ELA Attendance Policy

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In consultation with	Senior Leadership Team

Witchford Village College

Attendance Policy

Document Control 2

Document Control

New Version Number	Key changes from previous version	Date of ratification
2	Changes have been made following the release of new DfE guidance – Working together to improve school attendance, applies from 19 Aug 2024	
3	Section 2 – updated with new links Section 3.1 – Governor responsibilities updated Section 5.2 added Sections 6, 7 & 8 added Section 9.5 – added Appendix 4 - added	

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1. Aims

1.1. This policy applies to all pupils of compulsory school age at Witchford Village College. The policy aims to show our commitment to meeting our obligations with regards to school attendance, including those laid out in the Department for Education's (DfE's) statutory guidance on Working together to improve school attendance, through our whole-school culture and ethos that values good attendance.

1.2. Key Principles:

- Pupils at Witchford Village College have the right to education that is 'excellence as standard'.
- For pupils to access the best possible education, a high level of attendance is essential.
- To ensure all pupils understand the importance of attendance. Pupils' ability to stay and feel safe, enjoy and achieve and to make a positive contribution may be jeopardised by poor attendance. For Witchford Village College pupils, future life choices may be jeopardised by poor attendance. This includes application to further and higher educational establishments and future employment opportunities.

1.3. Witchford Village College endeavour to provide a safe learning environment in which pupils can enjoy and achieve. We acknowledge the proven correlation between high level attendance and pupil outcomes. This Attendance and Punctuality Policy emphasises positive strategies and a range of interventions to ensure the highest levels of attendance. However, when normal School procedures do not result in good attendance, a range of further measures, including legal action, must be considered.

1.4. Witchford Village College aim to:

- Ensure that every pupil has access to the education to which they are entitled
- Emphasise the importance, to all pupils, of maximum attendance at school as an essential pre-requisite for making full use of all educational opportunities and to maximise individual achievement
- Make explicit to all relevant parties (teachers, parents/carers and pupils) the School's expectations on attendance levels
- Promote a consistent approach across the school towards all matters relating to attendance
- Clarify the roles and responsibilities of all parties with respect to attendance
- Communicate to all relevant parties the legal position with respect to attendance and the categories of absence which are deemed "authorised"
- Act early to address patterns of absence, including persistent absence and promote good attendance
- Stress the need for home and school to work in close partnership to achieve high attendance

2. Legislation and guidance

2.1. It is a legal requirement that pupils of compulsory school age receive a full-time education and this means regular attendance at school. Irregular attendance leads to pupils missing important lessons and therefore not fulfilling their true potential; it also places children at risk and may result in them being drawn into patterns of anti-social or criminal behaviour. We take the issue of attendance very seriously and do all we can to obtain very high attendance from all our pupils.

2.2. This policy is based on the Department for Education's (DfE's) statutory guidance on Working together to improve school attendance and school attendance parental responsibility measures. The guidance is based on the following pieces of legislation, which set out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- Part 6 of the Education Act 1996
- Part 7 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006
- School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013
- The Equality Act 2010

It also refers to:

- School census guidance
- Keeping Children Safe in Education
- Mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance: guidance for schools
- Ofsted's 2025 framework toolkit

3. Roles and responsibilities

3.1. Trustees are responsible for:

- Setting high expectations of all school leaders, staff, pupils and parents/carers
- Making sure school leaders fulfil expectations, statutory duties and comply with the law on school attendance, including:
  - Making sure the school records attendance accurately in the register, and shares the required information with the DfE and local authority
  - Making sure the school works effectively with local partners to help remove barriers to attendance, and keeps them informed regarding specific pupils, where appropriate
- Recognising and promoting the importance of school attendance across the school's policies and ethos
- Making sure the school's attendance management processes are delivered effectively, and that consistent support is provided for pupils who need it most by prioritising staff and resources
- Making sure the school has high aspirations for all pupils, but adapts processes and support to pupils' individual needs
- Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data and helping school leaders focus improvement efforts on individual pupils or cohorts who need it most
- Working with school leaders to set goals or areas of focus for attendance and providing support and challenge
- Monitoring attendance figures for the whole school and repeatedly evaluating the effectiveness of the school's processes and improvement efforts to make sure they are meeting pupils' needs
- Where the school is struggling with attendance, working with school leaders to develop a comprehensive action plan to improve attendance
- Making sure all staff receive adequate training on attendance as part of the regular continued professional development offer, so that staff understand:
  - The importance of good attendance
  - That absence is almost always a symptom of wider issues
  - The school's legal requirements for keeping registers
  - The school's strategies and procedures for tracking, following up on and improving attendance, including working with partners and keeping them informed regarding specific pupils, where appropriate
- Making sure dedicated training is provided to staff with a specific attendance function in their role, including in interpreting and analysing attendance data
- Holding the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy

3.2. The Headteacher is responsible for:

- The implementation of this policy within the school
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to trustees
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils
- Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies

- Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary, and/or authorising the Senior Attendance Champion and Attendance Officer to be able to do so
- Making sure all staff receive adequate training on attendance as part of the regular continued professional development offer, so that staff understand:
  - The importance of good attendance
  - That absence is almost always a symptom of wider issues
  - The school's legal requirements for keeping registers
  - The school's strategies and procedures for tracking, following up on and improving attendance, including working with partners and keeping them informed regarding specific pupils, where appropriate
- Communicating with the local authority when a pupil with an education, health and care (EHC) plan has falling attendance, or where there are barriers to attendance that relate to the pupil's needs
- Communicating the school's high expectations for attendance and punctuality regularly to pupils and parents through all available channels

3.3. The designated senior leader responsible for attendance (also known as the 'senior attendance champion') is responsible for:

- Leading, championing and improving attendance across the school
- Setting a clear vision for improving and maintaining good attendance
- Decisions regarding attendance coding
- Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes
- Having a strong grasp of absence data and oversight of absence data analysis
- Regularly monitoring and evaluating progress in attendance
- Establishing and maintaining effective systems for tackling absence, and making sure they are followed by all staff
- Liaising with pupils, parents/carers and external agencies, where needed
- Building close and productive relationships with parents to discuss and tackle attendance issues
- Working with the parents of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) to develop specific support approaches for attendance where pupils with SEND face in-school barriers
- Creating intervention or reintegration plans in partnership with pupils and their parents/carers
- Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families

The designated senior leader responsible for attendance is **Joe Holmes** and can be contacted via jholmes@wvc.tmet.org.uk.

