



# Abbots Farm Junior School

# Attendance Policy



Original written: June 2023

Reviewed: June 2024 – significant additions due to new guidance

Reviewed with Attendance Officer: October 2024

Reviewed in line with more changes: January 2026

Next review due: January 2027

## 1. Aims

This policy aims to show our commitment to meeting our obligations with regards to school attendance, including those laid out in the statutory guidance on [Working together to improve school attendance](#) from the Department for Education (DfE). We are committed to meeting our obligation with regards to school attendance through our whole-school culture and ethos that values good attendance, including:

- Setting high expectations for the attendance and punctuality of all children
- Promoting good attendance and the benefits of good attendance
- Reducing absence, including persistent and severe absence
- Ensuring every child has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled
- Acting early to address patterns of absence
- Building strong relationships with families to ensure children have the support in place to attend school

## 2. Legislation and guidance

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

- 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 \(Child Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006 \(and 2010, 2011, 2013, 2016 amendments\)](#)
- [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)

It also refers to:

- [School census guidance](#)
- [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#)
- [Mental health issues affecting a child's attendance: guidance for schools](#)
- [Ofsted's 2025 framework toolkit](#)

## 3. Roles and responsibilities

### **Working together to improve attendance is key to success**

Successfully treating the root causes of absence and removing barriers to attendance, at home, in school or more broadly requires the whole school community, including local partners, to work collaboratively. All partners should work together to:

#### **Expect**

Aspire to high standards of attendance from all children and parents and build a culture where all can, and want to, be in school and ready to learn by prioritising attendance improvement across the school.

#### **Monitor**

Rigorously use attendance data to identify patterns of poor attendance (at individual and cohort level) as soon as possible so all parties can work together to resolve them before they become entrenched.

#### **Listen and understand**

When a pattern is spotted, discuss with children and parents to listen to and understand barriers to attendance and agree how all partners can work together to resolve them.

## **Facilitate support**

Remove barriers in school and help children and parents to access the support they need to overcome the barriers outside of school. This might include an early help or whole family plan where absence is a symptom of wider issues.

## **Formalise support**

Where absence persists and voluntary support is not working or not being engaged with, partners should work together to explain the consequences clearly and ensure support is also in place to enable families to respond. Depending on the circumstances this may include formalising support through an attendance contract or education supervision order.

## **Enforce**

Where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or not being engaged with, enforce attendance through statutory intervention: a penalty notice in line with the National Framework or prosecution to protect the child's right to an education.

*Working Together to Improve School Attendance, DfE, August 2024*

### **3.1 The governing board**

The governing board is responsible for:

- Holding the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy
- Ensuring the importance of school attendance is promoted across the school's policies and ethos
- Making sure the school has high aspirations for all children, but adapts processes and support to children's individual needs
- Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data
- Monitoring attendance figures for the whole school
- If the school is struggling with attendance, working with school leaders to develop a comprehensive action plan to improve attendance
- Making sure all staff receive adequate training on attendance in line with their specific roles in school

### **3.2 The headteacher**

The headteacher is responsible for:

- Implementation of this policy at the school
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual children
- Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies
- Communicating the school's high expectations for attendance and punctuality regularly to children and parents through all available channels

The school has an attendance support team which includes the head teacher, the children and families lead and an administrator. This team meets every half term to monitor attendance.

### **3.3 The attendance support team**

The attendance support team is responsible for:

- Leading attendance across the school
- Setting a clear vision and strategy for improving and maintaining good attendance
- Regularly monitoring and evaluating expectations, processes and progress in attendance
- Building close and productive relationships with parents to discuss and tackle attendance issues
- Creating intervention or reintegration plans in partnership with children and their parents

- Delivering targeted intervention and support to children and families
- Working with the Education Casework Officers from Warwickshire Attendance Service (WAS) to tackle persistent and severe absence

The designated senior leader responsible for attendance is Gemma Webb, Headteacher, supported by the Children and Families Lead Shannon Dolan. Either of them can be contacted via the school office or [admin2421@welearn365.com](mailto:admin2421@welearn365.com).

