Approved: May 2026 Review due: May 2028

Sandal Castle (VA) Community Primary School

Attendance Policy

1. Aims

Our school aims to meet its obligations with regards to school attendance by:

- Promoting good attendance and reducing absence, including persistent absence
- Ensuring every child has access to full-time education to which they are entitled
- Acting early to address patterns of absence

We will also support parents to perform their legal duty to ensure their children of compulsory school age attend regularly (as long as they are fit and healthy), and will promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

To this end, we strive to make our school a happy and rewarding experience for all children.

2. Legislation and guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the school attendance guidance from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on school attendance parental responsibility measures. These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- The Education Act 1996
- The Education Act 2002
- Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003
- The Education and Inspections Act 2006
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2010
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2011
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2016
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013
- The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2024

This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the school census, which explains the persistent absence threshold.

3. School procedures

3.1 Attendance register

By law, all schools (except those where all pupils are boarders) are required to keep an attendance register, and all pupils must be placed on this register.

The attendance register will be taken at the start of the first session of each school day (8:55) and once during the second session. It will mark whether every pupil is:

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

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

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

See appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes.

Every entry in the attendance register will be preserved for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

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

The register for the first session will be taken by 9am and will be kept open until 9:15. The register for the second session will be taken by 1:00 in EYFS/KS1/LKS2 and 1:15 in UKS2.

3.2 Unplanned absence

Parents must notify the school office via the main contact number 01924 303525 on the first day of an unplanned absence – for example, if their child is unable to attend due to ill health – by 9:30 or as soon as practically possible (see also section 6). If parents/carers fail to contact school then the school will contact parents as part of the 'first day response' measures.

Absence due to illness will be authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may ask parents to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

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

3.3 Medical or dental appointments

Missing registration for a medical or dental appointment is counted as an authorised absence; advance notice is required for authorising these absences.

However, we encourage parents to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

Notifying school can be made be providing evidence of the appointment to the school office.
Applications for other types of absence in term time must also be made in advance. Information relating to whether the school can authorise such absences can be found in section 4.

3.4 Lateness and punctuality

A child who arrives late but before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code.

The school doors open at 8:45am in KS1 and 8:30am in KS2 and we encourage children to arrive at this time in order to settle and complete a morning work activity before registration closes. We believe that this prepares children more effectively for the day.

If children are late on a regular basis, then the school will seek to meet parents/carers in order to discuss how we can move forward to ensure that children arrive at the appropriate time.

If a parent/carer fails to collect a child on time then the school will endeavor to make contact with the parent/carer. Should this happen regularly then will we seek to meet with parents/carers to seek a solution.

Children that are not collected from school by 3.20pm and where parents haven't made contact / school are also unable to contact, parents will be subject to a late collection fee of £4.50.

If a child is not collected by 4pm then we will attempt to make contact with all named contacts. Should contact still not be made then we will refer to social services and follow any advice. The child will not be left unattended.

3.5 Following up absence

The school will follow up any absences to ascertain the reason, ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary, identify whether the absence is approved or not and identify the correct attendance code to use. This may be via communication from the class teacher via a note or conversation. Failing this then the attendance officer will endeavor to make contact with parents/carers in order to establish a reason for absence.

The school will use a phone call as a method of first response. If the absence continues without reason then we may call at the house and if there is no answer then we will leave a card stating that we attempted to call.

If no reasons are gained and if the situation does not improve, the school will then contact the LA support services, who will visit the home and seek to ensure that the parents or carers understand the seriousness of the situation.

3.5.1 Children Missing in Education

A child going missing from education, which includes within the school day, is a potential indicator of abuse and neglect, including sexual exploitation. Unauthorised absences will be monitored and followed up in line with procedures, particularly where children go missing on repeated occasions. All staff will be aware of the signs of risk and individual triggers including travelling to conflict zones, FGM and forced marriage.

All pupils will be placed and removed from admission and attendance registers as required by law. We will collect, where possible, at least 2 emergency contact numbers for each pupil.

Where a pupil has not returned to school for 10 days after an authorised absence, or is absent from school without authorisation for 20 consecutive school days, you will be at risk of losing your child's place at school.

We will inform the local authority of any child removed from our admission register. We will inform the local authority of any child who fails to attend for a continuous period in line with local Wakefield procedures.

3.6 Reporting to parents

Parents will be notified of their child's attendance as a minimum termly via parent consultation evenings. Class attendance data will also be made available via newsletters each Friday so parents can see how their child's class is performing against others. Information can also be found with regards to their child's attendance on Arbor.

