

Attendance Policy

Approved by Governors _____

Written: **September 2026**

To be reviewed **September 2028 (or in light of new legislation/guidance)**

Whitefield Infant School

Attendance Policy

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1. Purpose, principles and aims

Whitefield Infant School and Nursery is committed to giving every child the best possible opportunity to learn, thrive and succeed. Regular and punctual attendance is a central part of safeguarding, wellbeing, achievement and belonging.

We expect pupils to attend school every day that it is open unless there is a valid reason for absence. Our whole-school attendance target is 96%; however, the school's approach is not simply about a percentage. We work with children and families to understand individual circumstances, identify barriers early and provide appropriate support.

Our aims are to:

- set high expectations for the attendance and punctuality of all pupils;
- promote the benefits of regular attendance and establish positive attendance habits from the earliest years;
- reduce absence, including persistent and severe absence;
- act early when patterns of absence or lateness emerge;
- build respectful, trusting relationships with families and work together to remove barriers;
- ensure pupils with SEND, disabilities, medical conditions or mental health needs receive appropriate support and reasonable adjustments;
- use attendance information intelligently to identify need, target support and evaluate impact; and
- use formal or legal intervention where support has not worked, has not been engaged with, or is not appropriate.

2. Statutory framework and guidance

This policy has been written with regard to the current statutory and legal framework for school attendance in England, including:

- Working together to improve school attendance, Department for Education (statutory guidance, updated 9 July 2026);
- The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024;
- Education Act 1996, including sections 7 and 444;
- Education and Inspections Act 2006;
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007, as amended, including the 2024 national framework;
- Children and Families Act 2014 and the SEND Code of Practice;
- Equality Act 2010;
- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026;
- Supporting pupils at school with medical conditions; and
- Education for children with health needs who cannot attend school.

Where this policy refers to a parent, this includes natural parents, those with parental responsibility and any person who has care of the child, in accordance with education law.

3. Roles and responsibilities

3.1 Parents and carers

Parents and carers are expected to:

- ensure their child attends school every day and arrives on time;
- contact school as soon as possible and no later than 9:00am on the first day of an unexpected absence, giving the specific reason for absence and expected return date;
- continue to keep school informed during an ongoing absence;
- provide up-to-date contact details and more than one emergency contact wherever possible;
- make routine medical and dental appointments outside school hours wherever possible and, when this cannot be avoided, keep time out of school to the minimum necessary;
- request any leave of absence in advance and provide supporting information where relevant;
- work with school to identify and overcome barriers to attendance and engage with agreed support; and
- inform school promptly about any change in circumstances that may affect attendance.

3.2 Headteacher / Senior Attendance Champion

The Headteacher, Mrs Erica Mason, is the senior leader responsible for the strategic approach to attendance.

The Senior Attendance Champion will:

- lead, champion and improve attendance across the school;
- set a clear vision and high expectations for attendance and punctuality;
- ensure statutory duties and this policy are implemented consistently;
- maintain a strong grasp of attendance and absence data and oversee analysis;
- monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of attendance systems and interventions;
- ensure early identification of pupils and groups at risk of persistent or severe absence;
- build productive relationships with families and ensure appropriate support is offered;
- work with the SENCO, DSL, pastoral staff and external partners where barriers are complex;
- oversee intervention and reintegration plans where required;
- make decisions regarding authorisation of absence and requests for leave;
- ensure appropriate consideration of Equality Act duties and reasonable adjustments; and
- report regularly to governors on attendance, persistent and severe absence, vulnerable groups and the impact of improvement work.

3.3 Attendance lead and designated staff

- complete first-day response and follow up unexplained absence;
- maintain accurate attendance records and ensure appropriate national codes are used;
- monitor attendance and punctuality at pupil, class, group and whole-school level;
- identify emerging patterns and pupils at risk of persistent or severe absence;
- communicate attendance information and concerns promptly to families;
- meet families to understand barriers and agree support and improvement plans;
- coordinate home visits and referrals where appropriate;
- liaise with Lancashire County Council attendance services and other agencies; and
- keep clear records of contacts, support, agreed actions, review dates and outcomes.

