Faith is all around us.
We have to have faith in ourselves in order to be the best that we can be.
We are a small school, with big hearts and together we beat as one.
Sowing seeds of knowledge and faith, with nurture and love
We thrive, we grow.

WISTOW PAROCHIAL CE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Head Teacher: Carla Cox

Attendance Policy

Document Status		
Date of Next Review	**October 2027**	**Responsibility – Full Governing Body**
Date of Policy Creation	**October 2013**	Responsible Governor Name
Date of Review and Ratification at FGB Meeting	**October 2026**	**Allen Blake**
Policy Publication/Communication ☒ On the school website ☒ Shared staff network drive ☒ Updates to staff in staff meetings		*Signed off by the above named Governor during the full governing body meeting held on the date stated as ratified.*

This policy is written in conjunction with 'Working together to improve school attendance, August 2024' by the Department for Education (DfE)

Introduction

The Headteacher and Safeguarding Governor are responsible for the strategic approach to attendance in school.

- Carla Cox - Head Teacher
- Nicki Williams - Safeguarding Governor

Contact: admin@wistow.n-yorks.sch.uk
Telephone: 01757 268378

'Improving attendance is everyone's business. The barriers to accessing education are wide and complex, both within and beyond the school gates, and are often specific to individual pupils and families. Good attendance begins with school being somewhere pupils want to be and therefore the foundation of securing good attendance is that school is a calm, orderly, safe, and supportive environment where all pupils are keen and ready to learn.'

'Some pupils find it harder than others to attend school and therefore at all stages of improving attendance, schools and partners should work in partnership with pupils and parents collaboratively to remove any barriers to attendance by building strong and trusting relationships and working together

to put the right support in place. Securing good attendance cannot therefore be seen in isolation, and effective practices for improvement will involve close interaction with schools' efforts on curriculum, behaviour, bullying, special educational needs support, pastoral and mental health and wellbeing, and effective use of resources, including pupil premium. It cannot solely be the preserve of a single member of staff, or organisation, it must be a concerted effort across all teaching and non-teaching staff in school, the trust or governing body, the local authority, and other local partners

Working together to improve school attendance 2024 DfE

This policy will be applied fairly and consistently, but in doing so Wistow School will always consider the individual needs of pupils and their families who have specific barriers to attendance and do our best to support and work with them. In the development and implementation of this policy, Wistow School will consider their obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Effective schools should be consistent in conveying their positive regard for regular attendance to parents, pupils and teachers. Children quickly pick up the message that their attendance is important. At Wistow School, we work together to encourage pupils to pride themselves in good attendance and work with families to support achieving this together.

Attendance

'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. It is the legal responsibility of every parent to make sure their child receives that education either by attendance at a school or by education otherwise than at a school.

Where parents decide to have their child registered at school, they have an additional legal duty to ensure their child attends that school regularly. This means their child must attend every day that the school is open, except in a small number of allowable circumstances such as being too ill to attend or being given permission for an absence in advance from the school.

This is essential for pupils to get the most out of their school experience, including their attainment, wellbeing, and wider life chances. 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.'

Working together to improve school attendance 2024 DfE

Children are expected to attend school every day of the academic year, unless there is a very good reason for absence. There are two types of absence, governed by the

Department for Education:

- Authorised - Where the Head teacher approves pupil absence

- Unauthorised - Where the Head teacher will not approve absence

We also robustly monitor lateness in school, which is recorded depending upon time late:

- Late (before the register closes)
- Late (after 9.20am – unauthorised)

If a child is to be absent, parents should call or email the school on **each** morning of the absence stating a full and detailed reason – this must be done before 9.20am. Parents can contact the office on:

Contact: admin@wistow.n-yorks.sch.uk
Telephone: 01757 268378

Alternatively, they can contact the class teacher, via their email addresses, all of which are sent out on half termly newsletters and on the school website.

The Head teacher will then decide whether to authorise the absence. If authorisation is refused, for instance because a child was kept off school for a birthday, a holiday or a very minor ailment, then parents would be informed of the reason for not authorising the absence.

If contact explaining the child's absence is not made by parents or carers, then the school office will try to contact the home by telephone on that initial morning. If contact cannot be made with the person named as first contact, the school will leave a message and then proceed to try and make contact with other named people, until all possibilities have been exhausted. If a child's absence remains unexplained, the school will do a home visit or contact Social Services.

