

# Attendance Policy

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<b>Role:</b>	Principal	Chair of Governors
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## Summary – Attendance at a Glance

### Attendance Matters

Here at Walthamstow Academy, we have the highest expectations across all areas of school life including attendance. We value positive relationships between both staff and students and want all students to feel they belong here and are valued. We work with our students to ensure that they have the highest possible attendance at school. We believe that this is the best way for them to succeed and to get the most out of all we have to offer.

There is a clear link between academic outcomes and school attendance. We want all students to achieve excellent outcomes to give themselves the very best chance in life.

There are 175 non-school days per year for holidays, shopping and appointments. There is no need, except in extreme circumstances to miss a day's education. If you miss one session in a week (remember, there are two sessions per day) your attendance is 90%.

This means you miss 19 days of education in a year and risk dropping one grade in your GCSEs.

It is vital we work together to teach our students the value of attending school each and every day. However, we do appreciate that at times, students may not be able to attend school. We ask our parents and carers to follow the processes below because they support our safeguarding, attendance and behaviour procedures.

Should you have a concern about your child's attendance, then we ask that you contact us to discuss this. We believe in strong partnerships across all parts of school life. This includes attending school.

It is also important to us that students arrive to school on time, and they must be at school by 8:30am.

### Absence through illness or unforeseen circumstances

Call the school (020 8527 3750) before 8:20am on the first and subsequent absent days or email [info@walthamstow.academy.org](mailto:info@walthamstow.academy.org). If you need to leave a message, we ask that you leave your name, your child's name, their form, and the reason for their absence. Do expect to receive a call back from the school to discuss your child's absence and to see if we can support in any way. If students suffer any form of injury, then we ask that you contact the school to make us aware. This is so we can do a risk assessment with you. It will identify impacts of the injury and the support your child may need. See section 7.3 of the full policy for further information.

### Known Absence

Your child may need to miss school for exceptional reasons. If so, parents/carers should ask the Principal. They should use the form below. Where possible, this should be made at least four weeks before the required date. The form should be completed and emailed back to [info@walthamstow.academy.org](mailto:info@walthamstow.academy.org). If such a request is made, the school expects it to be short. But even then, they may not be able to approve it.

If the Principal does not authorise it, then any absence is 'unauthorised' and can incur a penalty.

We must follow legal rules. Therefore, we cannot approve holiday requests during term time. Additionally, we may issue penalty notices. For more details, please check the Attendance Policy and Procedures (section 6.1).

## Support

We take absence very seriously. We are committed to supporting any child who is finding it difficult to attend school regularly. We will target bespoke support where necessary for any student whose attendance falls below 100%. Further information on support can be found in the full policy.

We will do all we can to encourage our students to attend. We will also make available the best provision we can for any student who needs additional support in school or who is prevented from attending school, due to a medical condition.

## Punctuality

The school day starts at 8:30am and we expect your child to be in school at that time. Registers close at 8:40am and arrival after that time will mean the child is late. Lateness means they miss out on important routines which help get their day off to a positive start. Late arriving students also disrupt lessons during the day for others.

### **How we manage lateness to school and lessons**

#### Lateness to school

If your child is late to school, they will be issued a centralised detention on the same day for 50 minutes after school. Parents will receive a text message stating this.

Parents may face prosecution if their child is often late after the register has closed. We'll watch for this and offer support. If the problem persists, we might take action.

#### Lateness to lessons

If your child is late to a lesson, they will be issued a centralised detention on the same day for 50 minutes after school. Parents will receive a text message stating this.

The rest of this document outlines our Attendance Policy and Procedures. We encourage all parents to review it. This ensures they understand how we handle attendance. If getting your child to school is problematic, please email [info@walthamstow-academy.org](mailto:info@walthamstow-academy.org)

## Part A - Policy

### 1. Introduction

This Attendance Policy outlines the culture and approach to supporting good attendance at our academy. The second part of the document outlines the more detailed procedures, roles and responsibilities related to student attendance that operate at our academy. Through all that we do to manage attendance, we are committed to creating a positive learning environment, supporting student achievement, and complying with legal requirements.

This is a successful academy, and all students play their part in making it so. We aim for an environment which enables and encourages all members of the community to be proud to belong and to achieve their best. For our students to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and should be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. It is very important therefore that parents<sup>1</sup> make sure that children attend regularly, and this policy sets out how together we will achieve this.

Regular attendance at school is of critical importance to a child's education. Evidence tells us that the students with the highest attainment at the end of key stage 4 have higher rates of attendance over the key stage compared to those with the lowest attainment. Any absence affects the pattern of a student's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any student's absence disrupts the learning of others in the same teaching groups by disrupting classroom routines. **Ensuring your child's regular attendance is your legal responsibility.**

We will work together with parents to improve attendance as necessary for each child, successfully treating the root causes of absence and removing barriers at home, in school or more broadly. This may include liaising with local partners who will work collaboratively in partnership with families. All partners should work together using a 'support first approach':

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<b>Support first approach (as set out on page 6 of the DFE Guidance)</b>	
<b>Expect</b>	Aspire to high standards of attendance from all students and parents and build a culture where all can, and want to, be in school and ready to learn by prioritising attendance improvement across the school.
<b>Monitor</b>	Rigorously use attendance data to identify patterns of poor attendance (at individual and cohort level) as soon as possible so all parties can work together to resolve them before they become entrenched.
<b>Listen and understand</b>	When a pattern is spotted, discuss with students and parents to listen to and understand barriers to attendance and agree how all partners can work together to resolve them.
<b>Facilitate support</b>	Remove barriers in school and help students and parents to access the support they need to overcome the barriers outside of school. This might include an early help or whole family plan where absence is a symptom of wider issues.
<b>Formalise support</b>	Where absence persists and voluntary support is not working or not being engaged with, partners should work together to explain the consequences clearly and ensure support is also in place to enable families to respond. Depending on the circumstances this may include formalising support through an attendance contract or education supervision order.

