



Watling Academy

Student Attendance

Policy

December 2025

Approved by: LSB

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1 Rationale

Central to raising standards in education and ensuring all pupils can fulfil their potential is an assumption so widely understood that it is insufficiently stated – pupils need to attend school regularly to benefit from their education. Missing out on lessons leaves children vulnerable to falling behind. Children with poor attendance tend to achieve less at school. This 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 (applies from 19 August 2024), through our whole-school culture and ethos that values good attendance, including:

As a school we must:

- promote good attendance and reduce absence, including persistent absence
- ensure every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled
- act early to address patterns of absence
- ensure parents perform their legal duty by ensuring their children of compulsory school age who are registered at school attend regularly
- ensure all pupils to be punctual to their lessons

2 Introduction

Watling Academy believes that regular school attendance is the key to enabling pupils to maximise the educational opportunities available to them and become confident, independent, and forward-thinking adults who are able to realise their full potential and make a positive contribution to their community.

It is essential to our core value of **responsibility**. Watling Academy values all pupils. As set out in this policy, we will work with families to identify the reasons for poor attendance and try to resolve any difficulties. Watling Academy recognises that attendance is a matter for the whole school community. Our Attendance Policy should not be viewed in isolation; it is a strand that runs through all aspects of school improvement, supported by our policies on safeguarding, bullying and behaviour. This policy also takes into account the Human Rights Act 1998, the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and the Race Relations Act 2000.

3 Legal Framework

This policy is based on the Department for Education’s (DfE’s) statutory guidance on working together to improve school attendance (applies from 19 August 2024) 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 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, and 2016 amendments)

- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013

It also refers to:

- School census guidance
- Keeping Children Safe in Education

Mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance: guidance for schools Section 7 of the 1996 Education Act states that parents must ensure that children of compulsory school age receive efficient full-time education suitable to their age, ability, and aptitude to any special educational needs they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

A child ceases to be of compulsory school age on the last Friday in June of the school year in which they reach the age of 16.

We will keep an electronic attendance register and place all pupils onto this register.

We will take our attendance register during Am tutorial sessions and in the afternoon session, as well as each timetabled session of the school day. It will be marked, using the appropriate national attendance and absence codes from the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024, whether every pupil is.

- Present;
- Absent;
- Present at approved educational activity; or
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

4 School Attendance Procedure

Students are expected to be in school by 8.40am to start morning registration each morning. Registers are taken promptly in morning registration time at 8:45am. The morning registers will close at 9:15am. The afternoon register will be taken during lesson 3, which includes 12 noon. Individual class registers will also be taken by staff during each lesson using SIMS.

Daily attendance is monitored by the administrative and pastoral teams.

Parents/carers should notify the school via ParentMail, **email or telephone on every day of a student's absence**. This notification should be received before the start of the timetabled day. Parents/carers should inform the school of the reason for absence and when they expect the student to return.

Where pupils of compulsory school age are recorded as absent, the register must show whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised. Absence can only be authorised by the school and cannot be authorised by parents. All absences will be treated as unauthorised unless a satisfactory explanation, or evidence, for the pupil's absence has been received.

Where a child we expect to attend school does not attend, the school will:

- Follow up on the absence with their parent/carer to identify the reason for absence. Contact will be made through phone calls₃ (All numbers held on our system) and/or email

to any parent/carer who have not yet informed us of their child's absence.

- Ensure any appropriate safeguarding action is taken, this may include home visits or liaison with external agencies, MASH (Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub) or the Police may become involved.*
- Where appropriate, home visits will be completed even when a reason has been provided between day 3 to 5 of an absence (This may be completed earlier for vulnerable students). These visits are a safeguarding measure but will also offer support to the pupil and their family, as well as encouraging improved attendance.
- Consider whether further intervention, support or follow up actions are needed within school or through supportive agencies.

*During the home visit we will expect to see the child. If we do not see the child after 2 visits, we will contact MASH (Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub) and complete a MARF if required.

5 Absence will be categorised as follows

5.1 Illness:

In most cases a telephone call or a note from the parent informing the school that their child is ill will be acceptable. For lengthy absences over five school days, you will be asked to provide a medical note from your doctor. Parents may be asked to provide medical evidence where there are repeated absences due to reported illness. This will usually be in the form of an appointment card, prescription etc.

