



Attendance Policy

Equalities Statement

In our Trust we work to ensure that there is equality of opportunity for all members of our community who hold a range of protected characteristics as defined by the Equality Act 2010, as well as having regard to other factors which have the potential to cause inequality, such as, socio-economic factors. For further information, please see our Equalities Policy

Document Management

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Principles

Westlands School encourages 100% attendance and punctuality for all students. The school expects all students to attend regularly and arrive at lessons on time, in order to take full advantage and access the full-time educational opportunities they are entitled to. The expectation is that parents/carers will ensure that their child or young person arrives at school on time every day and supports the school's policies and procedures regarding attendance and punctuality.

In order to achieve excellent attendance, Westlands School provides a welcoming, safe and secure environment where students feel valued. In addition, the school works hard to create a stimulating and accessible curriculum with high quality teaching for every student, together with a wide range of extra-curricular activities.

Why regular attendance is important

Learning and Achievement

There is a clear link between high attendance and high achievement. Students with higher rates of attainment have higher attendance levels in comparison to students with lower levels of attendance. We expect all students and parents/carers to know their attendance/absence rates from school. This can be found on Bromcom - MCAS and the Student Portal.

Evidence suggests that:

- Students who have an overall absence rate of 8.8% or more have a much higher chance of not achieving grades 9 to 4 in English and mathematics.
- Students with an absence rate of 5.2% achieved a grade 4.
- The overall absence rate of students not achieving grades 9 to 4 was twice as high as those achieving grade 9 to 5 (8.8% absence rate in comparison to 3.7% absence rate).
- For the most vulnerable students 90% of young offenders had been persistently absent from school - attendance less than 90%.
- 83% of knife possession offenders had been persistently absent from school.

Safeguarding

A child may be at risk of harm if they do not attend school regularly. Safeguarding the interests of each student is everyone's responsibility and within the context of our school, promoting the welfare and life opportunities for a child encompasses:

- Attendance
- Behaviour Management
- Health and Safety
- Access to the Curriculum
- Anti-bullying
- Mental Health and Wellbeing
- SEND

Failing to attend our school on a regular basis will be considered as a safeguarding matter which can result in a welfare check, South Eastern Attendance Advisory Service (SEAAS) involvement or Police check being carried out. If persistent absence continues, this can result in a referral to the South Eastern Attendance Advisory Service or referral to external agencies (Social Services).



The Designated Safeguarding Lead at Westlands School is Mrs Giles. If there are concerns about student wellbeing and safety, she can be contacted by email adelle.giles@swale.at

Legal Framework

Parents/Carers have a legal responsibility to ensure their child's regular attendance at the school where they are registered. If a child of compulsory school age, who is registered at a school, fails to attend regularly at the school, the parent is guilty of an offence under Section 444(1) of the Education Act 1996.

This policy has been created following the recent government guidance issued in May 2022. (Working Together to Improve School Attendance, May 2022).

The law on school attendance entitles every student to attend a full time educational provision suitable for their age, ability and SEN need. Parents have a legal obligation to make sure their child receives that education by attending school. Where parents decide to register their child at school, it is the additional responsibility of the parent to ensure their child attends that school every day, except in a small number of allowable circumstances such as being too ill to attend or being given permission for an absence in advance from school.

Rewards and Incentives

Excellent, regular and improved attendance is acknowledged by the school in assemblies and through our rewards system (see table below). Students will receive recognition for achieving excellent attendance each term. The Pastoral team and Senior Leaders may also use extra - curricular school events and activities or trips to incentivise attendance.

0 lates in a week	Positive communication sent home praising students for arriving to every lesson on time.
100% attendance in a week	1 achievement point will be awarded
100% attendance in a term	5 achievement points will be awarded. Students will also be entered in a termly raffles to receive additional rewards.
Rewards Assemblies	Assemblies will be used to rewards students for excellent or improved attendance and punctuality
Attendance badges - Bronze, Silver and Gold	Students will receive a Bronze badge for two terms of consistent full attendance, a Silver badge for four terms of consistent full attendance and a Gold badge for a full academic year of 100% attendance
Attendance Trips	Students will be invited to a range or trip and reward events to celebrate excellent or improved attendance and punctuality.



