Walthamstow School For Girls

"Neglect not the gift that is in thee"

Policy Document

Attendance Policy

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The name and contact details of the Senior Attendance Champion – the senior leader responsible for the strategic approach to attendance in our school, is:
Designated Safeguarding Lead – Rachel Warren - info@wsfg.waltham.sch.uk

The name and contact details of the school staff member students and parents should contact about attendance on a day-to-day basis is:
WSFG Attendance Officer – Miss Shaw - 020 8509 9446 option 1- Leave a voicemail if unanswered or you can report student absences via our parent app, Edulink One, including uploading medical evidence.

The name and contact details of the school staff member students and parents should contact for more individual support with attendance is:
WSFG Attendance Officer – Miss Shaw
All queries can be emailed to info@wsfg.waltham.sch.uk and put to the attention of Attendance Officer or Head of Year

The name of our linked Governor with responsibility for monitoring attendance is:
WSFG Chair of Governors – Andrea Corbett

1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Walthamstow School for Girls recognises that positive behaviour and good attendance are essential for students to get the most from their school experience, including their attainment, wellbeing, and wider life chances.

The law entitles every child of compulsory school age to an efficient, full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude, and any special educational need they may have. It is the legal responsibility of every parent to make sure their child receives that education either by attendance at a school or by education otherwise than at a school.

Where parents decide to have their child registered at school, they have an additional legal duty to ensure their child attends that school regularly, on time. This means their child must attend every day that the school is open, except in a small number of allowable circumstances such as being too ill to attend or being given permission for an absence in advance from the school.

The Department for Education (DfE) has produced statutory guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools, and local authorities. It is called "Working together to improve school attendance" and it includes a National Framework in relation to absence and the use of legal sanctions. Our School Attendance Policy reflects the requirements and principles of that guidance.

This policy is written with the above guidance in mind and underpins our school ethos to:

- promote children's welfare and safeguarding
- ensure every student has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled
- ensure that students succeed whilst at school
- ensure that students have access to the widest possible range of opportunities at school, and when they leave school.

It has been developed in consultation with school governors, the school safeguarding team, and the Local Authority. It details the responsibilities of individuals and groups involved and the procedures in place to promote and monitor student attendance.

In addition, all schools follow the DfE's statutory safeguarding guidance, Keeping Children Safe in Education, which emphasises the importance of understanding the potential vulnerabilities of children who are missing or absent from education.
https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2

Our policy aims to raise and maintain levels of attendance by:

- promoting a positive and welcoming atmosphere in which students feel safe, secure and valued
- raising and maintaining a whole school awareness of the importance of good attendance and punctuality
- ensuring that attendance is monitored effectively and reasons for absences are recorded promptly and consistently.

For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and be at school, on time, every day the school is open, unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

It is a rule of this school that students must attend every day, unless there are exceptional circumstances, and it is the *Headteacher*, not the parent, who can authorise the absence.

2. PROMOTING REGULAR ATTENDANCE

At Walthamstow School for Girls, we believe in developing good patterns of attendance and set high expectations for the attendance and punctuality of all our students from the outset. It is a central part of our school's vision, values,

ethos, and day-to-day life. We recognise the strong connections between attendance, attainment, safeguarding and wellbeing.

The name and contact details of the Senior Attendance Champion (the senior leader responsible for the strategic approach to attendance in our school) is:
Designated Safeguarding Lead – **Rachel Warren** info@wsfg.waltham.sch.uk

The governor with responsibility for monitoring attendance is:
WSFG Chair of Governors – Andrea Corbett

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is the responsibility of parents, students, and all members of school staff.

To help us all to focus on this, we will:

- submit a daily attendance return to the DfE, in line with the legal expectations placed on all schools
- build strong relationships and work jointly with families
- give parents/carers access to attendance data via the Edulink One parent app
- promote the benefits of high attendance
- accurately complete admission and attendance registers, and have effective day-to-day processes in place to follow-up absence as required by law
- celebrate excellent attendance by displaying and reporting individual and class achievements
- reward good or improving attendance; sweet treats, star badges, attendance certificates, attendance display board, well done postcards to home
- report to parents/carers regularly on their child's attendance and the impact on their progress
- contact parents/carers should their child's attendance fall below the school's target for attendance
- give students access to attendance information via student bulletins and noticeboards.

