

# Welburn Hall School



## Attendance Policy

**Review Period: Annual**

**Next review Due: September 2025**

**Signed by Quality Control Manager:**



**Date: 01.09.2024**

**Approved by Governors:**



**Date: 01.09.2024**

## **Introduction**

The Department of Education has published new guidance, 'Working Together to Improve Attendance' and this policy has been updated to reflect it. The DfE has also produced an accompanying document which is a 'summary table of responsibilities' for schools, parents, governors and the local authority. These were updated in August 2024 and Welburn Hall School is committed to adhering to this statutory guidance.

Welburn Hall School is a 'generic' special school, committed to providing an education of the highest quality for all its pupils and recognises this can only be achieved by supporting and promoting excellent school attendance for all. This is based on the belief that only by attending school regularly and punctually will children and young people be able to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them.

The whole school community has a responsibility for promoting excellent attendance: parents, carers, pupils and all school staff.

The designated senior lead for pupil attendance is the Behaviour and Safeguarding Manager. She is the senior point of contact with parents when attendance issues arise, or parents need more detailed support. She is supported in this role by the Headteacher.

## **School's Roles and Responsibilities**

All staff at Welburn Hall School have a key role to play in supporting and promoting excellent school attendance and will work to provide an environment in which all pupils are able to learn and feel valued members of the school community. Staff also have a responsibility to set a good example in matters relating to their own attendance and punctuality. Attendance is encouraged and recognised through assemblies and class group targets, whilst being mindful that for a lot of our students, their absence is due to medical needs or situations beyond their control.

The Governing Body holds the Headteacher to account through regular scrutiny of attendance, visits into school and monitoring of those pupils with Persistent Absence (PA), including those on Alternative Provision (AP). The local authority also scrutinises the attendance of those pupils with PA, through new, termly meetings with the Headteacher and the LA lead for attendance.

Attendance data is analysed at whole-school and pupil level, weekly, monthly and at least every half term on a systematic basis but also if and when issues arise. The Headteacher and Behaviour and Safeguarding Manager hold regular discussions in

supervision, with pupils of concern highlighted and actions agreed. Data also comes from CPOMS and the meetings of senior leaders responsible for safeguarding, behaviour and progress. This matrix approach of ‘ground up’ responsibility, coupled with the senior leaders’ analysis activities, leads to very strong practice both in terms of encouraging good attendance and managing it through robust support and challenge to parents and carers.

In our setting, we use the national guidance for levels of persistent and severe absence. However we are sensitive to the needs of our children and recognise that in some cases these percentages are not applicable or are unrealistic. We have to always consider our obligations under the Equality Act 2010, not to discriminate against pupils whose absence is not their fault.

### Registration

The school is required to mark the attendance register twice each day: at the start of the day and at the start of the afternoon session. Class teachers are responsible for completing the attendance registers using the prescribed codes (shown below).

### REGISTER CODES

This is a list of attendance codes that come into effect from 19<sup>th</sup> August 2024 for all schools:

CODE	SIMS DESCRIPTION	DFE DESCRIPTION/EXPLANATION
/	Present (AM)	Present
\	Present (PM)	Present
B	Attending any other Approved Education Activity	Attending any other approved educational activity. Not to be used for Virtual learning
C	Other authorised circumstances	Leave absence for exceptional circumstance
C1	Leave of absence - regulated performance	Leave of absence for the purpose of participating in a regulated performance or undertaking regulated employment abroad.
C2	Leave of absence - Temporary part-time timetable	Leave of absence for a compulsory school age pupil subject to a part-time timetable
D	Dual registered	Dual registered to another school
G	Family holiday (not agreed)	Unauthorised absence as pupil on a family holiday, not agreed, or is taking days more than an agreed family holiday
I	Illness	Illness (not medical or dental appointment)
J1	Leave of absence - Interview for employment or transfer to another educational institution	Leave of absence for the purpose of attending an interview for employment or