Each term, the attendance support team meets with our allocated Education Casework Officer, from Warwickshire Attendance Service

### **3.4 Class teachers**

Class teachers are responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes (see appendix 1), and submitting this information to the school office by completing the online register every morning and every afternoon.

### **3.5 School admin staff**

School admin staff will:

- Take calls from parents about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the school system
- Send daily emails to parents of children who are absent with no reason given
- Transfer calls from parents to the Children and Families lead in order to provide them with more detailed support on attendance
- Share details with the Children and Families lead of persistently absent children that are not in each day so that they can be followed up
- Report on overall absence levels to Children and Families lead at least termly, and individual attendance records for children where there is an attendance concern.

### **3.6 Parents/carers**

Parents are expected to:

- Make sure their child attends every day on time (8.50am)
- Call or email the school to report their child's absence before 9am on the day of the absence and each subsequent day of absence, and advise when they are expected to return
- Provide the school with more than 1 emergency contact number for their child
- Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day
- Keep to any attendance contracts that they make with the school and/or local authority
- Seek support, where necessary, for maintaining good attendance, by contacting our Children and Families lead who can be contacted by phoning the school office or by email on [pastoral2421@welearn365.com](mailto:pastoral2421@welearn365.com)

### **3.7 Children**

Children are expected to:

- Attend school every day on time

## **4. Recording attendance**

### **4.1 Attendance register**

We keep an attendance register, and place all children onto this register. The school gates open at 8:40 each day and children must arrive in school by 8:50. The school day ends at 3:20. The register for the first

session will be taken at 8:50 and kept open until 9:20 and the register for the second session will be taken straight after lunch (time will be dependent on which year group you are in).

It will mark whether every child is:

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

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

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

See appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes.

We will also record:

- Whether the absence is authorised or not
- The nature of the activity if a child is attending an approved educational activity
- The nature of circumstances where a child is unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 6 years after the date on which the entry was made.

## **4.2 Unplanned absence**

The child's parent/carer must notify the school of the reason for the absence on the first day of an unplanned absence by 9:00 or as soon as practically possible. They should call the school office and leave a message on the dedicated absence answer machine or email [admin2421@welearn365.com](mailto:admin2421@welearn365.com).

We will mark absence due to physical or mental illness as authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

Where the absence is longer than 5 days or the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may ask the child's parent/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.

If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, or that the severity of the illness warrants absence from school, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents/carers will be notified of this in advance.

## **4.3 Planned absence**

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the child's parent/carer notifies the school in advance of the appointment by emailing the school admin team on [admin2421@welearn365.com](mailto:admin2421@welearn365.com) or by calling 01788 576074 and either speaking directly to a member of the school admin team or leaving a message on the school absence line. Parents/carers are expected to provide evidence of the medical/dental appointment in the form of an appointment card and/or an official letter. If evidence is not provided then any absence will be marked as unauthorised.

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

If a child is taken out of school unnecessarily due to medical/dental appointment that is not for them, their absence will be marked as unauthorised.

#### 4.4 Authorised absence

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include (but are not limited to):

- Illness (including mental health illness) and medical/dental appointments (see sections 4.2 and 4.3 for more detail)
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the children’s parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents’ religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart. Note that only one day of religious observation can be authorised; if a child is absent for subsequent days these may be unauthorised. A Leave of Absence request must be made if you expect your child to be having more than one day absent from school due to religious observance.
- Parents 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 child is attending educational provision
- If a child is currently suspended or excluded from school (and no alternative provision has been made)

Other reasons the school may allow a child to be absent from the school site, which are not classified as absences, include (but are not limited to):

- Attending an offsite approved educational activity, sporting activity or visit or trip arranged by the school
- Attending another school at which the child is also registered (dual registration)
- Attending provision arranged by the local authority
- Attending work experience
- If there is any other unavoidable cause for the child not to attend school, such as disruption to travel caused by an emergency, a lack of access arrangements, or because the school premises are closed

A child’s resident parent/carer must apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence. To request a leave of absence, parents must complete this online form [Application for Leave of Absence for an AFJS Pupil in Term Time](#). Go to section 6 below for further information.