3.4. The Attendance Officer is responsible for:

- Overseeing administration of the register systems across the whole school
- Contacting parents/carers regarding non-attendance or attendance concerns and informing them of unexplained absences before they become unauthorised absences
- Monitoring and analysing attendance data
- Monitoring and responding to leave of absence requests
- Reporting concerns regarding attendance to the Heads of Year, Senior Deputy Headteacher and DSL
- Benchmarking attendance data to identify areas of focus for improvement
- Providing regular attendance reports to school staff and reporting concerns about attendance to the designated senior leader responsible for attendance, and the headteacher
- Working with education welfare officers to tackle persistent absence
- Advising the headteacher/senior attendance champion (authorised by the headteacher) when thresholds have been met for attendance or punctuality letters, fixed-penalty notices, parent meetings, reporting children missing from education (CME) or meeting parents who are considering elective home education (EHE).

The attendance officer is **Romanna Edgmon-Rollings** and she can be contacted via Edulink, email attendance@wvc.tmet.org.uk or via the absence line 01353 646416.

3.5. Pastoral leaders (Heads of Year) are responsible for:

- Giving attendance a high profile during assemblies and school events and celebrating outstanding attendance
- Monitoring attendance targets and implementing systems of rewards and sanctions
- Meeting with parents/carers to discuss attendance concerns as soon as they are identified
- Meeting regularly with the Attendance Officer to analyse attendance concerns for their pupils
- Working with the Senior Deputy Headteacher, SENCO and Locality Team to create individual packages and reintegration plans, where appropriate
- Ensuring work is provided for suspended pupils and long-term absentees
- Looking for patterns of absence and consider the impact of curriculum upon attendance alongside other possible causes
- Leading on strategies to improve attendance of pupils who are identified as being a concern through meetings with pupils and parents/carers
- Supporting form tutors on issues of non-attendance and with internal truancy, remedying causes and applying sanctions
- Working with parents/carers to support pupils with identified factors affecting their attendance to school

3.6. Form Tutors are responsible for:

- Recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes (see Appendix 1)
- Giving attendance a high profile, taking prompt action when pupils are late or absent without reason, updating the register and referring concerns to the Heads of Year
- Liaising with the Heads of Year when absence is causing concern

- Making contact with parents/carers regarding attendance, when appropriate

3.7. Class Teachers are responsible for:

- Recording attendance within the first 5 minutes of every lesson, using the correct codes
- Giving attendance a high profile, taking prompt action when pupils are late or absent without reason, updating the register and referring concerns to the Heads of Year
- Informing relevant staff of any pupil missing from lesson that had previously been marked present

3.8. School admin/reception staff will:

- Take messages (via email or telephone) from parents/carers regarding absence and record these on the school system
- Transfer calls from parents/carers to the Attendance Officer or Senior Attendance Champion where appropriate, in order to provide them with more detailed support on attendance

3.9. Parents/Carers:

Where this policy refers to a parent, it refers to the adult the school and/or local authority decides is most appropriate to work with, including:

- All natural parents, whether they are married or not
- All those who have parental responsibility for a child or young person
- Those who have day-to-day responsibility for the child (i.e. lives with and looks after them)

Parents are expected to:

- Make sure their child attends every day and timetabled session on time
- Contact the school to report their child's absence before 8:30am on the day of the absence and each subsequent day of absence, and advise when they are expected to return
- Provide the school with more than 1 emergency contact number for their child
- Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day. It is expected that pupils should only be absent from school for the time needed to attend the appointment and they should not, when possible, be absent for the entire school day
- Only request leave of absence in exceptional circumstances and do so at least two weeks in advance of the requested absence
- Monitor their child's attendance via Edulink
- Keep to any attendance contracts that they make with the school and/or local authority
- Seek support, where necessary, for maintaining good attendance, by contacting the Form Tutor, Head of Year or the Attendance Officer, who can be contacted via Edulink.

3.10. Pupils are expected to:

- Arrive on time to school everyday. This means arriving to school no later than 8:45am so that they can get to their tutor room ready for registration at 8:50am

- Attend every timetabled lesson on time, this includes lessons taking place before school and during period 7
- Sign in at the main reception if they are late arriving to school and provide a valid reason for being late
- Sign out at the main reception if they have been given permission to leave school before the end of the school day. Year 7 pupils are not permitted to leave the school site unaccompanied and therefore will need to be collected from reception. Pupils in Years 8-11 may leave unaccompanied however consent must be emailed to the school confirming that they have permission to leave by themselves.
- Tell their form tutor or Heads of Year if they are having any problems attending school
- Monitor their own attendance on Edulink and strive to maintain outstanding attendance of 98%+

4. Recording attendance

4.1. Attendance register

We will keep an electronic 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, using the appropriate national attendance and absence codes from the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024, whether every pupil is:

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

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

- The original entry
- The amended entry
- The reason for the amendment
- The date on which the amendment was made
- The name and position of the person who made the amendment

(See Appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes)

We will also record:

- Whether the absence is authorised or not
- The nature of the activity, where a pupil is attending an approved educational activity
- The nature of circumstances, where a pupil is unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 6 years after the date on which the entry was made.

The school day starts at 8:50am and ends at 3:05pm.

Pupils must arrive in school by 8:45am on each school day.

