



Attendance Policy

Agreed by governing body – 25/9/2023

Compassion
Forgiveness
Friendship
Trust

Ackworth Howard Church of England (VC) Junior and Infant School

Educating for 'life in all its fullness.'

Providing opportunities for growth in mind, body and spirit through inspirational and innovative education underpinned by a deeply Christian ethos. Those who learn and work here will develop confidence, embrace creativity and enhance their knowledge and skills so that they can experience 'life in all its fullness.' (John 10:10)

AIM

At Ackworth Howard we recognise the direct correlation between Attendance and Attainment. The aim of our Attendance Policy is to raise and maintain levels of attendance and punctuality for all pupils who attend our school, therefore maximising their opportunities for improved attainment.

We are committed to meeting our obligations with regards to school attendance by:

- Promoting good attendance and reducing absence, including persistent absence
- Ensuring every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled
- Acting early to address patterns of absence

We will also support parents to perform their legal duty to ensure their children of compulsory school age attend regularly, and will promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

LEGISLATION AND GUIDANCE

This policy meets the requirements of the [Working Together to Improve School Attendance](#) guidance from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on [school attendance parental responsibility measures](#). These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- Part 6 of [The Education Act 1996](#)
- Part 3 of [The Education Act 2002](#)
- Part 7 of [The Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006](#) (and [2010](#), [2011](#), [2013](#), [2016](#) amendments)
- [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)

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

This policy is aligned to the Wakefield Council Guidance Attendance Policy and the associated Wakefield Attendance Strategy 2023-2026.

THE LAW

The law entitles every child of compulsory school age to an efficient, full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude, and any special educational need they may have. It is the legal responsibility of every parent to make sure their child receives that education either by attendance at a school or by education otherwise than at a school.

Where parents decide to have their child registered at school, they have an additional legal duty to ensure their child attends that school regularly. This means their child must attend every day that the school is open, 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 the school.

THE IMPACT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

The findings from the 2012 Charlie Taylor report '[Improving Attendance at School](#)' highlighted the link between poor attendance at school and lower academic achievement.

National absence rates remained fairly static in the following years. In 2018/19, the overall absence rate was 4.7% nationally, with persistent absence at 10.9%. This was the last full year of data before