#### 4.5 Lateness and punctuality

Persistent lateness can have a significant impact on a child’s education.

A child who arrives late (after 8.50):

- Before the register has closed (9:20) will be marked as late, using the appropriate code
- After the register has closed (9:20) will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code

Any children with ongoing punctuality issues will be referred to our Children and Families lead, who will make contact with parents to see if there is any further support we can offer.

#### 4.6 Following up unexplained absence

Where any child we expect to attend school does not attend, or stops attending, without reason, the school will:

- Contact the child’s parent/carer on the morning of the first day of unexplained absence to ascertain the reason. If the school cannot reach any of the child’s emergency contacts, the school may make an unannounced home visit or call the police if there are significant concerns.
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not
- Identify the correct attendance code to use and input it as soon as the reason for absence is ascertained
- Contact the parent on each day that the absence continues without explanation, to ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary. The school will consider making a home visit, involving Family Connect and/or contacting the police if there are significant concerns
- Where appropriate, offer support to the child and/or their parents/carers to improve attendance and make any necessary referrals
- Where support is not appropriate, not successful, or not engaged with: issue a notice to improve, penalty notice or other legal intervention (see section 5.2 below), as appropriate

#### 4.7 Reporting to parents

Parents can view their child’s attendance records at any time via Arbor. Parents of children whose absence has reached levels that are becoming concerning will be contacted to explain our concerns and ways we can support. We may then also look to refer these families to our Children and Families lead for additional support.

### 5. Monitoring absence

Persistent absence is where a child misses 10% or more of school, and severe absence is where a child misses 50% or more of school. Reducing persistent and severe absence is central to the school’s strategy for improving attendance.

The school will:

- Analyse attendance and absence data regularly to identify children or cohorts that need additional support with their attendance, and use this analysis to provide targeted support to these children and their families
- Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence and then develop strategies to address these patterns
- Consider potential safeguarding issues and, where suspected or present, address them in line with Keeping Children Safe in Education
- Hold regular meetings with the parents of children who the school (and/or local authority) considers to be vulnerable, are persistently or severely absent, or at risk of being persistently or severely absent, to discuss attendance and engagement at school and any support that can be offered to improve this
- Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance
- Use home visits to carry out ‘safe and well checks’ on children

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 board.

## 6. Leave of absence requests

### 6.1 Approval for term-time absence

The headteacher will only grant a **leave of absence** to a pupil during term time if the request meets the specific circumstances set out in the [2024 school attendance regulations](#). These circumstances are:

- Taking part in a regulated performance, or regulated employment abroad
- Attending an interview for employment or for admission to another educational institution
- Study leave
- A temporary, time-limited part-time timetable
- Exceptional circumstances

The fundamental principles for defining 'exceptional circumstances' are that they are 'rare, significant and unavoidable'. The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, considering the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the headteacher's discretion, including the length of time the child is authorised to be absent for.

Parents/carers do not have any entitlement to take their children on holiday during term time. *'Generally, a need or desire for a holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure and recreation would not constitute an exceptional circumstance.'* – DfE Working Together to Improve School Attendance

The law states a leave of absence may only be granted by a school if an application is made in advance and if it considers there are exceptional circumstances relating to the application. The school can only consider applications for Leave of Absence which are made by the resident parent. i.e. the parent with whom the child normally resides.

When making an application for Leave of Absence, parents are advised to give sufficient information and time to allow the Head teacher the opportunity to consider all the exceptional circumstances and to notify the parents of their decision. The headteacher may also request further information on the application and supporting documentation where appropriate. Any request should be submitted as soon as possible by completing this online form [Application for Leave of Absence for an AFJS Pupil in Term Time](#).

