



Attendance and Punctuality Policy

Policy reviewed by the Governing Body – September 2025

Date for next review – September 2026

Introduction:

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. Good attendance is essential for pupils to get the most out of their school experience, including their attainment, wellbeing and wider life chances. Research shows that the pupils with the highest attainment at the end of key stage 2 and key stage 4 have higher rates of attendance over the key stage compared to those with the lowest attainment. * **

It is the responsibility of parents / carers to ensure that children attend school, and the responsibility of the school to monitor attendance and punctuality, whilst offering support where appropriate. This policy sets out how we support and challenge excellent attendance at Edward Wilson Primary School.

1. Aims

We are committed to meeting our obligations with regards to school attendance by:

- Promoting good attendance and reducing absence, including persistent absenteeism
- Ensuring every pupil 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 attend regularly, and will promote and support punctuality in order for pupils to have the best possible start to the school day.

2. Legislation and guidance

This policy is based on the Department for Education's (DfE's) statutory guidance on [working together to improve school attendance](#) and [school attendance parental responsibility measures](#).

The guidance is based on the following pieces of legislation, which set out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- Part 6 of the [Education Act 1996](#)
- Part 3 of the [Education Act 2002](#)
- Part 7 of the [Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006 \(and 2010, 2011, 2013, and 2016 amendments\)](#)
- [The School Attendance \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2024](#)
- [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013 and the 2024 amendment](#)

It also refers to:

- [School census guidance](#)
- [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#)
- [Mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance: guidance for schools](#)

3. Roles and responsibilities

The Governing Body

The Governing Body are responsible for:

- Monitoring attendance figures for the whole school on at least a termly basis;
- Holding the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy.

The Headteacher

The headteacher and leadership team understand that creating a culture of excellent attendance is everyone's responsibility. This collective responsibility involves setting high expectations for all pupils, staff and parents. The headteacher is responsible for:

- Implementation of this policy at the school;
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors;
- Celebrating and promoting excellent pupil attendance;
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils;
- Referring fixed-penalty notices, where necessary, to Westminster City Council;
- Carrying out home visits to safeguard pupils, where necessary.

Attendance Officer

Our Attendance Officer (Eden Taddese) is responsible for:

- Monitoring attendance data across the school, at group and individual pupil level;
- Reporting concerns about attendance to the headteacher and Designated Safeguarding Leader (Helena Desmarais);
- Working with Westminster City Council's Attendance Team and Early Help to tackle persistent absenteeism;
- Arranging phone calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues; • Advising the headteacher when to make referrals for fixed-penalty notices;

- Carrying out home visits to safeguard pupils, where necessary.

Class teachers

Class teachers are responsible for:

- Recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the school office;
- Talking about the importance of excellent attendance with their class every day e.g. when completing the register;
- Celebrating excellent attendance;
- Alerting the senior leadership team and Attendance Officer about any attendance concerns.

Office staff

School office staff are responsible for:

- Taking calls from parents about absence and recording it on the schools' Managed Information System;
- First day calling if absence has not been reported, including calling all available numbers listed for a child if there is no answer;
- Reporting the Senior Leadership Team and DSL when the family of an absent pupil cannot be contacted;
- Asking for and viewing evidence of appointments;
- Informing the Senior Leadership Team and Designated Safeguarding Leader about unauthorised absence and absence of any pupils at risk of persistent absenteeism;
- Checking registers have been completed with the correct codes and adding necessary additional information to the register.

Parents and carers

All parents and carers are expected to:

- Ensure their child attends every day the school is open except when a statutory reason applies;
- Make vacation arrangements during school holidays – Edward Wilson Primary School will not authorise term-time holiday;
- Notify the school as soon as possible when their child has to be unexpectedly absent (e.g. sickness);
- Only request leave of absence in exceptional circumstances and to do so in advance;
- Book any medical appointments around the school day where possible;

4. Recording attendance

Attendance register

We will keep an attendance register, and place all pupils onto this register.

We will take our attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day 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 See appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes on page 10.

We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

Pupils must arrive in school by 9.00am on each school day.

The register for the first session will be taken at 9.00 am and will be kept open until 9:30 am.

The register for the second session will be taken at 1:15pm and will be kept open until 1:45 pm.