The register for the first session will be taken at 8:50am and will be kept open until 9:20am. The register for the second session will be taken at 1:25pm and will be kept open until 1:55pm.

Once the registers are closed the session will be recorded as unauthorised and the 'U' code will be used.

4.2. Unplanned absence

The pupil's parent/carer must notify the school of the reason for the absence on the first day of an unplanned absence by 8:30am or as soon as practically possible by using one of the following methods:

- Edulink - e-mail via Edulink, the school's secure communication portal (this is our preferred method of contact)
- Email: attendance@wvc.tmet.org.uk
- Absence line: 01353 646416 (please leave a voicemail)

If a pupil is absent and a notification of absence has not been received from the parent/carer, the school form will record an unauthorised absence.

When reporting an absence, please ensure that you provide:

- Your child's name
- Their year group and tutor group
- The reason for the absence
- Expected date of return, if known

We will mark absence due to physical or mental illness as authorised, unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

Where the absence is longer than 3 days, or there are doubts about the authenticity of the illness, the school will ask for medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents will be notified of this in advance.

4.3. Planned absence

It is expected that absences for medical and dental appointments will, where possible, be arranged for outside of the school day. Where this is not possible, pupils should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary and we expect pupils to attend for part of the day.

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the pupil's parent/carer notifies the school form in advance of the appointment and we request that we are informed at least 48 hours in advance of the appointment, where possible. We will only authorise half a day of absence for standard medical/dental appointments.

Absence for medical or dental appointments should be requested on Edulink or by emailing attendance@wvc.tela.org.uk and be accompanied by appropriate evidence, such as an appointment letter or card, email or SMS reminder. Parental consent is also required where the pupil will need leave the school premises, for their appointment, during the school day.

Year 7 pupils are not permitted to leave the school unaccompanied during the school day and therefore will need to be collected from reception. Pupils in Years 8 – 11 may leave unaccompanied however parents/carers are required to confirm, within their Edulink/email notification, that they have given permission for their child to leave by themselves and that they take full responsibility for the safeguarding of their child once they have left the school premises. If we do not receive permission for them to leave unaccompanied, we will assume that the parent/carer will be collecting them from school reception. All pupils must 'sign out' (at reception) before leaving the school premises so that we have a record of them being off-site in the event of a fire evacuation or other emergency. The pupil must 'sign in' (at reception) upon their return.

If exceptional circumstances are being applied for in advance for a planned absence, an Application for Term Time Leave of Absence due to Exceptional Circumstances form is to be completed and submitted for approval by the Headteacher at least two weeks prior to the absence.

The pupil's parent must also apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence. Go to section 5 to find out which term-time absences the school can authorise.

4.4. Lateness and punctuality

It is the duty of parents/carers to ensure that children attend school regularly and punctually. This encourages habits of good time keeping and lessens any possible classroom disruption. If you are experiencing any difficulties regarding your child's attendance or punctuality please get in touch with their Heads of Year and appropriate support can be put in place.

Statutory registration starts at 8:50am and 1:25pm and closes after 30 minutes. A pupil who arrives late:

- Before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code 'L'. This does not count as an absence however, punctuality procedures will be followed and sanctions will be put in place in line with the behaviour policy.
- After the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code 'U'. This counts as an unauthorised absence and code 'U' will be used if a valid reason is not provided.

Where pupils are persistently late and punctuality is a cause for concern the school form punctuality procedures will be implemented. This is an escalating scale and includes:

- A conversation with the Heads of Year
- Letter one – notifying parents that we are monitoring their child's punctuality
- Punctuality report
- Letter 2 – requesting a meeting with the pupil's pastoral lead
- Letter 3 – formal meeting with parents/carers, pupil and senior deputy head

(See Appendix 3 Punctuality procedure flow chart)

4.5. Following up unexplained absence

Where any pupil we expect to attend school form does not attend, or stops attending, without reason, the school will:

- Call the pupil's parent on the morning of the first day of unexplained absence to ascertain the reason. If the school cannot reach any of the pupil's emergency contacts, the school may contact the police or other appropriate external agency if appropriate.
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not
- Identify the correct attendance code to use and input it as soon as the reason for absence is ascertained – this will be no later than 5 working days after the session(s) for which the pupil was absent
- Call the parent on each day that the absence continues without explanation, to make sure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary. If absence continues, the school will consider involving an education welfare officer and/or education inclusion officer and may conduct home visits.
- Where relevant, report the unexplained absence to the pupil's youth offending team officer
- Where appropriate, offer support to the pupil and/or their parents/carers to improve attendance
- Identify whether the pupil needs support from wider partners, as quickly as possible, and make the necessary referrals
- Where support is not appropriate, not successful or not engaged with, school will issue a notice to improve, penalty notice or other legal intervention (see section 5.2 below), as appropriate.

4.6. Reporting to parents/carers

The school will regularly inform parents/carers (see definition of 'parent', as used in this policy, in section 3.9 above) about their child's attendance and absence levels via termly written reports as well as live daily data accessible to parents/carers via Edulink.

5. Authorised and unauthorised absence

5.1. Approval for term-time absence

The headteacher will allow pupils to be absent from the school site for certain educational activities, or to attend other schools or settings.

The headteacher will only grant a **leave of absence** to a pupil during term time if the request meets the specific circumstances set out in the 2024 school attendance regulations. These circumstances are:

- Taking part in a regulated performance, or regulated employment abroad
- Attending an interview
- Study leave
- A temporary, time-limited part-time timetable
- Exceptional circumstances

A leave of absence is granted at the headteacher's discretion, including the length of time the pupil is authorised to be absent for.

The DfE guidelines look at the area of special occasions and make clear that only truly exceptional occasions should be classified as authorised; for example, absence resulting from a pupil attending the wedding of a parent could be counted as authorised; a birthday treat to a theme park would not.

