West Moors Middle School
Attendance Policy
2023-2024

Approved by:	Full Governing Board	Date: 29th February 2024
Next review due by:	February 2025	

Contents

1. Aims

Regular school attendance is essential if students are to achieve their full potential. West Moors Middle School believes that regular school attendance is the key to enabling students to maximise the educational opportunities available to them and become resilient, confident and competent adults who are able to realise their full potential and make a positive contribution to their community.

We are therefore committed to meeting our obligation with regards to school attendance through our whole-school culture and ethos that values good attendance, including:

- Promoting good attendance
- Reducing absence, including persistent and severe absence
- Ensuring every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled
- Acting early to address patterns of absence
- Building strong relationships with families to ensure pupils have the support in place to attend school

We will also promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

Our Attendance Policy should not be viewed in isolation; it is a strand that runs through all aspects of school improvement, supported by our policies on safeguarding, bullying, behaviour and SEND.

2. Legislation and guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the working together to improve school attendance from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on school attendance parental responsibility measures. These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- Part 6 of The Education Act 1996
- Part 3 of The Education Act 2002
- Part 7 of The Education and Inspections Act 2006
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (and 2010, 2011, 2013, 2016 amendments)

- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013

This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the school census, which explains the persistent absence threshold.

3. Roles and responsibilities

3.1 The governing board

The governing board is responsible for:

- Promoting the importance of school attendance across the school's policies and ethos
- Making sure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties
- Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data
- Monitoring attendance figures for the whole school
- Making sure staff receive adequate training on attendance
- Holding the Headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy

Our school's link governor for attendance is Mrs Lynne Anderson meets with the Headteacher to discuss and monitor attendance across the school every half term with attendance included as a standard agenda item at Full Governing board meetings.

3.2 The Headteacher

The Headteacher is responsible for:

- Implementation of this policy at the school
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils
- Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies
- Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary
- Leading attendance across the school
- Offering a clear vision for attendance improvement
- Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes
- Having an oversight of data analysis
- Devising specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data
- Arranging calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues
- Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families

3.3 The attendance officer

The school attendance officer is responsible for:

- Monitoring and analysing attendance data working with the Headteacher (see section 7)
- Benchmarking attendance data to identify areas of focus for improvement
- Providing regular attendance reports to school staff and reporting concerns about attendance to the Headteacher

- Working with the Inclusion Lead in East Education & Early Help Inclusion, Dorset Council/ education welfare officers to tackle persistent absence/ education welfare officers to tackle persistent absence.

- Advising the Headteacher when to issue fixed-penalty notices

The attendance officer is Mrs Kathryn Beavan and can be contacted via 01202 872472 or office@westmoorsmid.dorset.sch.uk.

3.4 Year tutors

Year tutors are responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the school office by 08.45. They are also responsible for monitoring attendance for their tutor groups each week and support children whose attendance and punctuality is a cause for concern, liaising with their parents/ carers where appropriate.

3.5 School administrative staff

School admin staff will:

- Take calls from parents and carers about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the school system

- Transfer calls from parents and carers to the Pastoral Lead in order to provide them with more detailed support on attendance

3.6 Parents/carers

Parents/carers are expected to:

- Make sure their child attends every day on time
- Call the school to report their child's absence before 08.45 on the day of the absence and each subsequent day of absence), and advise when they are expected to return

- Provide the school with more than 1 emergency contact number for their child
- Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day

3.7 Pupils

Pupils are expected to:

- Attend school every day on time
- Attend every timetabled session on time

4. Recording attendance

4.1 Attendance register

We will keep an attendance register, and place all pupils onto this register.

We will take our attendance register at tutor time registration 08.40 before the start of the first session of each school day and once after lunch before the start of the fifth lesson. It will mark whether every pupil is:

- Present
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity
- Absent
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

- The original entry
- The amended entry
- The reason for the amendment
- The date on which the amendment was made
- The name and position of the person who made the amendment

See appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes.

