to improve attendance (See Appendix 3). Ongoing cases, where attendance has not improved may receive direct intervention from the Education Welfare Officer and outside agencies.

Absence Reporting (Guidance for parents/carers)

Absence Due To Illness

DAY 1 Parent/carers to phone the school by the beginning of lesson 1 on the day of absence to confirm the following:

- Child's name
- Reason for absence ("unwell" is not sufficient) – to be recorded on electronic register
- Time/date of Dr. appointment (if made)

DAY 2 As DAY 1

DAY 3 As DAY 1
Note: If your child does not return to school on DAY 3, then from DAY 4 onwards, the school may request supporting medical evidence – e.g. appointment card/letter; note from Dr; specialist report; copy of prescription etc. – before consideration will be given whether or not to authorise the absences (wholly or in part).

DAY 4+ Parent/carers to 'phone the school before the beginning of lesson 1 on each subsequent day of absence until either:

- Child returns to school, or
- As otherwise agreed with a senior member of school staff.

Contact should be made on a daily basis to update the school on absence. No more than 5 consecutive school days of absence will be authorised by the head without sight of relevant medical evidence to support the absence. Furthermore, parents and carers will be asked to complete a medical consent form if a pupil is absent for over five days and no medical evidence has been provided, or if the school decides to query a medical absence. No evidence provided for extended illness is deemed as a safeguarding concern.

Any child accumulating 14 sessions (7 Days) of authorised absence due to illness in an academic year (consecutively or non-consecutively), may be required to provide sight of relevant medical or supportive evidence to explain every absence due to illness from Day 8 onwards. This is to ensure that the school is appropriately meeting the individual child's educational needs.

The coding of any absence from school, for whatever reason(s) given, is ultimately at the sole discretion of the headteacher; therefore the school may request sight of relevant evidence to support the correct coding of an absence of any length of time. It is the responsibility of the parent/carer to obtain the relevant evidence to support any absence from school.

Unauthorised 'O' coded absences of 5 days (10 sessions) or more in any 12 week period may result in your child's case being referred to the Education Attendance Service with either a request for the consideration of a Warning Penalty Notice to be issued to the parent(s)/Carer(s) responsible for the child's regular school attendance, or for the request of the involvement of the Education Attendance Officer. Further details of the Penalty Notice process may be obtained from the Education Welfare Officer responsible to the WSEP. The contact details of the Education Welfare Officer are available from each West Somerset School.

Children Missing from Education (CME)

A child is defined as being missing from education if they are of compulsory school age and who are neither on a school roll, or being educated otherwise (e.g. elective home education, or in alternative educational provision). This will include children who have moved into the area and are not on a school roll (including refugees, asylum seekers, and migrant workers).

A child is also missing from education if they are on the roll of a school (or other education provision) but have been absent for ten school days without any contact received from the parent/carer to explain the absence.

In accordance with the Local Authority's CME Policy, prior to submitting a CME referral, the Local Authority would expect a school to make preliminary investigations into the child's absence, which would include

- first day calling of all known contact numbers, including emergency contacts
- speaking to other family members within the school
- speaking to school staff at sibling's schools
- carrying out - home visits – if necessary at different times of the day to ascertain whether the family are still living in the home address

If following these checks it is felt that the child is not residing within the home or area and following discussions with your Education Welfare Officer, a CME referral may be required.

There is a requirement for these checks to be completed swiftly and the Local Authority does not expect a school to wait for 10 continuous school days of absence before starting to make enquiries. If all checks have been completed, the Local Authority may accept the CME referral prior to 10 days of continuous unexplained absence.

Making a CME Referral

If following your investigations and discussions with the Education Welfare Officer, it is felt that a CME referral is necessary, complete the CME referral form and email with the child's registration certificate to missingchildren@somerset.gov.uk

A CME referral must be completed if there are 10 days of continuous unexplained absence and the matter is not being dealt with as a non-school attendance matter. However it is imperative that schools also complete the necessary safeguarding checks as previously highlighted, to assist with the CME referral. If all attempts by school have been completed prior to the 10 days, the CME Officer may accept the CME referral earlier.

The pupil remains on roll until either a 'CME Found Form' or a 'CME Form ULP' is received from the Children Missing Education Liaison Officer. When in receipt of the CME Form ULP a lost pupil CTF should be created with XXXXXXXX as the destination. Either form should be received after period of 20 school days/4 weeks of the pupils being missing.

This should be read alongside Somerset's guidance: Children Missing Education- Guidance for Schools, September 2015

Strategies for Improving and Maintaining Good Attendance

Pupils in each of the WSEP' schools are made aware of attendance statistics through a variety of channels. These could include through assemblies, newsletters, school display boards and electronic media.

