



Policy Title:	ATTENDANCE POLICY	
Policy Code:	OPSP06	
Applies to:	All schools	
Date Reviewed:	SEPT 2026	
Next Update Due:	August 2027	
Policy Lead:	Sara Roe	
Policy Sponsor:	Richard Wilkins	
Cross Reference:	OPSP09	Child Protection Policy
	OPSP25	Suspension Policy
	OPSP04	Anti-Bullying Policy
	OPSP02	Admissions Policy
Outcome:	This policy: • supports the School to maintain high levels of pupil attendance; • follows the most up to date statutory and non-statutory guidance as set out by the Department for Education (DfE); • takes into account the statutory guidance documents on parental responsibility measures, children missing education, supporting children with medical conditions at school, suspensions and exclusions, alternative provision and safeguarding. • provides guidance for staff, those responsible for governance, parents and carers and alternative provision providers.	
EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY STATEMENT Witherslack Group is committed to the fair treatment of all in line with the Equality Act 2010. An equality impact assessment has been completed on this policy to ensure that it can be implemented consistently regardless of any protected characteristics and all will be treated with dignity and respect.		
ENVIRONMENT, SOCIAL, GOVERNANCE (ESG) STATEMENT Witherslack Group is committed to responsible business practices in the areas of: Environmental Stewardship, Social Responsibility, Governance, Ethics & Compliance. An ESG impact assessment has been completed on this policy to ensure it can be implemented successfully without adverse implications on our Group goals.		
FEEDBACK To ensure that this policy is relevant and up to date, comments and suggestions for additions or amendments are sought from users of this document. To contribute towards the process of review, please email the named policy lead.		

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1. STATEMENT AND VISION

- 1.1 This policy supports our school to provide consistent practice that promotes, encourages and supports good pupil attendance. Good attendance at school is key to pupil progress, safeguarding and enjoyment of learning and the wider school experience.
- 1.2 Our school takes a holistic and co-ordinated approach to maintaining excellent attendance and it is the joint responsibility of parents/ carers, other professionals, children and young people, and all staff members to ensure that children and young people are attending school as they should be. We try to work with parents/ carers and other professionals to ensure that any problems or circumstances which may impact on good attendance are given appropriate attention and support.

2. THE WITHERSLACK GROUP WILL:

- 2.1
 - ensure that the importance of attendance is made clear by promoting the relevant school policies and guidance
 - annually review the Witherslack Group attendance policy and ensure that all provisions are in place to allow schools, parents/carers, and children and young people to implement the policy effectively
 - nominate or identify a member of the Senior Leadership Team who will take the lead role in monitoring attendance and co-ordinating strategy, provision and policies for attendance
 - ensure that all legislation regarding attendance and guidelines are communicated to establishments
 - collate annual attendance data to support schools to set ambitious targets
 - take time at Board and monitoring meetings to review and discuss attendance issues that have arisen
 - ensure that the school is appropriately recording attendance and reviewing absence effectively
 - ensure that schools are clear on how to analyse attendance data and how to communicate the findings effectively to parents/carers, children/young people, staff and Witherslack Group Senior Leadership Team
 - use any data gathered to work with each establishment to devise solutions to problems, and make the proper adjustments to attendance strategy

3. IN THIS SCHOOL WE WILL:

- 3.1
 - be active in our approach to promoting good attendance for children and young people and their parents, which includes forming positive relationships with families

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- ensure that the school's teaching and learning experiences encourage good attendance and that children and young people are taught the value of high attendance for their own progression and achievement
- co-ordinate with the Witherslack Group Regional Directors (Schools) to monitor the implementation of the attendance policy and its effectiveness
- ensure that all staff are up to date with the school's attendance policy and government legislation, and that staff are able to recognise and deal with attendance issues
- ensure that government legislation on attendance is complied with and that the leadership team are up to date with any legislation changes and how to implement them
- nominate or appoint a senior manager to take the responsibility for overseeing and monitoring attendance provision
- provide/discuss with their Witherslack Group Regional Directors (Schools) details of attendance records, relevant data and intervention strategies as required and report to the School Board six times per year.
- ensure that systems to record and report attendance data and intervention strategies are in place and working effectively
- ensure attendance is recorded twice a day at appropriate times
- develop multi-agency relationships to intervene with poor attendance and support parents/carers who are having difficulties getting their child/young person to attend the school
- document any specific interventions or steps taken to work with children and young people and parents/carers to improve their child/young person's attendance
- ensure that all provisions are in place to allow staff, parents/carers, and children and young people to implement the policy effectively
- work with external agencies to support children and young people and their parents/carers who are struggling with regular attendance
- The Designated Safeguarding Lead (or a deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead) is responsible for liaising with other agencies and staff regarding attendance concerns that are also safeguarding concerns

