

Whole School Attendance Policy



Policy detail	Information
School	Whitworth Community High School
Effective from	Autumn 2026
Prepared by	A Kewin using Lancashire County Council and Department for Education guidance
Approval	
Next review	Autumn 2027 or earlier if guidance changes

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1 Purpose and scope

Regular attendance is essential to pupils' learning, wellbeing, safeguarding and future opportunities. This policy explains the expectations and procedures used by Whitworth Community High School to secure regular and punctual attendance, identify barriers early and work with pupils, families, Lancashire County Council and other partners to remove them.

The school expects every pupil to attend every session for the full duration unless a statutory reason applies. The school will set high expectations for all pupils while responding fairly to individual circumstances, including disability, special educational needs, physical or mental ill health, caring responsibilities and other barriers.

This policy applies to pupils of compulsory school age. The registration requirements also apply to pupils on roll who are over compulsory school age where the legislation requires them to be recorded. Attendance legal intervention applies only to pupils of compulsory school age.

2 Legal framework and related guidance

The school will have regard to the current version of Department for Education statutory guidance and will comply with relevant legislation. The principal sources are:

- Education Act 1996, including sections 7, 19, 444 and 576
- Education Act 2002, including the safeguarding duty in section 175
- School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024
- Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007, as amended
- Education (Parenting Contracts and Parenting Orders) (England) Regulations 2007
- Equality Act 2010, including the Public Sector Equality Duty and the duty to make reasonable adjustments
- Children Act 1989 and Children and Families Act 2014
- Working together to improve school attendance, Department for Education, July 2026
- Keeping Children Safe In Education and Children Missing Education statutory guidance
- Supporting pupils at school with medical conditions and guidance on education for children who cannot attend because of health needs
- Lancashire County Council's current Code of Conduct for issuing penalty notices for school absence.

For attendance purposes, a parent includes a natural parent, a person with parental responsibility and any person who has care of the child. The school and local authority will decide which parent or parents it is appropriate to involve in support or legal intervention.

3 Attendance expectations

3.1 School expectations

- Every pupil should attend school every day and every timetabled session, arrive on time and be ready to learn.
- The whole-school attendance target is 97 percent. This target does not replace individual consideration of a pupil's circumstances.
- Attendance is everyone's responsibility. Staff will create a calm, safe and supportive environment, notice emerging patterns and respond consistently.
- The school will listen to pupils and parents, address barriers within school and help families obtain wider support where it is needed.

3.2 Expectations of parents and carers

- Ensure that their child attends regularly and punctually and remains in school for the full day.
- Report an unexpected absence as soon as possible and no later than 8:45am on every day of absence, using EduLink One or by telephoning 01706 343218.
- Give the reason for absence and the expected return date, respond promptly to school contact and provide further information when reasonably requested.
- Arrange routine medical and dental appointments outside school hours wherever possible and return the pupil to school before or after an unavoidable appointment.
- Request any leave of absence in advance and provide information about the exceptional circumstances relied upon.

- Keep the school informed of changes to home address, contact details, emergency contacts and the address at which the pupil is staying.
- Work with the school and relevant services to remove barriers and meet the actions agreed in any attendance support plan or attendance contract.

3.3 Expectations of pupils

- Attend every day and every lesson, arrive on time and follow sign-in and sign-out procedures.
- Speak to a trusted adult if a problem in or outside school is making attendance difficult.
- Take part in agreed support and reintegration plans and complete missed learning with the support provided.

4 Roles and responsibilities

4.1 Governing Body

- Recognise attendance as a leadership and safeguarding priority and promote it across the school's ethos and policies.
- Ensure leaders fulfil statutory duties, maintain an effective attendance strategy and provide staff with suitable training and resources.
- Review attendance information regularly, challenge trends and differences between groups, and evaluate the impact of improvement work.
- Approve this policy and review it at least annually and sooner when legislation, guidance or school arrangements change.