3.4 All school staff

- create a welcoming, safe and inclusive environment that supports belonging;
- complete registers accurately and promptly;
- promote the importance of attendance and punctuality;
- notice and report emerging attendance concerns;
- listen to children and families and share relevant information with the attendance lead, SENCO or DSL; and
- support agreed attendance, reintegration and reasonable-adjustment plans.

3.5 Governing body

- recognise attendance as a school improvement and safeguarding priority;
- ensure the school complies with current attendance legislation and statutory guidance;
- review and approve the attendance policy and monitor its implementation;
- regularly review and challenge attendance data, including persistent and severe absence and key pupil groups;
- ensure leaders identify barriers, provide appropriate support and evaluate the impact of interventions; and
- hold leaders to account for improvement while ensuring the school's approach is fair, inclusive and responsive to individual need.

3.6 Lancashire County Council

Whitefield works with Lancashire County Council services, including School Attendance Consultants, attendance support and legal services, and the Children Missing Education team, as appropriate. The school will follow current Lancashire processes and the local code of conduct for penalty notices.

4. Recording attendance and the school day

The school keeps an electronic attendance register and records attendance for every pupil in each morning and afternoon session using the national attendance and absence codes.

School day starts	8:40am
Morning registration	from 8:40am; register closes at 9:10am
Afternoon registration	1:00pm–1:05pm; register closes at 1:15pm
School day ends	3:10pm
Registers	taken twice daily

Any amendment to the register will preserve the original entry and record the amended entry, reason, date and the name/position of the person making the amendment, as required by the 2024 Regulations.

Attendance register entries will be retained for the statutory period.

5. Reporting and responding to absence

5.1 Parent reporting

If a child is going to be absent unexpectedly, parents must contact school as soon as possible and no later than 9:00am on the first day by calling (01282) 612807. The office is staffed from 8:00am. Parents should give a clear reason for the absence rather than only saying that the child is 'unwell'.

5.2 First-day response

Where no reason has been received, school will contact parents on the first day of absence. If parents cannot be reached, school will use emergency contacts and, where necessary, make an unannounced home visit. Unexplained absence is treated as a safeguarding concern as well as an attendance concern.

5.3 Ongoing unexplained absence

School will make reasonable enquiries to establish the child's whereabouts and safety. The response will be proportionate to the child's circumstances and safeguarding risk. Where there are heightened safeguarding concerns, action may be escalated immediately in line with safeguarding procedures.

Where a pupil is absent without permission for a continuous period of 10 school days, or otherwise meets the relevant notification criteria, school will notify the local authority in accordance with current statutory requirements.

6. Authorised and unauthorised absence

The school, not the parent, determines how an absence is recorded. Decisions will be made in accordance with the national attendance codes and the circumstances of the case.

6.1 Illness and medical/dental appointments

Absence due to genuine illness will normally be authorised. School will not routinely request medical evidence, but may seek appropriate evidence where there are genuine and reasonable doubts about the reason for absence or where support planning requires it.

Routine appointments should be arranged outside school hours wherever possible. Where this is not possible, pupils should attend school before and/or after the appointment so that time out of education is minimised.

6.2 Examples of unauthorised absence

- keeping a child off school unnecessarily;
- absence without a satisfactory explanation;
- arrival after the register has closed without an authorised reason;
- shopping, birthdays, day trips or caring for other children;
- term-time holiday or leave that has not been authorised; and
- absence beyond the period of leave authorised by the Headteacher.

6.3 Religious observance

Absence will be authorised for a day that is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the parent belongs, in accordance with the national attendance code. Requests for additional leave will be considered under the leave-of-absence provisions and may only be authorised where the statutory criteria are met.

6.4 Sporting activities and performances

Requests relating to regulated performances, employment or approved sporting activities will be considered under the current regulations and national attendance codes. Where required, the appropriate licence or approval must be in place. The school will consider the educational impact and arrangements for supervision and continued education.