5.2 Medical/Dental Appointments:

Parents are advised where possible to make medical and dental appointments outside the school day. Where this is not possible, pupils should attend school for part of the day. Parents should show the appointment card to school.

5.3 Other Authorised Circumstances:

This relates to occasions where there is cause for absence due to exceptional circumstances, for example attending a family funeral, visiting a parent in prison or part time timetable agreed as part of a reintegration package. This can only be approved at the discretion of the Headteacher.

5.4 Fixed Term Exclusion (No alternative provision made):

A fixed term exclusion from attending school is counted as an authorised absence.

5.5 Late Arrival to School:

Registration begins at 08:40am. The school gates close at 8:40am. Registers are taken promptly in morning registration at 8:45am. The register will close at 09:15am. Pupils arriving after the close of register will be recorded as an unauthorised absence for that school session. The absence will be recorded as unauthorised if the pupil has arrived late after the registers close without justifiable cause.

5.6 Unauthorised absence:

Absence will not be authorised unless parents have provided a satisfactory explanation and that

it has been accepted as such by the school. Examples of unsatisfactory explanations include:

- A pupil's/family member's birthday
- Broken down car
- Shopping for uniforms
- Having their hair cut
- Closure of a sibling's school for INSET (or other) purposes
- "Couldn't get up"
- Illness where the child is considered well enough to attend school
- Holidays taken without the authorisation of school

5.7 Family Holidays and Extended Leave:

Holiday during term time will not be authorised. Parents are strongly advised to avoid taking their children on holiday during term time. Parents do not have an automatic right to remove their child from school during term time for the purpose of a holiday, in any circumstance. If permission to take leave is not granted and the pupil still goes on holiday, the absence will be unauthorised. In such cases the school will refer the matter to the School Attendance, Education Sufficiency and Access department at Milton Keynes Council who may **issue a Penalty Notice**.

Only in exceptional circumstances will any extended absence be agreed. This is at the discretion of the Headteacher. In such cases consideration will also be given to cultural needs and family circumstances. In some cases, granting leave may be considered justified, although this will not be considered for a holiday.

5.8 Religious Observance:

Watling Academy acknowledges the multi-faith nature of British society and recognises that on some occasions, religious festivals may fall outside school holiday periods or weekends, and this necessitates a consideration of authorised absence or special leave for religious observance. It is reasonable for a parent to allow their children not to attend school on any official day of religious observance if recognised by the parent's religious body.

Parents are requested to give advance notice to the school if they intend their child to be absent for a religious observance. No more than one day can be designated for any individual occasion of religious observance/festival and no more than three days in total in any academic year. Any further absence will be categorised as unauthorised.

6 Persistent 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 Academy's strategy for improving attendance. Missing school will impact their academic progress and achievement as they will fall behind in lessons. **It is important to note that an average of 3.2 days of absence per half term will categorise a student as a persistent absentee.**

6.1 Traveller Absence:

The aim for the attendance of Traveller children, in common with all other children, is to attend school as regularly and as frequently as possible. To protect Traveller parents from unreasonable prosecution for non-attendance, the Education Act 1944, section 86, states that a Traveller parent is safe from prosecution if their child accrues 200 attendances (i.e. 200 half days) in a year. This is

only when the family are engaged in a trade or business that requires them to travel and when the child is attending school as regularly as that trade permits. It does not mean that part-time education for Traveller children is legally acceptable, nor does it relieve parents of their duties to ensure that their children are receiving suitable education when not at school.

When in or around Milton Keynes, if a family can reasonably travel back to their Base School (see below) then the expectation is that their child will attend full-time. Watling Academy will be regarded as the base school if it is the school where the child normally attends when they are not travelling. However, the pupil must have attended in the last 18 months.

Traveller children can register at other schools temporarily while away from their base school, in such cases, the pupil's school place at Watling Academy will be kept open for them whilst travelling. This is to protect them from unfairly losing their place at their school of usual attendance. Watling Academy can only effectively operate as the child's base school if it is engaged in on-going dialogue with Traveller families. This means that parents must

6.1.1 advise of their forthcoming travelling patterns before they happen; and

6.1.2 inform the school regarding proposed return dates.