3.6.1 Fast Track to Attendance

Fast Track promotes early intervention to improve school attendance and punctuality. It involves pupil, parents/carers, schools and the Local Authority. It sets clear expectations for attendance and punctuality and gives a set period for improvement to be made. It explains procedures should parents fail to meet their legal responsibility.

How does it work? School will inform parents if their child is to be involved in the process by receiving a Stage 1 letter (below 94%) / Stage 2 Letter (below 90%). If absence continues to fall parents will be invited into school for a meeting with staff and or the Education Welfare Officer to discuss attendance issues. A parental contract will be drawn up and signed. A time period will be given for improvements to be made. If none are made a Final Warning / Notice to Improve letter will be issued. If improvements are made no further action will be taken. If none are made a Final Penalty Notice will be issued by the Local Authority. If there is no improvement after a Penalty Notice, Education Welfare can proceed with parental prosecution if deemed necessary.

Further information is also available on the Wakefield Council Website. https://www.wakefield.gov.uk/schools-and-education/schools/school-admissions/school-attendance-matters

4. Authorised and unauthorised absence

4.1 Granting approval for term-time absence

Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence to pupils during term time unless they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances' which will be considered on their own merits on a case by case basis.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the headteacher's discretion. All applications must be given in advance and provided in writing or via email. If no advance information is provided the absence will be recorded as unauthorised.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments – as explained in sections 3.2 and 3.3
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart
- Traveller children travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh Gypsies, Irish and Scottish Travellers, Showmen (fairground people) and Circus people, Bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and New Travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a Traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision.

4.2 Holidays in Term Time

Due to a change in legislation by the Government which came into force from September 2013 the school has been required to change its policy of granting up to 10 days holidays in term time due to 'special circumstances'.

The amendments made by the Department for Education mean that the law does not give any entitlement to parents to take their child on holiday during term time. Any application for leave must be in 'exceptional circumstances' and the headteacher must be satisfied that the circumstances warrant the granting of leave. According to the new legislation, parents can be fined for taking their child on holiday during term time without consent from the school. The Local Authority is responsible for this, not the school.

The Governing Body updated the school policy to reflect the new legislation for term time holidays in conjunction with local schools. As a result, from September 2013 the school is unable to authorise term time holidays. Any holiday taken during term time will be recorded as an unauthorised absence, unless it meets the criteria for 'exceptional circumstances'. Exceptional circumstances would include armed forces set holidays. (Evidence of this would need to be provided)

Although the school recognises the many benefits of holidays for children and the challenges parents/carers face when taking out of term holidays, however, we are unable to authorise term-time holidays unless there are ‘ exceptional circumstances’. Any holiday requests should be made in writing, in advance.

4.3 Legal sanctions

School will always endeavor to work with parents/carers to improve attendance and punctuality but as a last resort parents/carers should be aware that the school can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age.

With the introduction of the New National Framework for Penalty Notices, the following changes came into force on 19 August 2024.

Penalty Notices will be issued for;

- **Term time leave**: Penalty Notice Fines will be issued for Term Time Leave of 5 or more consecutive or accumulative days.
- **10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a 10 week period**: A Penalty Notice may be considered /issued when a pupil has had 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a 10 week period.

Per Parent / Per Child;

- Penalty Notice Fines continue to be issued per parent per child. For example: 3 siblings absent for term time leave, would result in each parent receiving 3 separate fines.

First Offence;

- The first time a Penalty Notice is issued for a Term Time Holiday or Irregular School Attendance the Penalty Notice will be charged at £160 per parent, per child if paid within 28 days of issue, reducing to £80 if paid within 21 days**.

Second Offence (within 3 years of the First Offence);

- Where it is deemed appropriate to issue a second Penalty Notice to the same parent for the same pupil within 3 years if the first notice, the second Penalty Notice will be charge at: £160 if paid within 28 days (no reduced fee for paying early).

- **Unpaid Penalty Notice's after 28 days may result in a parental prosecution.

Third Offence (within 3 years if the First Offence);

- On the third time that an offence is committed for either a Term Time Holiday and/or Irregular Attendance a Penalty Notice will not be issued, the case may proceed straight to Parental Prosecution under the Single Justice Procedure. If found guilty of the offence of 'Failure to send a child to school' the Magistrates can impose a fine up to £1000. Other prosecution tools may also be considered.

