



Westfield School

Nurturing Individuality & Progress

ATTENDANCE POLICY

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Approved by:	Full Governing Body	
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Next review due by:	September 2027, or earlier if statutory guidance changes	

Unless there are legislative or regulatory changes in the interim, this policy will be reviewed annually. Should no substantive changes be required at that point, the policy will move to the next review cycle.

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Senior Attendance Champion	Assistant Heads – contact via the school office: office@westfield.bucks.sch.uk
Statutory guidance	Working together to improve school attendance (DfE, July 2026)

1. AIMS

Westfield School is committed to securing good attendance through a whole-school culture in which attendance is understood as everyone's responsibility and as an essential foundation for safeguarding, wellbeing, learning and wider outcomes.

- promote regular attendance and punctuality and communicate high expectations clearly;
- reduce absence, including persistent and severe absence, through early identification and timely support;
- ensure every pupil can access the full-time education to which they are entitled;
- build strong, respectful and trusting relationships with pupils and families;
- listen to and understand barriers to attendance and work with families and partners to remove them;
- use attendance data intelligently to identify emerging patterns and target support;
- apply attendance procedures fairly and consistently while considering individual circumstances, SEND, disability, health needs and the school's duties under the Equality Act 2010.

As a special school, Westfield recognises that some pupils and families experience complex barriers to attendance or punctuality, including anxiety, sensory or regulation needs, medical needs, transition difficulties, transport disruption and other circumstances outside a family's control. High expectations remain for all pupils, but support and reasonable adjustments will be individualised where required.

1. STATUTORY FRAMEWORK AND GUIDANCE

This policy has been revised with regard to the Department for Education's statutory guidance Working together to improve school attendance (July 2026). The guidance is statutory and schools and governing bodies must have regard to it when maintaining and improving attendance.

- Education Act 1996;
- Education Act 2002;
- School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024;
- Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007, as amended;
- Equality Act 2010;
- Children and Families Act 2014;
- Keeping Children Safe in Education;
- Children Missing Education statutory guidance;
- Supporting pupils at school with medical conditions; and
- Arranging education for children who cannot attend school because of health needs.

The school will use the national attendance and absence codes in force at the time and will amend practice when legislation or statutory guidance changes.

3. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

3.1 Governing Board

- promote the importance of attendance across the school's ethos and policies;
- ensure leaders fulfil statutory duties and have regard to current attendance guidance;
- regularly review and challenge recent and historic attendance data, including benchmarking and the attendance of key pupil cohorts;
- ensure attendance improvement is appropriately resourced;
- ensure staff receive appropriate attendance training;
- hold the Headteacher and Senior Attendance Champion to account for implementation and impact; and
- support an attendance action plan where school data indicates that one is required.

3.2 Headteacher

- ensure this policy is implemented consistently;
- ensure admission and attendance registers are maintained accurately;
- monitor school-level absence data and report to governors;
- support staff to monitor individual pupils and cohorts;
- ensure appropriate support is offered and escalated where absence persists;
- work with the Local Authority and other partners; and
- authorise requests for penalty notices or other legal intervention in accordance with the Local Authority code of conduct and the National Framework.

3.3 Senior Attendance Champion

The Senior Attendance Champion role is held by Westfield's Assistant Heads, who can be contacted via the school office at office@westfield.bucks.sch.uk. The role includes:

- setting a clear vision for improving and maintaining good attendance;
- establishing and maintaining effective systems for tackling absence and ensuring they are followed;
- maintaining a strong grasp of attendance data and using it to focus improvement;
- evaluating the impact of attendance strategies and processes;
- leading targeted intervention and support for pupils and families; and
- liaising with the Local Authority School Attendance Support Team and other agencies where required.

3.4 Attendance officer / school office

The Headteacher retains oversight of the school's attendance function. Reception and administrative staff manage day-to-day absence communication and registration processes. They will record absence

information, undertake first-day contact, monitor late arrival and escalate concerns to the Senior Attendance Champion and DSL as appropriate.

3.5 Class staff

Class staff must ensure registers are completed accurately and on time, promote the importance of attendance, notice changes or patterns, and share concerns promptly with the attendance lead and/or DSL.

3.6 Parents and carers

- ensure their child attends every day the school is open unless there is a lawful reason for absence;
- ensure their child arrives by 9.00am wherever possible;
- notify the school before 9.00am on the first day of unexpected absence and on subsequent days unless otherwise agreed, giving the reason and expected return date;
- provide more than one emergency contact number wherever reasonably possible;
- request leave of absence in advance;
- arrange appointments outside school hours where possible; and
- engage with the school and relevant services where barriers to attendance arise.

