Warrington Primary Academy Trust

Attendance Policy

Ratified: 05/12/2023

Next Review Date: 05/12/2024

Policy Responsibilities and Review

Policy type:	Trust Wide
Guidance:	This policy is based on the recommendations of the non-statutory guidance "Working together to improve school attendance" in place form September 2022 and written with due regard to guidance documents and legislation as detailed in Appendix 2 where you will also find reading references.
Related policies:	This policy should be read alongside the following school policies: • Safeguarding policy • SEN policy • Behaviour Policy
Review frequency:	Annually
Committee responsible:	
Chair of Trustees signature:	
Changes in latest version:	

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1. Organisation and facilities

1.1. Securing good attendance is not seen in isolation. Warrington Primary Academy Trust's (WPAT's) effective practices for improvement involve close interaction with curriculum planning, positive behaviour, bullying prevention, safeguarding, special educational needs and medical needs support, mental health and wellbeing, and effective use of resources. WPATs foundation for 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.

2. Rationale

2.1. WPAT promotes the benefits of good attendance for all pupils. It sets and expects high standards of attendance for every pupil, communicates those expectations both clearly and consistently to pupils and parents/carers and systematically analyses their data to identify patterns to target their improvement efforts. We are committed to working together with children and parents to promote 100% attendance wherever possible.

2.2. For some pupils 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. Some pupils find it harder than others to attend school and therefore at all stages of improving attendance, WPAT and partners will work with pupils and parents/carers to remove any barriers to attendance by building strong and trusting relationships and working together to put the right support in place.

2.3. Improving and supporting attendance is the responsibility of everyone in school. We believe that good attendance is essential for pupils to get the most out of their school experience, including their attainment, wellbeing, and wider life chances.

3. Policy aims (based on DfE guidance and best practice)

3.1. We will ensure:

- a culture of good attendance that reflects WPAT's guiding principle and core values and that is embedded and enacted in everything we do.
- a named Trustee/Governor responsible for the attendance portfolio will be in place and knowledgeable about school attendance.
- strong school leadership, where leaders are highly visible and ambitious attendance goals are set.
- attendance and punctuality are set as a priority for all those associated with the school including Trustees, Governors, pupils, parents/carers and teachers.
- an improved overall percentage of pupils at school.

- accurate admissions and attendance registers in place in all schools.
- there is a framework which defines agreed roles and responsibilities and promotes consistency in carrying out designated tasks.
- a first day response in all schools as part of their robust daily response to absence.
- there is a dedicated senior leader responsible for attendance and championing and improving attendance.
- there is a Trust and school Data Manager who will provide training on attendance data management, supporting early identification and risk reduction for schools.
- there are monitoring reports for the Trust, Governor Committees, and schools.
- all school staff receive annual attendance training, and that attendance is part of school induction protocols.
- the Trust has a Strategic Lead for attendance who works with schools to improve attendance and is point of contact for advice and support.
- the WPAT Education Inclusion Hub supports the sharing of good practice for attendance across the Trust.
- each school has a Welfare Team in place and resources to support families at risk of poor attendance.
- work takes place with families to address the reasons for absence including in school barriers.
- vulnerable pupil groups including LAC, receive targeted and bespoke support plans.
- processes for engagement with Local Authority EWO Fast Track Prosecution services are in place.
- engagement with multi-agency professionals, early help assessment, whole family support, including special educational needs professionals.
- access to school resources in the first instance where there are out of school barriers for families.
- Children's Social Care are involved where there are safeguarding concerns and build support into attendance planning.

4. Expected attendance and legalities

4.1. 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.

4.2. 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.

5. Roles and responsibilities

5.1. Senior Leadership

- The Headteacher has overall responsibility for attendance in school. Each school within WPAT has a senior leader responsible for attendance. They will be the first point of contact should parents/carers have any concerns about their child's absence. The Senior Leader responsible for attendance in Ditton Primary Academy School is Gary Gornell.
- Responsibilities of the senior leader include championing and improving attendance in school, offering a clear vision for attendance improvement, evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes, oversight of data analysis, and communicating messages to pupils and parents.

6. First day response and daily absence

6.1. School requires first day contact for a child's absence. The procedures for when first day contact is not received are recorded in the attendance protocols.