Watling Academy will authorise absence of Traveller children if we are satisfied that a family is travelling and has given indication that they intend to return. Traveller children will be recorded as attending an approved educational activity when:

6.1.3 The child is on roll and attending another visited school

6.1.4 Undertaking supervised educational activity under the jurisdiction of another Local Authority's Traveller Education Service

6.1.5 The child is undertaking computer based distance learning that is time evidenced

Where Traveller children are registered pupils at a school and are known to be present either at a site (official or otherwise) or in a house and are not attending school, the absence will be investigated in the same way as that for any pupil.

7 Deletions from the Register

In accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, pupils will only be deleted from the register when one of the following circumstances applies:

7.1 The school is replaced by another school on a School Attendance Order

7.2 The School Attendance Order is revoked by the local authority

7.3 The pupil has ceased to be of compulsory school age

7.4 Permanent exclusion has occurred and procedures have been completed

7.5 Death of a pupil

7.6 Transfer between schools

7.7 When a parent informs the school in writing that the pupil is to be withdrawn to be educated outside the school system – Elected Home Education.

7.8 Pupil withdrawn to be educated outside the school system

7.9 Failure to return from an extended holiday after both the school and the local

- authority have tried to locate the pupil
- 7.10 A medical condition prevents their attendance and return to the school before ending compulsory school-age
 - 7.11 In custody for more than four months (in discussion with The Youth Offending Team)
 - 7.12 20 days continuous unauthorised absence and both the local authority and school have tried to locate the pupil.
 - 7.13 Left the school but not known where he/she has gone after both the school and the local authority have tried to locate the pupil

Watling Academy will follow Milton Keynes Council's Children Missing Education Protocol when a

Pupil's whereabouts is unknown.

8 Using Attendance Data

Pupil's attendance will be monitored and will be shared with the Local Authority and other agencies if a pupil's attendance is a cause for concern. Every four weeks the Attendance Officer will provide all

HOYs/ Assistant Headteacher with attendance data for the previous 4 weeks for each pupil within their

Year Group whose attendance is under 90%. (Please note, this is the start of the cycle of action. There will be ongoing strategies that are put in place weekly for students who are PA or indeed have an attendance figure less than 95%)

This pupil level data will be used to trigger school action as set out in the escalation of intervention. Attendance data will also be used to identify emerging patterns and trends to inform whole school strategies to improve attendance and attainment.

Watling Academy will share attendance data with the Local Authority as required. All information shared will be done in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998 and are GDPR compliant.

In line with expectations, the Academy will share daily attendance data with the DfE. The school has granted the DfE access to its 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.

9 Support Systems

Watling Academy recognises that poor attendance is often an indication of difficulties in a child's life. This may be related to problems at home and or in school. Parents should make school aware of any difficulties or changes in circumstances that may affect their child's attendance and or behaviour in school, for example, bereavement, divorce, and separation. This will help the school identify any additional support that may be required.

Watling Academy recognises that some pupils are more likely to require additional support to attain good attendance, for example, those pupils with special educational needs, those with physical or mental health needs, migrant and refugee pupils and looked after children.

The school will implement a range of strategies to support improved attendance. Strategies used will include:

- Discussion with parents and pupils
- Attendance support plans
- Referrals to support agencies
- Pastoral mentors
- Friendship groups
- Time limited part-time timetables
- Additional learning support
- Behaviour Support
- Use of our inclusion unit
- Reintegration support packages

Support offered to families will be child centered and planned in discussion and agreement with both parents and pupils. Where specific interventions are used, we will take account of relevant support and guidance.

10 Governors:

The Local School Board will:

- Monitor attendance data and be aware of reasons for change and the action taken.
- Be aware of the action plans and progress towards reducing the number of persistent absentees.

11 Sanctions

Where intervention fails to bring about an improvement in attendance, Watling Academy will notify the School Attendance, Education Sufficiency and Access department at Milton Keynes Council of the irregular attendance.

Watling Academy may invite parents to attend an attendance interview and issue a formal warning of a Penalty Notice.