<b>Enforce</b>	Where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or not being engaged with, enforce attendance through statutory intervention: a penalty notice in line with the National Framework or prosecution to protect the student’s right to an education.
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<sup>1</sup> The definition of a parent can be found in the Education Act 1996, and this applies to all the legislation to which this guidance relates. In addition to the child's birth parents, references to parents in this guidance include any person who has parental responsibility (which includes the local authority where it has a care order in respect of the child) and any person (for example, a foster carer) who has care of the child. To reflect this, this guidance uses ‘parent’ to refer to both parents and carers.

## 2. Aims

Our aim is to create a school environment where children feel they belong and want to come to school. We believe our school is a great place to learn, and that being in school day in, day out, is in the best interests of all our students. However, we recognise that there will be times when there may be barriers that prevent children from attending school. In these instances, we will act early to understand the issue, provide support and work with the child and their family to get them back to regular attendance as quickly as possible.

We believe that one of the most important factors in promoting good attendance is the development of positive attitudes towards school and a sense of belonging. To this end, we strive to make our school a happy and rewarding experience for all children, and to foster positive and mutually respectful relationships with parents.

By promoting good attendance and punctuality we aim to:

- Make good attendance and punctuality a priority for all those involved in the school community.
- Raise our students’ awareness of the importance of good attendance and punctuality.
- Provide support, advice and guidelines to parents, students and staff.
- Work in partnership with parents, including regularly informing them about their child’s absence and attendance levels.
- Support students back into school following a lengthy or unavoidable period of absence and provide support to build confidence and bridge gaps.
- Celebrate and reward good attendance and punctuality.

This policy will be applied fairly and consistently, considering the individual needs of our students and their families who have specific barriers to attendance. Therefore, in the development of our policy we have considered our obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

We will support parents to perform their legal duty to ensure their children of compulsory<sup>2</sup> school age attend regularly and will promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

We want our students to go to school every day unless they are not well enough to attend. We believe that children who attend school regularly are more likely to feel settled in school, maintain friendships, keep up with their learning and gain the greatest benefit from their education. We want all our students to enjoy school, grow up to become emotionally resilient, confident and competent

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<sup>2</sup> A child becomes of ‘compulsory school age’ on the 1st January, 1st April or 1st September following their 5th birthday and ceases to be of compulsory school age on the last Friday in June of Year 11.

adults who can realise their full potential. Regular attendance and punctuality are essential in the workplace and children who are used to attending school on time, and on every occasion unless they are too unwell to attend, will be better prepared for the attendance expectations in the workplace.

In April 2017 the Supreme Court clarified the definition of regular attendance to be attendance “in accordance with the rules prescribed by the school”, therefore if an absence is not authorised by the school, the student’s attendance is deemed to be irregular.

Please see DfE guidance documents [‘Supporting pupils at school with medical conditions - December 2015’](#), [‘Ensuring a good education for children who cannot attend school because of health needs- January 2013’](#) and [Mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance: guidance for schools - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#) – or ask the school for printed copies.

### 2.1. Effects of non-attendance

The table below indicates how what might seem like just a few days absence can result in children missing a significant number of lessons.

Attendance during school year	Days lost in a year	Which is approximately	Approximate number of lessons missed
95%	9.5 Days	2 Weeks	50 Lessons
90%	19 Days	4 Weeks	100 Lessons

### 3. Safeguarding and Attendance

Our school will monitor trends and patterns of absence for all students as a part of our standard procedures. However, we are aware that sudden or gradual changes in a student’s attendance may indicate additional or more extreme safeguarding issues. In line with government guidance [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#) we will investigate and report any suspected safeguarding cases on to the relevant authorities. As part of our safeguarding duty and our standard procedures, we will inform the Local Authority and/or the Police of the details of any student who is absent from school when the school cannot establish their whereabouts and is concerned for the student’s welfare.

### 4. Legislation and Guidance

This policy meets the requirements of [Working together to improve school attendance](#) from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE’s 2015 statutory guidance on [School Attendance Parental Responsibility Measures](#). These documents are drawn from legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance including:

- The Education Act 1996
- The Children Act 1989
- The Crime and Disorder Act 1998
- The Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003
- The Education and Inspections Act 2006
- The Sentencing Act 2020
- The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024
- The Education (Parenting Contracts and Parenting Orders) (England) Regulations 2007
- The Education (Information about Individual Pupils) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2024
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendments) Regulations 2024



## 5. Using data to support improvements in attendance

Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence may seriously affect their learning. The Department for Education (DfE) defines a student as a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year, for whatever reason. For students who miss more than 50% of possible sessions they are defined as 'severely absent'.