Leave of absence will not be granted for a pupil to take part in a protest activity during school hours.

As a leave of absence will only be granted in exceptional circumstances, it is unlikely a leave of absence will be granted for the purposes of a family holiday.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant background context behind the request.

Any request should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated and, where possible, at least 2 weeks before the absence, and in accordance with any leave of absence request form, accessible via the school's website. The headteacher may require evidence to support any request for leave of absence.

Other valid reasons for **authorised absence** include (but are not limited to):

- Illness (including mental-health illness) and medical/dental appointments (see sections 4.2 and 4.3 for more detail)
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parent(s) belong(s). If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parent's religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart
- Parent(s) travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh gypsies, Irish and Scottish travellers, showmen (fairground people) and circus people, bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and new travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school, but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision
- If the pupil is currently suspended or excluded from school (and no alternative provision has been made)

Other reasons the school may allow a pupil to be absent from the school site, which are not classified as absences, include (but are not limited to):

- Attending an offsite approved educational activity, sporting activity or visit or trip arranged by the school
- Attending another school at which the pupil is also registered (dual registration)
- Attending provision arranged by the local authority
- Attending work experience
- If there is any other unavoidable cause for the pupil not to attend school, such as disruption to travel caused by an emergency, a lack of access arrangements, or because the school premises are closed

5.2. What is an acceptable attendance rate?

Attendance is a national priority; national data clearly shows a correlation between high attendance rates and high achievement and examination performance. In addition, all schools must submit data electronically every term. It is a key indicator of an effective school and, as such, will be scrutinised by OFSTED.

Witchford Village College expect attendance at school to be 100%, unless there are exceptional or unavoidable reasons for absence.

The simple facts: Pupils attend school for **190** days each year. That means there are already 175 days where they are not in school each year.

- Every day missed means 5 hours of lost learning.
- At 96% (7.5 missed days), which is the minimum level of attendance acceptable, a pupil would have missed 37.5 hours of learning during their time at school.
- 17 days off school every year means that a pupil will probably obtain a whole grade lower in each exam than they are capable of achieving.
- 19 days off per school year (the equivalent of 4 weeks of absence) means that a pupil has approximately 90% attendance. At 90% attendance, pupils will have missed 95 hours of learning in one year.
- **Pupils with attendance below 90% are considered persistent absentees. Pupils with attendance of less than 50% are considered as severely persistently absent from school.**

Sickness comes usually in a block of time over a continuous period; what we look for are unbroken weeks (i.e. those where the pupil is marked present on all ten sessions). Pupils should not have more than one or two broken weeks in the course of an academic year. Regular broken weeks are a cause for concern.

5.3. Unauthorised Absence

An absence is unauthorised if:

- No email/telephone call or acceptable explanation is provided by parents/carers
- The reason for the absence does not fall into one of the categories of authorised absence

DfE guidelines state that the following activities would be classified as unauthorised:

- Minding the house; caring for relatives

- Awaiting repair people
- Shopping
- A birthday or family celebration

Reasons for unforeseen absences must be provided to the school within 5 school days otherwise they will be recorded as an unauthorised absence. This follows the guidance in Section 395 of 'Working together to improve school attendance' from the DfE.

5.4. Absence due to mental health issue

DfE guidance is clear that schools should 'set and maintain high expectations for the attendance, engagement and punctuality of pupils who are anxious about attending school'.

The guidance also states 'Many children will experience normal but difficult emotions that make them nervous about attending school, such as worries about friendships, schoolwork, exams or variable moods. It is important to note that these pupils are still expected to attend school regularly.'

To support students who are anxious about attending school, Witchford Village College will work with students, parents and carers to create plans to implement reasonable adjustments. Such adjustments will be decided on a pupil-by-pupil basis and may include strategies such as:

- Identification of trusted adults for the child to speak to in school
- In-school mentoring with a staff mentor
- Referral to external agencies and/or external professional support
- Short-term withdrawal from some lessons
- Issue and use of time out cards
- Adaptations within the classroom, such as changes to seating plans in lessons

5.5. Study Leave

Witchford Village College follows guidance from the Department for Education (DfE) regarding study leave. The guidance states 'study leave should not be granted by default once the exam syllabus is complete, it should be used sparingly and only granted to Year 11 pupils during public examinations.'

DfE guidance also makes clear that a student is of compulsory school age until the last Friday of June in the school year during which they turn 16.

Witchford Village College applies this guidance in the following manner:

- The date for study leave starting will be decided on a year-by-year basis dependent upon the public examinations calendar.
- When study leave is granted, students who have not completed all coursework requirements will still be expected to attend school to complete this work before starting study leave.
- Study leave will only be granted if a signed letter or completion of an electronic form confirming parents accept the conditions for study leave is received by the Academy. Verbal confirmation or permission will not be accepted under any circumstances.
- During study leave, Witchford Village College will continue to make provision available for those pupils who want to continue to come in to school to revise.

- In exceptional circumstances, early study leave may be granted to students if there is a clear rationale for this being supportive to their individual needs.

6. Strategies for promoting attendance

6.1. Rewarding good attendance (96% or above)

To promote good attendance and to emphasise its importance the school offers the following:

- House points, issued on a half termly basis for good and outstanding attendance and punctuality
- Celebrating good attendance during tutor time and assemblies with tutor group and year awards presented at the end of each term by the Heads of Year
- Attendance certificates
- Letters of congratulations from the Headteacher for long term exceptional attendance. These will become part of the pupil's records and make a meaningful contribution to their reference for further education or the world of work. Prospective employers, Sixth Form Colleges and Colleges of Further Education view attendance and punctuality as important indicators of motivation/attitude and our records and references are very valuable evidence of reliability. The majority of Cambridgeshire Sixth Form or Further Education providers expect at least 96% attendance when offering places.

6.2. Working together

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:

EXPECT

Aspire to high standards of attendance from all pupils 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.