Parenting Contracts: (Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003) A Parenting contract is a voluntary agreement between the Local Authority (LA), school and the parent, it can also be extended to include the child and any other agencies offering support to resolve any difficulties leading to improved attendance. The contract will outline attendance targets and will detail agreed actions that will help to achieve the target. The contract will be reviewed regularly. The contract can be used as evidence in a prosecution should irregular attendance continue.

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

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).

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.

Notices 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 local code of conduct for the local authority area in which the pupil attends school.

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

Prosecution: The school will provide the Local Authority with evidence required for a prosecution under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996. This is to ensure that parents realise their own responsibilities in ensuring attendance at school and most importantly about returning children to education.

Appendix 1

Attendance Codes – September 2024

Present mark		
CODE	MEANING	TYPE
/ \	Present at the school / morning \ afternoon	Present mark
B	Attending any other approved educational activity: - Alternative provision not arranged through the approved framework	Present mark
D	Dual registered at another school.	Present mark
K	Attending education provision arranged by the local authority: - Home tutoring - Approved framework for alternative provision - Blended learning.	Present mark
L	Late arrival before the registers have closed.	Present mark
P	Participating in a sporting activity.	Present mark
V	Attending an educational trip or visit.	Present mark
W	Attending work experience.	Present mark

Authorised Absence		
CODE	MEANING	TYPE
C	Authorised circumstance (see Table 2: The C code for breakdown).	Authorised Absence
E	Suspended or permanently excluded and no alternative provision made.	Authorised Absence
I	Illness (not medical or dental appointment).	Authorised Absence
J1	Leave of absence for the purpose of attending an interview for employment or for admission to another educational institution.	Authorised Absence
M	Attended a medical appointment.	Authorised Absence
R	Religious observance.	Authorised Absence
S	Leave of absence for the purpose of studying for a public examination. Must be used sparingly with revision opportunities in school.	Authorised Absence
T	Parent travelling for occupational purposes, and the pupil has attended for at least 200 sessions in preceding 12 months.	Authorised Absence
The C code: Authorised Absence is broken down into the following subcodes to provide better differentiation of the reason:		
C	Leave of absence for exceptional circumstances. Where a leave of absence is granted, the school will determine the number of days a pupil can be absent from school. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the school's discretion.	Authorised Absence
C1	Leave of absence for the purpose of participating in a regulated performance or undertaking regulated employment abroad.	Authorised Absence
C2	Leave of absence for a compulsory school age pupil subject to a part-time timetable.	Authorised Absence

Unauthorised Absence		
CODE	MEANING	TYPE
G	Holiday not granted by the school or term-time leave not granted by the school.	Unauthorised Absence
N	Reason for absence not yet established.	Unauthorised Absence
O	Absent in other or unknown circumstances.	Unauthorised Absence
U	Arrived in school after registration closed.	Unauthorised Absence

Not expected to attend		
CODE	MEANING	TYPE
Q	Unable to attend the school because of a lack of access arrangements.	Not expected to attend
X	Non-compulsory school age pupil not required to attend school.	Not expected to attend
Y	Unable to attend school because of unavoidable cause (see Table 2: The Y code for breakdown).	Not expected to attend
Z	Prospective or previous pupil not on admission register.	Not expected to attend
CODE	MEANING	TYPE
The Y code: Unable to attend school because of unavoidable cause, is broken down into the following subcodes to provide better differentiation of the reason:		
Y1	Unable to attend due to transport normally provided not being available.	Not expected to attend
Y2	Unable to attend due to widespread disruption to travel.	Not expected to attend
Y3	Unable to attend due to part of the school premises being closed. For example, this may be due to damage or teacher strikes.	Not expected to attend
Y4	Unable to attend due to the whole school site being unexpectedly closed. For example, extreme weather, damage, no hot water, or heating.	Not expected to attend
Y5	Unable to attend as pupil is in criminal justice detention. For example, in police detention, remanded to youth detention, awaiting trial or sentencing, or detained under a sentence of detention.	Not expected to attend
Y6	Unable to attend in accordance with public health guidance or law. contrary to or prohibited by any guidance relating to the incidence or transmission of infection or disease.	Not expected to attend
Y7	Unable to attend because of any other unavoidable cause. For example, an emergency has prevented the pupil from attending. The unavoidable cause must be something that affects the pupil, not just the parent.	Not expected to attend