



Attendance Policy

OUR ETHOS

At Witton Middle School we have always had strong attendance and we expect all children to have excellent attendance as part of our whole school ethos. We promote an atmosphere where every child is welcomed. Raising the awareness of attendance ensures that everyone values their education and the benefits of attending.

We believe that every child is entitled to a full-time education. Having an excellent record of attendance is part of preparing our children to go into the world and make it a better place. The links between attending school and learning are clear. Even 95% attendance implies that there has been an afternoon or a morning missing from school every fortnight, and this will seriously impede a child's learning. Such absence affects the pattern of learning and if this is a regular occurrence, will seriously affect outcomes. Absence disrupts classroom routines and can adversely affect the learning of others.

At Witton Middle School our expectation for good attendance is at least 96% and anything below requires improvement. If your child's attendance falls to 92% or below, then their attendance requires *significant* improvement.

Ensuring your child's attendance at school is your legal responsibility, and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law that may result in prosecution.

Our school targets for attendance to exceed the national expectations. This policy sets out how we monitor attendance and how we work with parents/carers where children have difficulties meeting these high standards.

SAFEGUARDING

Safeguarding the interests of each child is everyone's responsibility. Within the context of this school, excellent attendance is viewed as part of a whole range of practices which promote welfare and life opportunities. Others include: excellent behaviour, health and safety, and access to the full range of curriculum opportunities. Children who do not attend school regularly, may be considered as potentially at risk of harm.

PROMOTING REGULAR ATTENDANCE

Supporting a regular pattern of attendance is everybody's responsibility: parents/carers, children and all members of staff and governors.



Understanding Attendance

The table below shows the number of days lost can be significant. Even if your child's attendance is 95%, they will still have lost 2 weeks of education each year, which can make a difference year on year. If children are frequently absent then they find it harder to make and keep friends so it impacts in all sorts of ways.

Percentage attendance	Days attended	Days absent
100%	190	0
95%	180	10 (2 weeks)
90%	171	19 (1 month)
85%	161	29
80%	152	38
75%	143	47

To ensure that we all focus upon this we will:

- Give attendance updates in our newsletters and on the website.
- Report to you on attendance at least twice annually.
- Celebrate good attendance by displaying individual, class and whole school attendance.
- Praise good, and improving attendance through certificates and rewards.
- Reward good attendance.

THE LAW RELATING TO ATTENDANCE

Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 states that: 'the parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him/her to receive efficient full-time education suitable:-

(a) to age, ability and aptitude and

(b) to any special educational needs he/she may have either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.'

THE LAW RELATING TO SAFEGUARDING

Section 175 of the Education Act 2002 places a duty on local authorities and governing bodies to have regard to guidance by the Secretary of State with regard to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and students under the age of 18.

UNDERSTANDING THE TYPES OF ABSENCE

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by the parents), as either **authorised** or **unauthorised**. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good understandable reason like illness, medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable cause.

Whilst a child may be off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents and the child. If your child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and usually makes things worse.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no 'leave' has been given. This type of absence can lead to Witton Middle School using sanctions and/or legal proceedings. These include:

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily.
- Truancy before or during the school day.
- Absences which have never been properly explained.
- Children who arrive at school too late to get a mark.
- Shopping, birthdays or looking after other children.
- Day trips and holidays in term time that have not been agreed; there is no entitlement to time off for holidays.
- Failure of parents/carers to work with the school where children are reluctant to attend.

At Witton Middle School, 'exceptional circumstances' will be interpreted as:

'... Being of unique and significant emotional, educational or spiritual value to the child which outweighs the loss of teaching time.'

We will not agree leave during term time:

- At any time in September. This is very important as your child needs to settle into their new class as quickly as possible.
- During assessment and test periods in the school's calendar affecting your child.
- When a pupil's attendance record already includes any level of unauthorised absence or they have already been granted authorised leave within that academic year.