Roles and Responsibility

Parents/Carers responsibility

Parents and carers have a legal duty to ensure that students attend school regularly and are punctual otherwise they risk prosecution/fines if they fail in this duty.

To ensure that every student achieves their potential, parents/carers:

- Cannot approve absences for their child. Only the school, within the context of the law, can approve absence.
- Should attempt to arrange appointments for their child or young person outside normal school hours whenever possible. Wherever possible the student will be expected to attend school before and/or after the appointment.
- Ensures their children attend school on time.
- Communicate with the Attendance Team daily regarding every absence. The parent must phone the Attendance line every day for every absence. It is encouraged to leave a message if there is no answer on the telephone line.

Attendance Team responsibility

The Attendance Team consists of a Deputy Headteacher who will oversee the strategic oversight of attendance, Assistant Headteacher who is the Attendance Lead, Attendance Officers plus the management of the South Eastern Attendance Advisory Service.

- Deputy Headteacher: Strategic Lead - Beth Arculus-Pennells - bethany.arculuspennells@swale.at
- Assistant Headteacher: Attendance Lead- Peter Humphries - peter.humphries@swale.at
- Attendance Officer - Claire Webling - claire.webling@swale.at
- Attendance Assistant – Caroline Older – caroline.older@swale.at
- Part time Attendance Assistant - Julie Matson - julie.matson@swale.at
- The South Eastern Attendance and Advisory Service (SEAAS) worker is Tina Morris tinamorris@seaas.co.uk

To ensure that every student achieves their potential, the attendance team:

- Carefully monitor the attendance and punctuality of all students.
- Identify any attendance problems and students that are at risk of persistent absence.
- Liaise closely with the Pastoral and Safeguarding staff as well as the Headteacher to support attendance and punctuality initiatives.
- Ensure class teachers liaise proactively with the team to help identify and address attendance issues.
- Take relevant action where attendance is a cause for concern, e.g. telephone parents/carers to discuss the problem, make home visits, refer to SEAAS, organise meetings with parents/carers to decide on the appropriate intervention.
- In the case of students who refuse to attend school, home visits are carried out in an attempt to ascertain reasons for absence.
- Pursue enforcement action where no significant improvement has been made to attendance, in line with the process agreed by the Local Authority.
- On discovering truancy, inform the student's parents/carers and Year Team the same day and ensure appropriate sanctions are applied.



Student responsibility

To ensure that every student achieves their potential, students:

- Must ensure that they arrive promptly, attend all morning and afternoon sessions and timetabled lessons punctually.
- Discuss promptly with the Attendance Team any problems that may affect their attendance. Attend school appropriately prepared for the day.
- Provide medical evidence for any appointments that results in an absence.

Teaching staff responsibility

- To ensure that every student achieves their potential, teaching staff:
- Monitor class attendance and report any cause for concern to the Attendance Officer/SLT staff member.
- Have frequent discussions with students about the importance of regular attendance and punctuality.
- Support students who have been absent by posting work on Google Classroom and following up with pupils in the next lesson.
- Ensure registers are taken on time and accurately.

NB: Subject teachers will follow up suspicious absences by informing the Year Team and Attendance Team immediately.

Registers

Registers are completed using Westlands School Bromcom information system (a paper copy is always available should the Bromcom system not be available).

Registers are legal documents and must be taken clearly and accurately, using the correct symbols/codes. (see Appendix 1). All schools are required by law to keep an attendance register and no gaps in registration can be left.

The attendance register must be taken every lesson from the start of the first session of each school day (morning) and during the second sessions (afternoon) of the school day to mark whether every student is

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

Registers must be taken within the first 20 minutes of each registration session. Failure to do so will result in a formal reminder and potentially a disciplinary action. The Attendance Team will check that teaching staff are completing registers promptly and accurately (see appendix 2). If a student arrives after the register has closed, s/he should report to the front reception to be entered as late. Students arriving after the registration has closed without an acceptable reason, will be marked as late or having an unauthorised absence for that session.



