Winterbourne Earls CE Primary School
Attendance Policy

Date Published: September 2026
Date of next review: September 2027

This document sets out the policy of Winterbourne Earls CE Primary School with respect to pupil attendance.

Rationale
At Winterbourne Earls CE Primary School we understand that regular school attendance is the key to enabling children and young people to maximise the educational opportunities available to them and become emotionally resilient, confident adults who are able to realise their full potential and make a positive contribution to their community. School is the foundation for preparing children and young people for life as adults.

We are committed to providing an education of the highest quality for all our children and endeavour to provide an environment where all pupils feel valued and welcome.

For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend school regularly and punctually. Parents and the school community share the responsibility for supporting and promoting excellent school attendance and punctuality for all.

This policy represents our commitment to support pupils to achieve 100% attendance. It sets out the principles, procedures and practice the school will undertake. The sanctions and possible legal consequences of poor attendance and punctuality are also detailed. This policy will be reviewed, amended as necessary and published annually in accordance with current legislation and guidance**.**

Aims
We believe that the foundation for good attendance is based on a strong partnership between school, parents and the child. We 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 across the school. This includes clear communication with parents and pupils regarding our expectations of what is required to secure excellent attendance for pupils at our school.

At Winterbourne Earls CE Primary School we will:

- Provide regular information about attendance via newsletters/website
- Include attendance information in reports about your child's performance in school and how any absence may be affecting their attainment
- Listen to parents and carers to understand any barriers to attendance and agree how all partners can work together to resolve them
- Work with you and your child to remove any barriers in order to achieve the best possible attendance

At our school we expect:

- Pupils to arrive at school on time every day
- Parents to work with the school to ensure that their child attends regularly

Attendance: The Legal Framework – roles and responsibilities

The law says that ensuring a child receives education is a parent/carer's legal responsibility (Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act). For most parents this means registering their child at a school. Permitting absence from school that is not authorised by the school creates an offence in law and parents/carers who do not secure their child's regular attendance at school may be issued with a Penalty Notice or referred to the Wiltshire Education Welfare Service for prosecution in the magistrates' court.

To avoid this happening, we will work with parents and carers to address irregular or poor attendance to ensure full-time attendance.

Authorised absences are those that have been agreed by the headteacher. Unauthorised absences are those where no valid reason has been provided for absence or those absences which the headteacher has not agreed.

Partnership Working – roles and responsibilities

The school's attendance champion is the Headteacher, Philippa Carter.
All pupil attendance queries should be made to the school's admin office.

Do you know these facts about absence and attendance? Research suggests that a pupil who misses 17 days of school a year will drop 1 GCSE grade in attainment (Department for Education - DfE).

- 95% equates to half a day off every two weeks in a school year
- 90% equates to a day off every two weeks in a school year
- 85% equates to one and a half days off every two weeks in a school year
- 80% equates to one whole day off every week in a school year
- A secondary age pupil whose attendance is 80% will have missed ONE WHOLE YEAR of education by the time they leave school

"Better attendance at school by pupils improves their educational achievements and, in turn, their lives and prospects. Even a small reduction in absence would result in many pupils receiving greater benefit from their education." The National Audit Office.

At Winterbourne Earls CE Primary School, attendance is the business of everyone in our school community. The governors and all staff are committed to supporting all pupils to achieve excellent attendance and regularly review school procedures and strategies to support this.

We expect that parents and carers will work with us if school absence becomes a concern. Parents and carers can help to promote positive attendance by:

- Ensuring children arrive at school on time, before registers close, appropriately dressed, in a 'condition to learn' (ie not too tired or too hungry) and with the right equipment for the day
- Working in partnership with us to help their child(ren) gain an appreciation of the importance of attending school regularly

- Working in partnership with us to take an active interest in their child's education
- Working in partnership with us and other agencies (as appropriate) to resolve problems relating to non-attendance or which may have a negative impact on their child's attendance

Procedures
Although our commitment is to support pupils to achieve 100% attendance, our school attendance target for monitoring purposes is 96%.

Legally the school register must be taken twice a day.
At Winterbourne Earls, the registration period is between 8:50am and 9:00am (morning registration time) and once at the start of the afternoon session at 1:00 pm.
Any pupils arriving after 9.00 needs to be signed in at the school reception by a parent. Pupils arriving between 9.00-9:10am will be marked as late (L). Pupils arriving after 9:10 will be coded U (late after registers close) which counts as an unauthorised absence for the whole session and must be signed in via the school office by a parent.

Absence is recorded as unauthorised until a satisfactory reason is provided. If the reason given is not satisfactory and/or evidence of the reason cannot be provided, the absence will be coded as unauthorised absent. Ongoing and repeated lateness after the close of registration is considered as unauthorised absence and may be taken into account if any legal action is taken.