The school will ensure that data, including the DfE's View Your Education Data platform, is routinely monitored to identify emerging attendance issues and will seek to prevent any student becoming persistently or severely absent. This will include: identifying the individual needs of students; working closely with families and wider support services to remove barriers to attendance; and where a formalised approach in conjunction with the local authority is required in line with the DfE guidance [Working Together to Improve School Attendance](#).

## 6. Understanding Barriers to Attendance

In relation to understanding barriers to attendance, we will ensure all students and parents are treated with dignity and staff will model respectful relationships to build a positive understanding between home and school that can be the foundation of good attendance. In communicating with parents, we will highlight the link between attendance and attainment and wider wellbeing and enhance their understanding of what good attendance looks like. Where a student or family needs support with attendance we will identify who is best placed to work with them to address issues.

We will support students and parents by working together to address any in-school barriers to attendance. Where barriers are outside of the school's control, all partners should work together to support students and parents to access any support they may need voluntarily.

Where absence intensifies, so should the support provided, which will require the school to work in tandem with the local authority and other relevant partners.

Some students face greater barriers to attendance than their peers. These can include students who suffer from long term medical conditions or who have special educational needs and disabilities. In working with parents to improve attendance, we are mindful of the barriers these students face and will put additional support in place where necessary to help them access their full-time education.

The school is committed to share information and work collaboratively with other schools in the area, local authorities and other partners when absence is at risk of becoming persistent or severe.

## 7. Staff Training on Attendance

Improving attendance requires knowledge of guidance and regulations but also expertise in working with families to remove barriers to attendance and safeguard students. Just as those barriers are regularly evolving, so too is the training that school staff require to address them. The school therefore will facilitate training for all staff to understand

- the importance of good attendance and that absence is almost always a symptom of wider circumstances,
- the law and requirements of schools including on the keeping of registers
- the school/trust strategies and procedures for tracking, following up and improving attendance,
- the processes for working with other partners to provide more intensive support to students who need it.

For staff with specialist attendance responsibilities, they will receive training to include

- the necessary skills to interpret and analyse attendance data,
- and any additional training that would be beneficial to support students and student cohorts overcome commonly seen barriers to attendance.

## Part B - What the Law Says and Our Procedures

### 1. Roles and Responsibilities

#### Daily Attendance Procedures

Task	Time	Person Responsible
Contact the academy to inform us of any unplanned absence	By 8.20am	Parents
Take the morning register in form or assembly	By 8.40am	Tutors
Take P1 register	By 9.10am	P1 Teachers
Collate the attendance registers and parent messages to produce a list of students absent for no known reason	By 9.30am	Attendance Officer
Send a text to all parents of students in Years 7-11 on the above list	By 9.30am	Attendance Officer
Use Invenry to update Sixth Form attendance, then send message to parents of students in Years 12-13 on above list	By 9.30am	Sixth Form Supervisor
Take P2 register	By 10.10am	P2 Teachers
Update registers according to replies from parents	By 10.30am	Attendance Officer
Take P3 register	By 11.30am	P3 Teachers
Take P4 register	By 12.30pm	P4 Teachers
Take P5 register	By 2.20pm	P5 Teachers
Check inconsistent marks and correct if needed	Through Day	Attendance Officer

#### Weekly Attendance Procedures

Task	Person Responsible
Attendance team meet once per week. Standing Items: i) Off roll authorisations ii) Concerning low attendance cases and actions agreed. iii) Identification of vulnerable groups, monitoring and actions iv) Review of current procedures with suggestions for improvement	SLT lead for attendance chairs the meeting with DSL, SLT lead for behaviour, SENCO and Attendance Officer
Letters sent to parents where attendance is a concern and a stage of intervention is in operation	Attendance Officer as directed by SLT.

The attendance of each student in the academy is reviewed for the week and considered over time. Every student whose attendance is under 100% is examined to look at causes for this. Notes are added to our attendance tracking document when needed.	Attendance Officer
Stages of intervention reviewed using latest attendance tracking document and students moved in or out of stages depending on the progress they have made with attendance.	Attendance Officer
Weekly Year Team attendance bulletin is produced and distributed to each year groups for dissemination in assembly	Attendance Officer

### Stages of Attendance Intervention

Stage	Person Responsible	Description
1 – Attendance Contact	Attendance Officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For students with 93-94.9% attendance.</li> <li>• Students are added to this stage if there is no single, compelling reason for their low attendance.</li> <li>• A letter is sent home to parents/carers offering support to help improve their child’s attendance.</li> <li>• Continue monitoring attendance over period of one-half term.</li> <li>• Attendance officer to find out why the student’s attendance is below 100%, offer support and action bespoke intervention with relevant staff.</li> </ul>
2 - Attendance Pledge	Head of Year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For students with 90-92.9% attendance.</li> <li>• Students are added to this stage if there is no single, compelling reason for their low attendance.</li> <li>• A letter is sent home inviting the parent/carer in for a meeting to offer support on how to improve their child’s attendance. Heads of Year to understand why the student is absent from school and what bespoke action to take next.</li> <li>• Heads of Year manage their caseload of students in Stage 2. They will usually delegate their Stage 2 students to tutors, but in some circumstances may decide to work with the student themselves.</li> <li>• Students have a conversation at least once a week with the person they are assigned to. This conversation covers: any absence that week, actions taken to catch up, actions needed to avoid absence again.</li> <li>• Attendance Officer organises an encouraging text home when students in Stage 2 have good attendance over the course of a week.</li> <li>• Students would move to Stage 3 if their attendance dropped further to below 90%.</li> </ul>