PERSISTENT ABSENTEEISM (PA)

A child becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we need parents/carers fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

We monitor all absence thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority, and you will be informed of this immediately. PA children are tracked and monitored carefully by our Educational Welfare Officer (EWO).

All our PA children and their parents/carers are subject to an action plan and this may include allocation of additional support such as:

- Referral to specialist staff
- Participation in group activities
- Individual incentives

All PA cases are also automatically made known to the Headteacher.

ABSENCE PROCEDURES

If your child is absent you must:

- Contact us on the first day of absence by coming into reception or by telephoning us by 9.00 am. You will need to contact the school on every further day of absence. You will be required to provide a reason for absence; failure to inform school of the reason your child is absent may result in the absence being unauthorised and may be considered a safeguarding concern. This could result in a home visit to ensure that your child is safe and well. Ensure that your child returns to school as soon as possible.

If your child is absent we will:

- Telephone or text you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you. If we have not heard from you by 9.15 am then we will start to call all the contact numbers that you have provided in order to gain an explanation for the absence. If we still have not been able to ascertain where your child is then we will make a home visit. However, if we still haven't been able to get a response then we will report it to the police as your child will then be classed as a 'missing child'.
- Write to you if the absences are a cause for concern.
- Invite you in to discuss the situation with the teacher, Attendance Lead, Headteacher or Educational Welfare Officer if absences persist.
- Refer the matter to the Educational Welfare Officer if attendance moves below 85% or if school have additional concerns.

LEGAL SANCTIONS

The Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 inserts into the Education Act 1996 Section 444A and Section 444B enabling authorised personnel to issue penalty notices as an alternative to prosecution under Section 444 and enable parents to discharge potential liability for conviction for that offence by paying a penalty.

Section 444(1) of the Education Act 1996 provides that if a child of compulsory school age 'fails to attend regularly' at the school where he is a registered pupil, his parent is guilty of an offence. On the 6th April 2017, in the case of Isle of Wight Council v Platt the Supreme Court judgement ruled that the word 'regularly' means 'in accordance with the rules prescribed by the school'.

Section 103 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 places a duty on parents to ensure that their child is not present during school hours in a public place during the first 5 days of exclusions. Section 105 of the Act enables a penalty notice to be issued under Section 103.

Penalty notices are issued by the School's Educational Welfare Officer and schools are obligated to refer.

See Appendix A for detail regarding the casework of the Educational Welfare Officer.

ATTENDANCE MONITORING

The Attendance Lead monitors child absence on a daily basis. Parents are expected to call the school in the morning if their child is going to be absent due to ill health. If a child's absence goes above 10% we will contact the parents to discuss the reasons for this. If after contacting parents a child's absence continue to rise, we will consider involving an Education Welfare Officer.

The persistent absence threshold is 10%. If a child's individual overall absence rate is greater than or equal to 10%, the child will be classified as a 'Persistent Absentee'.

Child-level absence data is 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. We compare our attendance data to the national average, and share this with governors.

We store attendance data on our School Information Management System and this data is used to track all childrens' attendance.

DELETION FROM ROLL

For any pupil leaving Witton Middle School, other than at the end of Year 7, parents/carers are required to complete a 'CA1' form which can be obtained from the school office. This

provides school with the following information: Child's name, class, current address, date of leaving, new home address, name of new school, address of new school. This information is essential to ensure that we know and safeguard the whereabouts of all of our pupils. Failure to do so will mean that we classify your child as missing and the police will be contacted.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Governing Body

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

The Headteacher

The Headteacher is responsible for ensuring this policy is implemented consistently across the school, and for monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors. The Headteacher also supports other staff in monitoring the attendance of individual children and issues fixed-penalty notices, where necessary.

The Attendance Lead

The Attendance Lead:

- Monitors attendance data at the school and individual child level;
- Reports concerns about attendance to the Headteacher;
- Works with the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) to tackle persistent absence;
- Arranges calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues;
- Advises the Headteacher when to issue fixed-penalty notices;

Class Teachers

Class Teachers are responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the school office.