A log of all messages left by parents regarding child absence, telephone conversations that staff have with parents/carers and reasons for absences is securely stored on the school's management information system (MIS).

Completing the Register

The law requires that all schools maintain an attendance register which is taken twice, once at the start of the school day and once during the afternoon session. Registers provide the daily legal record of the attendance of all pupils; they are documents **that may be required in** a **court of law,** for example as evidence in prosecutions for non-attendance at school. They also contribute to pupil's termly and end of year reports. For these reasons, registers are required to be marked accurately.

- Miss Barley/ Mrs Dethridge are responsible for inducting new staff on completing registers and reporting any concerns about the completion of registers to the Headteacher or Mrs Dethridge – School Business Manager

- Mrs Dethridge ensures the Head teacher is kept up to date with changing guidelines for completing registers i.e. when a new code is introduced or old codes are archived.

Morning Registers and Dinner Registers are taken at 9:00 am. The class register is submitted online, using school's MIS. Dinner registers are returned to the office.

Afternoon Registers are taken promptly at 1.00 pm and submitted online.
Pupils who arrive after 9.20am are recorded as Unauthorised late after register has closed. This is an unauthorised absence and arrivals between 8.50am and 9.20am are not classified as unauthorised, but minutes late are recorded and regularly reported on to highlight where support may be needed.

School ends at 3.30pm. If parents are late collecting their child, we ask that they let us know as soon as possible. We understand that occasionally this will happen. Should it become more regular, it will be monitored, logged and the head teacher will have a conversation with the parents/carers, to ensure moving forward the child is collected on time.

Leave of Absence During Term Time

Parents are strongly urged to avoid booking a leave of absence during term time. Parents do not have the right to take their child out of school for such a holiday, but the Headteacher may choose to grant leave of absence in exceptional circumstances. For the Head teacher to consider this, supporting evidence to go alongside the application must be submitted. The school's policy for authorising holidays has to be responsive to changing Government and LA advice and should be amended/updated at least annually or more regularly if needed.

In considering whether or not to authorise leave, the Headteacher will examine each case and the supporting documents submitted by the applicant on an individual bases.

The school will not authorise any holidays for any pupils, unless exceptional circumstances are evidenced by the parents upon submission of the holiday request form. We also do not authorise holidays to be taken at the start of a new academic year or for Year 6 in April/May as this is the time for national assessments for Year 6 pupils.

Leave of absence forms can be obtained from the Headteacher, and all requests should be submitted in writing at least six weeks before the first day of intended absence, following an initial conversation with the Head teacher.

No holidays will be authorised retrospectively.

We ask that parents and carers make appointments for their children outside of school time but acknowledge that this isn't always possible. In this case, when pupils need a short time out of school due to a medical appointment or exam for example, we ask that parents and carers fill in an online form, found in the parents section on the website and then submit this to the school. This information is then logged, the Head teacher checks to ensure authorised reasons along with any supporting documents such as appointments, letters etc. which can be emailed separately to admin@wistow.n-yorks.sch.uk . A note is made in the MIS so that class teachers can see and be aware of when a pupil will be absent and why. Medical, appointments

and exams are authorised by the Head teacher. If parents are unsure when submitting an online request, we ask that they contact the office, who will guide them through the process and ensure the correct forms are completed.

A pupil's absence during term time can seriously disrupt their continuity of learning. Not only do they miss the teaching provided on the days they are away (which can equate to a unit of work and therefore leaves a significant gap in their knowledge), they are also less prepared for the lessons building on that after their return. This then impacts their confidence, which is detrimental to any child. There is a consequent risk of underachievement, which we, and you, must seek to avoid together.

Parents are reminded of the school and Local Authorities guidelines around attendance every term via newsletters.

As per the August 2024 guidelines, the unauthorised leave of absence process has changed.
All unauthorised leave of absence in excess of 5 days (10 sessions) taken will result in action being taken by the local authority, at this point a Fixed Penalty Notice will be sought by the school.