MONITOR

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.

LISTEN AND UNDERSTAND

When a pattern is spotted, discuss with pupils and parents to listen to understand barriers to attendance and agree how all partners can work together to resolve them.

FACILITATE SUPPORT

Remove barriers in school and help pupils 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.

FORMALISE SUPPORT

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 a parenting contract or education supervision order.

ENFORCE

Where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or not being engaged with, enforce attendance through statutory intervention or prosecution to protect the pupil's right to an education.

6.3. Support for pupils and parents

Witchford Village College provides support for parents/carers and pupils if pupils are struggling to attend school. Measures include following:

- Attendance reports
- Attendance contracts
- Attendance interviews and regular reviews with Heads of Year
- Referrals to relevant agencies to provide support for children and their parents/carers
- Coordinated support, where appropriate, from external agencies and attendance at Team Around the Family meetings (TAFs)
- Re-integration programme arranged between pupils, parents/carers and relevant staff (Heads of Year, SLT and SENCO) after long-term absence
- Individualised curriculum where appropriate. An Individual Alternative Education Plan (IAEP) would be completed and in put in place for a short amount of time to support re-integration.

6.4. Local Authority Attendance Officer

The LA Attendance team is a statutory service and a legal requirement. Their involvement is triggered by an unacceptable level of:

- Unauthorised absence
- Persistent absence
- Lateness

At Witchford Village College the attendance officer and senior leadership team monitor attendance at a whole school level and specifically targets the pupils whose attendance falls below 90%. The Headteacher is responsible for ensuring that the attendance strategy and practice is compliant with the local authority's legal duties and processes.

The Local Authority requires the following actions to be taken in response to lengths of absence recorded until the specified codes:

Attendance Codes/ Length of absence	Who to Notify
10 consecutive days of O codes	Complete Non School Attendance (NSA) online form (if location of pupil is unknown, complete Children Missing Education (CME) online referral form)
10 consecutive days of U codes	Complete NSA online form
10 Consecutive days of G codes	Complete online referral form for legal sanction (present code required first)
15 days of I codes – Primary school age	Complete SEND online form
15 days of I codes – Secondary school age	Discuss and share details of pupils who have met the threshold during fortnightly EIO meetings.

7. Supporting pupils with poor attendance

Our school will make use of the full range of support and potential sanctions – including, but not limited to, those listed below – to tackle poor attendance. Decisions will be made on an individual, case-by-case basis.

7.1. Attendance contract

We use attendance contracts as a form of attendance support.

An attendance contract is a formal written agreement between a parent and the school to address irregular attendance at school. An attendance contract is not legally binding, but it provides a more formal route where previous support has not worked or would not have been appropriate.

Parents cannot be compelled to enter an attendance contract, and the school cannot agree an attendance contract in a parent's absence.

Where an attendance contract would be an appropriate form of support, the school will arrange a meeting with the parent (and pupil if they are old enough to understand) to discuss how we can work in partnership to improve the pupil's attendance.

Where parents fail to comply with an agreed attendance contract, the school may seek an alternative course of action. In the first instance, this will include discussions with the parents to seek explanations and determine whether the attendance contract remains useful. Where there is further non-compliance following these discussions, the school may take further action.

7.2. Notice to improve

If the national threshold has been met and support is appropriate, but parents do not engage with offers of support, the school may offer a notice to improve to give parents a final chance to engage with support.

Notices to improve will be issued in line with processes set out in the code of conduct for the local authority.

They will include:

- Details of the pupil's attendance record and of the offences
- The benefits of regular attendance and the duty of parents under section 7 of the Education Act 1996
- Details of the support provided so far
- Opportunities for further support, or to access previously provided support that was not engaged with
- A clear warning that a penalty notice may be issued if attendance doesn't improve within the improvement period, along with details of what sufficient improvement looks like, which will be decided on a case-by-case basis
- A clear timeframe of between 3 and 6 weeks for the improvement period
- The grounds on which a penalty notice may be issued before the end of the improvement period

If a child of compulsory school age fails to attend regularly at a school at which they are registered, or at a place where alternative provision is provided for them, their parents may be guilty of an offence and can be prosecuted by the local authority.

7.3. Penalty notices

The headteacher (or someone authorised by them), local authority or the police can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age, by issuing a penalty notice.

If the school issues a penalty notice, it will check with the local authority before doing so, and send it a copy of any penalty notice issued.

Before issuing a penalty notice, the school will consider the individual case, including:

- Whether the national threshold for considering a penalty notice has been met (10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks)
- Whether a penalty notice is the best available tool to improve attendance for that pupil
- Whether further support, a notice to improve or another legal intervention would be a more appropriate solution
- Whether any obligations that the school has under the Equality Act 2010 make issuing a penalty notice inappropriate

Each parent who is liable for the pupil's offence(s) can be issued with a penalty notice, but this will usually only be the parent/parents who allowed the absence.

The payment must be made directly to the local authority, regardless of who issues the notice. If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute or withdraw the notice.

If issued with a **first** penalty notice, the parent must pay £80 within 21 days, or £160 within 28 days.

If a **second** penalty notice is issued to the same parent in respect of the same pupil, the parent must pay £160 if paid within 28 days.

A **third** penalty notice cannot be issued to the same parent in respect of the same child within 3 years of the date of the issue of the first penalty notice. In a case where the national threshold is met for a third time within those 3 years, alternative action will be taken instead.

A penalty notice may also be issued where parents allow their child to be present in a public place during school hours without reasonable justification, during the first 5 days of a suspension or exclusion (where the school has notified the parents that the pupil must not be present in a public place on that day). These penalty notices are not included in the National Framework, not subject to the same considerations about support being provided, and do not count towards the limit as part of the escalation process.

In these cases, the parent must pay £60 within 21 days, or £120.