Individual pupils are rewarded on a termly basis for 100% attendance with recognition being given to 97%+ at the end of the academic year. Pupils who have significantly improved attendance are also rewarded at the end of the academic year. Each pupil is congratulated and will receive an attendance certificate. Attendance is also reported upon in school subject reports and written comments are made, based upon this, by staff.

Pupils who achieve 100% attendance during any given term will have this recognised through each school's reward systems.

Attendance is closely monitored through the headteacher and the attendance administrator on a regular basis. This data is further reviewed regularly at year group, staff and pastoral meetings and with the Education Welfare Officer dependant on the individual school size.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Attendance is monitored weekly and patterns and trends in absence are identified. Children's attendance is classified in the following ways:

| | |
|--------------------|--|
| 97% to 100% | Excellent attendance |
| 95% to 97% | Satisfactory attendance |
| Below 95% | Unsatisfactory attendance - below this level will trigger school action |
| Below 90% | Government threshold for persistent absence |

Parents will generally be informed by letter if their child's attendance falls below 95%. This communication will be supportive and will take into account individual circumstances. Levels of attendance below 95% are of concern and will be subject to continued monitoring and further communication with both the parents and the Education Welfare Officer.

Attendance figures are monitored by the Government on a termly basis. The annual attendance figures for the school are published in each of the schools prospectuses and/or website.

Record Keeping

Registers and all related correspondence will be kept for a period of six years.

Any correspondence regarding concerns about a child's attendance will be kept in the school attendance file. Information related to attendance concerns will be shared with the next school at the point of transfer.

Training

Staff training takes place annually in line with each school's CPD.

Parents and carers are informed of the Attendance Policy, expectations and school procedures through the schools' websites, regular school newsletters, and the schools' prospectuses. Changes to procedures and the law regarding attendance are outlined in letters sent home to parents.

Pupils are regularly reminded of the importance of regular attendance by teachers and subject staff. In addition, attendance-related issues are presented during assemblies, as and when appropriate. Coping and time-management strategies are delivered through Citizenship and PSHE activities and with targeted pupils via attendance surgeries and intervention techniques.

Appendix 1: Absence Request Form

West Somerset Education Partnership



Absence Request Form

(A separate application must be completed for each child 6 weeks before the planned absence)

| | | | |
|-----------------------------|-------|--------------|-----|
| Name of child: | | Class/Tutor: | |
| Inclusive Dates of absence: | From: | | To: |

Exceptional Reason for Absence:

(You must submit requests for planned absences at least two weeks prior to the first day of absence.)

Absence has also been requested for the following child(ren):

Name: _____ School: _____

Name: _____ School: _____

Signed (parent/guardian): _____

Date: _____

When deciding whether to allow term time leave, for any reason, the school will consider:

- The specific nature of the request
- The time and duration of the leave
- Your child's record of attendance
- The learning that will be missed

IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR PARENTS/CARERS:

- There is no automatic right to absence for a family holiday. Authorisation of absence requests will depend on whether the application meets the LA 'Exceptional Circumstances' criteria.
- Authorisation during, and leading up to, examination periods (e.g. SATs) and in the first term of any new school placement (or academic year) will not be granted. Requests for extended leave will not be authorised, if a similar request was authorised (or extended leave was taken) during the previous academic year.
- Parents whose children are on a school register have a duty to ensure that their children attend regularly and if they fail to do so they may be guilty of an offence under the Education Act, 1993.
- NB. If the school refuses your request and the child is still taken out of school, this will be recorded as an unauthorised absence. This may result in a penalty notice being issued or legal action taken for poor attendance.

For school use only

| | | | |
|----------------------------|----------------------|--|-------------|
| Current attendance: | More than 97% | Excellent | |
| | 95% to 97% | Satisfactory | |
| | 92% to 95% | Unsatisfactory Triggers action | |
| | Less than 92% | Government threshold for persistent absence | |
| Attendance history: | Year: _____ | Year: _____ | Year: _____ |

Authorised Not authorised

Comments:

We will continue to monitor attendance and may require supportive evidence following any term time absence.

Signed (Headteacher): _____

Date: _____



TERM TIME LEAVE

ADVICE FOR SCHOOLS AND PARENTS

Amendments to the 2006 regulations were made by the [Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#) and come into force on 1 September 2013.

The amendments make it clear that schools can only grant leave of absence during term time for exceptional circumstances. All reference to a holiday and/or extended leave, including the threshold of ten school days is removed. Any request for leave must be made in writing for the attention of the Headteacher in advance.