3. UNDERSTANDING TYPES OF ABSENCE

Any absence affects the routine of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning journey and ability to progress. Any student's absence or late arrival disrupts teaching routines and so may affect the learning of others in the same class. Ensuring a child's regular attendance at school is a parental responsibility and allowing absence from school, without a good reason, creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by the parent/carer), as either **authorised** or **unauthorised**. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required. Each half-day is known as a 'session.'

Authorised absences are morning or afternoon sessions away from school for a genuine reason such as illness (although you may be asked to provide medical evidence for your child before this can be authorised), medical or dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable cause.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no 'leave' has been granted. This type of absence can lead to the school referring to the Local Authority for penalty notices and/or legal proceedings.

Unauthorised absence includes, (however this list is not exhaustive):

- parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily e.g., because they had a late night or for non-infectious illness or injury that would not affect their ability to learn
- absences which have never been properly explained

- children who arrive at school after the close of registration are marked using a 'U' - this indicates that they are in school for safeguarding purposes, however this is counted as an absence for the session
- shopping trips
- looking after other children, or children accompanying siblings or parents to medical appointments
- their own or family birthdays
- holidays taken during term time, not deemed "for exceptional purposes" by the Headteacher, including any arranged by other family members or friends

- day trips
- other leave of absence in term time which has not been agreed
- religious observance over a maximum of 2 days across an academic year
- absence after an external/internal activity such as sports or drama, due to tiredness.

4. PERSISTENT ABSENTEEISM (PA) AND SEVERE ABSENTEEISM (SA)

A student is defined by the Government as a **'persistent absentee'** when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year for any reason; this can be authorised or unauthorised absence. Absence at this level will cause considerable damage to any student's education and we need the full support and co-operation of parents to resolve this. All students who have attendance levels of 90% or below are considered to be persistent absentees.

A student who has missed 50% or more schooling is defined by the Government as '**severely absent'**. Students within this cohort may find it more difficult to be in school or face bigger barriers to their regular attendance and, as such, are likely to need more intensive support.

5. ABSENCE PROCEDURES

The name and contact details of the school staff member students and parents should contact about attendance on a day-to-day basis is:
WSFG Attendance Officer - Miss Shaw 020 8509 9446 option 1- Leave a voicemail if unanswered or report to another staff member in school office.

We monitor and review all student absences, and the reasons that are given, thoroughly.

If a child is absent from school the parent must follow these procedures:

- contact the school on the first day of absence before 9.00 a.m.
- the school has voicemail available to leave a message on the student absence line if nobody is available to take your call, or you may call into school personally and speak to the office staff. Please be aware that if you leave a voicemail to report your child's absence, you may receive a call from the school to discuss the absence before we decide whether the absence is to be recorded as authorised
- on the Edulink One parent app Student Absence Reporting section, parents/carers can input the day's absence. Medical evidence can be submitted by choosing the "paperclip" icon
- contact the school **on every further day of absence**, again before 9.00 a.m.
- ensure that your child returns to school as soon as possible and that you provide any medical evidence, if requested, to support the absence. Medical evidence may be requested where your child is having multiple periods of absence which are reported as being due to medical reasons. Medical evidence examples include a prescription, text message to confirm an appointment, appointment card, e-mails, or letters from medical services. School does NOT expect families to pay for a note from medical services as evidence.

If your child is absent:

- we will telephone or text you on the first, and every subsequent day of absence, if we have not heard from you. The text service used by the school enables us to see that the text has been received and opened. However, it is your responsibility to contact us in response to our call/text.

- and if we are unable to contact you by telephone, we will call other emergency contact numbers held for your child, send letters home, and a home visit may be made, in the interests of safeguarding.

If absence continues, we will:

- write to you if your child's attendance is below **95% or is causing concern.** The school aims for 95%, if not 100% attendance
- write to you if your child's punctuality is a concern
- arrange a meeting so that you may discuss the situation with the school Attendance Officer / Head of Year
- create a personalised action/support plan, such as an attendance contract, to address any barriers to attendance and make clear each person's role in improving the attendance patterns of your child
- offer signposting support to other agencies or services, if appropriate

- refer the matter to the Local Authority for relevant legal sanctions if attendance does not improve or deteriorates following the above actions.

6. LATENESS

Poor punctuality is not acceptable and can sometimes lead to irregular school attendance patterns. Good timekeeping is a vital life skill which will help children as they progress through their school life and out into the wider world.

Students who arrive late disrupt lessons and if a child misses the start of the day, they can feel unsettled and embarrassed. If students are late for school, they miss vital learning as period 1 starts at 8:45am.