3 – Attendance Contract	SLT lead on attendance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students with attendance lower than 90% with no single, compelling reason for absence.</li> <li>• Parents/carers sent a letter to offer support by inviting them in for an attendance meeting and advice on how to improve attendance. The letter also makes the legal status of attendance clear.</li> <li>• If there is no improvement with attendance, SLT lead for attendance calls parent/carers inviting them in for a meeting to discuss why their child is absent and what the school can do to support. Parents to sign a bespoke attendance contract that outlines the support in school.</li> <li>• If there is no further improvement students move to Stage 4.</li> <li>• Attendance Officer organises an encouraging text home when students in Stage 3 have good attendance over the course of a week.</li> </ul>
4 – Attendance review (Child Missing in Education)	SLT lead on attendance and DSL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For students with high levels of absence.</li> <li>• Attendance Officer manages this system and records actions on the master attendance spreadsheet. All of these actions are requested by the academy but administered by Waltham Forest Child Missing in Education Service (BACME)</li> <li>• In extreme cases if there is still no improvement in attendance then we will make a referral to court for prosecution. If accepted, the parent/carers responsible for the student will be taken to court, prosecuted and may be fined, or in extreme cases they can be sentenced to time in prison</li> </ul>

### **The Local Governing Body**

The Local Governing Body is responsible for monitoring attendance figures for the whole school on at least a termly basis. It also holds the Principal to account for the implementation of this policy.

### **The Principal – Emma Skae**

Emma Skae is responsible for ensuring this policy is implemented consistently across the school, and for monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors.

Emma Skae also supports other staff in monitoring the attendance of individual students and requests fixed-penalty notices, where necessary.

### **The Attendance Champion – SLT**

SLT lead on attendance will analyse attendance by group, such as students entitled to Free School Meals, Pupil Premium students, students with SEND, Children in Care, attendance by Ethnicity and Language (English/EAL).

### **Attendance Officer – Attendance Officer**

- Monitors attendance data at the school and individual student level.
- Reports concerns about attendance to the Principal and Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) as appropriate.

- Arranges calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues.
- Co-ordinates requests for Term-time Leave of Absence (this includes liaison with the DSL and Safeguarding Team) and advises the Principal as requested.

#### **Head of Year, Deputy Head of Year and Student Support Officer**

- Review all weekly attendance reports received from the Attendance Officer
- Follow up on actions sent from the weekly attendance meeting
- Check in on students that have returned to school following a period of absence
- Arrange to meet parents of students whose attendance is of concern
- Delegate phone calls home and student check ins to tutors
- Deliver weekly attendance assemblies

#### **Class Teachers/Form Tutors**

Class teachers and form tutors are responsible for recording attendance daily, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the school office.

## **2. Contents of the Admissions Register**

The admission register (sometimes referred to as the school roll) must contain specific personal details of every student in the school along with the date of admission or re-admission to the school, information regarding parents and carers, and details of the school last attended. The school will enter students on the admission register at the beginning of the first day on which the school has agreed with, or been notified by the parent, that the student will attend.

A student's name can only lawfully be deleted from the admission register if a reason set out in regulation 9 of the **School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024**.

It is vital that the admission register is kept up to date, it is a legal document. Therefore, we encourage parents to inform the school of any changes whenever they occur and ensure the admission register is amended as soon as possible.

## **3. Contents of Attendance Register**

The law makes it clear that schools must take the attendance register at the start of the morning session of each school day and once during the afternoon session. On each occasion the register is taken, the appropriate attendance and absence code must be entered for every student. Please refer to **Working Together To Improve School Attendance** for the code descriptors and also **Appendix 2** of this document. The school must record whether each student is:

- Attending, or
- Absent

Effective and timely use and sharing of register data is critical to safeguard children, improve attendance and is supported using our electronic Management Information System to record attendance information. Our registers will be preserved for 6 years from the date after the last entry was made.

## **4. Attending the School (and Lateness)**

Students are marked present (/ \) if they are in school when the register is taken. If a student leaves the school premises after registration they are still counted as present for statistical purposes.

It is the duty of parents to ensure that children attend school on time. This encourages habits of good timekeeping and lessens any possible classroom disruption.

Our students must arrive by 8:30 am on each school day.

Our morning register is taken at 8:30 am and will be kept open until 8:40 am

Our afternoon register is taken at 1:10 pm and will be kept open until 1:20 pm

A student who arrives late but before the register has closed will be marked as late (L) – which counts as present.

If a student arrives after the register has closed they will be marked with the unauthorised absence code “Late after registers close” (U) which is an unauthorised absence mark.

However, if the student is late arriving due to a valid reason such as an unavoidable medical appointment, the absence will be authorised and coded accordingly. See DfE guidance [Working together to improve school attendance](#)

## 5. Attending a place other than the school

Students are marked as attending a place other than the school if they are present for the assigned session. These codes include:

- Code K Attending education provision arranged by the local authority
- Code V: Attending an educational visit or trip
- Code P: Participating in a sporting activity
- Code W: Attending work experience
- Code B: Attending any other approved education activity
- Code D: Dual registered at another setting

Our school retains responsibilities for the safeguarding and welfare of students attending an approved educational activity. Our school must be satisfied that appropriate measures have been taken to safeguard the student. Our school should ensure that we have in place arrangements whereby providers notify the school of any absence. Our school must record the student’s absence using the relevant absence code.