4.2 Headteacher

- Provide leadership and ensure the school complies with statutory attendance and registration requirements.
- Appoint a Senior Attendance Champion and ensure sufficient capacity for day-to-day attendance work.
- Decide requests for leave of absence, or formally delegate this function, and ensure each request is considered on its individual merits.
- Ensure the local authority receives the required attendance and registration information.

4.3 Senior Attendance Champion

The Senior Attendance Champion is Mr A Kewin, Deputy Headteacher, a.kewin@whitworth.lancs.sch.uk. The Senior Attendance Champion will:

- set the school's strategic approach to improving and maintaining attendance and punctuality
- ensure systems are understood and followed by all staff
- use attendance data to identify priorities and oversee targeted support
- work with the designated safeguarding lead, special educational needs coordinator, pupil premium lead, pastoral leaders and external partners
- review the effectiveness of interventions and report to the Headteacher and Governing Body
- lead regular work with Lancashire County Council, including Targeting Support Meetings where applicable.

4.4 Attendance team and pastoral leaders

- Maintain accurate daily registers and follow up unexplained absence promptly.
- Contact parents on the first day when no reason has been received and escalate contact in line with safeguarding risk.
- Monitor patterns, communicate concerns early and coordinate meetings, plans, home visits and referrals.
- Record support and decisions clearly, review progress and prepare referrals to the local authority when appropriate.
- Support reintegration following lengthy or unavoidable absence.

4.5 All staff

- Complete registers accurately and promptly and report missing pupils or suspected truancy without delay.
- Promote regular attendance, build trusted relationships and identify barriers at an early stage.
- Apply agreed support and reasonable adjustments and help pupils catch up with learning after absence.
- Share attendance or safeguarding concerns with the appropriate pastoral, attendance or safeguarding lead.

4.6 Lancashire County Council

Lancashire County Council provides attendance advice and support through its attendance services and undertakes legal enforcement through the School Attendance Legal Team. It also fulfils local authority duties relating to children missing education, pupils who cannot attend because of health needs, register returns and penalty notices.

5 School day registration and punctuality

Event	Time and expectation
Site opens	8:15am
Breakfast club	8:30am to 8:45am
School day and morning registration begin	8:45am. Pupils should be in their form room and ready to learn.
Morning register closes	9:15am
Afternoon register closes	2:00pm
School day ends	3:00pm

The attendance register will be taken at the start of each morning session and once during the afternoon session, at the same time for all pupils. Registers are legal records and must use the national attendance and absence codes required by the 2024 Regulations.

A pupil who arrives after the register has been taken but before it closes will be recorded as late using code L. A pupil who arrives after the register has closed without an authorised reason will be recorded using code U. Code U is an unauthorised absence for that session and can count towards the national threshold for considering a penalty notice.

Pupils arriving late must sign in at Reception and give a reason. The school will monitor lateness, contact parents, offer support and apply proportionate consequences under the Behaviour for Learning Policy where appropriate. Persistent lateness after the register closes will be treated as an attendance concern.

6 Reporting and responding to absence

6.1 Parent reporting

Parents must report absence by 8:45am on every day of absence through EduLink One or by telephoning 01706 343218. The message should state the reason and expected return date. Where a pupil leaves during the day, parents must make arrangements with the school in advance and the pupil must sign out and back in through Reception.

6.2 School response

Where no reason has been provided, the school will make contact on the first day. Depending on the pupil's vulnerability, known risks and the circumstances, the school may contact emergency contacts, conduct a home visit, contact other professionals or request a police welfare check. Safeguarding risk, rather than a fixed number of absent days, will determine the urgency of action.

An unexplained mark will be updated as soon as the reason is established and no later than five working days after the session. If no satisfactory reason is established within that period, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised.

7 Recording and authorising absence

7.1 Decisions and evidence

Only the school may decide whether an absence is authorised. The decision will be based on the law, current statutory guidance, the information supplied and the individual circumstances. The school will not authorise absence merely because a parent has provided an explanation.