Unplanned absence

If a child is unable to attend school due to an unexpected reason, the parent or carer must notify the school office by 8:45am, or as soon as practically possible. Please inform the office by telephoning the office, stating your child's full name, class and the reason for not attending school.

The telephone number for Edward Wilson Primary School is: 0203 214 3930

We will mark absence due to illness as authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness. The school may ask the pupil's parent or carer 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.

Planned absence

We strongly encourage parents and carers 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.

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the pupil's parent or carer notifies the school in advance of the appointment. Evidence, such as an appointment card, letter or text confirmation of an appointment should be shown to the school office.

The pupil's parent or carer must also apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence. Read section 5 to find out which term-time absences the school can authorise.

Lateness and Punctuality

The school encourages good punctuality for all pupils. It is important to arrive at school on time to create a good start to the day, and also to ensure no loss of learning.

Once the main gates along Senior Street close at 9.00am, children need to enter the school via the office reception (opposite the park). Any children arriving between 9.00am and 9.30am will be marked in the register as 'late', and parents / carers will be asked to provide a reason for their late arrival.

Any children arriving at school after 9.30am will be marked in the register with the code 'U'. This means that they will be calculated as being absent from school for the entire morning. Families with pupils who repeatedly arrive to school late may receive a fixed-penalty notice.

Following up absence

Where any child we expect to attend school does not attend, or stops attending, the school will:

- Call their parent or carer on the first day of absence to ascertain the reason;
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not;
- Identify the correct attendance code to use;
- Ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary;

In cases where it is not possible to contact the parent or carer, the school will call other contacts listed for the child. The school may email the parent or carer as well if there is no response. If no contact has been made by the end of the morning, a home visit will be carried out by a senior member of staff and one other member of school staff to ensure the safety and well-being of the child/ren and their family. If the child is not at their home address at the time of the home visit, the school may need to contact children's services or the police.

Reporting to parents Edward Wilson Primary School will report your child's attendance at the end of each big term. However, parents or carers can request a copy of their child's attendance certificate at any time via the school office. We aim for all pupils to have an attendance rate of at least 97%.

5. Authorised and unauthorised absence

Approval for term-time absence

If you need to request leave from school during term-time for your child, you will need to complete the term-time leave form (available from the school office) and provide any additional evidence, which will then be considered by the headteacher. This form should be completed a minimum of two weeks prior to the requested leave period.

The headteacher will only grant a leave of absence to pupils during term time if they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'. While a leave of absence is granted at the headteacher's discretion, he will be consistent in his decision making.

Exceptional Circumstances

Exceptional leave **may** be:

- Where an absence from school is recommended by a health professional as part of a child's rehabilitation from a medical or emotional issue;
- The death or terminal illness of a child's parent or sibling.

Exceptional leave is **NOT**:

- Availability of cheap flights and / or holidays;
- Overlap with the beginning or end of term, half term;
- Visiting relatives abroad;

The Headteacher will only authorise leave if they are satisfied that the circumstances are truly exceptional. Evidence would be required in each case. The school considers each application

for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments (see section 4 for more details);
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong, for example Eid and Diwali. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart. One day of Religious Observance can be authorised per term.
- Traveller pupils 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.

Holidays

Edward Wilson Primary School does not authorise term-time holiday. It is important that parents and carers understand the educational and financial cost of taking their children out of school during term-time. The school will always refer to Westminster City Council for a fixed penalty notice when we believe that a pupil is absent due to a vacation during term time. This figure currently stands at £60 if paid within 21 days, rising to £120 if not paid on time. However, please be aware that a prosecution from a magistrate can take place if a family receive a fixed penalty notice for a second time during their child's education (including while they are in secondary school).

6. Promoting and incentivising good attendance and punctuality

At Edward Wilson Primary School, we have high expectations for attendance and expect all pupils to aim for an attendance rate of at least 97%. We recognise that promoting excellent attendance is the responsibility of all members of school staff and an embedded part of our school culture. To promote excellent attendance and to reduce persistent and severe absenteeism we do the following:

Praise/Celebration:

Excellent attendance and punctuality are promoted throughout the school by all members of the school staff. Children are reminded by their class teachers of the importance of being on time and at school. Links are made to being away from school and missing out on learning and social experiences. For example, class teachers may comment when completing the register, "I am so pleased that you are all here at school and on time today so we can do our best learning".