If a student is attending an alternative education provider such as another school or Pupil Referral Unit for part or all of their education, our school will make arrangements for the student to be dual registered at the other setting and mark our registers accordingly.

If a student is attending an alternative education provider arranged by the school, which is not a school or Pupil Referral Unit, for part or all their education, we will mark the sessions which the student attends the alternative setting as code B (any other approved educational activity).

The school expects the alternative provision (AP) to notify us of any absences by individual students, to ensure we become aware of any attendance concerns as soon as possible and take follow up action as necessary. Attendance updates will be requested on a weekly basis, or more frequently if agreed with the alternative setting. Any attendance concerns will be followed up by us, in conjunction with the Alternative Provision (AP).

## 6. Absent – Leave of absence

A leave of absence means that the school has given approval in advance for a student of compulsory school age to be away from the school. These codes are classified for statistical purposes as ‘authorised absence’ which means the student’s absence is with permission granted by the school. These codes include:

- Code C1: Leave of absence for the purpose of participating in a regulated performance or undertaking regulated employment abroad
- Code M: Leave of absence for the purpose of attending a medical or dental appointment
- Code J1: Leave of absence for the purpose of attending an interview for employment or for admission to another educational institution
- Code S: Leave of absence for the purpose of studying for a public examination
- Code X: Non-compulsory school age student not required to attend school
- Code C2: Leave of absence for a compulsory school age student subject to a part-time timetable
- Code C: Leave of absence for exceptional circumstance

### 6.1. Leave of Absence Requests – ‘Exceptional Circumstances’

**The law does not grant parents the automatic right to take their child out of school during term time.**

Only exceptional circumstances warrant an authorised leave of absence. Generally, a need or desire for a holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure and recreation would not constitute an exceptional circumstance. The school will consider each application individually, considering the specific facts and circumstances and relevant background context behind the request. The request must be made by the parent with whom the child normally lives, and permission must be sought in advance. The school will not grant leave of absence unless there are exceptional circumstances. The school must be satisfied that there are exceptional circumstances, based on the individual facts and circumstances of the case; following consultation with other staff as required, including the Designated Safeguarding Lead. Where a leave of absence is granted, the school will determine the number of days the student can be away from school. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the school’s discretion.

Circumstances which could be authorised include significant family emergencies or funerals. However, parents will also be aware that, wherever possible, it can be better for children to continue to attend school normally during difficult family times.

Parents should complete a Leave of Absence Request. Please email [info@walthamstow-academy.org](mailto:info@walthamstow-academy.org) for more details.

The request should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated; and wherever possible, at least **four weeks** before the absence. **Although such absence may be unauthorised, it is better that we know your child is safe, rather than missing.** Please be aware that you may be required to provide us with additional evidence to support your request. If we have any concerns about possible safeguarding risks such as risk of FGM or Forced Marriage, we will follow the necessary protocols.

All term time absence for children in care should be discussed at the child’s Personal Education Planning (PEP) meeting in advance where possible and agreed with the Social Care and Virtual School. This permission should be gained before school is approached for approval. The school will contact the Virtual School in relation to any requests for term time absence for a child in care.

### 6.2 Medical/Dental Appointments

Parents should try to make appointments outside school hours wherever possible. Where appointments during school time are unavoidable, the student should only be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary for the appointment. It is not acceptable for a child to miss a whole day’s schooling for an appointment, unless necessary, in which case the school will need an explanation as to why this is.

No student will be allowed to leave the school site to attend a medical appointment during the school day without parental confirmation.



Advance notice is required for medical or dental appointments, unless it's an emergency appointment, and must be supported by providing the school with sight of, or a copy of, the appointment card or letter – only then will the absence be authorised. Please email [info@walthamstow-academy.org](mailto:info@walthamstow-academy.org)

### 6.3 Part-time timetables - Leave of absence for a compulsory school age student subject to a part-time timetable

Students are entitled to a full-time education, suitable to their age, ability and aptitude, and any special educational needs or disabilities that they may have.

If, for any reason, our school is unable to provide a student with a full-time education due to the student's needs, we will work with the student, parent and other agencies where appropriate, to come to a mutually convenient arrangement. Any reduced timetables will be for the shortest amount of time possible, whilst arrangements are made to support the student's return to full-time provision as soon as possible.

## 7. Absent – other authorised reasons

Absent due to other authorised reasons means that the school has given approval in advance for a student of compulsory school age to be away from the school or has accepted an explanation offered afterwards as justification for absence. These codes are classified for statistical purposes as 'authorised absence'. These codes include:

- Code T: Parent travelling for occupational purposes
- Code R: Religious observance
- Code I: Illness (not medical or dental appointment)
- Code E: Suspended or permanently excluded and no alternative provision made

### 7.1. Mobile student - Parent travelling for occupational purposes

The school will authorise the absence of a mobile student of no fixed abode who is unable to attend school because they are travelling with their parent who is engaged in a trade or business of such a nature as to require them to travel from place to place. This is subject to certain limits, depending on the child's age and number of sessions absent. The school will discuss cases individually with Traveller parents as necessary. Parents should let the school know of their plans as far in advance as possible. Authorised Traveller absence will be recorded appropriately in the register.