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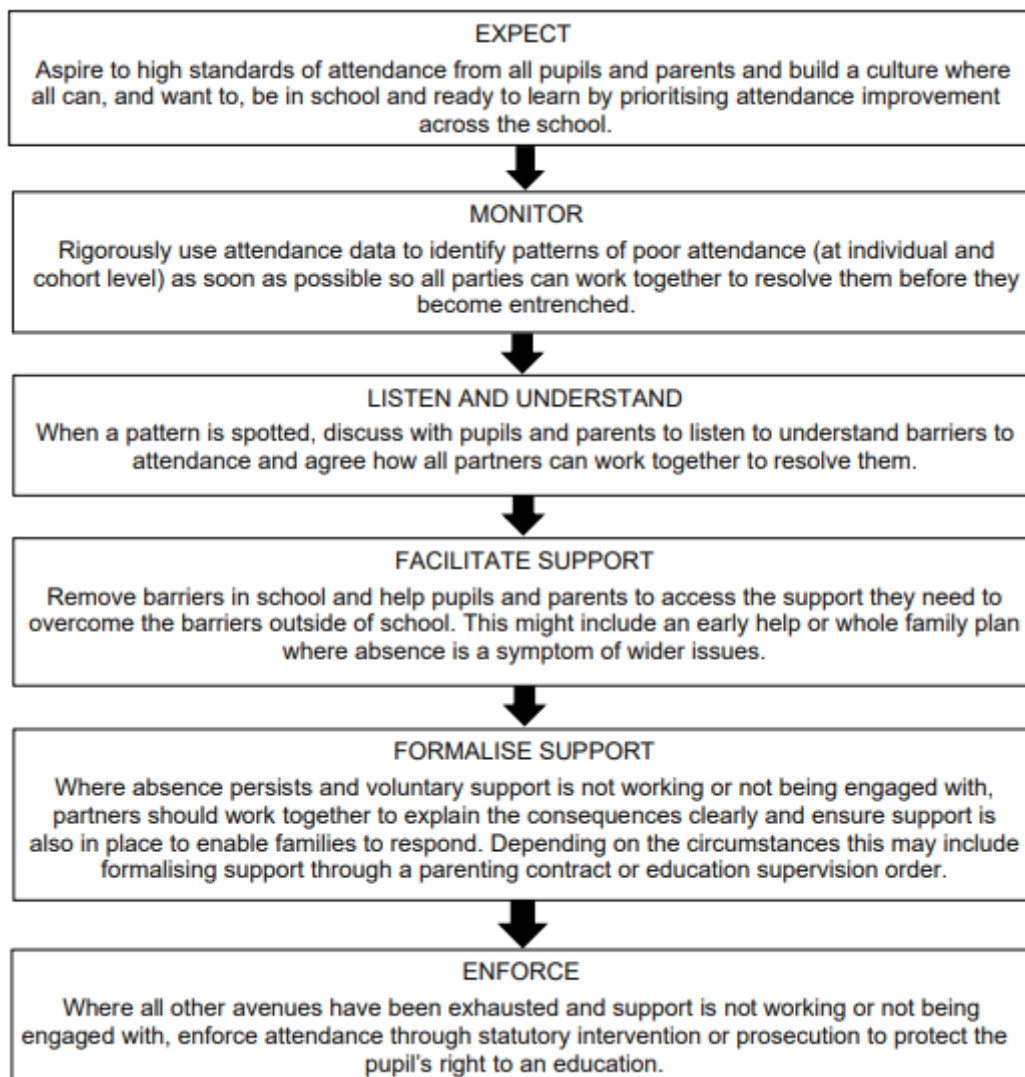
Covid-19. Since then, attendance has not recovered to these pre-pandemic levels. In 2021/22, the national overall absence rate was 7.6% and the persistent absence rate was 22.5%; 2022/23 rates are at a similar levels

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic upon attainment has been researched by the Education Endowment Foundation. [The Impact of COVID-19 on Learning: Review of the Evidence](#) highlighted that the enforced lack of school attendance negatively impacted the attainment of all pupils, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds. In September 2020, the Children's Commissioner published the report [Childhood in the Time of Covid](#), setting out the key ways in which children's lives were impacted as a result of the COVID-19 crisis, in particular their attainment. This reached the same conclusions as the EEF review; before the crisis, disadvantaged children were 18 months behind their wealthier peers in their learning by the time they finished their GCSEs, and the report concludes that the closures have worsened this attainment gap.

Post-pandemic, our local data shows that more children and young people are absent from school due to illness issues than pre-pandemic. This is repeated in national data. Persistent and severe absence rates have escalated nationally and locally post-pandemic. The impact of Covid-19 and other issues such as social media and anxiety in our contemporary world should not be underestimated.

WORKING TOGETHER TO IMPROVE ATTENDANCE

Successfully treating the root causes of absence and removing barriers to attendance, at home, in school or more broadly requires schools and local partners to work collaboratively with, not against families. All partners should work together to:



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ABSENCE FROM SCHOOL

School will follow up any unexplained absences by contacting parents / carers on the first day of absence. Children with inadequate attendance will become part of our Key Focus Attendance Pupils. These children will have their attendance monitored daily. Parents / carers will be invited into school to discuss attendance issues if there is a cause for concern. If attendance does not improve a referral will be made to the Education Welfare Service.

The pupil's parent/carer must notify the school on the first day of an unplanned absence as soon as practically possible via telephone or email.