8. Supporting pupils who are absent or returning to school

If the school becomes aware of barriers that relate to the pupil's needs, we will inform the local authority.

8.1. Pupils absent due to complex barriers to attendance, including those related to SEND

Where the Attendance Champion recognises that complex barriers to attendance exist, they will meet with parents to set up an Attendance Strategy Plan. This will involve an agreement as to actions that will be taken by parents, the school and the child respectively, including a consideration of support that the child may require in overcoming these barriers.

Where appropriate this will include input from other professionals involved with the pupil and/or their family, e.g. the local authority case work officer or social care. The meeting notes, with actions, will be recorded and saved with relevant information and actions being forwarded to appropriate staff to allow support to be actioned.

This could include, but is not limited to:

- In-house support; mental health support, pastoral mentor, peer buddy
- Identification of a helping hand of trusted adults
- Discussion of appropriate places for a pupil to go for regulation, break and/or lunch
- Suggestion to speak to a GP re: issues outside of school
- Supporting Medical Needs
- Referral to external support
- Reintegration timetable
- Support meetings in school
- Restorative meetings with peers to support friendship breakdowns.
- Meetings with Anti-Bullying Ambassadors / Safer Schools Officer

- Early Help referral

Where a pupil has an education health and care (EHC) plan and their attendance falls, or the school becomes aware of barriers to attendance that related to the pupil's needs, the school will inform the local authority.

8.2. Pupils absent due to mental or physical ill health

Where parents inform the school that mental or physical ill health is impacting on the pupil's attendance, the Attendance Champion will meet with parents to set up an Attendance Strategy Plan.

Where medical/health professionals are involved, this will include an initial Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT) meeting to take advice from all professionals involved on how the school should best approach the child's mental or physical health needs. Parents should be aware that school will not automatically have the relevant information about all medical/health professionals involved, and should take responsibility for providing the Attendance Champion with this information and assisting in inviting professionals to the meeting.

The Attendance Strategy Plan will involve an agreement as to actions that will be taken by parents, the school and the child respectively, including a consideration of support that the child may require in overcoming these barriers. The meeting notes, with actions, will be recorded and saved with relevant information and actions being forwarded to appropriate staff to allow support to be actioned.

8.3. Pupils returning to school after a lengthy or unavoidable period of absence

When pupils are returning to school after a lengthy or unavoidable period of absence, the Attendance Champion or Headteacher will meet with parents to set up a reintegration package.

Where appropriate, this will involve input from health/medical professionals and other professionals involved with the pupil and/or their family, e.g. the local authority case work officer or social care. This reintegration package may incorporate a part time timetable and/or an attendance strategy plan where appropriate.

9. Attendance monitoring

9.1 Monitoring attendance

The school will monitor attendance and absence data (including punctuality) fortnightly, half-termly, termly and yearly across the school and at an individual pupil, year group and cohort level.

Specific pupil information will be shared with the DfE on request.

The school has granted the DfE access to it management information system so the data can be accessed regularly and securely.

Data will be collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics.

The school will benchmark its attendance data at whole school, year group and cohort level against local, regional, and national levels to identify areas of focus for improvement, and share this with the local governing board.

9.2 Analysing attendance

The school will:

- Analyse attendance and absence data regularly to identify pupils, groups or cohorts that need additional support with their attendance, and
- Identify pupils whose absences may be a cause for concern, especially those who demonstrate patterns of persistent or severe absence
- Conduct thorough analysis of half-termly, termly, and full-year data to identify patterns and trends
- Look at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence, and then develop strategies to address these patterns

9.3 Using data to improve attendance

The school will:

- Develop targeted actions to address patterns of absence (of all severities) of individual pupils, groups or cohorts that it has identified via data analysis
- Provide targeted support to the pupils it has identified whose absences may be a cause for concern, especially those who demonstrate patterns of persistent or severed absence, and their families (see section 8.4 below)
- Provide regular opportunities for form tutors/class teachers to review pupil's attendance, to facilitate discussions with pupils and families, and report headlines to the local governing board and school leaders (including special educational needs co-ordinator, designated safeguarding lead and pupil premium lead)
- Use data to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place in order to modify them and inform future strategies
- Share information and work collaboratively with other schools in the area, local authorities and other partners where a pupil's absence is at risk of becoming persistent or severe, including keeping them informed regarding specific pupils, where appropriate

9.4 Reducing persistent and severe absence

Persistent absence is where a pupil misses 10% or more of school, and severe absence is where a pupil misses 50% or more of school. Reducing persistent and severe absence is central to the school's strategy for improving attendance.

The school will:

- Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence
- Consider potential safeguarding issues and, where suspected or present, address them in line with Keeping Children Safe in Education
- Hold regular meetings with the parents of pupils who the school (and/or local authority) considers to be vulnerable or at risk of persistent or severe absence, or who are persistently or severely absent, to:
    - Discuss attendance and engagement at school
    - Listen, and understand barriers to attendance

- Explain the help that is available
- Explain the potential consequences of, and sanctions for, persistent and severe absence
- Review any existing actions or interventions

- Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance, in conjunction with the local authority, where relevant
- Consider alternative support that could be put in place to remove any barriers to attendance and re-engage these pupils. In doing so, the school will sensitively consider some of the reasons for absence
- Implement sanctions, where necessary (see section 5.2, above)

School will use a number of steps to target unauthorised absence:

- Send attendance letters to make parents aware of their legal obligations.
- Arrange meetings with parents/carers to discuss barriers to education and work to remove these.
- Continue to closely monitor the pupil's attendance.
- Regularly review the support in place for effectiveness and make adjustments, if required and appropriate.

Appendix 4 sets out our process for managing attendance

9.5 Safe and Well checks

Each school and education provision is required to have contact with pupils to ensure their safety and well-being, in person (whether face-to-face or virtually with visual contact).