To help ensure continuity of education for Traveller children, wherever possible, the child should attend school elsewhere when their family is travelling for occupational purposes. In which case the child will be dual registered at that school and this school, which is their 'main' school.

Children from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities whose families do not travel for occupational purposes are expected to register at school and attend as normal. They are subject to the same rules as other children in terms of the requirement to attend school regularly.

### 7.2. Religious Observance

Our school acknowledges the multi-faith nature of the school community and recognises that on some occasions, religious festivals may fall outside of school holidays or weekends.

In accordance with the law, the school will authorise **one day's absence** for a day exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the parent belongs. Should any additional days be necessary, they should be requested in advance using the leave of absence in term time process. Additional days taken without exceptional circumstances will be recorded in the register as unauthorised absence. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body, to confirm whether the day is set apart.

### 7.3. Illness

In most cases, absences for illness which are reported by following the school's absence reporting procedures will be authorised. That is unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

The school follows Department for Education guidance '[Working together to improve school attendance \(applies from 19 August 2024\) \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)' 2024<sup>3</sup> which states that if the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may ask the parent to provide medical evidence, such as a prescription, appointment card, or other appropriate form of evidence.

Where a parent cannot provide any written evidence, we will endeavour to have a conversation with the parent and student, if appropriate, which may itself serve as the necessary evidence to record the absence.

We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily. In some instances, the school may ask the parent to obtain a letter from a GP, or the school may seek parental permission to contact the student's GP directly to help support the needs of the individual student.

If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised.

Where a student has a high level and/or frequency of absence, the school may require medical evidence of some description in order to authorise any future medical absences. If this is the case, the school will make the parent/s aware of this expectation in advance.

The reporting of absence due to illness remains the responsibility of the parent. Absences due to illness which have **not** been reported to the school by the parent on the first day of absence may not be authorised.

#### **Mental Health and Wellbeing**

Parents who have concerns about their child's mental wellbeing can contact our school's Designated Safeguarding Lead and/or our Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead for further information on the support available.

Parents should also contact their GP or the NHS Helpline by phoning telephone number 111 for advice if they are concerned. In case of emergency parents should dial 999.

#### **Students taken ill during the school day**

If a student needs to be sent home due to illness, this should be by agreement with an appropriately authorised member of school staff. In such circumstances, no student will be allowed to leave the school site without parental confirmation.

### 7.4. Suspensions (Exclusions)

In this policy, the word 'suspension' is used to refer to what legislation calls an exclusion for a fixed period. Suspensions and permanent exclusions are both types of exclusion, and where this policy uses the word 'exclusion' this includes both suspensions (fixed-period exclusions) and permanent exclusions.

If the school decides to send a student home due to their behaviour, this will be recorded as an suspension. The school will follow the current [DfE's statutory guidance on suspensions and permanent exclusions](#). The full behaviour and exclusions policy for our school can be found here [WA Behaviour Policy](#). Any suspension **must** be agreed by the Principal.

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<sup>3</sup> Please ask the school for a printed copy of Working Together to Improve School Attendance if required

The school will notify the parent of the exclusion in writing. If the student's is a Child in Care, the school will notify the student's carer, social worker and the Virtual School. In other instances, where a student is open to Children's Social Care for any reason, the school will also inform their allocated social worker.

No student will be allowed to leave the school site without parental confirmation.

## 8. Absent – unable to attend school because of unavoidable cause

In accordance with DfE school attendance guidance, our school will record students as 'Unable to attend school because of unavoidable cause' in the following circumstances (such circumstances are not recorded as absences and are not counted as possible attendances):

- Code Q: Unable to attend because of a lack of access arrangements
- Code Y1: Unable to attend due to transport normally provided not being available
- Code Y2: Unable to attend due to widespread disruption to travel
- Code Y3: Unable to attend due to part of the school premises being closed
- Code Y4: Unable to attend due to the whole school site being unexpectedly closed
- Code Y5: Unable to attend as student is in criminal justice detention
- Code Y6: Unable to attend in accordance with public health guidance or law
- Code Y7: Unable to attend because of any other unavoidable cause

## 9. Absent - unauthorised absence

Unauthorised absence is where a school is not satisfied with the reasons given for the absence or no reason for absence was provided.

Absence will be unauthorised if a student is absent from school without the permission of the school. Whilst parents can provide explanations for absences, it is the school's decision whether to authorise the absence or not.

Unauthorised absence includes:

- Absences which have never been properly explained
- Students who arrive at school too late to get a mark
- Shopping
- Birthdays
- Waiting at home for a washing machine to be mended, or a parcel to be delivered
- Day trips
- Long weekends and holidays in term time (unless very exceptional circumstances are agreed in writing, in advance by the school)
- In the case of term time leave - if a student is kept away from school longer than was agreed, the additional absence is unauthorised

Unauthorised absences may result in Legal Sanctions, usually Penalty Notices or Prosecutions. The unauthorised absence codes include:

- Code G – Holiday not granted by the school
- Code N – Reason for absence not yet established
- Code O – Absent in other or unknown circumstances
- Code U – Arrived in school after registration closed

## 10. Administrative codes

Where necessary and applicable, our school will use the defined administrative codes. These codes are not collected for statistical purposes and are:

- Code Z: Prospective student not on admissions register
- Code #: Planned whole school closure

## 11. First Day of Absence Response

Staff at the academy with responsibility for taking registers are fulfilling an important legal duty. It is the academy's expectation that all registers are:

- Taken within the first 10 minutes of a lesson beginning
- Taken by the member of staff reading out each student's name, and only filling in a present mark when they are certain the student has answered their name. The class should be in absolute silence whilst this happens so that the register is accurate.
- Filled in thoroughly, with students marked absent or late as needed. Absent marks should always be changed to late marks as any student arrives.