We will also record:

- Whether the absence is authorised or not
- The nature of the activity if a pupil is attending an approved educational activity
- The nature of circumstances where a pupil is unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

Pupils must arrive in school by 08.30 on each school day.

The register for the first session will be taken at 08.35 and will be kept open until 09.05. A register is taken at the start of each period throughout the school day.

4.2 Unplanned absence

The pupil's parent/carer must notify the school of the reason for the absence on the first day of an unplanned absence by 08.30 or as soon as practically possible by calling the school office staff (01202 972474) (see also section 7).

We will mark absence due to illness as authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may ask the pupil's parent/carer to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents/carers will be notified of this in advance.

4.3 Planned absence

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the pupil's parent/carer notifies the school in advance of the appointment.

Parents and carers who wish to request leaves of absence should place this in writing to the Headteacher.

However, we encourage parents/carers to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

The pupil's parent/carer must also apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence. Go to section 5 to find out which term-time absences the school can authorise.

4.4 Lateness and punctuality

A pupil who arrives late:

- Before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code
- After the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code

If the school has concerns in relation to ongoing punctuality issues, they will contact the parent(s)/ carer(s) to identify the underlying reason and provide support as necessary to facilitate the child/ren's punctuality, moving forwards. The school will then continue to monitor attendance, liaising with the Inclusion Lead in East Education & Early Help Inclusion, Dorset Council.

4.5 Following up unexplained absence

Where any pupil we expect to attend school does not attend, or stops attending, without reason, the school will:

- Call the pupil's parent/carer on the morning of the first day of unexplained absence to ascertain the reason. If the school cannot reach any of the pupil's emergency contacts, the school may liaise with external agencies in Dorset Council and/ or the police

- Identify whether the absence is approved or not

- Identify the correct attendance code to use and input it as soon as the reason for absence is ascertained – this will be no later than 5 working days after the session

- Call the parent/carer on each day that the absence continues without explanation to ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary. If absence continues, the school will consider involving an education welfare officer

4.6 Reporting to parents/carers

The school will regularly inform parents and carers about their child's attendance and absence levels in their termly interim reports (Autumn and Spring), as well as their end of year report.

5. Authorised and unauthorised absence

5.1 Approval for term-time absence

The Headteacher will only grant a leave of absence to a pupil during term time if they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'. A leave of absence is granted at the Headteacher's discretion, including the length of time the pupil is authorised to be absent for. Before deciding whether to authorise leave of absence the Headteacher will consider

- The impact on the student's academic progress of any absence
- The pupils attendance over the academic year
- Whether the leave falls within any key stage national tests

We define an 'exceptional circumstance' as an event that has had a negative impact on a child's ability to attend school, study or complete their assessments. We can only grant a leave of absence during term-time if we consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances' that warrant this.

Exceptional circumstances may include for example:

• When a family needs to spend time together because of an immediate family members bereavement, crisis or serious illness

Funeral of immediate family member

- Religious observance
- Transport was not provided by the LA when it should have been
- Children of service personnel about to go on deployment (permission would be considered as long as the request is accompanied by a letter from the Commanding Officer)
- One off sporting events/performing arts competitions, if the child is participating and is at county standard or above and a letter has been provided from the performing arts/sports regional governing body as evidence
- One day of absence could be authorised for an immediate family members graduation ceremony/passing out parade

Absence will not be authorised for the reasons stated below:
- To care for other family members
- Birthdays
- To interpret for other family members
- No school uniform/shoes
- Bullying
- Friendship problems
- Head lice
- Learning difficulties
- Family holiday
- Weddings abroad – regardless of whether it is for immediate family members
- Family Anniversaries
- Death of a pet

- Travel problems
- School refusal

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request.

Any request should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated and, where possible, at least two weeks before the absence, and in accordance with any leave of absence request form, accessible via the school website. The headteacher may require evidence to support any request for leave of absence.