Improving attendance is everyone's business. The barriers to accessing education are wide and complex, both within and beyond the school gates, and are often specific to individual pupils and families. The foundation of securing good attendance is that school is a calm, orderly, safe, and supportive environment where all pupils want to be and are keen and ready to learn.

FOLLOWING UP ON ABSENCE

Where any child we expect to attend school does not attend, or stops attending, the school will:

- Follow up on their absence with their parent/carer to ascertain the reason, by initiating first day response – text message, phone call and in extreme circumstances home visits.
- Ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not
- Identify the correct attendance code to use

AUTHORISED ABSENCE

Some absences are unavoidable, usually due to illness, bereavement or difficult family circumstances. These absences should be supported by medical evidence where possible or a written explanation from the parent / carer. The decision as to whether an absence is authorised or not lies with the Headteacher.

UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE

An unauthorised absence is an absence which is not permissible in Law. Unauthorised absences include:- birthdays, shopping trips, days out, term time holidays and absences where no explanation has been received. School will discuss unauthorised absence with the Education Welfare Service and further action will be agreed.

The school does not authorise holidays taken in term time and works in partnership with the Education Welfare Service regarding the issue of Fixed Penalty Fines. Pupils have an entitlement to an education, not a term time holiday.

TERM TIME HOLIDAYS

Ackworth Howard School recognises that school attendance is closely linked to attainment. Following the recommendations of the Governments Attendance Lead, the Government has made clear in law that Headteachers cannot grant any leave of absence unless there are exceptional circumstances. The DFE website is clear that leave of absence is unlikely to be granted for the purpose of a family holiday.

As such the Governors have made the decision to refuse requests for term time holidays unless there are exceptional circumstances. In order to enforce this decision the Governors have agreed to the issuing of Fixed Penalty Notices for parents taking their children out of school during term time for holidays without permission. The school will work closely with the Education Welfare Service to enforce this policy.

Exceptional circumstances could include:

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1. Service personnel returning from a tour of duty abroad where it is evidenced the individual will not be in receipt of any leave in the near future that coincides with school holidays.
2. Where an absence from school is recommended by a health professional as part of a parent or child's rehabilitation from a medical or emotional issue.
3. The death or terminal illness of a person close to the family.
4. To attend a wedding or funeral of a person close to the family.
5. Out of school programmes such as music, arts or sport operating at a high standard of achievement. Documentary evidence of this event will be required.
6. Religious observance – The Education Act 1996 S444(3) (c), states "on any day exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which his/her parent belongs."
7. Where there are exceptional and unforeseen circumstances that fall outside of 1 to 6 above, the Headteacher will consult with the education welfare officer prior to any authorisation being given to the parent. The education welfare officer will discuss each case with the Headteacher and will make a recommendation to the school. Evidence would be required in each case.

If a request meets the above exceptional circumstances but falls within the following times, the Headteacher must be convinced that absence from school is the only option:

- The first half term of any academic year (applies to all pupils).
- Statutory assessment periods such as Year 6 SATs week.

Examples of circumstances NOT considered as exceptional:

- Holidays abroad for the purpose of visiting a sick relative, excepting where that person is seriously ill. Medical evidence may be requested.
- Holidays taken in term time due to lower cost/parental work commitments.

The policy is in line with Wakefield Council Code of Conduct on Penalty Notices and falls under section 44 of the Education Act 1996. The Education (penalty Notices) Regulations 2007 set the framework for the operation of the Penalty Notice scheme. The Code of Conduct states that a Penalty Notice may be issued where there are at least 10 sessions (half days) recorded as unauthorised absence due to a holiday in term-time.

Payment of a Penalty Notice is £60 per child, per parent if paid within 21 days, rising to £120 if paid within 42 days. If a parent fails to make payment the matter will be progressed to court by the Education Welfare Service.

MEDICAL APPOINTMENTS

Parents should inform the school in writing indicating attendance at a medical appointment before the arranged absence unless an emergency situation has arisen.