If a student is absent to a lesson during the day, but they have been present in all other lessons that day and no planned absence has been recorded in the register then they are to be considered missing in school. An email should be sent to the student absence address immediately. The Reception will:

- Check to see if the student has a planned absence (for example a dentist's appointment).
- If they do not, then Reception will call the member of staff that is on sense check who will search the academy for the student.

Parents will be asked to supply details of **at least three** people who can be contacted in an emergency, and these details will be reviewed on a termly basis through parents' evenings and emails from the school.

If the school is unable to contact any of the emergency numbers provided, and is concerned for the welfare of the student, we may undertake our own 'safe and well' checks and/or request a Welfare Check from the police.

## 12. Rewarding Good Attendance and Improved Attendance

Students with 100% attendance, sustained good attendance (above 98%) or attendance that has increased from the previous week will receive a positive letter home and a shout out from the Head of Year in assembly. Tutors will also make regular calls home to students that have improved attendance.

## 13. Support for Poor School Attendance (other than unauthorised term time leave)

Sometimes students can be reluctant to attend school. We encourage parents and students to be open and honest with us about the reason for the student's absence. If a child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or for a parent to give in to pressure to let the child stay at home. This can give the impression to the child that attendance does not matter and can make things worse. As a school, we need to understand the reasons why a student is reluctant to attend to be able to support students and parents in the best way.

When we have concerns about the attendance of a student, we will do our best to make the parent/s aware of the concerns about their child's attendance and give them the opportunity to address this. However, if parents do not make use of the support offered and improve their child's attendance to an acceptable level, this may result in legal sanctions. Where there are no genuine reasons for the absences, parents may be asked to meet with the Attendance Champion to discuss the matter. In some cases, this may result in a formal action plan being produced in the form of an Attendance Contract.

If our school refers a case of poor school attendance to the Local Authority for legal sanctions, we will show that we have warned the parent/s that they are at risk of receiving a Penalty Notice or other legal sanction. This will at least be evidenced via the sending of a Notice to Improve – attendance warning letter.

We will not usually request legal sanctions from the Local Authority in cases where poor attendance is symptomatic of complex family circumstances. In such circumstances our school will take a holistic approach to the issue and involve other agencies as necessary. The exception to this will be where parents fail to accept or engage with support offered by the school and/or other agencies or fail to implement the suggested changes. Again, when referring for legal sanctions, we will show that we have warned the parent/s that they are at risk of receiving a Penalty Notice or other legal sanction.

If our school has safeguarding concerns about a student who is absent, we will share information with other agencies as we deem necessary.

#### **14. Penalty Notices and Prosecutions**

Parents have a legal responsibility to ensure that their child attends school on a regular basis. It is a criminal offence under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 to fail to secure regular attendance of a registered student at the school. This applies to both resident and non-resident parents who may both be subject to legal sanctions if their child fails to attend school regularly. It also applies to others who may not be the parent but may have day to day care of the child.

Unauthorised absence from school can result in a number of different outcomes for parents and children. Each case is considered individually.

Under section 444 of the Education Act 1996, if a child of compulsory school age, who is a registered student at a school, fails to attend regularly at the school his/her parent(s) are guilty of an offence. Parents with more than one school aged child need to be aware that each child's irregular attendance is dealt with as a separate matter.

The school will refer cases of unauthorised absence that meet the threshold for a Penalty Notice to the Local Authority for legal action unless there are reasonable grounds for not doing so. The outcome of a referral to the Local Authority may be a Penalty Notice or Prosecution.

Penalty Notices are intended as a sanction for low level offences and a tool to support improved school attendance for example in circumstances associated with an unauthorised holiday taken during term time. They are an alternative to prosecution and may not be issued if prosecution is a more appropriate response to a student's irregular attendance.

A student's unauthorised absence from school could result in one of the following:

1. A Penalty Notice. The penalty is £80 per parent, per child payable within 21 days, rising to £160 per parent, per child if paid between 22 and 28 days. (Failure to pay will result in prosecution.) If a second Penalty Notice is issued within a rolling 3-year period the penalty is £160 per parent, per child if paid within 28 days. There will be no option to pay a lower amount.

2. Prosecution. Prosecution could lead to fines up to £2500 and /or up to 3 months imprisonment. (See DfE's statutory guidance on [School attendance parental responsibility measures](#) for more information.

Penalty Notices and prosecution proceedings are issued to each parent with responsibility for the child and are issued for each child with irregular attendance. For example, in the case of Penalty Notices, if two siblings had irregular school attendance, and there were two parents with responsibility for the children, four Penalty Notices would be issued. Penalty Notices cannot be paid in instalments.