If a pupil is absent for more than five consecutive days with the absence coded under O, I or U, the Designated Safeguarding Lead will arrange weekly Teams meetings or home visits (as appropriate) known as 'Safe and Well Checks' in order to meet the school's safeguarding duty.

10. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the local authority and/or DfE is updated, and as a minimum annually by the headteacher. At every review, the policy will be approved by the Head of School of each school.

11. Links with other policies

This policy links to the following policies:

- Child protection and safeguarding policy
- Behaviour policy

Appendix 1: Attendance codes

The following codes are taken from the DfE's guidance on school attendance.

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	Pupil is present at morning registration
****	Present (pm)	Pupil is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Pupil arrives late before register has closed
Attending a place other than the school		
K	Attending education provision arranged by the local authority	Pupil is attending a place other than a school at which they are registered, for educational provision arranged by the local authority
V	Attending an educational visit or trip	Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised or approved by the school
P	Participating in a sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
W	Attending work experience	Pupil is on an approved work experience placement
B	Attending any other approved educational activity	Pupil is attending a place for an approved educational activity that is not a sporting activity or work experience
D	Dual registered	Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
Absent – leave of absence		
C1	Participating in a regulated performance or undertaking regulated employment abroad	Pupil is undertaking employment (paid or unpaid) during school hours, approved by the school
M	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment
J1	Interview	Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment

S	Study leave	Pupil has been granted leave of absence to study for a public examination
X	Not required to be in school	Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
C2	Part-time timetable	Pupil is not in school due to having a part-time timetable
C	Exceptional circumstances	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
Absent – other authorised reasons		
T	Parent travelling for occupational purposes	Pupil is a 'mobile child' who is travelling with their parent(s) who are travelling for occupational purposes
R	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance
I	Illness (not medical or dental appointment)	Pupil is unable to attend due to illness (either related to physical or mental health)
E	Suspended or excluded	Pupil has been suspended or excluded from school and no alternative provision has been made
Absent – unable to attend school because of unavoidable cause		
Q	Lack of access arrangements	Pupil is unable to attend school because the local authority has failed to make access arrangements to enable attendance at school
Y1	Transport not available	Pupil is unable to attend because school is not within walking distance of their home and the transport normally provided is not available
Y2	Widespread disruption to travel	Pupil is unable to attend because of widespread disruption to travel caused by a local, national or international emergency
Y3	Part of school premises closed	Pupil is unable to attend because they cannot practicably be accommodated in the part of the premises that remains open

Y4	Whole school site unexpectedly closed	Every pupil absent as the school is closed unexpectedly (e.g. due to adverse weather)
Y5	Criminal justice detention	Pupil is unable to attend as they are: • In police detention • Remanded to youth detention, awaiting trial or sentencing, or • Detained under a sentence of detention
Y6	Public health guidance or law	Pupil's travel to or attendance at the school would be prohibited under public health guidance or law
Y7	Any other unavoidable cause	To be used where an unavoidable cause is not covered by the other codes
Absent – unauthorised absence		
G	Holiday not granted by the school	Pupil is absent for the purpose of a holiday, not approved by the school
N	Reason for absence not yet established	Reason for absence has not been established before the register closes
O	Absent in other or unknown circumstances	No reason for absence has been established, or the school isn't satisfied that the reason given would be recorded using one of the codes for authorised absence
U	Arrived in school after registration closed	Pupil has arrived late, after the register has closed but before the end of session
Administrative codes		
Z	Prospective pupil not on admission register	Pupil has not joined school yet but has been registered
#	Planned whole-school closure	Whole-school closures that are known and planned in advance, including school holidays

<u>Appendix 2</u>: Application for Term Time Leave of Absence due to Exceptional Circumstances form

Dear Parent(s)/Carer(s)

APPLICATION FOR TERM TIME LEAVE OF ABSENCE DUE TO EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES

I understand that you wish to apply for leave of absence for your child(ren).

The law stipulates that 'Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances'

Headteachers may, ***in exceptional circumstances***, grant leave of absence in a school year in accordance with the school policy but parents/carers should not expect such leave to be granted as of right. Indeed, following clarification from the Government recently, it is likely that in most cases headteachers will be unable to authorise leave. I would ask you to consider the following:

- parents/carers do not have a legal entitlement to remove their children from school for family holidays and they cannot themselves authorise absence
- each application is considered individually bearing in mind the age of the child, the nature of the exceptional circumstance, the child's attendance record, any school activities that occur during the period of absence (e.g. examinations), that parents have given at least 2 weeks notice.
- if the school does not agree to the absence and the parent still takes the child out of school the absence must, by law, be regarded as unauthorised
- if the child is absent for longer than the agreed time the extra absence will be recorded as unauthorised absence.
- a pupil who fails to return to school within 10 days of the agreed return date may lose their place at the school unless there is a good reason for the continued absence

Absence from school during term time can seriously disrupt a child's education on a day-to-day basis and pupils are less prepared, upon their return, for lessons that build on the work they have missed. Your child(ren) may well be expected to attend an after school catch-up club if this is felt necessary by the school.

If you would like to proceed with your application, please complete all sections on the form overleaf and ensure that it is signed by **<u>all</u>** parents/carers who have parental responsibility for the child(ren) and return it to the Attendance and Admissions Officer as soon as possible. We will advise you as soon as we can of the outcome of your application. Incomplete forms will not be considered.

Yours sincerely

Mr J Holmes
Senior Deputy Headteacher

Please see application form overleaf

Application for Leave of Absence During Term Time

I have read the letter overleaf and I understand and accept the points contained therein. In particular, I understand that leave of absence may not be granted and that if it is, it will be for no longer than 10 school days. I also understand that any unauthorised absences will be recorded and referred to the Education Welfare Service. I will ensure that my child completes any work missed during the period of absence.