The school may ask for evidence when it is reasonable and necessary to understand an absence or arrange support. Medical evidence for recording illness should be required only in a minority of cases. Evidence will not be requested routinely for every illness or automatically after a fixed number of days. Where evidence is needed, it may include an appointment message or card, prescription information, hospital letter or information from another relevant professional. Parents should not be asked to obtain a GP sick note solely for school attendance purposes.

7.2 Illness and medical appointments

Absence because a pupil is too ill to attend will normally be recorded using code I. An unavoidable medical or dental appointment will normally be recorded using code M for the time required. Pupils should attend before or after the appointment where possible. If illness is prolonged, complex or recurring, the school will work with the family and relevant professionals to plan support and reasonable adjustments.

The school will make a sickness return to Lancashire County Council where there are reasonable grounds to believe that a pupil recorded with code I will miss 15 consecutive school days or will reach 15 school days of illness absence cumulatively during the school year.

7.3 Leave of absence

A parent with whom the pupil normally lives must request leave in advance. The Headteacher will consider each request individually, taking account of the facts, circumstances and relevant background. If leave is granted, the Headteacher will determine its duration. The school will not operate a blanket policy that automatically approves leave for particular events.

A holiday or other absence for leisure or recreation will not normally be regarded as an exceptional circumstance. Leave taken without approval, after a request has been refused or beyond the period granted will be unauthorised and may lead to legal intervention. Parents are strongly advised not to make bookings before receiving the school's written decision.

7.4 Religious observance

The school will authorise absence for a day that is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the parent belongs. Parents should notify the school in advance. Requests for additional leave will be considered individually under the rules for leave of absence.

7.5 Performances, sport interviews and study leave

The school will apply the specific statutory rules and national codes for regulated performances, approved sporting activities, interviews for education or employment and study leave for public examinations. Approval must normally be sought in advance. Study leave will not be granted for internal examinations or mock examinations.

7.6 Education away from the school site

Where a pupil attends approved alternative provision, another school, work experience, an educational visit or another supervised educational activity, the school will use the relevant national code and will make arrangements to confirm attendance promptly. If attendance cannot be confirmed, the school will follow up the pupil's absence without delay.

7.7 Part-time timetables

All pupils of compulsory school age are entitled to a full-time education. A temporary part-time timetable will be used only in very exceptional circumstances where it is in the pupil's best interests and never to manage behaviour. It must:

- be agreed with the parent with whom the pupil normally lives
- form part of a wider support, health care or reintegration plan with a clear full-time ambition
- state the sessions the pupil must attend, the appropriate register codes and a proposed end date
- be reviewed regularly with the pupil and parent and remain in place for the shortest necessary period
- involve the social worker where the pupil has one and the local authority where the pupil has an education, health and care plan.

8 Supporting pupils with barriers to attendance

When a pattern of absence emerges, the school will listen to the pupil and family, identify barriers and agree practical actions. Support will increase as the concern increases and will be reviewed for impact. It may include:

- a consistent named adult, mentoring, check-ins or pastoral support
- reasonable adjustments to routines, uniform, movement around school, break or lunchtime arrangements and access to a safe space
- support to address bullying, friendship, learning, behaviour, transport or family difficulties
- special educational needs assessment or review of existing provision
- a time-limited phased return where appropriate
- early help, school nursing, mental health support, social care or other partner involvement
- an attendance support plan, attendance contract or education supervision order where voluntary support has not secured improvement.

8.1 Mental and physical ill health

Staff are not expected to diagnose or treat health conditions. They will work with families and relevant services to support the pupil's health while maintaining the clearest possible route to regular attendance. Normal but difficult emotions, including worries about friendships, schoolwork or examinations, do not usually require absence; the school will provide support that helps the pupil attend.