If at any time, you have not received notification or a response regarding a leave of absence application that you have submitted, it is the responsibility of the resident parent that applied for the leave of absence to ascertain if the leave is authorised prior to the start of the leave.

Where applications for Leave of Absences are made in advance and refused, the child is expected to be in school on the dates set out in the application. If the child is absent during that period, it will be recorded as an "unauthorised" absence. Where a leave of absence is requested but additional days take either prior to or after the request, they may be considered as part of the leave of absence.

Leave of Absences which are not made in advance cannot be authorised in line with legislation. This will result in the absence being recorded as 'unauthorised'.

## 7. Penalties for Parents

Parents have a duty to make sure their child receives an efficient full-time education that's suitable for their age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs, as set out in the [Education Act 1996 s7](#).

Parents whose children are of compulsory school age and registered at school are responsible for making sure their children attend school regularly. If they don't do this, they may be guilty of an offence under the [Education Act s444](#).

### 7.1 Our Support First Approach

Abbots Farm Junior School will make use of the full range of potential sanctions when required, to promote good attendance. However, support will always be our first option and our Attendance Team will do everything they can to support children and their families when attendance becomes a concern.

Where a child has complex barriers to attendance, including ongoing medical needs, SEND or SEMH needs, our Attendance Team will work with families and external agencies where appropriate, to identify suitable

strategies for removing in-school barriers. They will consider any adjustments the school could make, and any additional support we can provide and act as the point of contact between school and home.

Decisions to escalate cases further will be made by the headteacher on an individual, case-by-case basis.

The national threshold set out in the statutory guidance states that a penalty notice must be considered for 10 sessions (usually equivalent to 5 days) of unauthorised absence within a rolling 10 school week period. Any absences that meet this threshold are reported directly to Warwickshire Attendance Services but this does not always mean a penalty notice will be automatically issued.

## 7.2 Notification of Attendance Intervention

If the national threshold has been met and support is appropriate, but parents do not engage with offers of support, the school may make a referral to Warwickshire Attendance Service, who will then consider offering a Notice of Attendance Intervention to give parents a final chance to engage with support.

A Notice of Attendance Intervention will be issued in accordance with [Warwickshire County Council's Code of Conduct for Penalty Notices](#) to notify parents of a rolling 10 week formal attendance monitoring period. It will also include a clear warning that a penalty notice may be issued if attendance doesn't improve within the allocated time period.

## 7.3 Further Attendance Enforcements

To legally enforce attendance, parents may be issued with a:

- Parenting order
- Education supervision order
- Fixed penalty notice (i.e. a fine)

Penalty notices are issued in accordance with [Warwickshire County Council's Code of Conduct for Penalty Notices](#) and are intended to prevent the need for court action. They will only be used as a last resort after support has been offered but not worked or been engaged with, and where it is deemed likely to change parental behaviour and secure regular attendance. They may also be used if support would not have been appropriate in the circumstances of the offence. An example of where support would not be appropriate is in cases where the absence is clearly condoned by the parent with no mitigating factors, such as a holiday taken in term time.

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 child must not be present in a public place on that day).

All Penalty Notices are issued to **each parent of each absent child**, (for example 2 children and 2 parents, means each parent will receive 2 invoices – 4 in total).

- For a first offence, the fine is £160 (reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days).
- If there is a second offence within a 3 year period from the date of issue of the first penalty notice, the fine is £160, to be paid within 28 days.
- A third penalty notice can't be issued to the same parent(s) regarding the same child(ren) within a 3 year period. Therefore, at this point, a Penalty Notice will not be issued and the matter will be referred to Warwickshire County Council's Legal Services instead to consider instigating criminal prosecution proceedings under S444 of Education Act 1996.

Where a Penalty Notice is not paid within the timeframe set out in that Notice, the matter will be referred to Warwickshire County Council's Legal Services to consider instigating criminal prosecution proceedings under S444 of Education Act 1996.