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

Children should be collected from and returned to the school office to be signed in or out when attending medical appointments during the school day. If a child has an appointment in a morning or afternoon session and does not attend school for the other session this will be recorded as an unauthorised absence unless it has been agreed with the Head teacher.

PUBLIC PERFORMANCES

On occasions children become involved in public performances for dance groups, theatres etc. The school prides itself in the breadth of achievements of pupils both within and outside of the immediate community.

- The Head teacher has the discretion to grant authorised absence for these events.

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- The Head teacher will take into account individual circumstances such as the attendance record of the child, whether the child would miss tests or any exceptional circumstances. If any child has an attendance record of less than 90% then authorisation will not be given. Permission is at the discretion of the Head teacher and may not always be granted.
- Parents must obtain a licence to perform from the employing agency. This must be submitted to the Head teacher for completion.
- A letter must also accompany the licence indicating the time out of school that the child will require in order to participate in the performances including time required for rehearsals.
- Absences for rehearsals will be recorded as unauthorised.
- Parents are asked to reflect upon the effect performances would have upon their child as **any absence because a child is tired after a performance will be recorded as unauthorised.**

PERSISTENT ABSENCE

A pupil becomes a persistent absentee if he/she has missed 10% or more of school for **any reason** and has an attendance of below 90%. The school will invite parents/carers in to discuss the situation, and referrals will be made to the Education Welfare Service. This will result in a range of strategies being deployed to improve attendance, including participation in the Fastrack Attendance Programme, Parenting Contracts, referral to School Health and Fixed Penalty Fines.

PUNCTUALITY

The law states that children should arrive at school on time, every day. School doors open at 8.50am and it is expected that pupils should be there ready to learn for that time. Poor punctuality is unacceptable and persistent lateness, i.e. after the close of registration at 9.00am will be referred onto the Education Welfare Service and parents may risk legal action.

A pupil who arrives late:

- Before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code (L).
- After the register has closed will be marked using the appropriate punctuality code (U). This will count as an absence.

ROLES / RESPONSIBILITIES

The governing body is responsible for monitoring attendance figures for the whole school on at least a termly basis. It also holds the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy.

The headteacher is responsible for the implementation of this policy at the school, monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors. The Headteacher works closely with the Education Welfare Officer.

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WE ARE IN THIS TOGETHER: CLEAR ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES FOR EVERYONE

PUPILS

Parents are expected to:	Schools are expected to:	Academy trustees and governing bodies are expected to:	Local authorities are expected to:
<p>Ensure their child attends every day the school is open except when a statutory reason applies.</p> <p>Notify the school as soon as possible when their child has to be unexpectedly absent (e.g. sickness).</p> <p>Only request leave of absence in exceptional circumstances and do so in advance.</p> <p>Book any medical appointments around the school day where possible.</p>	<p>Have a clear school attendance policy on the school website which all staff, pupils and parents understand.</p> <p>Develop and maintain a whole school culture that promotes the benefits of good attendance.</p> <p>Accurately complete admission and attendance registers.</p> <p>Have robust daily processes to follow up absence.</p> <p>Have a dedicated senior leader with overall responsibility for championing and improving attendance.</p>	<p>Take an active role in attendance improvement, support their school(s) to prioritise attendance, and work together with leaders to set whole school cultures.</p> <p>Ensure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties.</p> <p>Ensure school staff receive training on attendance.</p>	<p>Have a strategic approach to improving attendance for the whole area and make it a key focus of all frontline council services.</p> <p>Have a School Attendance Support Team that works with all schools in their area to remove area-wide barriers to attendance.</p> <p>Provide each school with a named point of contact in the School Attendance Support Team who can support with queries and advice.</p> <p>Offer opportunities for all schools in the area to share effective practice.</p>