Illness during the school day

If a student becomes genuinely unwell during the day, a community call will be made by their teacher who will take the student to our First Aid Room. Students should not contact parents/carers directly.

In the event of a student being genuinely unwell and unable to continue with the school day, contact will be made with the parent/carer, In the interest of safeguarding the students, arrangements will be made for the student to be collected by parent/carer or other nominated family member.

Staff will then assess the illness and make decisions about whether parents/carers need to be informed and whether a student will be sent home, wait and/or return to class.

No student should leave the school premises due to medical reasons without staff permission (based on whether contact has been made with a parent/carer at home).

Appropriate First Aid will be administered where deemed necessary by a trained First Aider.

Absence procedure

Westlands School will only authorise 5 days of illness per academic year provided contact has been made by the parent/carer and the reason deemed acceptable. All further absences will be unauthorised unless medical evidence is provided. Please note the following are acceptable as medical evidence; appointment card, letter, doctors note, appointment text or prescribed medication including the label. On the provision that SEAAS are involved, a home visit can be organised to authorise the absence if medical evidence cannot be obtained.

On the first day of a student's absence, parents/carers must contact the school to report the absence. This should be done by a telephone call/email to the Attendance Team and at the earliest opportunity (by 8:30am), giving a reason for the absence and a date when the child or young person is expected to return. Parents/carers should contact the school on each subsequent day of absence. Please note the Attendance Office does not open until 8am. There is a high volume of calls daily meaning you may not get through however a voicemail can be left in this instance with a detailed reason for absence.

All unauthorised absences will result in a text message/email being generated by our system to parents/carers. Westlands School understands the difficulty of obtaining same-day GP appointments, however there are a number of walk-in clinics who provide confirmation of emergency appointments. Symptoms such as headaches, we advise your child taking suitable medication in the morning and attend school. We are unwilling to authorise a whole day's absence due to a 'headache' or feeling 'generally unwell'. All contact should be made by calling the Attendance Office on (01795 413 920) or emailing wss-attendanceoffice@swale.at. A copy of this is on our website for easy access.

Understanding types of absences

Every half-day absence from our school has to be classified by the Attendance Officer (not by parents/carers), as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause



of any absence is always required, preferably in writing. If no explanation is received, absences will not be authorised.

Absence (for example leave for holidays) during term time can only be approved in “exceptional circumstances”. The following reasons are examples of absence that will not be authorised:

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily (persistent nonspecific illness e.g. poorly/unwell/headache/sore throat).
- Absence for illness when attendance is below 95% unless medical evidence is provided.
- Medical/dental appointments of more than half a day without very good reason (distance is taken into consideration).
- Absence of siblings if one child is ill.
- Truancy before or during the school day.
- Absences which have not been properly explained via email/telephone/message.
- Children who report their own absence.
- Children who arrive at school after registration has closed and are too late to get a mark without good reason (oversleeping/missed the bus).
- Shopping, looking after other children or birthdays.
- Day trips and holidays in term time which have not been agreed.
- Period pains (unless medical evidence is provided).
- Weddings.
- Moving house.
- Inadequate clothing/uniform.
- Confusion over school dates.

Persistent Absenteeism (PA) - A student becomes a ‘persistent absentee’ when their attendance falls to 90% or below for whatever reason. Absence at this level will cause considerable damage to any child or young person’s educational prospects and the fullest support and cooperation is needed from parents/carers to tackle this.

A student who misses 10% of their education will miss approximately 120 lessons per year or 600 lessons over the course of their compulsory secondary education.

Any case that is seen to have reached the PA mark or at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority; parents/carers will be informed of this immediately and remedial action will be taken. Action will likely mean working with The South Eastern Attendance Advisory Service to put support in place before legal action is discussed.

The school will follow procedures prior to referral and parents will be notified in writing. This will be made following the SEAAS procedure. Students can face additional barriers to attendance if they suffer from long term medical conditions or SEND needs and disabilities. The school aims to work with families to improve attendance and remove the barriers these students face and put additional support in place where necessary to allow them to access full time education.