6.2. All other absences will be marked as unauthorised unless prior arrangement has been agreed with the Headteacher.

6.3. With regards to unexpected absence during term time, parents and carers should contact school daily during any absence. When a child joins Ditton Primary Academy School, parents/carers agree to contact school for EVERY day of absence. It is an essential part of the school's safeguarding procedures that we know the reasons for all absences as soon as possible (preferably , by 8.30 a.m.). Otherwise, it is our duty to follow up with calls, messages and home visits. In the event of a child needing to be absent from school, parents/carers should inform the Office at the earliest opportunity using either:

Tel; 0151 424 5861 and press 1 to report an absence,
or email: ditton.absence@wpat.uk

7. Managing absence

7.1. Attendance is reviewed by the school attendance officer.

7.2. Where absence persists and voluntary support is not working or is not being engaged, school will work together with families 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 a parenting contract or education supervision order.

7.3. The school is supported by The Attendance Service at the Local Authority and will seek advice and representation from this service to assist in the monitoring of poor attendees. The service will formulate a plan of action with the school to improve pupil attendance and if necessary, can instigate legal proceeding through the fast-track process. Where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or not being engaged with, attendance will be enforced through statutory intervention to protect the pupil's right to an education.

8. Recording attendance and authorising absence

8.1. Reasons for non-attendance should always be provided by parents/carers. If this is not the case the school will continue to contact parent/carer until a reason has been given.

8.2. WPAT have agreed with the Local Authority that the school will not authorise absence except for medical or illness or faith-based holiday. WPAT follows Local Authority guidelines and will not authorise any absence due to holiday unless exceptional circumstances can be proven. Appendix 1

8.3. School can request that any absence due to illness be verified with a doctor's appointment card or medical note if necessary. Detailed guidelines have been formulated and will be provided upon request.

8.4. Fixed codes for absence and attendance are used consistently throughout the school and are shared with parents/carers. Appendix 3

9. Requesting authorised absence

9.1. All other planned absences will be marked as unauthorised unless prior arrangement has been agreed with the Headteacher. Leave of absence forms can be found in the protocols.

10. Promoting and incentivising good attendance

10.1. WPAT aims to build strong relationships with families, listen to and understand barriers to attendance and work with families to remove them. They will be provided with support, advice and guidance where required. We will establish an effective and efficient system of communication with pupils, parents/carers and appropriate agencies to provide mutual information, advice and support. We are committed to working together with children and parents to promote 100% attendance wherever possible.

10.2. WPAT visibly demonstrate the benefits of good attendance throughout school life. This may include in displays, assemblies or through curriculum content. This will be done sensitively and without discrimination and may also include praising and rewarding improvements in attendance at whole school, key stage, year group, class and individual level. Praise and rewards systems

can be found in the protocols.

10.3. When a pupil has not attended school for a significant period, we will recognise the needs of the individual pupil and carefully plan re-integration.

11. The use of data/tracking and monitoring of attendance

11.1. The Department for Education, Local Authority and WPAT require schools to monitor and report the attendance levels of every pupil. One of the reasons for this is the strong statistical link between attendance and attainment. The higher a pupil's attendance, the higher their levels of achievement. WPAT seeks to ensure that all its pupils receive a full-time education which maximises opportunities for each pupil to realise their true potential.

11.2. WPAT will rigorously and proactively use attendance data to identify poor patterns of attendance at individual and cohort level as soon as possible so that all parties can work together to resolve them before they become entrenched.

11.3. WPAT's Data Manager will provide monitoring reports for Trust, Governor Committees, and schools.

12. Strong Partnerships and working together

12.1. WPAT will work collaboratively with external partners to identify and address the root causes of absence and remove barriers to attendance, at home, in school or more broadly. This work may include Early Help assessment, whole family planning and special educational needs assessment. It may also include working with Children's Social Care where there are safeguarding concerns. This support will be built into attendance planning.

12.2. Information will be shared with other schools in the area, Local Authorities, and other partners when absence is at risk of becoming persistent or severe.

12.3. Developing strong relationships and families will result in reduction in persistent and severe absence. These relationships will ensure families are supported to gain access to wider support services and will be provided with support to remove the barriers to attendance. When appropriate support will be formalised in conjunction with the local authority.

13. Training

13.1. All teaching and non-teaching staff will know the importance of good attendance, are consistent in their communication with pupils and parents/carers and receive the training and professional development they need. To ensure this happens all school staff will have received annual attendance training.