We will contact parents to address and improve attendance where:
- A pupil's attendance falls below 90%
- A pupil has missed more than a day a week over a period of 3 weeks in a term (In Wiltshire there are 6 terms in an academic year)
- A pupil has more than 4 recorded late marks in a term

Parents are asked to:
- Notify the school when their child is unable to attend, with a reason, on the first and subsequent days of absence. Parents should make contact with school before the start of the school day, either by telephone or the school office email address (absence@winterbourneearls.wilts.sch.uk)
- Keep the school informed, in cases of ongoing absence. A note from a pupil's home does not mean an absence becomes authorised. The decision whether or not to authorise an absence will always remain with the school
- Arrange medical or dental appointments outside of school hours unless there is urgent need for an appointment
- Sign their child in and out at the office if their child has to attend emergency medical appointments or medical assessments
- Tell the school if their child is going to be late, the reason why and expected time of arrival

The process for requesting leave of absence is explained further in this policy. Examples of types of absence that which will not be authorised under any circumstances are:
- Birthdays
- Staying at home because other members in the family are unwell
- Day trips and holidays in term time

- Arriving at school too late to get a present mark (after the close of registration)

We will contact the parent/carer if a child is absent and the parent/carer has not advised that the child will not be in school. Parents can expect contact on every occasion of an un-notified absence. The admin team will initially phone parents. If we cannot speak directly with parents/carers then we will make contact with nominated emergency contacts to establish the reason for absence; this is in line with school safeguarding procedures.

If after 1 day of absence, your child has not been seen and no contact has been made with the school, a home visit will be made by school staff, to ascertain the safety and well-being of your child and establish the reason for absence from school.

After 10 days of unexplained absence and no contact with the school, we are obliged to notify the local authority. The local authority will follow their procedures for Children Missing Education (CME) and parents may expect contact and visits from an Education Welfare Officer to ascertain the well-being and safety of your child.

We are mindful of pupils absent from school due to physical or mental ill health or their special educational needs and/or disabilities and will seek to work in partnership with parents/carers to provide them with additional support, ensuring it meets individual needs. This may include: access to pastoral support, a reduced educational timetable, support from academy and local authority experts and regular reviews with parents/carers.

Collecting your child from school at the end of the school day
Please refer to Procedures in Appendix 1 which will be implemented when a parent fails to collect a child.

Monitoring attendance
Regular monitoring of the registers will be made by the Headteacher, to analyse overall absence for each pupil and identify pupils with:

- Low attendance
- A pattern of absences that may lead to Persistent Absence (PA)
- Severe Absence (SA) patterns and levels of broken weeks
- Lateness
- Authorised absence and unauthorised absence and reasons for absence

A pupil is classed as a persistent absentee (PA) when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year and as a severe absentee (SA) if they miss more than 50% of schooling for whatever reason, whether it be authorised or unauthorised, or a mixture of both. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to a child's educational prospects and we need parents' full support and encouragement to tackle it. PA and SA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully and we combine this with tracking academic progress to assess the effect on the pupil's attainment. Absence for whatever reason disadvantages a pupil by creating gaps in his or her learning.

The Headteacher will be responsible for putting in place actions for each pupil of concern. Initially we will try to resolve the problem with parents/carers and this may involve requesting medical evidence in order for the school to authorise any further absence due to ill health and/or an attendance meeting. We may

ask parents to agree to a Parenting Contract which details how we will work together to improve attendance. However, if absence continues the school may make a referral to the Local Authority for interventions that may include penalty notices and court action.

Requesting leave of absence in exceptional circumstances
In accordance with DfE guidance, leave of absence from school including for holidays in term time, may only be authorised in exceptional circumstances.

Parents are required to complete a leave of absence request form which must outline the exceptional circumstances for which the leave has been requested. This can be requested from the school office. Leave of absence request forms must be completed in advance of the dates requested. We require at least 2 weeks' notice unless the absence is related to an emergency.

We do not give retrospective agreement for leave of absence so any absence not advised to the school in advance will be unauthorised.

Requests will be considered by the headteacher and parents and carers will be advised if their request is agreed.

Parents/carers will be asked to provide evidence if a pupil does not return to school on the agreed date following a holiday as a result of delayed or cancelled flights or other travel arrangements.

Where the school has genuine and reasonable doubt about the authenticity of any illness, medical evidence can be requested to support the absence. (Para 365 DfE Working Together to Improve School Attendance 2024)

Where an unauthorised leave of absence is taken and results in 10 sessions or more of unauthorised absence within a 6-month period, the local authority will be notified and parents may be issued with a penalty notice. This will be in the sum of £160 per parent/carer for each child, but is reduced to £80 per parent/carer for each child if paid within 21 days of issue.