4. THE ROLE OF PARENTS AND CARERS:

4.1 As part of our whole-school approach to maintaining high attendance, we request that parents/carers:

- engage with their child/young person's education – support their learning and take an interest in what they have been doing at school
- promote the value of good education and the importance of regular school attendance at home
- encourage and support their children and young people's aspirations
- follow the school procedure (see below) for reporting the absence of their child/young person from school and include an expected date for return
- do everything they can to prevent unnecessary school absences, such as making appointments outside of school hours
- do not take their children and young people out of school for holidays during term time
- use the school as a support when they or their child/young person are having difficulties, and work to form a positive relationship with the school so that there is easy communication when a problem arises
- keep the school informed of any circumstances which may affect their child/young person's attendance
- encourage regular routines and consistency at home so and the school day becomes part of that routine

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- agree and sign a home-school agreement

5. CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE:

5.1 As part of our whole-school approach to maintaining high attendance, we request that children and young people:

- be aware of the school's high expectations with regard to attendance and when and what they are required to attend. This will be communicated to them through the school staff, parents/ carers, and the school timetable
- speak to their Form Tutor, Learning Mentor, Key Worker or another member of staff if they are experiencing difficulties at school or at home which may impact on their attendance
- attend all lessons ready to learn, with the appropriate learning tools requested and on time for the class. Lesson times will be made clear through their school timetable
- bring a note of explanation from their parents or carers to explain an absence that is foreseen
- follow the correct school procedure if they arrive late. This will help the school to monitor attendance and keep accurate records of the child/young person's individual attendance, and is also vital for health and safety in the event of a school evacuation

6. CATEGORIES OF ABSENCE AND PROCEDURES FOR RECORDING ABSENCE

6.1 Absence from school will be treated as unauthorised unless a satisfactory explanation for the child /young person's absence is given to the school. Parents cannot authorise absences.

Staff should use the appropriate codes on the school register and ask for guidance from the head teacher if unclear.

6.2 When a child/ young person is absent from school without prior permission, parents should inform the school by telephone on the first day of absence and let the School know what date they expect the child/ young person to return. Alternative arrangements will be made individually with non-English speaking parents or carers.

6.3 Illness – Not medical or dental appointments (Code I)

Most cases of absence due to illness are short term, but parents/carers will need to make a phone call to alert the school on the first day and each subsequent day of absence.

For prolonged absence due to illness, parents may be asked to provide the school with medical evidence such as a note from the child/young person's doctor, an appointment card or a prescription paper.

6.4 Medical (incl clinical) or dental appointments (Code M)

Parents should make every effort to ensure these appointments are made outside of school hours. Where it cannot be avoided, children and young people should attend school for as much of that day as possible. This will include clinical appointments which take place outside of school including any organised by a Witherslack Group children's home.

6.5 Authorised absences

A child/young person registered at a school can legally miss school only in very limited and exceptional circumstances. These include: when the child/young person is too ill to attend or when the school has authorised the absence beforehand. There may be some instances where the school will authorise absence such as for a family bereavement. All requests for authorised absence will be considered by the relevant member of the Senior Leadership Team. Parents/carers should contact the school immediately if there will be a cause for delay from the stated date of return.

Example authorised absence:

- Illness (NOT medical or dental appointments) (Code I)
- Medical/dental appointments (Code M)

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- Religious observance (Code R)
- Study leave (Code S)
- Traveller absence (Code T)
- Excluded, no alternative provision (Code E)
- Authorised absence in exceptional circumstances (Code C)

6.6 Suspended or permanently excluded and no alternative provision made (Code E)

Suspension is treated as an authorised absence. The Head Teacher will arrange for work to be sent home in accordance with school suspension guidance.

6.7 Family holidays and extended leave (Code H)

Parents do not have the automatic right to remove their child from school during term time. Requests for leave of this type must be made in writing to the Headteacher in advance of the leave being taken. Retrospective applications will not be considered and this time taken will be processed as unauthorised absence. Requests for leave of this nature will only be granted in exceptional circumstances.