5.2 Legal sanctions

The school or local authority can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age.

If issued with a fine, or penalty notice, each parent must pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the local authority.

Penalty notices can be issued by a Headteacher, local authority officer or the police.
The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice may take into account:
- The number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year
- One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission
- Where an excluded pupil is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason

If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute or withdraw the notice.

6. Strategies for promoting attendance

The school seeks to promote effective partnerships with parents/carers and to provide support, advice and guidance on the importance of regular and punctual attendance of their children. The foundation for good attendance is a strong partnership between the school, parents/carers and the child. To help us all to focus on this we will:

· Seek to foster and develop positive partnerships with parents/carers; encourage/invite parents/carers in to school to discuss individual attendance concerns; signpost parents/carers to our Pastoral Support Worker or other professional/agency for support and guidance.

· Set whole school targets in relation to attendance and persistent absence. The whole school attendance target for 2023/2024 is 94%+ with less than 15 individual pupils being classified as Persistent Absentees at the end of the academic year.

· Expect that all pupils will achieve an attendance level of at least 94%.

· Highlight the importance of good attendance and progress towards attendance targets in our newsletters, class, assemblies, consultation evenings, workshops and in the prospectus. Attendance issues may also be discussed in Inclusion meetings, pupil target setting meetings and/or in relevant staff meetings.

The school encourages the active involvement of other services and agencies to support and promote good attendance, including the North Shore Attendance Hub. The Education Social Work Service may arrange a Parenting Order, an Education Supervision Orders, issue a fine (also known as a penalty notice) and/or liaise with other agencies and professionals as appropriate.

To support, at West Moors Middle School, we use a range of strategies for rewarding and improving attendance. These include:

- Praise points, linked to House Points, to celebrate attendance and punctuality
- Termly attendance awards
- End of term attendance reward time
- Positive communications with parents e.g. praise postcards home

- Communicating to parents and carers via termly letters sent out via Arbor
- Dissemination of weekly attendance data for tutors to support children and help improve their attendance and reduce the incidence of lateness
- Half termly celebration assemblies for excellent attendance and most improved attendance
- Implementing the WMMS attendance reward scheme and rewarding individual pupils each half term
- Attendance display board in school
- Whole school and phase assemblies that highlight the importance of good attendance
- Weekly presentation of KS2 and KS3 attendance shields to the tutor group with the highest percentage attendance in each key stage
- Newsletter updates weekly on tutor group attendance awards with an emphasis placed on the importance of school attendance
- Timely targeted interventions and support, working in partnerships with colleagues in Dorset Council

7. Attendance monitoring

Our school monitors and analyses attendance on a daily basis. The school's Attendance Officer is Kathryn Beavan. The attendance officer, in liaison with the Headteacher, monitors pupil absence on an ongoing basis. The school collects and stores attendance data to enable:

· tracking of attendance of individual pupils

· identification as to whether there are particular groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern

· the monitoring and evaluation of those children identified as being in need of intervention and support.

Formal attendance review meetings take place every half term. Present at these reviews will be the school's attendance officer, the inclusion leader and Headteacher.

If a pupil's attendance is 93% or below, the reasons for all absences will be investigated and we contact the parents/carers if attendance is a concern,

If after contacting parents a pupil's absence continue to rise, we will invite the parents/carers to a meeting following which we may consider involving an education social worker and/or give consideration to taking legal action.

The persistent absence threshold is 10%. If a pupil's individual overall absence rate is greater than or equal to 10%, the pupil will be classified as a persistent absentee.

Regular attendance monitoring reports are shared with the Headteacher and the Link Governor for Attendance. In addition, a summary of attendance monitoring data is presented to all governors at Full Governing Board meetings each term.

7.1 Monitoring attendance

West Moors Middle School will:

- Monitor attendance and absence data half-termly, termly and yearly across the school and at an individual pupil level

- Identify whether or not there are particular groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern

Pupil-level absence data will be collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. The school will compare attendance data to the national average, and share this with the governing board.