The times of the start and close of the school day for all students at Walthamstow School for Girls are:

Gates open: 8.15am
Period 1 starts: 8.45am
Registration closes: 9.15am
End of the school day: 3.15pm

How we manage lateness:

- the school day starts at 8.15am when children can begin to come into school
- children arriving at 8.40am are required to come into school via the school office.
- children arriving after the 8:45am bell are late to school. They must sign in using our Inventry system (signing in screen) and provide a reason for their lateness, which is recorded.
- registers are taken at 8.45am
- at 9.15am the registers will be closed
- in accordance with the regulations, if your child arrives after 9.15am, they will receive a mark that shows them to be on site – 'U', but this will **not** count as a 'present' mark, and it will mean that they have an unauthorised absence
- the school may contact parents/carers regarding punctuality concerns
- The Senior Leadership Team are on duty every day at the school entrance gates and manage students arriving late to school at the school office from 8:40am

Unauthorised lateness could result in the school making a referral to the Local Authority for sanctions and/or legal proceedings. If your child has a persistent lateness record, you may be asked to meet with the school Attendance Officer and / or Head of Year, but you can approach us at any time if you are having difficulties getting your child to school on time. We expect parents/carers and staff to encourage good punctuality by being good role models to our children and as a school we celebrate tutor group and individual punctuality.

7. UNDERSTANDING BARRIERS TO ATTENDANCE

Whilst any child may occasionally have time off school because they are too unwell to attend, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any barriers preventing regular attendance are best resolved between the school, the parents/carers, and the child. If a parent/carer thinks their child is reluctant to attend school, then we will work with and possibly signpost that family to understand the root problem and provide any necessary support. We can use outside agencies to help with this, such as the School Nurse, Mental Health & Emotional Wellbeing support services, a Child & Family Support Worker, or the relevant Local Authority team/s.

Some students face greater barriers to attendance than their peers. These can include students who live with long-term medical conditions, who have special educational needs and disabilities, or have other vulnerabilities. High expectations of attendance remain in place for these students; however, we will work with families and students to support improved attendance whilst being mindful of the additional barriers faced. We will discuss reasonable adjustments and additional support advice from external partners, where appropriate.

The name and contact details of the school staff member students and parents should contact for more detailed support on attendance:

School Attendance Officer – Miss Shaw
Head of Year info@wsfg.waltham.sch.uk

8. LOCAL AUTHORITY ATTENDANCE SUPPORT SERVICES

The Local Authority BACME Service works strategically by offering support to schools to reduce persistent absences and improve overall attendance.

Parents/carers are expected to work with the school and Local Authority to address any attendance concerns.

Parents/carers should proactively engage with the support offered, aiming to resolve any problems together. If difficulties cannot be resolved in this way, the school may consider more formal support and/or refer the child to the Local Authority. If attendance does not improve, legal action may be taken.

9. SCHOOL ATTENDANCE AND THE LAW

In accordance with the School Attendance (Student Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 all children of compulsory school age must receive an appropriate full-time education (Education Act 1996). Parents/carers have a legal duty to ensure their child attends school regularly at the school at which they are registered.

Parents/carers may be recognised differently under education law than under family law. Section 576 of the Education Act 1996 states that a 'parent', in relation to a child or young person, includes any person who is not a parent (from which can be inferred 'biological parent') but who has parental responsibility, or who has care of the child.

A person typically has care of a child or young person if they are the person with whom the child lives, either full or part time and who looks after the child, irrespective of what their biological or legal relationship is with the child.

10. NATIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR PENALTY NOTICES

There is now a single consistent national threshold for when a penalty notice must be considered by all schools in England, of 10 sessions (usually equivalent to 5 school days) of unauthorised absence within a rolling 10 school week period. The 10 sessions of absence do not have to be consecutive and can be made up of a combination of any type of unauthorised absence (G, O and/or U coded within the school's registers). The 10-school week period can span different terms, school years or education settings.

Sanctions may include issuing each parent (for each child) with a Penalty Notice for £160, reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days (for the first offence). A second Penalty Notice issued within a three-year period will result in a fine of £160 per parent, per child. If a third offence is committed the matter may be referred to the Local Authority for consideration of prosecution via the Magistrates Court. If prosecution is instigated for irregular school attendance, each parent may receive a fine of up to £2500 and/or up to 3 months in prison. If a parent is found guilty in court, they will receive a criminal conviction.