This can include:



- Organising meetings and developing good relationships with the family.
- Making reasonable adjustments for the individual student.
- Make necessary referral to the relevant agency to support the family and student.
- Liaising with the school's SEND Team and the Local Authority SEND Team.

Punctuality procedure

Students should be in school by 8.30am every day ready for lessons to start at 8.35am. Students arriving after registration time will receive a late mark (L) in the register. If a student is going to be late, parents/carers have a responsibility to inform the school of their child's lateness by telephone.

Registers close at 9:30am. Students arriving after this time must report to the Attendance Office to sign in. After this time, the attendance mark will be coded as U, which is an unauthorised absence and will affect the student's attendance percentage.

Sixth Form students should 'tap in' and 'tap out' with their ID badges at the front reception. Students that are working in the Sixth Form centre are required to sign in and out at the front reception by using their ID badges. Sixth Form students must attend all timetabled lessons.

Communication will be sent to parents/carers at approximately 11am indicating absence if no contact has been made by parent/carer to explain this.

Students will be challenged for poor/persistent punctuality as follows:

- Late to school will result in a detention.
- A letter being sent home to parent/carer (3 or more).
- Placed on an Attendance Report for punctuality.
- Referred by the Attendance Team or Year Team to SEAAS.
- Frequent lateness after the register has closed (U) will be discussed with parents/carers and could provide grounds for prosecution or a Penalty Notice by SEAAS.

Penalty Notice Proceedings for lateness. Penalty Notices are issued in accordance with Kent County Council's Education Penalty Notices Code of Conduct, when:

- Ten incidents of late arrival after the registers have closed during any possible 100 school sessions leads to a Penalty Notice Warning Letter.
- The Penalty Notice Warning Letter sets out 15 school days during which no unauthorised absence is to be recorded.
- If unauthorised absence is recorded during the 15 day period, a Penalty Notice(s) will be issued (one per parent per child).
- Where a Penalty Notice is not paid within 28 days of issue the Local Authority will instigate court proceedings. Ultimately, the parent/carer of a student/young person who frequently arrives late at school can be prosecuted in the Magistrates Court under the Education Act 1996 for failing to ensure their child attends regularly.



Supporting and encouraging good attendance

Whilst any child or young person may be off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents/carers and the child or young person. If a child or young person is reluctant to attend, it is never a good idea to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. Condoning absence, particularly at an early age, can lead to habitual patterns of non-attendance and can give students the impression that attendance does not matter.

Parents/carers can support students by:

- Ensure regular routines and early bedtimes.
- Helping with homework.
- Having uniform and equipment prepared the night before.
- Providing a healthy breakfast.
- Reporting and academic or social concerns promptly to the school.
- Retaining an open and honest communication with the child or young person's school.
- Being positive about school (even if a parent/carer's own experience was less than positive).

School can support students by:

Staged Intervention Process

Wave	% Attendance	Staff	What we do
0	97.0%	All	Reward excellent and improved attendance. Call home on the first day of any absence to check in with the student/family. Record any lateness to school/lessons
1	96.9 - 94.0%	Mentor/PSM	Meeting with parents/carers and students Attendance targets are agreed and an attendance report is issued Reviewed after 2 weeks
2	93.9 - 90.0%	SLT/PSM/SEND Team	Meeting with student and small group intervention Letter/phone call home Continued monitoring with attendance targets and attendance report
3	Below 90%	Attendance Team/SEAAS/SLT	SEAAS teams to meet parents/carers with students in school for a Fast Track meeting. Fast Track plan, do and review completed Follow- up letter
4	<40.0%	Safeguarding Team	Support from external agencies



Teachers can support students by:

- Welcome all students - make them feel safe and valued.
- Use praise and the schools reward systems, emphasized the importance of attendance for learning.
- Give students ‘the big picture’ about a scheme of learning.
- Integrate returning students and inconsistent attenders by considering adaptive teaching strategies such as seating plans, peer support and catch up material both in the classroom and posted on Google Classroom.
- Ensure the student has access to any work missed during the time of absence.