3.7 Pupils

Pupils are expected, according to their age, development and individual needs, to attend school regularly, arrive on time and engage with support offered to help them attend.

4. RECORDING ATTENDANCE

4.1 Admission and attendance registers

Westfield will maintain its admission and attendance registers electronically. Every pupil will be placed on the admission register and attendance will be recorded for each morning and afternoon session using the appropriate national code. Registers are legal records and entries will be preserved for six years from the date of entry. Any amendment will retain the original entry, the amended entry, the reason, the date and the person making the amendment.

A pupil's name will only be deleted from the admission register where a lawful ground under the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 applies. Additional requirements apply to pupils registered at a special school and will be followed where relevant.

4.2 Registration times and punctuality

Pupils should arrive by 9.00am. The morning register will be taken at the school's agreed registration time and will close at 9.30am. Pupils arriving after the register has been taken but before 9.30am will be recorded as late. Arrival after 9.30am, once the register has closed, will be recorded using the appropriate unauthorised absence code unless another lawful code applies.

The afternoon register will be taken at 13.00 and will close at 13.15. Registration arrangements will be applied consistently, while agreed individual arrangements and lawful reasonable adjustments will be taken into account.

4.3 Unexpected absence and first-day response

- Parents/carers should contact the school before 9.00am, or as soon as practicable, explaining the reason for absence.
- Where no reason has been received, school will make first-day contact with the parent/carer and, where appropriate, other emergency contacts.
- Unexplained absence will be followed up for each session. Once the reason is established, the correct attendance code will be entered as soon as possible and no later than five working days after the session.

- If absence remains unexplained, contact attempts and safeguarding follow-up will continue. The school may contact relevant professionals, including a social worker, where appropriate.
- Repeated, prolonged or unexplained absence will be considered alongside safeguarding information and shared with the DSL where there is a welfare concern.

4.4 Illness and medical evidence

Illness, including physical and mental health-related illness, will be recorded using the appropriate national code. The school will not routinely require medical evidence and will not operate a blanket rule requiring it. Reasonable evidence may be requested where there is genuine and reasonable doubt about the authenticity of illness or where prolonged or repeated illness means evidence would help the school understand needs, plan support or reasonable adjustments, or record absence accurately.

4.5 Planned absence and leave of absence

Medical or dental appointments may be authorised where the school is notified in advance. Pupils should attend for as much of the school day as reasonably possible.

Leave of absence during term time will only be granted where permitted by the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024. Requests must be made in advance where required and will be considered individually, taking account of the facts, circumstances and relevant context. Westfield will not operate blanket rules that automatically grant leave for particular events. A holiday or leisure trip will not normally constitute an exceptional circumstance.

4.6 Education off site

Where a pupil is receiving approved education away from the school site, including alternative provision, another registered school, an educational visit, work experience or provision arranged by the Local Authority, the school will use the appropriate national attendance code and will maintain oversight of attendance at that provision.

5. DAY-TO-DAY ATTENDANCE RESPONSE AND SAFEGUARDING

Attendance is a safeguarding priority. Regular attendance is an important protective factor, particularly for vulnerable pupils, and absence can be a symptom of wider need. Westfield will therefore use an “expect, monitor, listen and understand, facilitate support, formalise support, enforce” approach, with support intensifying as absence becomes more persistent or severe.

- identify emerging patterns early and contact families promptly;
- listen to the pupil and family and seek to understand barriers rather than move immediately to punitive responses;
- remove in-school barriers and make reasonable adjustments where appropriate;
- help families access voluntary support, including early help or whole-family support where needed;
- hold regular review meetings for pupils who are vulnerable or persistently/severely absent;
- work with the Local Authority School Attendance Support Team and other partners where absence is at risk of becoming persistent or severe;
- formalise support where voluntary support is unsuccessful or not engaged with; and
- use legal intervention only where appropriate and in line with the National Framework and Local Authority arrangements.

Where a pupil is known to Children’s Social Care, has a social worker or other safeguarding vulnerabilities, unexplained absence will be considered alongside those risks and relevant professionals will be informed as appropriate. Safeguarding procedures take precedence where there is concern that a child may be suffering or at risk of harm.