7.2 Analysing attendance

The school will:

- Analyse attendance and absence data regularly to identify pupils or cohorts that need additional support with their attendance, and use this analysis to provide targeted support to these pupils and their families

- Look at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence, and then develop strategies to address these patterns

7.3 Using data to improve attendance

The school will:

- Provide regular attendance reports to year tutors, and other school leaders, to facilitate discussions with pupils and families.

- Use data to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place in order to modify them and inform future strategies.

7.4 Reducing Persistent and severe absence

Persistent absence is where a pupil misses 10% or more of school, and severe absence is where a pupil misses 50% or more of school.

The school will:

- Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence
- Send the relevant letters out to parents/ carers as a graduated response to absence that develops a culture of whole school responsibility for attendance and punctuality, ensuring close monitoring during the 2-3 weeks following the letter being sent.
- Hold regular meetings with the parents of pupils who the school (and/or local authority) considers to be vulnerable, or are persistently or severely absent, to discuss attendance and engagement at school
- Hold Inclusion Panel meetings with the East Dorset Inclusion Lead to address attendance concerns.
- Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance

The Government measures our school on attendance and the numbers of Persistent Absence pupils. Whatever the reasons for absence, the Department for Education deems a pupil to be a persistent absentee if they have 10% or more absence (of any kind) on any given day of the school year.

The school will write to these parents/carers, each half term, to alert them that their child is falling into the persistent absentee category. Parents/carers may also be invited in to a meeting to discuss attendance and to agree steps that need to be taken to address and manage their child's absence. This may include providing the school with medical evidence for any future absence to be authorised. In cases where attendance is a concern, a referral will be made to the Education Social Work Service.

Absence for whatever reason disadvantages a child by creating gaps in their learning. The school monitors all absence thoroughly. Attendance data is shared with the Link Governor for Attendance, all Governors at Full Governing Board meetings, the Local Authority and the Department for Education.

8. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the local authority or DfE is updated, and as a minimum every 12 months by the Headteacher and Attendance Officer. At every review, the policy will be approved by the Full Governing Board.

9. Links with other policies

This policy links to the following policies:

- Child Protection and Safeguarding policy
- Behaviour for Learning policy

Appendix 1: attendance codes

The following codes are taken from the DfE's guidance on school attendance.

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	Pupil is present at morning registration
****	Present (pm)	Pupil is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Pupil arrives late before register has closed
B	Off-site educational activity	Pupil is at a supervised off-site educational activity approved by the school
D	Dual registered	Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
J	Interview	Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
P	Sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
V	Educational trip or visit	Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised, or approved, by the school
W	Work experience	Pupil is on a work experience placement

Code	Definition	Scenario
Authorised absence		
C	Authorised leave of absence	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
E	Excluded	Pupil has been excluded but no alternative provision has been made
H	Authorised holiday	Pupil has been allowed to go on holiday due to exceptional circumstances

I	Illness	School has been notified that a pupil will be absent due to illness
M	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment
R	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance
S	Study leave	Year 11 pupil is on study leave during their public examinations
T	Gypsy, Roma and traveller absence	Pupil from a traveller community is travelling, as agreed with the school
Unauthorised absence		
G	Unauthorised holiday	Pupil is on a holiday that was not approved by the school
N	Reason not provided	Pupil is absent for an unknown reason (this code should be amended when the reason emerges, or replaced with code O if no reason for absence has been provided after a reasonable amount of time)
O	Unauthorised absence	School is not satisfied with reason for pupil's absence
U	Arrival after registration	Pupil arrived at school after the register closed

Code	Definition	Scenario
X	Not required to be in school	Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
Y	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances	School site is closed, there is disruption to travel as a result of a local/national emergency, or pupil is in custody
Z	Pupil not on admission register	Register set up but pupil has not yet joined the school

#	Planned school closure	Whole or partial school closure due to half-term/bank holiday/INSET day