7. Leave of absence during term time

The Headteacher may grant a leave of absence only in the circumstances permitted by the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024. For requests based on exceptional circumstances, each application will be considered individually and at the Headteacher's discretion.

- Requests **must** be made in advance using the school's leave-of-absence process.
- Parents should provide relevant information or evidence where they believe exceptional circumstances apply.
- A family holiday would not normally be considered an exceptional circumstance.
- The Headteacher will determine whether leave is granted and, if so, the number of school days authorised.
- Absence taken without permission, after a request has been declined, or beyond the length of time agreed, will be recorded as unauthorised and may lead to legal intervention.

In reaching a decision, the Headteacher may consider the specific circumstances of the request, the timing and length of absence, the pupil's attendance history and any individual or family context relevant to the decision.

8. Lateness and punctuality



Good punctuality supports learning, routines and a child's sense of belonging. Children should be in school ready to learn at 8:40am.

A pupil arriving after the register has been taken but before it closes will be recorded as late (code L). A pupil arriving after the register has closed without an authorised reason will be recorded using the appropriate code for late arrival after registration has closed (code U), which counts as an unauthorised absence for that session.



Repeated lateness will be followed up with parents. School will seek to understand the reasons, agree support and monitor improvement. Persistent unauthorised lateness may contribute to the national threshold for considering a penalty notice.

9. Understanding and removing barriers to attendance

Whitefield uses a support-first approach. When attendance begins to cause concern, our first priority is to understand why. Absence can be a symptom of wider barriers, and effective improvement depends on identifying and addressing those barriers.

School will, as appropriate:

- meet with the child and family and listen carefully to their experience;
- identify school-based, family, health, SEND, emotional, practical or wider barriers;
- agree clear actions, responsibilities and review dates;
- make reasonable adjustments where required;
- use Early Help or other multi-agency support where this would help;
- work with Lancashire attendance services and other relevant partners;
- maintain regular communication and recognise improvement; and
- escalate intervention where absence continues and support has not secured sufficient improvement.

10. Supporting pupils with SEND, disability, medical or mental health needs

The school recognises that some pupils face greater barriers to attendance than their peers. High expectations remain important, but they must be accompanied by appropriate support, reasonable adjustments and careful consideration of individual need.

For pupils with SEND, disabilities, medical conditions or mental health needs, school may:

- work closely with parents, the SENCO, DSL, health professionals and other agencies;
- review whether unmet need or an in-school barrier is contributing to absence;
- make reasonable adjustments in line with the Equality Act 2010 and any EHC plan;
- agree an individual attendance, support or reintegration plan;
- use soft starts, adapted routines, a safe or quiet space, targeted adult support or other appropriate adjustments;
- consider a temporary, time-limited part-time timetable only in exceptional circumstances, where it is in the pupil's best interests, with clear review arrangements and a plan to return to full-time education;
- support phased return following lengthy or unavoidable absence; and
- work with the local authority where a pupil is likely to be unable to attend school for 15 school days or more because of health needs, whether consecutive or cumulative, so that appropriate education can be considered.

Where non-attendance may be linked to emotional or mental health difficulties, school will seek to understand the underlying need rather than treating the description of 'school refusal' as an explanation in itself. Safeguarding concerns will always be referred to the DSL.

11. Persistent and severe absence

Persistent absence means a pupil misses 10% or more of possible school sessions, for any reason. Severe absence means a pupil misses 50% or more of possible sessions.

Whitefield will not wait for a child to cross a threshold before acting. Pupils whose attendance indicates that they are at risk of persistent or severe absence will be identified and supported early.

For pupils who are persistently or severely absent, or at risk of becoming so, school will:

- analyse the pattern and reasons for absence;
- consider any safeguarding, SEND, health, disability or family factors;
- meet parents regularly and, where appropriate, involve the child;
- agree a written support/intervention plan with clear actions and review points;
- coordinate support with external services where appropriate;
- monitor whether agreed support is improving attendance and adapt it where necessary; and
- consider formal or legal intervention where support is unsuccessful, is not engaged with, or is not appropriate.

Severe absence will receive particularly intensive and coordinated support because pupils at this level are at high risk of poor educational and safeguarding outcomes.