Where needs are complex, long term or frequently recurring, the school may seek appropriate professional evidence to understand needs and identify suitable provision. Remote education will be considered only as a last resort, normally as a short-term part of a plan to reintegrate the pupil into face-to-face education.

8.2 Special Educational Needs Disability and Equality

The same ambition for regular attendance applies to pupils with special educational needs or disabilities, but additional support may be required. The school will work with pupils and parents, make reasonable adjustments where required by the Equality Act 2010, ensure relevant provision in an education, health and care plan can be accessed and involve Lancashire County Council where barriers relate to the plan or may require it to be reviewed.

8.3 Pupils with a social worker, young carers and other vulnerable pupils

The school will pay particular attention to the attendance of pupils with a social worker, looked-after and previously looked-after pupils, young carers, pupils eligible for pupil premium and other pupils whose circumstances increase vulnerability. Unexplained absence will be shared with the pupil's social worker or youth offending team worker where applicable. Young carers will be recorded in the school census and supported in partnership with the family and relevant services.

9 Persistent and severe absence

A pupil is persistently absent when they miss 10 percent or more of possible sessions, for authorised or unauthorised reasons. Severe absence means missing 50 percent or more. The school will not wait for a pupil to cross these thresholds before acting.

For pupils at risk of persistent or severe absence, the school will meet with the pupil and parent, agree and review an action plan, coordinate support with relevant services and use regular case reviews. Severe absence will receive intensive multi-agency attention because it may indicate unmet need, harm or neglect. Where appropriate support and provision have been provided but severe unauthorised absence continues, the school will follow safeguarding procedures and work with children's social care.

10 Legal intervention and penalty notices

Support will be provided before legal intervention wherever it is appropriate. If support is not appropriate, has not succeeded or has not been engaged with, the school will work with Lancashire County Council to consider the most suitable intervention. Options include an attendance contract, Education Supervision Order, attendance prosecution, parenting order and penalty notice.

10.1 National threshold

The school must consider whether a penalty notice is appropriate when a pupil has 10 sessions of unauthorised absence within a rolling period of 10 school weeks. The sessions may be consecutive or separate, may include unauthorised leave and code U lateness, and the 10-week period may span terms or school years.

Meeting the threshold does not mean a notice will be issued automatically. The individual circumstances, support offered, likely effectiveness, safeguarding considerations and Equality Act duties will be considered. Where support is appropriate but has not worked or has not been engaged with, a Notice to Improve will usually provide a final opportunity to improve over a period set under Lancashire's Code of Conduct. A Notice to Improve may not be appropriate for an unauthorised holiday.

10.2 Penalty amounts and repeat offences

Occurrence within a rolling three-year period	Amount
First penalty notice to a parent for the same pupil	£160 if paid within 28 days, reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days
Second penalty notice to the same parent for the same pupil	£160 payable within 28 days with no reduced rate
Third or subsequent offence	A third penalty notice cannot be issued; alternative action will be considered, often prosecution

Lancashire County Council issues and receives payment for penalty notices requested by the school. If a notice is unpaid after 28 days, the local authority must decide whether to prosecute for the original offence or withdraw the notice. There is no statutory right of appeal against a penalty notice.

11 Safeguarding children missing education and register returns

Absence can be a safeguarding warning sign. The school will respond promptly to unexplained or unusual absence and will follow Keeping Children Safe In Education, local safeguarding procedures and the Children Missing Education process. The school will make reasonable enquiries with Lancashire County Council before removing a pupil whose whereabouts are unknown.

The admission and attendance registers will be kept electronically. Every entry will be retained for six years from the date it was made. Any amendment will preserve the original entry and record the amended entry, reason, date and person making the amendment.

The school will make the statutory returns required by the 2024 Regulations, including:

- a New Pupil Return within five days when a pupil is added outside standard transition arrangements
- a Deletion Return when a pupil is removed from roll under a lawful ground in regulation 9
- attendance returns for pupils of compulsory school age who fail to attend regularly or meet the statutory continuous absence reporting requirement
- sickness returns for pupils expected to reach 15 school days of illness absence, consecutively or cumulatively, during the school year.