## **8. 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 and the AFJS Attendance Support Team. At every review, the policy will be approved by the full governing board.

## **9. Links with other policies**

This policy links to the following policies:

- Child protection and safeguarding policy
- AFJS Relationships and Behaviour policy

## Appendix 1: attendance codes

The following codes are taken from the DfE's [guidance on school attendance](#).

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	Child is present at morning registration
\	Present (pm)	Child is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Child arrives late before register has closed
<b>Attending a place other than the school</b>		
K	Attending education provision arranged by the local authority	Child is attending a place other than a school at which they are registered, for educational provision arranged by the local authority
V	Attending an educational visit or trip	Child is on an educational visit/trip organised or approved by the school
P	Participating in a sporting activity	Child is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
W	Attending work experience	Child is on an approved work experience placement
B	Attending any other approved educational activity	Child is attending a place for an approved educational activity that is not a sporting activity or work experience
D	Dual registered	Child is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
<b>Absent – leave of absence</b>		
C1	Participating in a regulated performance or undertaking regulated employment abroad	Child is undertaking employment (paid or unpaid) during school hours, approved by the school
M	Medical/dental appointment	Child is at a medical or dental appointment
J1	Interview	Child has an interview with a prospective employer or educational establishment
S	Study leave	Child has been granted leave of absence to study for a public examination
X	Not required to be in school	Child of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
C2	Part-time timetable	Child is not in school due to having a part-time timetable
C	Exceptional circumstances	Child has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
<b>Absent – other authorised reasons</b>		

<b>T</b>	Parent travelling for occupational purposes	Child is a 'mobile child' who is travelling with their parent(s) who are travelling for occupational purposes
<b>R</b>	Religious observance	Child is taking part in a day of religious observance
<b>I</b>	Illness (not medical or dental appointment)	Child is unable to attend due to illness (either related to physical or mental health)
<b>E</b>	Suspended or excluded	Child has been suspended or excluded from school and no alternative provision has been made
<b>Absent – unable to attend school because of unavoidable cause</b>		
<b>Q</b>	Lack of access arrangements	Child is unable to attend school because the local authority has failed to make access arrangements to enable attendance at school
<b>Y1</b>	Transport not available	Child is unable to attend because school is not within walking distance of their home and the transport normally provided is not available
<b>Y2</b>	Widespread disruption to travel	Child is unable to attend because of widespread disruption to travel caused by a local, national or international emergency
<b>Y3</b>	Part of school premises closed	Child is unable to attend because they cannot practicably be accommodated in the part of the premises that remains open
<b>Y4</b>	Whole school site unexpectedly closed	Every child absent as the school is closed unexpectedly (e.g. due to adverse weather)
<b>Y5</b>	Criminal justice detention	Child is unable to attend as they are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In police detention</li> <li>• Remanded to youth detention, awaiting trial or sentencing, or</li> <li>• Detained under a sentence of detention</li> </ul>
<b>Y6</b>	Public health guidance or law	Child's travel to or attendance at the school would be prohibited under public health guidance or law
<b>Y7</b>	Any other unavoidable cause	To be used where an unavoidable cause is not covered by the other codes
<b>Absent – unauthorised absence</b>		
<b>G</b>	Holiday not granted by the school	Child is absent for the purpose of a holiday, not approved by the school
<b>N</b>	Reason for absence not yet established	Reason for absence has not been established before the register closes
<b>O</b>	Absent in other or unknown circumstances	No reason for absence has been established, or the school isn't satisfied that the reason given would be recorded using one of the codes for authorised absence

<b>U</b>	Arrived in school after registration closed	Child has arrived late, after the register has closed but before the end of session
<b>Administrative codes</b>		
<b>Z</b>	Prospective child not on admission register	Child has not joined school yet but has been registered
<b>#</b>	Planned whole-school closure	Whole-school closures that are known and planned in advance, including school holidays