		for admission to another educational institution
K	Alternative provision provided by LA	Attending education provision arranged by the local authority
L	Late (before registers closed)	Late arrival before the register closed
M	Medical or dental appointment	Leave of absence for the purpose of attending a medical or dental appointment
N	No reason yet provided for absence	Reason absence not yet established
O	Absence in other or unknown circumstance	Absence in other or unknown circumstance
P	Participating in sports activity	Participating in sports activity
Q	Unable to attend - lack of access arrangements	Unable to attend the school because of lack of access arrangements
R	Religious observance	Religious observance
S	Study leave for public examination	Study leave for public examination
T	Traveling with parent for occupational purposes	Traveling with parent for occupational purposes
U	Late (after registers closed)	Late (after registers closed)
V	Attending an educational visit or trip	Attending an educational visit or trip
W	Attending work experience	Attending work experience
X	Not required to attend-non-compulsory school age pupil	Not required to attend-non-compulsory school age pupil
Y1	Unable to attend - Transport not available	Unable to attend due to transport normally provided not being provided
Y2	Unable to attend - widespread travel emergency	Unable to attend due to widespread disruption to travel
Y3	Unable to attend - unavoidable partial closure	Unable to attend due to part of the school premises being closed.
Y4	Unable to attend - unavoidable full closure	Unable to attend due to the whole schools' site being unexpectedly closed
Y5	Unable to attend - criminal justice detention	Unable to attend as pupil is in criminal justice detention
Y6	Unable to attend - Public Health Guidance / Law	Unable to attend in accordance with public health guidance or law
Y7	Unable to attend - Unavoidable other than Y1-Y6	Unable to attend because of any other unavoidable cause.
Z	Pupil not on roll	Prospective pupil not on admission requester

#	Planned whole school closure	Planned whole school closure
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Registers will be called promptly at **9.15** and **1.20** by the class teacher.

Registers will close at **9.30** and **1.30**.

### **Categorising Absence**

A mark will be made in respect of each pupil during registration. Any pupil who is not present at this time will be marked unauthorised absent unless leave has been granted by the school in advance or the reason for absence is already known and accepted by the school as legitimate. Where a reason for absence is given and accepted by the school at a later stage, the register will be amended in such a way that the original entry and the amendment / correction are distinguishable.

School staff will amend the registers to indicate lateness if a pupil arrives after the register closes.

School recognises the clear links between attendance and attainment, and attendance and safeguarding children. If absence is frequent or continuous, and except where a pupil is clearly unwell, staff at Welburn Hall School will challenge parents about the need and reasons for their child's absence and will encourage them to keep absences to a minimum. A note or explanation from a child's home does not mean an absence becomes authorised. The decision whether or not to authorise an absence **will always rest with the school**.

Absences will be authorised in the following circumstances:

- (a) where leave has been granted by the school in advance, for example -
  - a pupil is involved in an **exceptional** special occasion e.g. family wedding
  - in **exceptional** circumstances, where permission has been granted for a family holiday for which the parents have sought permission in advance
- (b) where the school is satisfied that the child is too ill to attend;
- (c) where the pupil has a medical appointment (although parents should be encouraged to make these out of school hours wherever possible, and to return their child to school immediately afterwards - or send him/her to school beforehand);
- (d) where there is an unavoidable cause for the absence which is beyond the family's control, e.g. extreme weather conditions;
- (e) the absence occurs on a day exclusively set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parent belongs;
- (f) the pupil lives more than two miles (if he/she is under eight) or three miles (if he/she has reached eight) and no suitable transport arrangements have

been made by the Local Authority;

- (g) the pupil is of no fixed abode, his/her parent is engaged in a trade which requires him/her to travel, the pupil has attended school as often as the nature of the trade permits **and**, having reached the age of six, he/she has attended 200 sessions in the preceding 12 months;
- (h) in other **exceptional circumstances** (e.g. a family bereavement) and **for a very limited period**.

Except in the circumstances described above, absences will be unauthorised.

Some examples of reasons for **not** authorising absence would be:

- no explanation has been given by the parent/carer;
- the school is not satisfied with the explanation;
- the pupil is shopping during school hours;
- the pupil is absent for **unexceptional** reasons, e.g. a birthday;
- the pupil is absent from school on a family holiday without prior permission;
- the pupil has been stopped during a truancy sweep and is unable (or the parent/carer is unable) to give a satisfactory reason for the absence.

### **Approved Educational Activity**

Where a pupil is engaged in off-site approved educational activities, the school will check his/her attendance on a daily basis before entering the appropriate code in the register.

### **Collection and Analysis of Data**

A member of the school's office staff will ensure that attendance data is complete, accurate, analysed and reported to the Headteacher.

Accurate attendance returns are made to the DfE within the stipulated time frame.

### **Systems and Strategies for Managing and Improving Pupil Attendance**

1. On a daily basis office staff will go through the registers between 9.30 am and 10.00 and any absences will be noted. If no explanation has been received, school will attempt to contact the parent/carer immediately in line with our safeguarding responsibilities?

2. If the child returns to school with no explanation of the absence from their parent/carer, a letter will be sent to the parent/carer requesting this information.