PUPILS AT RISK OF BECOMING PERSISTENTLY ABSENT

Parents are expected to:	Schools are expected to:	Academy trustees and governing bodies are expected to:	Local authorities are expected to:
<p>Work with the school and local authority to help them understand their child's barriers to attendance.</p> <p>Proactively engage with the support offered to prevent the need for more formal support.</p>	<p>Proactively use data to identify pupils at risk of poor attendance.</p> <p>Work with each identified pupil and their parents to understand and address the reasons for absence, including any in-school barriers to attendance.</p> <p>Where out of school barriers are identified, signpost and support access to any required services in the first instance.</p> <p>If the issue persists, take an active part in the multi-agency effort with the local authority and other partners. Act as the lead practitioner where all partners agree that the school is the best placed lead service. Where the lead practitioner is outside of the school, continue to work with the local authority and partners.</p>	<p>Regularly review attendance data and help school leaders focus support on the pupils who need it.</p>	<p>Hold a termly conversation with every school to identify, discuss and signpost or provide access to services for pupils who are persistently or severely absent or at risk of becoming so.</p> <p>Where there are out of school barriers, provide each identified pupil and their family with access to services they need in the first instance.</p> <p>If the issue persists, facilitate a voluntary early help assessment where appropriate. Take an active part in the multi-agency effort with the school and other partners. Provide the lead practitioner where all partners agree that a local authority service is best placed to lead. Where the lead practitioner is outside of the local authority, continue to work with the school and partners.</p>

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PERSISTENTLY ABSENT PUPILS

Parents are expected to:	Schools are expected to:	Academy trustees and governing bodies are expected to:	Local authorities are expected to:
<p>Work with the school and local authority to help them understand their child's barriers to attendance.</p> <p>Proactively engage with the formal support offered – including any parenting contract or voluntary early help plan to prevent the need for legal intervention.</p>	<p>Continued support as for pupils at risk of becoming persistently absent and:</p> <p>Where absence becomes persistent, put additional targeted support in place to remove any barriers. Where necessary this includes working with partners.</p> <p>Where there is a lack of engagement, hold more formal conversations with parents and be clear about the potential need for legal intervention in future.</p> <p>Where support is not working, being engaged with or appropriate, work with the local authority on legal intervention.</p> <p>Where there are safeguarding concerns, intensify support through statutory children's social care.</p> <p>Work with other schools in the local area, such as schools previously attended and the schools of any siblings.</p>	<p>Regularly review attendance data and help school leaders focus support on the pupils who need it.</p>	<p>Continued support as for pupils at risk of becoming persistently absent and:</p> <p>Work jointly with the school to provide formal support options including parenting contracts and education supervision orders.</p> <p>Where there are safeguarding concerns, ensure joint working between the school, children's social care services and other statutory safeguarding partners.</p> <p>Where support is not working, being engaged with or appropriate, enforce attendance through legal intervention (including prosecution as a last resort).</p>

SEVERLEY ABSENT PUPILS

Parents are expected to:	Schools are expected to:	Academy trustees and governing bodies are expected to:	Local authorities are expected to:
<p>Work with the school and local authority to help them understand their child's barriers to attendance.</p> <p>Proactively engage with the formal support offered – including any parenting contract or voluntary early help plan to prevent the need for legal intervention.</p>	<p>Continued support as for persistently absent pupils and:</p> <p>Agree a joint approach for all severely absent pupils with the local authority.</p>	<p>Regularly review attendance data and help school leaders focus support on the pupils who need it.</p>	<p>Continued support as for persistently absent pupils and:</p> <p>All services should make this group the top priority for support. This may include a whole family plan, consideration for an education, health and care plan, or alternative form of educational provision.</p> <p>Be especially conscious of any potential safeguarding issues, ensuring joint working between the school, children's social care services and other statutory safeguarding partners. Where appropriate, this could include conducting a full children's social care assessment and building attendance into children in need and child protection plans.</p>