Consequences of persistent and severe absence
At Winterbourne Earls CE Primary School, we will always work with you to address any attendance concerns.
The DfE Guidance is as follows (taken from Working Together to Improve School Attendance 2024):

- *The first penalty notice issued to a parent in respect of a particular pupil will be charged at £160 if paid within 28 days. This will be reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days.*
- *A second penalty notice issued to the same parent in respect of the same pupil is charged at a flat rate of £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 issue of the first. In a case where the national threshold is met for a third time (or subsequent times) within those 3 years, alternative action should be taken instead. This will often include considering prosecution, but may include other tools such as one of the other attendance legal interventions.*

If we have been unable to resolve the issue, despite a number of interventions, then we may have to refer parents/carers to the local authority.
The Education Welfare Service has a range of actions available which include:

1. The parents/carers may be issued with a penalty notice, which carries a fine of £160, per parent, per child. This is reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days of issue. If not paid at all, court action will be initiated.
2. The local authority may initiate court action under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996, which could lead to fines of up to £2,500, imposition of orders such as Parenting Orders or even imprisonment.
3. In some cases, action may be taken under the Children Act 1989 to protect the welfare and development of the child.

Strategies for improving and maintaining good attendance

At this school we take every opportunity to promote excellent attendance for all pupils. We are a caring school community where the needs of all pupils are carefully considered. Winterbourne Earls CE Primary School provides and promotes a welcoming and positive atmosphere so that pupils feel safe, and know that their presence is valued.

If there are specific issues which might impact on a child's attendance, it is important that parents talk to school leaders so that support can be provided for both parent and child. Parents can speak to the Headteacher, office staff or the class teacher.

There may be times when school asks other agencies to become involved to help understand and work with parents/carers to encourage regular school attendance. (e.g. Wiltshire Council Education Welfare Officer, School Nursing Service, Ethnic Minority and Traveller Advisory Service, Medical Needs Reintegration Service). If this is be helpful, school leaders will discuss with parents/carers first.

Winterbourne Earls CE Primary School is very keen to listen to the views of children and parents with regard to attendance matters and welcomes any feedback which helps shape how the school works with families to address attendance issues and encourage excellent attendance.

Monitoring and Evaluation
The attendance policy will be reviewed annually by governors and school staff to ensure that it continues to meet the needs of the school community.

This policy reflects current DfE and Local Authority guidance so that parents may be assured of the standards that the school strives to achieve.

Appendix 1

Protocol for schools when a child has not been collected as expected by parents/carers at the end of the school day.

This protocol will be brought to the attention of parents when their child first starts at the school.
Parents must provide the school with a record of their contact details:

- Name/s
- Address/es
- Telephone numbers – mobile, home, work
- Where possible, parents should also provide the school with the contact details of two or more other relatives/carers who can be called when the parent/carer cannot be contacted or in the event of an emergency.

The school aims to keep this record up to date by reminding parents in newsletters and at parent consultation evenings of the need to notify the school of any changes.

School staff will not ever take a child home with them but will care for a child who has not been collected until:

- he/she is reunited with a parent or other nominated responsible adult,
  or
- advice is sought from The Integrated Front Door (including Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub MASH) and/or the Emergency Duty Service re next steps.

School procedure

If a child is not collected by a parent or carer, this will be brought to the attention of the Headteacher -the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL):

- The DSL will make sure every effort is made to contact the parent or carer or named alternative carer as per the child's school records for up to 30 minutes from the end of the school day. This might include speaking to known friends or neighbours of the parents where appropriate.

- If no contact is made, the DSL will ensure the child has adequate supervision at all times

When the above procedure has been followed and the child has still not been reunited with a parent or carer:

- If the child is known to children's social care, the DSL will contact the child's allocated social worker or the Emergency Duty Service (EDS) if it is out of normal office hours
- If the child is not known to social care, the DSL will consult with The Integrated Front Door (including Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub MASH) or the EDS for advice
- The school will provide MASH/EDS with the following information about:
  The child:
  - Name(s), date of birth and address
  - Gender, ethnicity, religion, language spoken
  - Any additional needs – dietary, SEN, behavioural difficulties, medical
  - Any current or previous child protection concerns
  - Any previous significant or pattern of incidents of not being collected from school

The parent (and alternative carers):

- Name/s
- Address/es
- Telephone numbers – mobile, home, work

The DSL will record and review any incident when a child is not picked up by parents or picked up late (when no reasonable explanation is given) as part of the school safeguarding and child protection processes.

Social Care/ Police procedure

EDS or MASH will advise the DSL of the next steps. This may include carrying out appropriate checks with partner agencies such as the Police and make further attempts to contact the parent/carer.

If a member of staff thinks a child is at risk of significant harm, is injured, or abandoned, they will contact

- the Integrated Front Door (including Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub MASH) on **0300 4560 108**
  - 8.45am-5pm, Monday-Thursday and
  - 8.45am-4pm Friday
- out of hours Emergency Duty Service (EDS) on **0300 4560 100**

or

- if there is immediate danger, phone the police or emergency services on **999.**