There is no entitlement in law for students to take time off during the term to go on holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure or recreation, or to take part in protest activity in school hours. In addition, the Supreme Court has ruled that the definition of regular school attendance is "in accordance with the rules prescribed by the school."

The School Attendance (Student Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 set out the statutory requirements for schools. All references to family holidays and extended leave have been removed. The amendments specify that headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are "exceptional circumstances".

It is a rule of this school that a leave of absence shall not be granted in term time unless there are reasons considered to be exceptional by the Headteacher, irrespective of the child's overall attendance. Only the Headteacher or her designate (not the Local Authority) may authorise such a request and all applications for a leave of absence must be made in writing, in advance, on the prescribed form provided by the school. The school will usually consider that the parent/carer who has made the application is therefore allowing the leave of absence, and also that all parents/carers who are on the holiday are allowing the leave. Where a parent/carer removes a child after their application for leave was refused or where no application was made to the school, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised. It is likely that penalty notices will be requested, in line with LBWF's Code of Conduct in respect of each parent/carer believed to have allowed the absence.

At *WSFG* 'exceptional circumstances' will be interpreted as:
The fundamental principles for defining 'exceptional' are events that are "rare, significant, unavoidable and short". By 'unavoidable' we mean an event that could not reasonably be scheduled at another time, outside of school term time.

Generally, the DfE does not consider a need or desire for a holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure and recreation an exceptional circumstance
(Working Together to improve School attendance s38 P18)

The Headteacher/school may discuss the leave of absence request with other education settings and/or the Local Authority to determine any exceptional circumstances.

If leave of absence is unauthorised, the school will **NOT** provide work for children to do during their absence.

Where the Headteacher/school believes a penalty notice would be appropriate in an individual case, the Local Authority retains the discretion to issue one before the threshold is met. Examples may include, where parents/carers are deliberately avoiding the national threshold by taking several term time holidays below threshold, or for repeated absence for birthdays or other family events.

School Penalty Notice for School Attendance changed on 19 August 2024

With the introduction of the new National Framework for Penalty Notices issued by DfE, the following changes came into force for School Penalty Notice fines issued after 19 August 2024.

National Threshold

There is a single consistent National Threshold for when a Penalty Notice must be considered by all schools in England of 10 sessions (usually equivalent to 5 school days) of unauthorised absence within a rolling 10 school-week period.
These sessions do not have to be consecutive and can be made up of a combination of any type of unauthorised absence.
The 10 school-week period can span different terms or school years.

Please note: The DfE does not consider a need or desire for a holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure and recreation to be an exceptional circumstance.

First Offence

The first time a Penalty Notice is issued for unauthorised absence the amount will be: £160 per parent, per child to be paid within 28 days. Reduced to £80 per parent, per child, if paid within 21 days.

Second Offence (within 3 years)

The second time a Penalty Notice is issued for unauthorised absence the amount will be: £160 per parent, per child to be paid within 28 days.

Per Parent*, Per Child

A School Penalty Notice is issued to each parent*, for each child that was absent.
For example: Three siblings absent for term time leave, would result in each parent receiving three separate penalty notices.

***Parent**

Section 576 of the Education Act 1996 defines "parent" as:

- All natural (biological) parents, whether they are married or not.
- Any person who, although not a natural parent, has parental responsibility for a child or young person.
- Any person who, although not a natural parent, has care of a child or young person.

Third Offence and any further offences (within 3 years)

The third time an offence is committed a Penalty Notice will not be issued and the case could be presented straight to the Magistrate's Court.

Prosecution can result in a Criminal record and fines of up to £2,500

Cases found guilty in a Magistrates' Court may show on a parent's future DBS certificate, due to 'failure to safeguard a child's education'.

11. DELETION FROM ROLL

For any student leaving WSFG other than at the end of Year 11, parents/carers are required to complete written notification (including e-mail) to the school in advance of the leaving date. This must provide the 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 the child's whereabouts and can appropriately safeguard all of our students, even those who leave us.

It is crucial that parents/carers keep the school updated with current addresses and contact details for the student and key family members, in case of emergency.

Under Student Regulations, all schools are **legally required** to notify their Local Authority of **every new entry** to the admission register **within five days** of the student being enrolled. In addition to this, **every deletion** from the school register must also be notified to the Local Authority, as soon as the grounds for deletion has been met in relation to that student, and in any event no later than the time at which the student's name is deleted from the register. This duty does not apply when a student's name is removed from the admission register at a standard transition point – when the student has completed the final year of education normally provided by that school.