6. PUPILS REQUIRING ADDITIONAL ATTENDANCE SUPPORT

6.1 SEND, disability and health needs

Westfield will maintain the same ambition for attendance for pupils with SEND, disabilities, long-term physical health conditions or mental health needs, while recognising that additional support and reasonable adjustments may be necessary. The school will work with pupils, parents, health professionals, the Local Authority and other agencies as appropriate, and will regularly review whether support remains effective.

Where attendance difficulties may be linked to unmet or changing SEND, the school will consider whether provision should be adjusted and, for pupils with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP), whether the Local Authority should be involved in reviewing the support package or EHCP.

6.2 Pupils with a social worker

Where a pupil has a social worker, the school will inform them of unexplained absences and involve them in attendance planning where appropriate.

6.3 Young carers

Westfield recognises that caring responsibilities can create barriers to attendance. Young carers will be identified and recorded in accordance with census requirements. Where caring responsibilities contribute to absence, the school will work with the pupil and family and facilitate access to early help, a young carer's needs assessment or other relevant support where appropriate.

6.4 Reintegration after absence

Following lengthy or unavoidable absence, the school will plan a supportive return, taking account of learning, communication, sensory, regulation, therapeutic and wellbeing needs. Remote education will not be used as a routine substitute for attendance; where used, it will be a last resort and form part of an agreed reintegration plan.

7. PART-TIME TIMETABLES

All pupils of compulsory school age are entitled to a full-time education. A temporary part-time timetable will only be used in very exceptional circumstances where it is in the pupil's best interests and is needed to meet individual needs. It will not be used to manage behaviour. Any temporary part-time timetable must meet the following requirements

- be agreed by the school and the parent with whom the pupil normally lives;
- form part of a wider support, health-care or reintegration plan with a clear ambition to increase access to education;
- include regular review dates involving the pupil, where appropriate, and parents;
- be in place for the shortest time necessary and include a proposed end date;
- involve the pupil's social worker where they have one;
- be discussed with the Local Authority where the pupil has an EHCP so that the support package can be reviewed; and
- be recorded in the attendance register using the appropriate national codes.

8. ATTENDANCE MONITORING AND USE OF DATA

The school will monitor attendance and punctuality routinely at individual, cohort and whole-school level. Analysis will be used for early identification, targeted support and evaluation of impact rather than relying only on headline percentages. To support this approach, the school will:

- review weekly patterns and early indicators of deterioration;
- undertake individual-level analysis for pupils needing support;
- undertake half-termly, termly and annual analysis of patterns and use of attendance codes;
- benchmark attendance against appropriate local, regional, national and similar-school data where available;
- consider relevant cohorts in the school context, including pupils with SEND/disabilities, pupils with a social worker, looked-after pupils, young carers and pupils eligible for free school meals;
- share appropriate information with class staff, senior leaders, the DSL and governors; and
- evaluate the impact of interventions and adapt them where they are not improving attendance.

9. PERSISTENT AND SEVERE ABSENCE

Persistent absence is where a pupil misses 10% or more of possible sessions. Severe absence is where a pupil misses 50% or more. Westfield will provide enhanced monitoring and regular review for pupils approaching or meeting these thresholds, while intervening earlier where emerging patterns indicate need.

Support may include an individual attendance plan, pastoral or therapeutic support, reasonable adjustments, early help, multi-agency planning, health or SEND input and Local Authority attendance support. Where voluntary support is unsuccessful or not engaged with, support may be formalised through an attendance contract or education supervision order. Where severe absence is linked to safeguarding concerns, the school will work with Children's Social Care and follow safeguarding procedures without delay.

10. FORMAL SUPPORT AND LEGAL INTERVENTION

Legal intervention is a last resort where support is not appropriate, has not been successful, or has not been engaged with. Westfield will work with the Local Authority and follow its Local Code of Conduct and the National Framework for Penalty Notices.

10.1 National Framework for Penalty Notices

State-funded schools must consider whether a penalty notice is appropriate in each individual case when the national threshold is met. The national threshold is 10 sessions of unauthorised absence within a rolling period of 10 school weeks. The sessions may be consecutive or non-consecutive and the 10-week period may span terms or school years.

When the threshold is met, the school will consider the individual circumstances, whether support is appropriate and whether a penalty notice is the best available tool to improve attendance. Where support is appropriate but has not worked or has not been engaged with, a Notice to Improve will usually be considered before a penalty notice. A Notice to Improve is not required where support is not appropriate, for example some unauthorised term-time holidays, or where it is not expected to have a behavioural impact.