13.2. Information regarding attendance is part of school staff induction protocols.

13.3. The WPAT Education Inclusion Hub will support the sharing of good practice for attendance across the Trust.

14. Attendance protocols which form part of this policy

14.1. Ditton Primary Academy School has the following protocols to support the implementation of this policy. The protocols are intended to support staff and parents/carers by providing guidance in procedures and are based on DfE best practice:

Number	School Protocols
1	The school day and registration
2	Daily absence procedure
3	Absence managing procedure
4	Tiered approach to attendance support
5	Praise and rewards systems
6	Leave of absence forms

Protocol 1 - The School Day and Registration

- The school day begins at 8.50 am.
- Registration takes place as soon after 8.50 am as is possible.
- A child will be marked late after registration, if their class teacher is unaware that they are in the building.
- The register will be left open in extreme bad weather, or if the child has been delayed by another member of staff on the premises.
- Registers must be in the school office by 9.00 am and will be officially "closed".
- Children who arrive after registration closes at 9.15am will be recorded in the school's Registration and Attendance Management system (Arbor) as late. Children arriving after 9.30am will lose a mark for the morning session. This absence will be marked as unauthorised.
- A letter will be sent home if a child is late after registration closes on two or more days in the week.

Protocol 2 Daily Absence Procedures :

The Attendance Officer monitors the front entrance 8.50-9.15 a.m. daily in order to

accompany younger pupils down to class; oversee entry to main school through security door system; provide a welcome smile and welfare check on arrival (e.g. check if child has managed to have breakfast); be available for any pastoral concerns or reports at start of day; pass on important information from late drop off to class teachers, etc.

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All late arrivals recorded (preferable by accompanying parents)on electronic signing in system and details added to Arbor to complete the morning register by 9.30

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Office staff member checks on Arbor for all absent children with no given reason and commences home calls to first contact on child's list up to 9.30 a.m. Reasons for absence recorded on Arbor. *
All messages regarding pupil absence entered onto Arbor by 9.30 a.m. at the latest.

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Attendance Officer checks for any unopened or incomplete registers and any validation errors on Arbor for both morning and afternoon sessions . Class teachers emailed if there are any issues.

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From 9.30 a.m. the Attendance Officer checks Arbor for all remaining absent children with no given reason. Telephone calls made to first contact on child's list . If no response from primary contact, telephone made to other contacts on list. Pings and emails sent to parents/carers requesting call back. Any reasons for absence obtained recorded on Arbor.

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Vulnerable list children identified and if no reasons for absence given, Social Worker/relevant lead professional notified.

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When deemed necessary, home visit made by 2 members of staff- attendance/safeguarding team member plus another. If reason for absence established, update records and remind parent/carer of duty to inform school. If no response at home address, card to be left requesting call back.

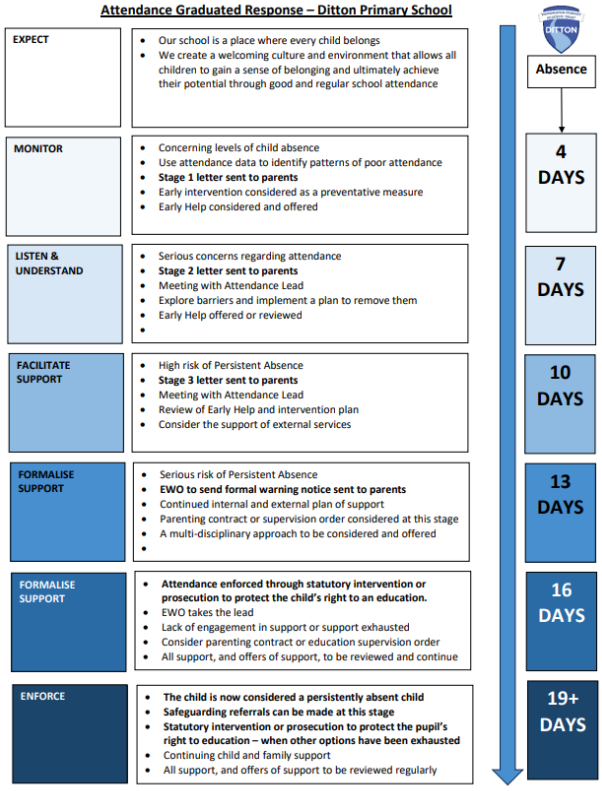
If child is unaccounted for , **given all range of hard and soft data available regarding the family** (CPOMS, Arbor, etc.) , police welfare check requested via 101.

Cases identified for discussion/referral to Education Welfare Officer.

*School will attempt to hold 2 contacts per child.