January 2026 Update

Please see below update to the Penalty Notice Code of Conduct.

The National Framework states the following: If in an individual case the Local Authority believes a penalty notice would be appropriate, they retain the discretion to issue the penalty notice before the threshold is met. Wakefield Council retain the right to exercise this discretion. Examples of when such discretion could be used are:

a) Where a pupil has 4 days of unauthorised absence that are G coded, and, where the absence immediately precedes or includes a 5th day which is a school INSET day, or an enforced school closure, and, where this has previously occurred and a penalty notice was not issued for that absence.*
b) Where a pupil has had fewer than 5 days of G coded absence, and, where this has previously occurred and a penalty notice was not issued for that absence.*
c) Where a pupil has had fewer than 5 days of G coded absence, and, where there has been a penalty notice issued for an absence, the Local Authority would issue a further penalty notice or seek a parental prosecution in line with the National Framework for Penalty Notices.*

*NB. The examples provided are not an exhaustive list and they can be used separately or in conjunction with each other.

Where a pupil has previously had an extended period of absence (unauthorised term time leave) of 20 (or more) school days, and where a penalty notice was issued for this absence, if the pupil then has a further extended period of absence, the Local Authority may, in agreement with the pupil's school, seek a parental prosecution rather than issue a further penalty notice. Where a pupil has been absent for 20 (or more) school days, the school can liaise with the Child Missing Education Team for advice and for appropriate action to be agreed.

For further information in relation to Penalty Notices please see the 'Local Code of Conduct for Issuing Penalty Notices for School Absence Effective From 19 August 2024' can be found on Wakefield Council's website.

5. Strategies for promoting attendance

We believe the best way to get children to want to attend school is for them to enjoy their education. To this end, we seek to implement an inspiring, varied curriculum promoting opportunities for all children to succeed; a curriculum that offers challenge and interest to all learners.

As part of our positive approach to attendance we will reward children with certificates/prizes for 100% attendance. Children will also gain their Bronze, Silver and Gold award for 100% attendance though the school year. (Bronze = 1 full term 100%, Silver = 2 full terms of 100%. Gold full school year 100%). Each year, School council will vote for the 100% prize, 96% prize and the 50 Day Summer Challenge prize Posters will displayed around school to remind our pupils of this exciting opportunity.
Children may also receive certificates/postcards/prizes for improving their attendance.

Any class in EYFS/KS1 and KS2 who gains 100% attendance for the week will be awarded with a reward.
Examples of class choices include;

- Additional Swimming sessions
- Additional Forest School sessions
- Additional PE sessions
- A film
- Non-uniform or PJ day

Weekly attendance % is recognised for every class within the weekly newsletter and celebrated in our Friday Collective Worships. The class with highest attendance each week will receive a certificate. Attendance is also celebrated on our classroom doors demonstrating our weekly figures and on our website.

Parents are able to their child's attendance on our school Arbor system. Conversations around this information are welcomed by our Attendance Officer.

Parents/carers are actively encouraged to talk to their children about the benefits of attending school regularly and should let the school know at their earliest convenience of any potential issues that may prevent a child from attending and vice versa. It also important that contact details are kept up to date in order for the school to follow up on any attendance issues that may arise.

6. Attendance monitoring

The attendance officer monitors pupil 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 (see section 3.2)

If after contacting parents, a pupil's absence continues to rise, we will consider involving an Education Welfare Officer. (see section 3.6.1) Information will also be offered / signposted to wider support services.
The persistent absence threshold is 10%. If a pupil's individual overall absence rate is greater than or equal to 10%, the pupil will be classified as a persistent absentee.

Absence data is collected each half 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 each half term.

The school collects and stores attendance data as a requirement set out by the local authority and in line with our GDPR policy. The data collected will be used to internally track individual and groups of pupils.

7. Roles and responsibilities

7.1 The Governing board

The governing board 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.

7.2 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 pupils and issues fixed-penalty notices, where necessary.

7.3 The School Attendance Champion

The school attendance champion is a designated member of the school's senior leadership team (SLT) responsible for driving strategies to improve pupil attendance. They analyze data, establish support systems, and build relationships with families to remove barriers to attendance. This statutory role focuses on boosting attendance culture to enhance educational outcomes.