On the school grounds, there is an attendance display which is updated each week to share the attendance percentage of each class, as well as key information about the impact of missed learning. This information is easily accessible for parents.

Whole Class Awards:

Class attendance will be calculated at the end of each week and is shared during our weekly whole school assembly each Friday afternoon. The class with the best attendance each half term enjoys a reward trip to Westbourne Park Family Centre, to play on the bouncy castle and other games.

Individual Awards:

Individual certificates and/or other rewards e.g. art supplies are also given to children where there has been a significant improvement in their attendance or punctuality from one half term to the next, or during a monitoring period following a meeting with the attendance officer.

7. Attendance monitoring

The Attendance Officer monitors pupil absence on a daily basis, with more thorough analysis of trends and patterns taking place on a weekly basis. Attendance is monitored for the whole school, each class, groups of pupils and individuals. Data is used to identify pupils at risk of poor attendance, including attendance data from the previous academic year. In order to reduce persistent absenteeism, the school monitors attendance data and takes the following actions:

Pupils at risk of becoming persistently absent

If a pupil's absence reaches 8%, they are at risk of becoming persistently absent, therefore the parent or carer will be invited to a meeting with the headteacher at school.

During this meeting:

- The reasons for absence will be discussed;
- Targets will be set;
- If out of school barriers to attendance are identified, the school will signpost and support access to any required services

The Attendance Contract will set targets and a monitoring period for attendance to be improved. These targets will be reviewed at the end of the monitoring period. If absence is still at 8% or greater at the end of the monitoring period, the school may make a referral to Early Help.

8. Sanctions

Our school will make use of the full range of potential sanctions – including, but not limited to, those listed below – to tackle poor attendance. Decisions will be made on an individual, case-by-case basis.

Penalty notices

The headteacher (or someone authorised by them), local authority or the police can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age, by issuing a penalty notice.

If the school issues a penalty notice, it will check with the local authority before doing so, and send it a copy of any penalty notice issued.

Before issuing a penalty notice, the school will consider the individual case, including:

- Whether the national threshold for considering a penalty notice has been met (10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks)
- Whether a penalty notice is the best available tool to improve attendance for that pupil

- Whether further support, a notice to improve or another legal intervention would be a more appropriate solution
- Whether any obligations that the school has under the Equality Act 2010 make issuing a penalty notice inappropriate

The payment must be made directly to the local authority, regardless of who issues the notice. If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute or withdraw the notice.

If issued with a **first** penalty notice, the parent must pay £80 within 21 days, or £160 within 28 days.

If a **second** penalty notice is issued to the same parent in respect of the same pupil, the parent must pay £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 the issue of the first penalty notice. In a case where the national threshold is met for a third time within those 3 years, alternative action will be taken instead.

A penalty notice may also be issued where parents allow their child to be present in a public place during school hours without reasonable justification, during the first 5 days of a suspension or exclusion (where the school has notified the parents that the pupil must not be present in a public place on that day). These penalty notices are not included in the National Framework, not subject to the same considerations about support being provided, and do not count towards the limit as part of the escalation process. In these cases, the parent must pay £60 within 21 days, or £120.

Notices to improve

If the national threshold has been met and support is appropriate, but parents do not engage with offers of support, the school may offer a notice to improve to give parents a final chance to engage with support.

Notices to improve will be issued in line with processes set out in Westminster City Council's code of conduct.

They will include:

- Details of the pupil's attendance record and of the offences
- The benefits of regular attendance and the duty of parents under [section 7 of the Education Act 1996](#)
- Details of the support provided so far
- Opportunities for further support, or to access previously provided support that was not engaged with
- A clear warning that a penalty notice may be issued if attendance doesn't improve within the improvement period, along with details of what sufficient improvement looks like, which will be decided on a case-by-case basis
- A clear timeframe of between 3 and 6 weeks for the improvement period
- The grounds on which a penalty notice may be issued before the end of the improvement period

Persistently absent pupils

The persistent absence threshold is 10%. If a pupil's individual overall absence rate is equal to or greater than 10%, the pupil will be classified as a persistent absentee. If a pupil's absence reaches this level, in addition to the support for pupils at risk of becoming persistently absent, the school will:

- Put additional targeted support in place to remove any barriers (through referral to other agencies where possible, including the School Nurse, the Mental Health Support Team, the SENDCo, Early Help or appropriate other services);
- Where support is not working, being engaged with or appropriate, the school will work with the local authority on legal intervention.