SUPPORT FOR COHORTS OF PUPILS WITH LOWER ATTENDANCE THAN THEIR PEERS

Parents are expected to:	Schools are expected to:	Academy trustees and governing bodies are expected to:	Local authorities are expected to:
<p>Not applicable.</p>	<p>Proactively use data to identify cohorts with, or at risk of, low attendance and develop strategies to support them.</p> <p>Work with other schools in the local area and the local authority to share effective practice where there are common barriers to attendance.</p>	<p>Regularly review attendance data and help school leaders focus support on the pupils who need it.</p>	<p>Track local attendance data to prioritise support and unblock area wide attendance barriers where they impact numerous schools.</p>

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SUPPORT FOR PUPILS WITH MEDICAL CONDITIONS OR SEND WITH POOR ATTENDANCE

Parents are expected to:	Schools are expected to:	Academy trustees and governing bodies are expected to:	Local authorities are expected to:
<p>Work with the school and local authority to help them understand their child's barriers to attendance.</p> <p>Proactively engage with the support offered.</p>	<p>Maintain the same ambition for attendance and work with pupils and parents to maximise attendance.</p> <p>Ensure join up with pastoral support and where required, put in place additional support and adjustments, such as an individual healthcare plan and if applicable, ensuring the provision outlined in the pupil's EHCP is accessed.</p> <p>Consider additional support from wider services and external partners, making timely referrals.</p> <p>Regularly monitor data for such groups, including at board and governing body meetings and with local authorities.</p>	<p>Regularly review attendance data and help school leaders focus support on the pupils who need it.</p>	<p>Work closely with relevant services and partners, for example special educational needs, educational psychologists, and mental health services, to ensure joined up support for families.</p> <p>Ensure suitable education, such as alternative provision, is arranged for children of compulsory school age who because of health reasons would not otherwise receive a suitable education.</p>

SUPPORT FOR PUPILS WITH A SOCIAL WORKER

Parents are expected to:	Schools are expected to:	Academy trustees and governing bodies are expected to:	Local authorities are expected to:
<p>Work with the school and local authority to help them understand their child's barriers to attendance.</p> <p>Proactively engage with the support offered.</p>	<p>Inform the pupil's social worker if there are any unexplained absences and if their name is to be deleted from the register.</p>	<p>Regularly review attendance data and help school leaders focus support on the pupils who need it.</p>	<p>Regularly monitor the attendance of children with a social worker in their area.</p> <p>Put in place personal education plans for looked-after children.</p> <p>Secure regular attendance of looked-after children as their corporate parent and provide advice and guidance about the importance of attendance to those services supporting pupils previously looked after.</p>

MONITORING

Parents:	Schools:	Academy trustees and governing bodies:	Local authorities:
<p>Schools regularly update parents on their child's attendance.</p>	<p>Ofsted considers schools' efforts to improve or sustain high attendance as part of inspections. Multi-academy trusts regularly review attendance data and support schools.</p>	<p>DfE Regions Group considers multi academy trusts' efforts on attendance as part of decision making. Ofsted considers governing bodies' efforts as part of inspections.</p>	<p>DfE Regions Group monitors local authority efforts as part of regular interaction.</p>

RECORDING ATTENDANCE

We will keep an attendance register, and place all pupils onto this register. We will take our attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. It will mark whether every pupil is:

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

All marks will be compliant with the DfE attendance codes.

Pupils must arrive in school by 8:50am on each school day. The register for the first session will be taken at 8:50am and will be kept open until 9:00am. The register for the second session will be taken at 1:00pm.

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REPORTING TO PARENTS

School reports to parents on their child's attendance record annually in the written end-of-year report. Where attendance falls below the expected standard, parents are likely to receive letters updating them on their child's attendance more frequently.

MONITORING ARRANGEMENTS

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the local authority or DfE is updated, and as a minimum annually by the Headteacher. Where changes are made, the policy will be approved by the full governing board.