12. ABSENCE DATA

We use data to monitor, identify and support individual students or groups of students when their attendance needs to improve, and schools are required to submit student attendance data to the Department for Education on a daily basis, Education (Information about Individual Students) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2024. Persistently and severely absent students are tracked and monitored carefully. We also combine this with academic tracking, as increased absence affects attainment.

We share information and work collaboratively with other schools in the area, local authorities, and other partners, when absence is at risk of becoming persistent or severe.

13. FURTHER INFORMATION

Working together to improve school attendance

Summary table of responsibilities for school attendance

Statutory Guidance: Keeping Children Safe in Education

The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024

Working Together to Improve School Attendance

ATTENDANCE LETTER 1

Dear Parent/Carer,

As part of our monitoring and support process, we have identified (Student name) as having (current attendance) % attendance so far this Year.

As you know, good attendance is a crucial part of a successful education. The government guidelines state that any student with attendance below 90%, is considered a persistent absentee.

We are keen to work with parents to ensure that any attendance issues are quickly resolved. If you would like any further support, please do not hesitate to contact the school.

Yours sincerely,

Miss Shaw
Attendance Officer

ATTENDANCE LETTER 2

Dear Parent/Carer,

«chosen_forename» «chosen_surname» «year_reg»

As advised in my previous letter, we have been monitoring (student name) attendance and there has been little or no improvement in her attendance levels. It is imperative that pupils attend regularly to school and arrive on time if they are to get the best education available.

(student name) attendance is currently (percentage attendance). I would like to take this opportunity to advise you that under Section 444 Education Act 1996, it is your parental responsibility to ensure that «chosen_forename» attends school regularly and punctually. **I must therefore advise you that from now on, any absence due to ill health must be accompanied by medical evidence or will not be authorised.**

I ask that you give this matter immediate attention to avoid further action or a fixed penalty notice be issued by the local authority. We are keen to work with parents to ensure that any attendance issues are quickly resolved. If you would like any further support, please do not hesitate to contact the school.

I thank you in advance for your support.

Yours sincerely,

Miss Shaw
Attendance Officer

APPENDIX A

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
B	Off-site educational activity	Pupil is at a supervised off-site educational activity approved by the school
D	Dual registered	Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
J1	Interview	Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
P	Sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
V	Educational trip or visit	Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised, or approved, by the school
W	Work experience	Pupil is on a work experience placement

Code	Definition	Scenario
Authorised absence		
C	Authorised leave of absence	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
C1	Authorised regulated performance	Pupil has been granted leave authorised by the school for regulated performance or undertaking regulated employment abroad
C2	Authorised Part Time Timetable	Authorised part time timetable, agreed by school/local authority (BACME)
E	Excluded	Pupil has been excluded but no alternative provision has been made

H	Authorised holiday	Pupil has been allowed to go on holiday due to exceptional circumstances
I	Illness	School has been notified that a pupil will be absent due to illness
K	Authorised Alternative Provision	Agreed alternative provision- arranged by local authority
M	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment
Q	Authorised absence	Unable to attend- lack of access arrangement, school to advise
R	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance
S	Study leave	Year 11 pupil is on study leave during their public examinations
T	Travelling with parent for occupational purposes	Pupil is a mobile child and their parent (s) is traveling in course of their trade or business. Who has no fixed abode, it is expected for student to be dual rolled and to attend school where their parent(s) is travelling.
Y1	Unable to attend	Normal transport not available
Y2	Unable to attend	Widespread travel disruption
Y3	Unable to attend	Unavoidable partial closure
Y4	Unable to attend	Unavoidable closure
Y5	Unable to attend	Criminal justice detention
Y6	Unable to attend	Public health guidance/Law
Y7	Unable to attend	Unavoidable other than Y1-Y6
Unauthorised absence		
G	Unauthorised holiday	Pupil is on a holiday that was not approved by the school

N	Reason not provided	Pupil is absent for an unknown reason (this code should be amended when the reason emerges, or replaced with code O if no reason for absence has been provided after a reasonable amount of time)
O	Unauthorised absence	School is not satisfied with reason for pupil's absence
U	Arrival after registration	Pupil arrived at school after the register closed

Code	Definition	Scenario
X	Not required to be in school	Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
Y	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances	School site is closed, there is disruption to travel as a result of a local/national emergency, or pupil is in custody
Z	Pupil not on admission register	Register set up but pupil has not yet joined the school
#	Planned school closure	Whole or partial school closure due to half-term/bank holiday/INSET day