In addition to Penalty Notices, there is a range of other legal interventions open to schools

We will work together with local authority and make use of the full range of legal interventions rather than relying solely on fixed penalty notices or prosecution, and will work closely with the local authority to decide whether to use them in an individual case after considering the individual circumstances of a family. These are: Parenting contracts, Education supervision orders, Attendance prosecution, Parenting orders, Fixed penalty notices

### **15. Children Missing Education (CME)**

Our school will add and delete students from roll in line with the law. A student's name can only lawfully be deleted from the admission register if a reason set out in regulation 9 of the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024. The school will make CME and Pupil Tracking referrals as appropriate. The school will seek advice from the local authority representative responsible for children missing education if unsure about any individual cases:

### **16. Following up Unexplained Absences**

Where no contact has been made with the school, the school will contact parents by text, email, or telephone to try and establish the reason for a child's absence. When we establish the reason for the absence, we will mark it as authorised or unauthorised depending on the reason for the absence. If we are unable to establish the reason for absence within two school days, we will make the absence as unauthorised, using the **O** code. If we are concerned about a student's absence and are unable to contact the parent/s, we may contact the student's emergency contacts and/or other professionals or contacts of the family who we reasonably expect may be able to advise us of the student's whereabouts.

### **17. Reporting to Parents**

The academy reports attendance records to parents by:

- Providing attendance statistics on the fortnightly student pastoral report.
- Providing attendance statistics on all exam performance reports sent home. This means all parents receive up to date attendance statistics via email at least twice per half term.
- Providing attendance statistics through the 'Arbor Parent Portal'. This means that parents who are signed up to the portal can access live attendance statistics at any time.

If a parent wished to query any aspect of the school's attendance record for their child, then they can do so by contacting the Attendance Officer.

Where a child's attendance drops below 100%, for whatever reason, our school will contact parents to highlight this, unless there is a reason not to.

### **18. Recording Information on Attendance and Reasons for Absence**

Reasons for absences are recorded on the attendance tracker by the Attendance Officer and are shared with SLT, the Safeguarding Team and Heads of Year on a daily basis.

### **19. Policy Monitoring Arrangements**

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Principal or more frequently if there are changes to legislation and guidance. At every review, the policy will be shared with the governing body.

### **20. Links with other policies**

This policy is linked to our:

- WA [Safeguarding Policy](#)
- DfE guidance [Behaviour and Discipline in Schools](#)
- DfE Guidance [Working together to improve school attendance](#)

#### **Guidance Documents (include but are not limited to):**

Supporting pupils at school with medical conditions (DfE December 2015)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/supporting-pupils-at-school-with-medical-conditions-3>

Education for children with health needs who cannot attend school (DfE January 2013)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/education-for-children-with-health-needs-who-cannot-attend-school>

Mental Health issues affecting a pupil's attendance (DfE February 2023)

[Mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance: guidance for schools - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

Arranging education for children with who cannot attend school because of health needs (DfE December 2023)

[Arranging education for children who cannot attend school because of health needs \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

Keeping children safe in education (DfE September 2024)

[Keeping children safe in education 2024 \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

School attendance parental responsibility measures (DfE January 2015)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/parental-responsibility-measures-for-behaviour-and-attendance>

School census guidance and regulation

<https://www.gov.uk/education/school-censuses-and-slasc>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-exclusion>

Home to school travel and transport guidance (DfE July 2014)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/home-to-school-travel-and-transport-guidance>

## Appendix A – Department for Education (DfE) Attendance & Absence Codes

<b>Attending</b>	
/ \	Present at the school / = morning session \ = afternoon session
L	Late arrival before the register is closed
K	Attending education provision arranged by the local authority
V	Attending an educational visit or trip
P	Participating in a sporting activity
W	Attending work experience
B	Attending any other approved educational activity
D	Dual registered at another school
<b>Absent – Leave of absence</b>	
C1	Leave of absence for the purpose of participating in a regulated performance or undertaking regulated employment abroad.
M	Leave of absence for the purpose of attending a medical or dental appointment
J1	Leave of absence for the purpose of attending an interview for employment or for admission to another educational institution
S	Leave of absence for the purpose of studying for a public examination
X	Non-compulsory school age pupil not required to attend school
C2	Leave of absence for a compulsory school age pupil subject to a part-time timetable
C	Leave of absence for exceptional circumstance
<b>Absent – other authorised reasons</b>	
T	Parent travelling for occupational purposes
R	Religious observance
I	Illness (not medical or dental appointment)
E	Suspended or permanently excluded and no alternative provision made
<b>Absent – unable to attend school because of unavoidable causes</b>	
Q	Unable to attend the school because of a lack of access arrangements
Y1	Unable to attend due to transport normally provided not being available
Y2	Unable to attend due to widespread disruption to travel
Y3	Unable to attend due to part of the school premises being closed
Y4	Unable to attend due to the whole school site being unexpectedly closed
Y5	Unable to attend as pupil is in criminal justice detention
Y6	Unable to attend in accordance with public health guidance or law
Y7	Unable to attend because of any other unavoidable cause
<b>Absent – unauthorised absence</b>	
G	Holiday not granted by the school



N	Reason for absence not yet established
O	Absent in other or unknown circumstances
U	Arrived in school after registration closed
<b>Administrative Codes</b>	
Z	Prospective pupil not on admission register
#	Planned whole school closure