A pupil's name will be removed from roll only where a ground in regulation 9 of the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 applies. The school will not remove a pupil to improve attendance data or without completing the required enquiries and notifications.

12 Attendance data monitoring and information sharing

The school will monitor attendance and punctuality weekly at pupil, cohort, year and whole-school level; undertake deeper half-termly and termly analysis; and benchmark against local, regional and national information. Analysis will include early indicators, patterns by day or lesson, use of absence codes and differences affecting vulnerable or protected groups. Relevant information will be shared with staff who can act on it and reported regularly to the Governing Body.

Parents will receive regular, understandable information about their child's attendance, including time missed and the effect on learning rather than only a headline percentage.

The school will share register and case information lawfully with the Department for Education, Lancashire County Council, other schools and relevant partners where required or where it supports the pupil. Personal data will be handled in accordance with UK data protection law and the school's privacy notices.

13 Promoting good attendance

The school will promote the benefits of attendance through its curriculum, assemblies, form time, communication with families and positive relationships. Recognition will focus on regular attendance and meaningful improvement and will be applied sensitively so that pupils with disability, medical needs or other unavoidable barriers are not disadvantaged.

Access to curriculum enrichment, educational visits, representation of the school and the Year 11 prom will not be withheld automatically because of an attendance percentage or authorised absence. Any restriction for behaviour, safety or another legitimate reason will be considered separately, fairly and in line with the relevant school policy and equality duties.

14 Monitoring review and publication

The Senior Attendance Champion will monitor implementation and report on outcomes to the Headteacher and Governing Body. The policy will be reviewed annually and sooner if legislation, statutory guidance, Lancashire procedures or school arrangements change. The school will seek pupil and parent views where appropriate.

The current policy will be published on the school website, provided to new families and brought to parents' attention at the start of each school year and whenever it is updated.

Appendix 1 Attendance contacts and key times

Contact or time	Current detail
Attendance Office	Mrs S Jackson and Mrs J Robinson attendance@whitworth.lancs.sch.uk
Attendance Manager	Mr J Shepherd j.shepherd@whitworth.lancs.sch.uk
Senior Attendance Champion	Mr A Kewin, Deputy Headteacher a.kewin@whitworth.lancs.sch.uk
Telephone	01706 343218
Report absence	EduLink One or telephone by 8:45am on every day of absence
Morning session	Register opens 8:45am and closes 9:15am
Afternoon register closes	2:00pm
School address	Hall Fold, Whitworth, Rossendale, Lancashire, OL12 8TS

Appendix 2 Graduated response to attendance concerns

Stage	Typical school response
Expect and monitor	Clear expectations, accurate registers, first-day response, regular communication and weekly monitoring.
Listen and understand	Early conversation with the pupil and parent to identify barriers and agree immediate actions.
Facilitate support	Remove in-school barriers, make reasonable adjustments and coordinate pastoral, SEND, early help, health or other support.
Formalise support	Written attendance support plan or attendance contract, regular review and work with Lancashire County Council.
Enforce where necessary	Notice to Improve, penalty notice, Education Supervision Order or prosecution where support is inappropriate, unsuccessful or not engaged with.

Appendix 3 Key sources

Department for Education Working together to improve school attendance, statutory guidance updated July 2026

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-improve-school-attendance>

UK legislation School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2024/208/contents/made>

Department for Education Mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/mental-health-issues-affecting-a-pupils-attendance-guidance-for-schools>

Lancashire County Council Education penalty notices and current local arrangements

<https://www.lancashire.gov.uk/children-education-families/schools/attendance-and-support/education-penalty-notice/>

Whitworth Community High School Attendance information and current contacts

<https://www.wchs.co/attendance/>