3. If a pattern of concern re attendance is developing, the Headteacher will speak to the parent/carer about their child's pattern of absences.
4. If there is no significant improvement, the Headteacher will contact the parents/carers and invite them into school to discuss attendance.
5. Once point 4 is reached the Education Welfare Officer should receive copies of all previous attempts made.

### **Parents' / Carers' Responsibilities**

The prime responsibility for ensuring children receive an appropriate and full-time education rests with parents/carers (defined by the Education Act 1996 as those with parental responsibility and those who have the care of a child), who will be supported and encouraged by Welburn Hall Special School.

The Education Act 1996 states that all children should attend school regularly and punctually. Section 444 of the Act says:-

“If a child of compulsory school age who is a registered pupil at a school fails to attend regularly at the school, his parent is guilty of an offence”.

(NB Where the Education Act refers to “he”, it also means “she”)

Welburn Hall Special School expects parents/carers will:

- ensure their children attend the school regularly;
- support their children's attendance by keeping requests for absence to a minimum;
- not expect the school to automatically agree any requests for absence, and not condone unjustified absence from school.

Parents/carers will also be expected to:

- notify school by telephone on the morning of the first day of absence and confirm in writing in the home/school book upon their child's return to school;
- ensure their child arrives at school on time, properly dressed and with the right equipment for the day;
- work in partnership with the school, for example by attending parents' /carers' meetings and consultations, taking an interest in their child's work and activities;
- contact the school without delay if they are concerned about any aspects of their child's school life. Welburn Hall Special School will endeavor to support parents/carers to address their concerns

### **Conclusion**

Regular school attendance is a necessary contributor to ensuring positive outcomes for all children. These include:

- good school attendance supports children in reaching their maximum potential and enjoying the fulfilment this brings;
- the best way to safeguard children is to ensure they attend school regularly;
- regular attendance at school supports children's emotional and social health and development;
- the school curriculum teaches children to be healthy;
- schools and the LA have a statutory duty to promote the safety and welfare of children;
- membership of a school community builds confidence, gives children a sense of belonging and teaches them to contribute to and be responsible for the well-being of others;
- good school attendance supports engagement in further education, employment or training in the future, which in turn helps to support a prosperous and fulfilling life-style.

### **Reviewing the Policy**

The school will review this policy each year.

### **Equality Impact Assessment**

This policy has been screened for potential adverse impact on specific groups within the school community. It is not believed that this policy will have any such adverse impact.



## A GUIDE FOR PARENTS/CARERS

### 1. When does my child need to be in school?

School opens for pupils at 8.50 a.m. Your child should be ready in good time for the school transport to ensure that they arrive on time.

### 2. Does the school need letters explaining my child's absence or will a phone call do?

We would expect a parent/carer to telephone the school on the first day of absence before 9.30am and confirm in writing in the child's home/school book upon their return. If you do not phone us, we will try to contact you. We ask all parents to provide two updated emergency contact telephone numbers to enable us to contact you. Do we already have these?

If we do not receive an explanation, or if the explanation is unsatisfactory, we will not authorise the absence, and this will be shown on your child's end of year report.

### 3. What reasons will the school accept for absences?

- Illness
- Dental/medical appointment (Please make routine appointments after school or during the holidays, wherever possible)
- Day of religious observance
- Family bereavement
- **Exceptional** special occasions, eg a family wedding, where permission has been granted in advance using a Special Leave of Absence Request form
- Other **exceptional** circumstances, where permission has been granted in advance using a Special Leave of Absence Request form
- Attending an interview e.g. for college

Except in the case of illness, you should ask for permission for your child to miss school well in advance, giving full details. In cases of recurring absences through illness you may be asked to produce a medical certificate.

### 4. What is unacceptable?

The school will not authorise absence for day trips, visiting relatives, shopping or birthdays.

**5. Will the school contact me if my child is absent?**

We would expect a parent/carer to telephone the school before 9.30am on the first day of absence. If you do not phone us, we will try to contact you. This is to ensure your child's safety as well as their regular school attendance. If we do not receive an explanation, or if the explanation is unsatisfactory, we will not authorise the absence, and this will be shown on your child's Annual Review report.

If we are concerned about aspects of your child's attendance or punctuality we will contact you to discuss the best way forward.

**6. What can I do to encourage my child to attend school?**

Try to make sure your child gets enough sleep and gets up in plenty of time each morning. Ensure that he/she leaves home in the correct clothes and properly equipped. Show your child, by your interest, that you value his/her education.

**7. My child is reluctant to come to school. What should I do?**

Contact your child's teacher and openly discuss your worries. It is important that we identify the reason for your child's reluctance to attend school and work together to resolve the problem.

The school may also refer you to Early Help who sometimes work with staff and families if difficulties with attendance arise.