Protocol 3 – - Absence Managing Procedure

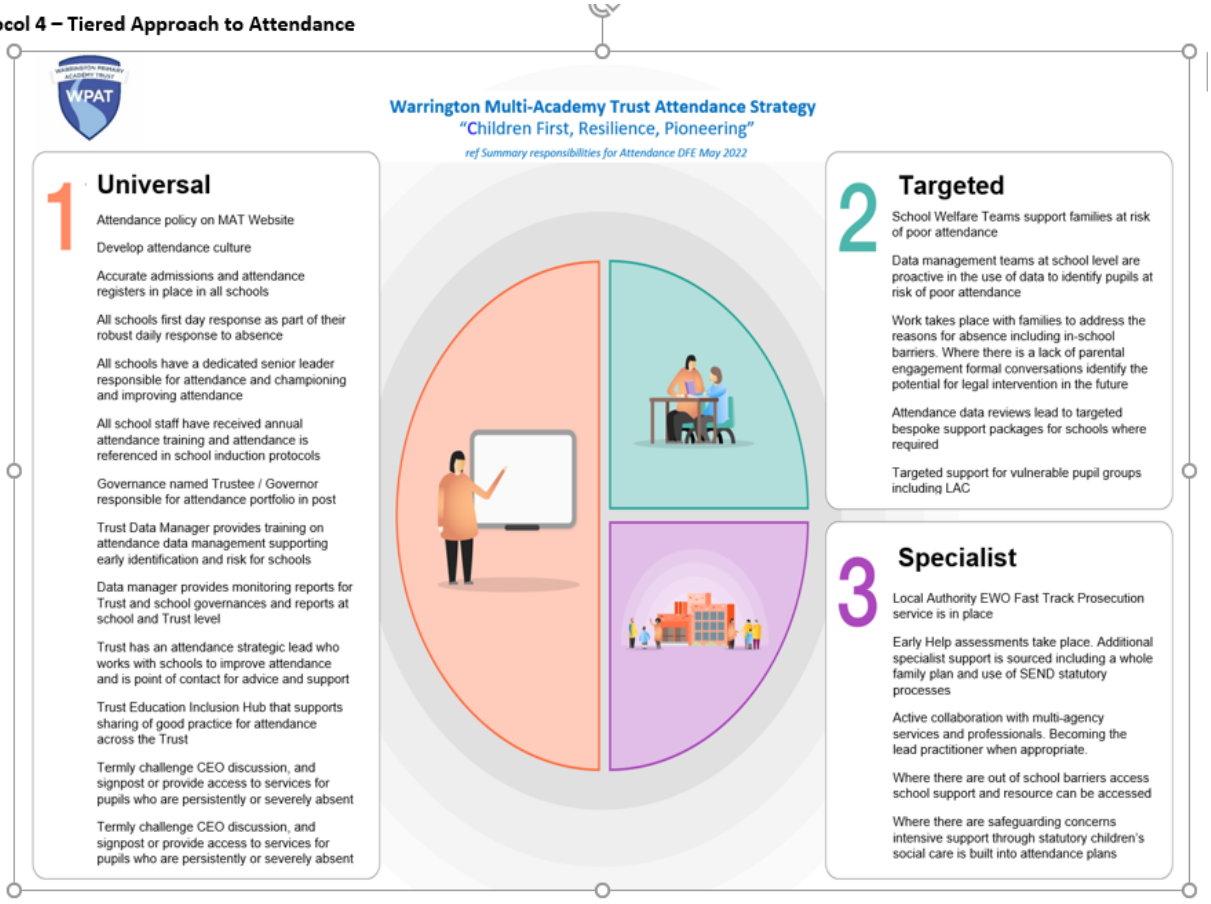
Every 6 weeks attendance is reviewed by the Attendance Officer and EWO and the following procedure/escalated approach is followed:



- Stage 1 letter sent after **4** days absence
- Stage 2 letter sent after **7** days absence
- Stage 3 letter sent after **10** days absence
- Formal warning sent after **13** days absence
- Formalised actions/interventions taken over by EWO after **16** days absence

- Statutory intervention or prosecution may happen after **19** days absence.

Protocol 4 – Tiered Approach to Attendance



Protocol 5 – Praise and reward systems

- Weekly assemblies for class attendance
- Publication of weekly attendance and lates data by class
- Weekly rewards for highest class attendance and fewest lates
- Letters /postcards home for good or improved attendance
- Termly Attendance Challenges to reward excellent attendance and encourage improvement

Protocol 6 – Leave of absence forms

These are available from the school office.