Reception

Reception staff are expected to take calls from parents about absence and record it on the school system.

TELEPHONE NUMBERS

There are occasions when we need to contact parents about absence, so it is vital that we have your contact numbers at all times. Parents/carers need to ensure that we always have the most recent numbers.

EDUCATION WELFARE OFFICER

Parents are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with staff in resolving any problems together. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, school may refer your child to the Education Welfare Officer. He/she will also try to resolve the situation by agreement, but if these fail and the unauthorised absence persists, he/she can use sanctions such as penalty notices or prosecutions in the Magistrates Court. Alternatively, parents/carers or children may wish to contact the Educational Welfare Officer themselves to ask for support or information. They are independent of school and will give impartial advice. Their contact number is available through the school office.

LATENESS

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If your child misses the start of the day they can miss work and do not spend time with their class getting vital information and news for the day. Children arriving late disrupt the learning of others and this can cause embarrassment for the child and can lead to further absence.

How we manage lateness:

The school day starts at 8:25am and we expect all our children to be in class, [ready to learn](#) by 8:30am, otherwise children will receive a late mark. Children arriving late will need to enter through the side door from the car park entrance as the gates will be closed at 8.30am. The lateness will be recorded together with the number of minutes late.

See summary of attendance management in Appendix 1.

At 8.50am the registers will be closed. If a child arrives after this time, children will be recorded as being present but this will count as an **unauthorised absence**. You could face the possibility of a Penalty Notice if the problem continues.

If a child has a persistent late record we will write to you and you will be asked to meet with the Headteacher and possibly the Educational Welfare Officer to resolve the problem. You can approach us at any time if you are having problems getting your child to school on time.

ASSOCIATED POLICIES

- Holidays in term-time.
- Safeguarding Children and appendices.
- Supporting children unable to be in school with medical conditions.
- Children Missing in Education.

This policy appears on the school website.

Prepared by: Headteacher Responsibility of: Headteacher

Agreement Date: 11th April 2019 Review Date: April 2021

This Policy was prepared giving due regard to the disabilities and/or special education needs, age, race, religion or belief, sex/sexual orientation, gender/gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity of the children and staff at Witton Middle School and its community.

VERSION CONTROL

Date	Version	Approved by	Title	Changes
11/2015	1	FGB	Attendance Policy	
11.04.19	2	FGB	Attendance Policy V2	School Responsibilities Updated

Appendix A – Educational Welfare officer

Step 1 Direct contact with parent in numerous and varied means including contact within the home environment.

Step 2 Where casework has failed to secure improved attendance or there's lack of parental engagement, issue a First Notice. (Two templates of First Notice are available: i) there has been casework contact with parents; ii) despite attempts there has been no contact with parents).

Step 3 Where casework fails to secure improved attendance and Worcestershire County Council's definition of irregular attendance has been met - i) Where a period of improved attendance is considered achievable issue a 15 day notice specifying 15 school days requiring full attendance. ii) Where a 15 day notice period is not considered achievable or there's been lack of parental engagement to date issue a Final Notice letter giving parents an opportunity to submit any further information.

Step 4 Consider whether an application for an Education Supervision Order is appropriate and make comment with the referral.

Step 5 Where parents have submitted mitigating information use professional judgement to determine the next course of action ie continue with casework or complete and submit a request to initiate legal proceedings form. When parents have not provided any further information complete and submit a request to initiate legal proceedings form. In respect of a failed 15 day notice period the local authority will offer parents the opportunity to dispose of the offence by payment of a penalty notice fine.

The Local Authority may commence legal proceedings against you under the provisions of the Education Act 1996, in respect of this matter and/or any further complaint received from the school, or other places of learning. In the event of your conviction by a Magistrates' Court, you may be liable to a fine of up to £2,500 and/or the possibility of imprisonment for up to three months per offence.