Name of Pupil	Form	Year

Dates of absence for which permission sought:			
Start Date		End Date	
Total Number of days			

Please present your case for taking your child(ren) out of school during term time. (Please provide sufficient information / detail to enable us to make an informed decision. Continue on a separate sheet where necessary.)		
**Signed	Name	Relationship to Child
Date:		
**Signed	Name	Relationship to Child
Date:		

** This form needs to be signed by **all** parents/carers who have parental responsibility for the child(ren)

Appendix 3: Punctuality procedure flow charts

Witchford Village College (process for Years 7-11)

Student receives 3+ late marks or 2 late marks in a single week, whichever comes first.	HOH conversation with student. HOH contacts home.
Student receives a total of 5+ late marks.	Late letter 1 sent home
Student receives a total of 8+ late marks.	Student goes on punctuality report. HOH contacts home.
Student receives <2 more late marks after 2 weeks.	Student comes off punctuality report. HOH contacts home.
Student receives 2-4 late marks after 2 weeks (if 5 or more the report will not be extended and late letter two will be issued)	Student continues on punctuality report for a further 2 weeks. HOH to contact home with outcome of 4 weeks on punctuality report.
Student receives a total of 12+ late marks.	Late letter 2 sent home requesting meeting with HOH Student goes on punctuality report to SLT for 2 weeks
Student receives a total of 15+ late marks.	Late letter 3 sent home requesting formal meeting with Deputy Head
5+ additional late marks received	AM registration late marks will no longer be authorized (O code)

Appendix 4: ELA Attendance Support Framework

Stage 1 Attendance Support Meeting	Stage 2 Attendance Support/Review Meeting	Stage 3 Attendance Contract Meeting
Form tutor, Attendance Officer, teaching staff	Heads of Year, SLT Champion	SLT Champion, AP Lead, EIO
Trigger Point: 3 separate absences/broken weeks	Trigger Point: 3 additional absences/broken weeks 3 days or more in 2 or more weeks within 6 weeks	Trigger Point: No improvement following support meeting and review, continued decline in attendance
IDENTIFY BARRIERS TO ATTENDANCE	**REMOVE** BARRIERS TO ATTENDANCE AND OFFER MORE FORMAL (VOLUNTARY) SUPPORT	**DISCUSS** CONSEQUENCES OF NON-ATTENDANCE AND ENSURE **APPROPRIATE SUPPORT** HAS BEEN OFFERED
• Issue Letter 1 • Discuss attendance and barriers to attendance with pupil (wishes and feelings) • Discuss attendance and barriers to attendance with parents (can be a telephone meeting) • Record findings and actions in meeting notes and save centrally • Notes forwarded to Heads of Year to allow appropriate support to be offered. This could include: ○ In-house support (Mental Health Champion, Student Welfare Officer) ○ Identification of trusted adult(s) ○ Discussion of appropriate places for child to go at break/lunch ○ Suggestion to speak to GP re: issues outside of school ○ Changes to PD groups (last resort)	• Issue Letter 2 • Hold a formal meeting with parents and pupil in school (TEAMS or phone if necessary) • Ensure all support is in place and formally recorded to support and remove barriers to attendance. This could include: ○ Supporting Medical Needs ○ Referral to external support e.g. EHA ○ Reintegration timetable (2 weeks max.) ○ Support meetings in school ○ Restorative meetings with peers to support friendship breakdowns ○ Early lesson exit passes etc ○ Meetings with Anti-Bullying Ambassadors / Safer School's Officer ○ Changes to timetables (last resort)	• Issue Letter 3 • Discuss impact of attendance not improving: Impact on attendance, mental health & progress in lessons • Risk of Local Authority considering Penalty Notice Fines or Prosecution if no improvement is seen • Write and agree an Attendance Contract using the LA template provided • Achievable outcomes and targets are mutually agreed to provide focus and measurable impact of interventions • School will determine the duration of the Attendance Contract (between 3 – 6 months) with the family and open professionals - can be extended if felt beneficial • Frequent reviews are conducted informally, maintaining relationship with parents and the offering of support. These can take

		place during professional meetings e.g. CP conference, CIN or TAF meetings
STAGE 4 Notice to Improve Meeting		
If attendance does not improve, and support/Attendance Contract is declined, school then complete online referral for a 'Notice to Improve'. Attendance Service processes request and reviews schools' suggested monitoring period and attendance target. Attendance Service via email, provides suggestions for support, confirms monitoring period and targets with a 'Notice to Improve' template. School issues a Notice to Improve to BOTH parents by post giving them a fixed period to improve their child's attendance. In this period, the child must show significant improvements in attendance and have **no unauthorised absences** from school. Throughout the monitoring period, school to reflect on the journey of the pupil and the target(s). Attendance reviewed weekly and progress to stage 5 considered, if any unauthorised absences are recorded (this can be done as soon as any unauthorised absence is recorded, if appropriate), for legal sanctions to be considered by the LA.		
STAGE 5		
School does not have to wait for the monitoring period to finish before referring for legal sanctions if the threshold is met. LA review if there is clear evidence of school offering a support first approach in line with the Working Together to Improve School Attendance statutory guidance, August 2024 LA review whether any previous penalty notices have been issued to the parent in respect of the child/ren concerned. LA review if there are any other prosecution cases pending in respect of the family to avoid duplication. LA review parental engagement with the support offered and the impact of this on improving attendance. LA decide if there is a statutory defence for non-attendance or whether to issue a penalty notice fine or refer for prosecution.		

Relevant government guidance

Children missing in education
Keeping children safe in education and Working together to safeguard children
Special educational needs and disability code of practice: 0 to 25 years
Elective home education
Alternative provision: statutory guidance for local authorities
Exclusion from maintained schools, academies and pupil referral units in England
Supporting pupils at school with medical conditions
Arranging education for children who cannot attend school because of health needs
Promoting and supporting mental health and wellbeing in schools and colleges
Preventing and tackling bullying
Providing remote education