APPENDIX 1

WPAT Pupil attendance and planned absence (Appendix to policy).

Definition of "exceptional circumstances" for term time holiday authorisation.

Legislative Framework:
It is a parent's duty under Section 7 of the Education Act 1996, to ensure that their child of "compulsory school age" is to receive "an efficient, full time education". A child is of compulsory school age from age five. A child should attend school from the start of term commencing on or after his / her fifth birthday. We, at WPAT, encourage good attendance from the day a child joins one of our schools.

Parents of registered pupils have a legal duty under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 to ensure that children of compulsory school age attend school on a regular and fulltime basis. Permitting unauthorised absence from school is an offence and parents may be reported to the Trust, and other authorities, if problems cannot be resolved by agreement with the school. School policies describe the required levels of attendance and punctuality for good progress to be made at school.

The government expects schools to:

- Promote good attendance and reduce absence.
- Ensure that every child has access to full time education to which they are entitled; and,
- Act early to address patterns of absence.

The government also expects:

- Parents to perform their legal duty by ensuring their children of compulsory school age, who are registered at school, attend regularly.

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendments) Regulations 2013 have amended Regulation 7 of the 2006 regulations to prohibit the Headteacher of a school from granting leave of absence to a pupil except where an application has been made in advance and the Headteacher

considers that there are exceptional circumstances relating the request. WPAT and its Headteachers believe it is necessary to define what we consider to be "exceptional circumstances" to give further structure to the decision to decline authorisation of absence.

WPAT have four permitted areas of "exceptional circumstance":

1. The death or terminal illness of an immediate family member, where immediate is defined as the parents / carers and siblings of the child in school.
2. Absence recommended by a health professional.
3. Religious observance.
4. Allowances made for the families of service personnel on active duty.

In addition, we apply a further "threshold test" to the fundamental definition of "exceptional". We believe that the circumstances must be, rare, significant, and unavoidable to qualify.

Where the Headteacher is satisfied that there are exceptional circumstances to warrant the request for leave of absence but has additional concerns about the timing of the absence, or the pupil's attendance record, they may request a meeting with the parent / carer; the absence may not be authorised without attendance at this meeting.

If you require any further information or clarification, please refer your request to the school Headteacher via the school office.

APPENDIX 2:

This policy is guided by Warrington Borough Council and Department for Education guidance and best practice

The policy has been written with due regard to the following:

DfE Guidance Documents

- Working together to improve school attendance Guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools, and local authorities - Published Sept 2022

- Summary table of responsibilities for school attendance Guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools, and local authorities – Published September 2022

Legislation

- Section 175 of the Education Act 2002
- Section 7 and 444 of the Education Act 1996
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendments) Regulations 2013
- The Equality Act 2010
- Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018)
- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2021 (KCSIE)

Reading References & Research

- http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/pupilsupport/behaviour/attendance
- http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/guidanceandadvice/f00221879/advice-on-schoolattendance
- https://www.gov.uk/school-attendance-absence/overview

APPENDIX 3:

CODE	DESCRIPTION	MEANING
/	Present (AM)	Present
\	Present (PM)	Present
B	Educated off site (NOT Dual registration)	Approved Education Activity
C	Other Authorised Circumstances (not covered by another appropriate code/description)	Authorised absence
E	Excluded (no alternative provision made)	Authorised absence
G	Family holiday (NOT agreed or days in excess of agreement)	Unauthorised absence
H	Family holiday (agreed)	Authorised absence
I	Illness (NOT medical or dental etc.	Authorised absence

	appointments)	
J	Interview	Approved Education Activity
L	Late (before registers closed)	Present
M	Medical/Dental appointments	Authorised absence
N	No reason yet provided for absence	Unauthorised absence
O	Unauthorised absence (not covered by any other code/description)	Unauthorised absence
P	Approved sporting activity	Approved Education Activity
R	Religious observance	Authorised absence
S	Study leave	Authorised absence
T	Traveller absence	Authorised absence
U	Late (after registers closed)	Unauthorised absence
V	Educational visit or trip	Approved Education Activity
W	Work experience	Approved Education Activity
D	Dual registration (i.e. pupil attending other establishment)	Not counted in possible attendances
X	Untimetabled sessions for noncompulsory school-age pupils	Not counted in possible attendances
Y	Enforced and partial enforced closure	Not counted in possible attendances
Z	Pupil not yet on roll	Not counted in possible attendances
#	School closed to pupils	Not counted in possible attendances