As a parent, I can help by:	As a school, We will help by:	As a student, I can help by:
Contact the school when your child will be absent.	Following up on every absence ensures that no absence goes un-noted.	Attending school and lessons every day, on time, to give you the very best chance of success.
Booking doctors and dentist appointments outside of school hours.	Acknowledging and rewarding good attendance and punctuality.	Taking part in the attendance competitions and reward incentives
Supporting your child to attend as often as possible by reminding them on the importance of school attendance	Reminding parents and students about the importance of attendance and how it is measured against attainment.	
Ensuring your child arrives at school by 8:30 am each morning.	Letting parents know if we have concerns regarding their child’s attendance and punctuality.	

Leave of absences (holidays)

No holidays during term time will be authorised. We expect parents to notify us if they have booked a holiday, using the Leave of Absence Form. If there are exceptional circumstances the Headteacher may agree to authorise the absence, but this is very rare.

Parents/carers must apply through the [Leave of Absence Form](#) on the website to take a student out of school for a holiday. This form will need to be downloaded, completed fully and returned to the Attendance Office at least 3 weeks prior to the holiday taking place. The Attendance Team will notify the parent in writing of this decision to refuse/grant permission and will code accordingly. Parents who disregard this and still take their child on holiday will receive a letter informing them of a request for a Fixed Penalty Notice.



A Fixed Penalty Notice may be issued by the local authority where 'a student has been taken on a holiday during term time. Each Penalty Notice states that £60 is payable within 21 days of the notice being issued, rising to £120 if paid between the 21st and 28th day. If neither of these sums are paid within this period, liability to prosecution may arise.

Analysing and reporting attendance

The Attendance Team reviews attendance on a daily basis and monitors this continually, producing reports on a weekly, termly and yearly basis. These reports compare attendance data with the national average, previous years and are shared with the schools Senior Leadership Team and Governing Body.

All teachers should look for any patterns in absence and investigate or report their concerns to the Attendance Team and/or Pastoral Teams as appropriate. If a student's attendance level drops below 96% the cause will be investigated by the school's Attendance Team who will liaise with SEAAS and parents/carers.

Monitoring attendance and punctuality at off site provision

Where students attend external provision, weekly registration certificates are received from the external providers. These are monitored and any concerns reported to the Attendance Team/SLT.

South Eastern Advisory Attendance Services

SEAAS are an outside company employed by Swale Academies Trust to monitor students concerning attendance levels. The Attendance Officer will have access to the school's information system, Bromcom. The Attendance Officer from SEAAS will work with Year Teams weekly highlighting students who fall below the expected 96% level attendance. A pre-referral letter will be sent to parents/carers informing them that SEAAS will now be monitoring the attendance of their child.

SEAAS will liaise with parents and carers as well as the pupil's Year group team in order to encourage good attendance. Where there are persistent or prolonged periods of sickness, the school may refer the matter to SEAAS so that the correct advice and assistance can be put in place to support families. Our SEAAS Officer will actively support a student to improve their attendance level, which may require parents/carers to attend a meetings at the school in the first instance. Home visits may also be arranged; either planned in advance or unannounced if there is a concern. SEAAS may liaise with the local authority, KCC, if improvements do not occur.

Prosecution procedure

Reducing unauthorised absence from school is a key priority nationally and locally because missing school damages a student's attainment levels, disrupts school routines and learning of others.

Truancing can also leave a student vulnerable to antisocial behaviour and youth crime. Truancing lessons during the school day is non-negotiable at this school and will result in students spending a



period of time in our Consequence and Intervention Room as well as having an After School Detention.

Under existing legislation, parents/carers commit an offence if a child or young person fails to attend school regularly and the absences are classed as unauthorised (absences without a valid reason). Parents/carers are legally responsible for making sure their child attends regularly and punctually. This applies even if children are missing school without the knowledge of their parent/carer.

Penalty Notices

Penalty notices are issued in accordance with the terms as outlined in [Kent County Council's Education Penalty Notices Code of Conduct](#).