Severely absent pupils

The severely absent threshold is 50%. If a pupil's individual overall absence rate is equal to or greater than 50%, the pupil will be classified as severely absent. If a pupil's absence reaches this level, in addition to the support for pupils who are persistently absent, the school will:

- Agree a joint approach for all severely absent pupils with the local authority.

Support for cohorts of pupils with lower attendance than their peers

The school proactively uses data to identify cohorts with, or at risk of, low attendance and develop strategies to support them. The school will work with other schools in the local area and the local authority to share effective practice where there are common barriers to attendance.

Support for pupils with medical conditions or SEND with poor attendance

The school will maintain the same ambition for excellent attendance for all pupils and we will work with pupils and parents / carers to maximise attendance. The SENDCo and Attendance Officer regularly monitor attendance data for pupils with an EHCP and those receiving SEND support in school.

Where required, the school will put in place additional support and adjustments, such as an Individual Education Plan and, if appropriate, ensure that the provision outlined in the pupil's EHCP is accessed. The school will consider additional support from wider services and external partners and make referrals when needed.

National and local attendance data

Pupil-level absence data will be collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. The school will compare attendance data to the national average, and share this with the Governing Body.

9. Safeguarding

Children Missing in Education (CME)

A child going missing from school is a potential indicator of abuse or neglect and, as such, these children are increasingly at risk of being victims of harm, exploitation or radicalisation. Staff will monitor pupils that go missing from the school, particularly on repeat occasions, and report them to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (Helena Desmarais) following normal safeguarding procedures.

We will inform Westminster City Council of any pupil who fails to attend regularly, or has been absent without the school's permission for a continuous period of 10 school days or more.

If a child is missing from school and the school has not been contacted as to reason for the absence the school will:

- Make on-going attempts, beginning on day one of any unexplained absence, to contact the pupil's parent or carer either by telephone or email;

- Make further attempts to contact the parent / carer either by letter or by carrying out a home visit;
- Contact any other schools where the pupil or their siblings are known to have been pupils e.g. secondary schools or nursery settings.
- Sensitively check with the pupil's peer group to ascertain if they are aware of any change in the pupil's place of residency;
- Contact any relevant agency, for example Children's Services;
- Notify the Local Authority where the pupil is resident regarding their on going absence from school.

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

Prolonged or repeated absence from school is one of the signs that a girl may be at risk of FGM. If staff have any concerns that a girl is at risk of FGM or that FGM has taken place, they will follow the procedures set out in our Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

10. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the local authority or DfE is updated, and as a minimum every year by the headteacher. At every review, the policy will be approved by the full Governing Body.

11. Links with other policies

This policy links to the following policies:

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Behaviour Policy

Appendix 1: 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
J	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
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Code	Definition	Scenario
Authorised absence		
C	Authorised leave of absence	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
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
M	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment
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	Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence	Pupil from a Traveller community is travelling, as agreed with the school
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

Appendix 2: Term-time leave request form



Application for Leave During Term Time

Edward Wilson Primary School will not usually authorise any term-time holiday for pupils on roll.

Parents or carers must ask permission, where the situation is exceptional or urgent, for their child to be absent during term-time. It is at the headteacher's discretion to decide whether or not the absence will be authorised. Parents wishing to apply for their child to have leave from school should complete this form and return it to school for authorisation at least two weeks before the proposed leave. A separate request form should be completed for each child that will be absent during term time.

I understand that if the request is unauthorised, then the school will make a referral for fixed penalty notice. This figure currently stands at £80 if paid within 21 days, rising to £160 if not paid on time. However, please be aware that a prosecution from a magistrate can take place if a family receive a fixed-penalty notice for a third time during their child's education (including while they are in secondary school).

Application for Leave During Term Time

Surname of child		First name of child	
Date of birth		Class	
Address of child			
Postcode		Phone Number	
Reason for requesting leave during term time			
First date of absence from school		Date of return to school	
Will your child miss any national assessments during this time?		Yes	No
Parents / carers full name: Parent's / carer's signature: Date:			