7.4 The Attendance Officer

The attendance officer:

- Monitors attendance data at the school and individual pupil level
- Liaises with SLT and the Safeguarding Officer
- Reports concerns about attendance to the headteacher
- Works with Education Welfare Officer to tackle persistent absence
- Arranges calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues
- Advises the headteacher when to issue fixed-penalty notices

7.5 Class teachers

Class teachers are responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the Attendance Officer. They are also expected to encourage and celebrate good attendance within their class and discuss with parent/carers at parent evenings.

7.6 Office staff

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

8 Links with other policies

This policy is linked to our Child Protection, Safeguarding Policy, Behaviour and GDPR policies.

Appendix 1: attendance codes

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

Code	Full Name	Description
The student is counted as present		
/	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
The student is counted as present, at an Approved Educational Approved Educational Activity		
B	Educated off-site	The student is at an off-site supervised educational activity approved by the school
K	Education provision provided by LA	Education provision arranged by a local authority rather than the school
P	Sporting Activity (Approved)	Pupil is taking part in a sporting activity that has been approved by the school and supervised by someone authorised by the school
V	Educational trip	A residential trip organised by the school or a supervised strictly educational trip arranged by someone authorised by the school
W	Work experience	Pupil is on a work experience placement

Code	Full Name	Description
The student is counted as absent, authorised		
C	Other authorised absence	Leave of absence for exceptional circumstance
C1	Other authorised absence	Absence for a regulated performance or employment abroad
C2	Other authorised absence	Pupils on part-timetables

J1	Interview	Leave of absence to attend an interview for employment or admission into another educational institution
E	Excluded	If a student is excluded but still on the admission register, they should be marked E, for up to the sixth consecutive day of any fixed period (referred to as 'suspensions' by the DfE from Autumn 2021) or permanent exclusion.
M	Medical / Dental Appointment	The student is absent due to a medical or dental appointment that could not be made outside of school hours.
R	Religious Observance	The student is absent for religious observance on a day designated by the religious body.
S	Study Leave	Study leave should be used sparingly and only granted to Year 11 pupils for public exams. Students should still be able to come into school to revise.
T	Traveller Absence	Used when Roma, English and Welsh Gypsies, Irish and Scottish Travellers, Showmen (fairground people) and circus people, Bargees (occupational boat dwellers) or New Travellers are known to be travelling for occupational purposes and have agreed this with the school.
I	Illness	This illness code can be used for any form of illness.

Code	Full Name	Description
The student is counted as absent, unauthorised		
G	Family Holiday (Not agreed)	The holiday was not authorised by the school
N	Reason not provided	The reason for the absence has not been provided. If no reason for an absence is provided after a reasonable amount of time it should be changed to O.
O	Unauthorised absence	If the school is not satisfied with the reason given for absence they should record it as unauthorised.
U	Late (After register closes)	Pupil arrived at school after the register closed

Code	Full Name	Description
These codes are not counted so will not affect the attendance figures		
D	Dual Registration	The student is registered at another school and attends it during the lesson e.g. students at a pupil referral unit. Schools should only record attendance and absences for sessions the pupil is scheduled to attend at their school.
X	Non Statutory School Age Absence	Sessions non-compulsory school-age children are not expected to attend. This could should only be used for early years students who have not yet passed the 1st January, 1st April or 1st September following their 5th birthday.
Y1	Unable to attend	The pupil is unable to attend because the school is not within walking distance of their home and the transport to and from the school that is normally provided for the pupil by the school or local authority is not available.
Y2	Unable to attend	The pupil is unable to attend the school because of widespread disruption to travel caused by a local, national, or international emergency.
Y3	Unable to attend	Part of the school premises is unavoidably out of use and the pupil is one of those that the school considers cannot practicably be accommodated in those part of the premises that remain in use.

Y4	Unable to attend	Where a school was planned to be open for a session, but the school is closed unexpectedly (e.g. due to adverse weather), the attendance register is not taken as usual because there is no school session.
Y5	Unable to attend	Pupil is in the criminal justice system.
Y6	Unable to attend	Absence due to Public Health Guidance or Law.
Y7	Unable to attend	An unavoidable cause, that is not covered by one of the other 'unable to attend' codes detailed above. This code should be used only where something in the nature of an emergency has prevented the pupil from attending the session in question. The unavoidable cause must be something that affects the pupil, not the parent. The fact that a parent has done all they can to secure the attendance of the pupil at school does not, in itself, mean the pupil has been prevented by unavoidable cause.

Prepared by (member of staff): Leian Johnson Caroline Butterworth	**Date:** **March 2026**
Ratified by Full Governing Body:	**Date:** **19/05/2026**