12. Graduated attendance support and intervention

Whitefield's response is graduated and proportionate. The exact response will depend on the pupil's circumstances rather than a rigid percentage alone.

Stage	Typical trigger	School response
1. Universal	All pupils	Clear expectations; welcoming environment; accurate registers; regular communication; promotion of attendance and punctuality.
2. Early concern	Emerging pattern, repeated lateness or attendance beginning to fall	Prompt contact; conversation with family; identify barriers; practical support; monitor.
3. Targeted support	Risk of persistent absence or continuing concern	Meeting; written attendance/support plan; agreed targets and review dates; Early Help or agency involvement where appropriate.
4. Intensive support	Persistent absence, complex barriers or significant deterioration	Frequent review; multi-agency support; home visits where appropriate; SENCO/DSL involvement; reintegration or reasonable-adjustment plan.
5. Formal intervention	Unauthorised absence continues and support has not worked, is not engaged with, or is inappropriate	Formal warning/Notice to Improve where appropriate; referral to Lancashire attendance/legal services; consideration of penalty notice or other legal intervention.

The stages may overlap or be accelerated where safeguarding risk, unauthorised leave or other circumstances require a different response.

13. Penalty notices and other legal intervention

Legal intervention is not the starting point for most attendance difficulties. It may be considered when voluntary support has not been successful, has not been engaged with, or is not appropriate.

13.1 National threshold

The national threshold for considering a penalty notice is 10 sessions of unauthorised absence within a rolling period of 10 school weeks. The 10 sessions can be made up of any combination of unauthorised absence, including unauthorised leave and late arrival after the register has closed. The 10 school weeks may span different terms and school years.

Meeting the threshold does not mean that a penalty notice is automatic. The school and local authority will consider the individual case, the support offered, whether a Notice to Improve is appropriate, and relevant duties such as those under the Equality Act 2010.

13.2 Notices to Improve

Where the national threshold has been met and support is appropriate but has not secured improvement or has not been engaged with, a Notice to Improve may be used in line with Lancashire's current code of conduct. It will set out the attendance concern, support available, the improvement required, the review period and the possible consequences if sufficient improvement is not made.

13.3 Penalty notices

Where appropriate, Whitefield may request that Lancashire County Council issue a penalty notice in accordance with the national framework and Lancashire's code of conduct. This can include unauthorised term-time leave and other unauthorised absence that meets the relevant criteria.

Because national and local arrangements can be updated, current penalty amounts and procedural details will be communicated to parents using the latest Lancashire County Council information rather than relying solely on figures printed in this policy.

13.4 Other legal intervention

Where a penalty notice is not appropriate, or where attendance concerns continue, the local authority may consider other statutory interventions available under education law. Decisions are made case by case.

14. Children missing education and notifications to the local authority

The school will comply with the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 and current statutory guidance regarding admissions, deletions from the admission register and attendance notifications.

14.1 Admissions and leavers

School will provide the local authority with required information when pupils are added to or removed from the admission register, within the statutory timescales and subject to the exceptions in the 2024 Regulations.

A pupil will only be removed from roll where a statutory ground for deletion is met. The school will not remove a pupil simply because they have stopped attending.

14.2 Children missing education

If a pupil's whereabouts is unknown, school will make reasonable enquiries jointly with the local authority and follow Lancashire Children Missing Education procedures. This may include checking all known contacts, contacting relevant services and undertaking a home visit. Safeguarding procedures will be followed throughout.

15. Alternative provision and pupils educated off site

Where a pupil is educated at another setting or attends an approved off-site educational activity, the school will use the appropriate national attendance code and ensure the placement/activity meets current legal requirements. The school will maintain oversight of the pupil's attendance, safety, educational purpose and progress.

Any direction to attend alternative provision will be made in accordance with the legal framework that applies to the reason for the placement. Whitefield will communicate clearly with parents and the receiving provider.

16. Promoting good attendance

Attendance is promoted through relationships, belonging, engaging provision, clear communication and recognition of positive habits and improvement.