Under the National Framework, the first penalty notice issued to a parent in respect of a particular pupil is £160 if paid within 28 days, reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days. A second notice to the same parent for the same pupil within a rolling three-year period is £160, payable within 28 days. A third penalty notice cannot be issued to the same parent for the same child within three years of the first; alternative action, which may include prosecution, must instead be considered.

Penalty notice arrangements are subject to the Local Authority's current code of conduct. The school will not operate a blanket policy of issuing or not issuing penalty notices.

11. INFORMATION SHARING AND STATUTORY RETURNS

Westfield will share attendance information lawfully with the Department for Education, Local Authority and relevant partners where required or where sharing is necessary to support a pupil. This includes statutory register returns and attendance information required under current legislation and guidance. Attendance information is also shared with parents and relevant professionals through Annual Reviews, MDT reports and end-of-year reports. Parents and carers have ongoing access to their child's current attendance percentage through Arbor. These information-sharing arrangements enable the school and relevant partners to identify attendance concerns promptly, fulfil statutory duties and coordinate appropriate support for pupils and families. In line with these requirements, the school will:

- notify the Local Authority of relevant additions to and deletions from the admission register outside standard transition points;
- provide attendance returns concerning pupils of compulsory school age who fail to attend regularly or who have been absent for a continuous period of 10 school days where absence is recorded with relevant unauthorised codes, at the frequency agreed with the Local Authority and at least monthly where required by guidance;
- provide sickness returns for pupils of compulsory school age where the school has reasonable grounds to believe they will miss 15 school days, consecutively or cumulatively, because of sickness; and
- share daily attendance data with DfE in accordance with applicable requirements for state-funded schools.

12. PROMOTING ATTENDANCE

Westfield will promote the benefits of good attendance through consistent communication, supportive relationships and an inclusive school environment. Because of the complex needs of many pupils, the school will not use attendance rewards in a way that disadvantages pupils who cannot maintain high attendance for reasons linked to disability, medical need or other protected circumstances. Where recognition is used, it will be sensitive, proportionate and inclusive and may focus on improvement, engagement or overcoming individual barriers.

13. TRAINING

Attendance will form part of staff induction and ongoing professional development. All staff will understand the importance of attendance, the law and register requirements relevant to their role, the school's procedures for tracking and following up absence, and how attendance links to safeguarding. Staff with specific attendance responsibilities will receive additional training appropriate to their role, including data analysis and work with families and partners.

14. MONITORING AND REVIEW

This policy will be reviewed at least annually and sooner where legislation, statutory guidance, Local Authority arrangements or the school's circumstances change. The school will seek the views of pupils and parents as appropriate when reviewing attendance arrangements. The policy will be published on the school website, made available to staff and families, and publicised when pupils join the school and when the policy is materially updated.

15. LINKS WITH OTHER WESTFIELD POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy;
- Children Missing Education / children absent from education procedures;
- Behaviour Policy;
- SEND Policy / SEN Information Report;
- Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions / First Aid arrangements;
- Equality information and objectives;
- Data Protection Policy; and
- Complaints Policy.

APPENDIX 1 – ATTENDANCE CODES

Westfield will use the national attendance and absence codes set out in the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 and current DfE guidance. The full national code set should be used within the school's management information system; the examples below highlight the school's punctuality arrangements.

Code	Definition	Westfield application
L	Late arrival	Pupil arrives after the register has been taken but before it closes at 9.30am.
U	Unauthorised absence – arrival after registration	Pupil arrives after 9.30am once the morning register has closed, unless another lawful attendance code applies.

APPENDIX 2– CORE PRINCIPLES

1. Expect and promote: communicate high expectations while maintaining an inclusive, supportive environment.
2. Monitor: identify emerging patterns of absence or lateness through regular data review.
3. Listen and understand: contact the family and, where appropriate, the pupil to understand barriers, including SEND, health, regulation, transport and family circumstances.
4. Facilitate support: agree practical actions, reasonable adjustments and/or referrals; record and review the plan.
5. Intensify support: where absence persists, involve the Senior Attendance Champion, Local Authority School Attendance Support Team and relevant partners; consider early help or multi-agency support.
6. Formalise support: where voluntary support is unsuccessful or not engaged with, consider an attendance contract, education supervision order or Notice to Improve in conjunction with the Local Authority.
7. Enforce where necessary: where other avenues have been exhausted or support is not appropriate, consider a penalty notice or prosecution in line with the National Framework and Local Authority code of conduct.
8. Safeguard throughout: where absence indicates possible harm or severe vulnerability, follow the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and involve Children's Social Care as appropriate.