All families wishing to travel abroad during term time and/or requesting permission at short notice, should attend a meeting with the Headteacher to discuss the request. The Headteacher will make clear the legal obligations of the parent / carer to ensure all children over 5 years old are in full time education, and will stress that safeguarding is a priority for the school. If the pupil is female and from a practising community, the Headteacher should use direct questioning to ascertain whether the child is at risk of FGM. If the Headteacher has concerns regarding the response to this questioning they should contact the police and their local Children's safeguarding Board.

If permission is not granted, but the child/young person is still absent, the absence is classed as unauthorised.

6.8 Religious observance (Code R)

This establishment recognises that there may be times where children/young people of different faiths observe religious festivals that fall outside of school holidays and weekends, and will allow authorised absence for these times. Parents/carers will be aware of these dates and should give the school written notification in advance.

6.9 Study leave (Code S)

The school may have a period of study leave leading up to exams where children and young people are granted authorised absence to revise at home. The school operates study sessions at school within this time to help with revision and to reduce the amount of time spent out of school.

6.10 Late arrival (Code L)

Registration opens as soon as the school day begins, and closes at the start of the first taught session of the day.

Children and young people who arrive after the registration period has ended should go straight to the school office to sign in and give a reason for their lateness. Any unjustifiable reason for absence will be marked as unauthorised. It is vital that children and young people sign in at the office to ensure that appropriate health and safety regulations are followed and that all children and young people are accounted for.

6.11 Off Site Educational Activity (Code B)

This code should be used when the young person is involved in an educational activity, organised by the school but provided by an alternative provider away from the school. This includes where the school transports the young person to the alternative provision. The register should only be marked at the start of each morning/afternoon session once the school has confirmed that the young person is in attendance.

Additional Codes that may be used:

D – dual registration

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F – extended family holiday agreed
 G – family holiday not agreed
 J – interview
 N – no reason yet provided for absence
 O – unauthorised
 P – approved sporting activity
 U – late after register closed
 V – educational trip
 W – work experience
 X – non-compulsory school age absence
 Y – enforced closure
 Z – pupil not yet on roll

7. SCHOOL ACTIONS TO FOLLOW UP ABSENCE

- 7.1** Where there are unexplained or unauthorised absences, the school will contact the parents or carers when their child is absent to explain and establish the reason for absence. The school will contact parents on the first day of absence where a reason has not been provided. For any unexplained absence of a child known to have a social worker, the social worker will be informed immediately.
- 7.2** If a pattern of unauthorised absences emerges, the school will contact the parent or carer to discuss reasons for absence and to identify school support systems that could help prevent future absence. Parents/carers will be contacted if a child/young person gives a reason for an unauthorised absence and there is doubt about the truth of the reason.
- 7.3** The School has a duty of care for pupils on roll. If absence continues without explanation, further contact will be made to ensure safeguarding. The School will conduct home visits and work in partnership with parents and the local authority as appropriate, to ensure that a child is safe and well. We recognise that children missing education can act as a vital warning sign to a range of safeguarding issues including neglect, sexual abuse and child sexual, criminal exploitation, mental health problems, substance abuse, risk of travelling to conflict zones, female genital mutilation, so called ‘honour’-based abuse or risk of forced marriage
- 7.4** The school will keep effective evidence of monitoring of absence and intervention programmes to secure improvement. Where children and young people have been away for either short or long term periods, the school will support that child/ young person when they return to school to help them catch up on any work that they have missed. For longer periods of absence a reintegration plan should be formulated.
- 7.5** School Attendance Support Plans should be introduced for all those children and young people whose attendance becomes a concern or falls below 90%. Where attendance concerns escalate and indicate a potential safeguarding risk, the matter will be managed in line with the Child Protection Policy.

8. REFERENCES

This policy has been written in response to:

- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk)
- [Education Act \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk)
- [The Education \(School Day and School Year\) \(England\) Regulations \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk)
- [The Changing of School Session Times \(England\) \(Revocation\) Regulations \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk)
- [Education and Inspections Act \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk)
- [The Education \(Independent School Standards\) Regulations \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk)
- [Regulating independent schools - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)
- [Working together to improve school attendance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)
- [Keeping Children Safe in Education \(KCSiE\)](https://www.gov.uk)

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This policy is supported by our policies on **Safeguarding, Suspensions and Exclusions, Anti-Bullying, Positive Behaviour**, our **Admissions Register** and our procedures for use of **Alternative Provision**.

9. ASSOCIATED FORMS

None

10. APPENDICES

None

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