Whitefield currently uses a range of approaches, which may include:

- weekly attendance information and celebration;
- class-based recognition and rewards;
- communication through newsletters and the website;
- traffic-light or other attendance updates for parents;
- HERO (Here, Everyday, Ready, On time) messages and recognition;
- special attendance-focus days; and
- recognition of improved attendance and positive punctuality.

Recognition will be applied thoughtfully so that pupils with disabilities, medical conditions or other legitimate barriers are not unfairly disadvantaged. Improvement, effort and engagement may be recognised alongside high attendance.

17. Attendance monitoring, analysis and governance

17.1 Monitoring and analysis

Attendance data will be reviewed regularly at pupil, class, group and whole-school level. Leaders will examine:

- overall attendance and absence;
- persistent and severe absence;
- authorised and unauthorised absence;
- lateness and punctuality;
- patterns by year group and pupil group, including disadvantaged pupils, pupils with SEND and pupils known to children's social care where relevant;
- historic and emerging trends;
- individual pupils whose attendance is deteriorating or who are approaching key absence thresholds; and
- the impact of interventions and support.

School will benchmark attendance against available national and local authority information and use this analysis to set priorities and target support.

17.2 Using data to improve attendance

- Attendance information will be used to identify need early, not simply to describe absence after it has happened.
- Relevant staff will receive information that enables them to support pupils and families.
- Interventions will have clear aims and review points so that leaders can judge whether they are working.
- Where an approach is not improving attendance, leaders will review the barriers and adapt support.

17.3 Governor oversight

Governors will receive regular attendance reports, including trends, persistent and severe absence, vulnerable groups, punctuality, interventions and impact. They will provide support and challenge and ensure attendance remains a strategic priority.

18. Data protection, monitoring and review

Attendance information is personal data and will be processed in accordance with data protection law, the school's privacy notices and statutory requirements for sharing attendance information with the Department for Education and local authority.

This policy will be reviewed by September 2028, or earlier where legislation, statutory guidance, local authority arrangements or school practice changes. The Headteacher and governing body will monitor its implementation and effectiveness.

Appendix 1. Attendance contacts

Role	Name	Contact
Absence notification / Admin Assistant	Mrs Donna Brotheron	(01282) 612807
Senior Attendance Champion / Headteacher	Mrs Erica Mason	(01282) 612807
Home-School Support Officer	Mr Gavin Wesley	(01282) 612807

Appendix 2. Key attendance thresholds and terminology

Persistent absence	Missing 10% or more of possible school sessions, for any reason.
Severe absence	Missing 50% or more of possible school sessions, for any reason.
National penalty-notice threshold	10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks.
Session	A morning or afternoon registration session. There are normally two attendance marks each school day.
Late before register closes (L)	Present, but late.
Late after register closes (U)	Counts as unauthorised absence for that session unless another authorised code applies.

Appendix 3. National attendance and absence codes – policy summary

The school will use the national codes prescribed by the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024. The code used must reflect the actual circumstances for that session. The current national code set includes codes for:

- present at school (morning and afternoon);
- late arrival before registration closes (L);
- late arrival after registration closes (U);
- illness (I);
- medical or dental appointment (M);
- religious observance (R);
- approved educational activity, visit, sporting activity, work experience and dual registration;
- leave of absence in the specific circumstances permitted by regulation;
- absence where the reason has not yet been established; and
- circumstances where a pupil is unable or not required to attend.

The school office and attendance staff will refer to the current DfE code guidance when determining the correct code. This appendix is intentionally a summary so that the policy does not become inaccurate if technical code guidance is amended.

Appendix 4. Key legislation and guidance

- Department for Education: Working together to improve school attendance (statutory guidance; updated 9 July 2026).
- The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 (SI 2024/208).
- Education Act 1996.
- Education and Inspections Act 2006.
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007, as amended.
- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026.

- Equality Act 2010.
- SEND Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years.
- Supporting pupils at school with medical conditions.
- Education for children with health needs who cannot attend school.
- Lancashire County Council: current school attendance and penalty notice procedures/code of conduct.