There is no formal definition offered for exceptional leave at present by the Department for Education. However, from discussion with the DfE and concerned professional associations it is suggested that exceptional leave may include:

- *Forces staff returning from lengthy active service abroad*
- *Police, Fire Service staff being told when they can or cannot take leave*
- *If a close family member has a terminal illness and it may be a last chance to be together especially if the family member lived overseas*
- *Parents having to work abroad for a fixed, minimum term period*
- *Significant year round seasonal employment restrictions (where NO leave is allowed in any published school holiday)(Evidence must be required to support this.)*

Somerset County Council (SCC) supports schools:

- In expecting parents and carers to make sure that children and young people attend school regularly. Any absence from school will impact on educational achievement, success in later life and longer term health and well being
- In ensuring the law is upheld. Parents and carers are committing an offence if they fail to ensure the regular and punctual attendance at school of their child. Schools must explain their stance on term time leave in their attendance policy so parents/carers are clear on expectations and potential consequences, such as any unauthorised absence including taking term time leave not agreed with the school, can result in a Penalty Notice being issued to each parent for each child. Any Penalty Notice unpaid is taken to Magistrates Court as failure to secure the regular attendance of their child. If found guilty of such an offence, they might receive a criminal conviction and a potential fine of up to £1,000.

SCC cannot override a school's decision not to authorise any term time leave. There is no right of appeal.

Taking a child on holiday in term time interrupts the learning of the whole class. Teachers have to spend time helping children catch up when they return. Parents should arrange holidays for the 13 week school holiday periods. Schools are open 190 days which leaves 175 days of the year for a holiday. Every day of your child's education is valuable. We hope that, when you have read this advice, you will consider that your child's education is too important to take extended absence during term time.

Appendix 2: Attendance Codes

Attendance Codes

| Code | School Meaning |
|-------------|--|
| / | Present (AM) |
| \ | Present (PM) |
| B | Educated off site (not Dual Registration.) |
| C | Other authorised circumstances |
| D | Dual registration (attending other establishment.) |
| E | Excluded (no alternative provision made) |
| F | Extended family holiday (agreed) |
| G | Family Holiday (not agreed or days in excess) |
| H | Family holiday (agreed) |
| I | Illness (not medical/dental appointments) |
| J | Interview |
| L | Late (before register is closed) |
| M | Medical/Dental Appointments |
| N | No reason yet provided for absence |
| O | Unauthorised circumstances |
| P | Approved sporting activity |
| R | Religious observance |
| S | Study leave |
| T | Traveller absence |
| U | Late (after registers closed) |
| V | Educational visit |
| W | Work Experience |
| Y | Enforced closure |
| X | Non-compulsory school age absence |
| Z | Pupil not on roll |
| - | All should attend/No mark recorded |
| # | School closed to pupils and staff |

Appendix 3:



WSEP Attendance Concerns Pathway

| | |
|----------------|---|
| Level 1 | You may receive a letter or be contacted by the school if your child's attendance falls below 95%. This is intended as a supportive gesture providing you with information that can be shared with your child to improve attendance in school before it becomes a cause for concern. |
| Level 2 | If your child's attendance continues to fall, you will receive a second letter . Over the next two weeks we will expect to see full attendance in school and thereafter they will be continually monitored until it is above 95%. |
| Level 3 | Your child's attendance is now becoming a cause for concern. You will be invited to an Attendance Meeting with a senior member of staff, a third letter , to discuss how your child's attendance can be improved. At this point the Education Welfare Officer will be aware of the matter and will expect to see collaboration hopefully avoiding their involvement. |
| Level 4 | <p>The school will now make a referral to the Educational Welfare Officer due to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Failure to attend Attendance Meeting or relevant contact with a senior member of staff. • Your child has unauthorised absences of 5 days (10 sessions) or more in any 12 weeks period. Initially a Parent Contract Meeting will be arranged with Education Welfare Officer. <p>The Education Welfare Officer will be kept informed of continued irregular school attendance.</p> <p>There are a number of different options for Education Welfare Officer involvement. In all cases the parent(s) /carer(s) will be kept informed usually by a letter from the school of the proposed option.</p> <p>WPN - Warning Penalty Notice – three school weeks period showing improvement with no unauthorised absences during the specified period and no further action will be taken. If there are any unauthorised absences this will lead to PN.</p> <p>PN – Penalty Notice - Only used in the case of UTTL (Unauthorised Term Time Leave) without a WPN first. You will be expected to attend a Parent contract meeting with Educational Welfare Officer, with a request for the consideration of a Warning Penalty Notice to be issued to the parent(s)/carer(s) responsible for the child' regular school attendance.</p> |

Fixed Term Penalty Notice

The parent(s)/carer(s) responsible for the child' regular school attendance will have 21 days to pay this £60 fine, after which it goes up to £120 per parent per child. Failure to pay a Fixed Penalty Notice within 28 days may result in a criminal conviction and a fine in the Magistrate's Court of up to £1000. A Fixed Penalty Notice might also be issued if a child's attendance falls below 95% with 10 sessions or more of unauthorised absence and no satisfactory reason or explanation is given.