- A Penalty Notice can only be issued in cases of absence for 10 or more half day sessions (5 school days) without authorisation during any 100 possible school sessions or period of 50 days of schooling – these do not need to be consecutive.
- A Penalty Notice can also be issued where an excluded child is found in a public place during school hours.
- After the appropriate request for a Penalty Notice is received, the KCC Inclusion and Attendance Service will issue a warning letter setting out 15 school days during which no unauthorised absence is to be recorded.
- If unauthorised absence is recorded during the 15 day period a Penalty Notice will be issued (one per parent per child).

Where Penalty Notices are imposed, the regulations state that the penalty will be £120 to be paid within 28 days, reduced to £60 if paid within 21 days. Penalty Notices are issued to each parent of each child. Failure to pay the penalty in full by the end of the 28 day period will result in prosecution by the Local Authority.

Leaving Westlands School

We are always sad to say goodbye to our students. If a student is leaving Westlands School because they are relocating or they are changing schools, please inform us. We need the student's new address and the details of the new school, including school name, address and start date. This safeguarding procedure means that we know that the student is still in education, safe and well. If a parent/carer decides to Home-School their child, it is essential that you inform school in writing. This can be via an email to wss-attendanceoffice@swale.at

Legislation and guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the School Attendance Guidance from the Department for Education (DfE) with the most recent publication being issued in May 2022, the DfE's Statutory Guidance on School Attendance Parental Responsibility Measures and refers to the DfE's Guidance on the School Census which explains the persistent absence threshold.

These are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:



- The Education Act 1996
- The Children Act 1989
- The Crime and Disorder Act 1998
- The Education Act 2002
- The Education and Inspections Act 2006
- The Anti-social behaviour Act 2003
- The Education (Student Registration) (England) Regulations 2006
- The Education (Student Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2010
- The Education (Student Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2011
- The Education (Student Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013
- The Education (Student Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2016
- The Education (Parenting Contract and Parenting Orders) (England) Regulations 2007
- The Sentencing Act (2020) The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (2007)

The Westlands Policies:

- Westlands School Safeguarding and Child protection Policy.
- Swale Academies Trust - Health and Safety Policy.
- Westlands School Behaviour and Uniform Policy.



Appendices

Appendix One: Attendance Codes

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	Students are present at morning registration.
\	Present (pm)	Students are present at afternoon registration.
L	Late Arrival	Students arrive late before the register has closed
B	Off-site activity educational	Students are at a supervised off-site educational activity approved by the school.
J	Interview	Students have an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment.
P	Sporting Activity	Students are participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school.
V	Education trip or visit	Students are on an educational visit/trip organised, or approved by the school.
W	Work Experience	Student is on a work experience placement.

Authorised Absence

C	Authorised Leave of Absence	Student has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances.
E	Excluded	Students have been excluded but no alternative provision has been made.
H	Authorised Holiday	Students have been allowed to go on holiday due to exceptional circumstances.
I	Illness IO1 - General Illness IO2 - Covid related illness	IO1- School has been notified that a student will be absent due to illness. IO2- Tested positive for Covid.



M	Medical/Dental Appointment	Students are at a medical or dental appointment.
R	Religious Observance	Students are taking part in a day of religious observance.
S	Study Leave	Year 11 student is on study leave during their GCSEs
T	Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Absence	Students from a Traveller community are travelling, as agreed with the school. If the attendance is a concern, the school will request for evidence to be submitted.

Unauthorised attendance

G	Unauthorised holiday	Student is on a holiday that was not approved by the school.
N	Reason not provided	Student is absent for an unknown reason (this code should be amended when reason emerges)
O	Unauthorised absence	School is not satisfied with the reason for the student's absence.
U	Arrival after registration	Student arrived at school after the register closed.



Appendix Two: Register Procedure

Westlands School takes the safety of its students to the highest degree. Below outlines the register procedure that all staff must adhere to.

Any error(s) on the registers throughout the day will receive a warning. This can be for a variety of reasons including taking a register late, marking a student absent when in lesson or vice versa.

It is with utmost importance that all staff are taking accurate registers in order for the Attendance Team to identify as soon as possible when a student is missing. If three errors are made, a meeting with the AHT to discuss the errors.

In the event Bromcom is not working, staff must have their registers printed/downloaded so they can be completed and sent to the Attendance Office.