Punctuality

Children are expected to arrive at school on time. The school gates open at 8.45am each morning and children are expected to be lined up in their classes by 8.50am, ready to begin their day of learning. These pupils are marked as on time for school. If a pupil arrives and their class has gone into school, they need to report to the school office door and they will be marked as late before registration closes. Should a child arrive after 9.20am, without authorisation from the Head teacher, this will be recorded as unauthorised and counts as one session towards a penalty notice. The child will then go to their classroom. If their parents are with them, they are asked to sign them in with reasons for lateness. The office staff record the late marks and number of minutes late and the Head teacher monitors these closely. Should a pattern occur, the Head teacher will speak with the families involved and strive to support them to improve attendance and punctuality.

Pupils who are consistently late are disrupting not only their own education but also that of others. Persistent lateness will result in further action being taken, in accordance with Education Welfare advice. Three late marks in the same two weeks or 5+ over the year will be the trigger for contacting parents and exploring reasons for this, and then we strive to work together to improve this.

What can parents do to help?

- Let the school know as soon as possible, why your child is unable to attend that day, giving details of symptoms of illness.
- Talk to a member of staff when your child returns to school, to see if there is anything we can do to support their return.
- Try to make routine medical and dental appointments outside school time.
- Do not allow your child to have time off school unless it is absolutely necessary.
- Talk to the Headteacher if your child develops any medical condition which may affect their attendance in the future.

- If you would like support with your child's attendance, please contact your child's class teacher in the first instance.

How Can School Support Parents to Improve Attendance?

As per the Working together to Improve Attendance, Wistow School aim to:

'Successfully treating the root causes of absence and removing barriers to attendance, at home, in school or more broadly requires schools and local partners to work collaboratively in partnership with, not against families. All partners should work together to:

Expect

Aspire to high standards of attendance from all pupils 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 pupils 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 pupils 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 pupil's right to an education.

Working together to improve school attendance 2024 DfE

The Headteacher rigorously monitors attendance, to ensure that pupils are in school and maintain the best attendance possible, with the support of the school team, parents and pupils. Attendance is recorded on the school's MIS and this system tracks attendance. When patterns arise or attendance dips below 96%, the Headteacher will print out an attendance summary and share this when speaking with the parents/carers to hopefully address and improve the child's attendance. This conversation and attendance summary is logged on CPOMS (safeguarding software), as parent conversation and attendance concerns. Should these meetings identify that the family need some support, the Headteacher will speak with the class teacher, family support worker, parent and child, to see how best to put something in place to support the family and improve the child's attendance moving forward.

Concerns procedure

The DfE defines attendance below 90% as persistent absenteeism and attendance below 50% as severely persistent absenteeism.

Every pupil's attendance is monitored day-to-day by the school office. Where attendance becomes a concern, the Headteacher will make individual contact with the family. Where attendance drops below 90% (persistent absenteeism) a formal letter is sent to the family and the Headteacher will maintain individual contact with the family until attendance improves.

Individual circumstances are always taken into account. A child's attendance could decrease considerably due to one genuine period of illness – i.e. with chickenpox, tonsillitis, but the Headteacher will know that it will steadily increase again over the year and not be concerned.

Absences due to very minor ailments/illness, regular absences and unexplained absences are significant concerns and it is always the school's intention to identify issues and intervene early. Support is always offered and by working together, parents and school can improve the situation. However, if this does not happen and the school continues to be concerned about a child's low attendance, the Headteacher may decide to code any future absence as unauthorised, unless robust medical evidence is given. All unauthorised absences, using the 'O' code, are monitored closely by the Head teacher and this therefore, will be the trigger for formal conversations with the parents/carers and if they do not improve, involving external agencies.

Giving positive messages about attendance

At Wistow School, we will try to highlight the importance of high attendance via displays, newsletters and posters around school as well as by rewarding good attendance through certificates at the end of each half term etc.

We also try to make parents aware that there is support available, in addition to working in partnership with school, via Early Help service.

Attendance is incentivised weekly with a celebration of attendance data in Friday Celebration Worship and we have a special bee hive board for attendance that tracks and visualises weekly percentages for each class.

Wistow School will support the families of children with persistent and severe absenteeism on an individual basis, identifying specific barriers to attendance and implementing actions to support great attendance. Where necessary, support will be formalised with the Local Authority (e.g. Early Help Service or Social Care).

Monitoring attendance and the role of the governing body

'Improving attendance requires constant focus, and effective whole school approaches require regular ongoing support, guidance, and challenge. Therefore, all trusts and governing bodies are expected to:

- *Recognise the importance of school attendance and promote it across the school's ethos and policies.*
- *Ensure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties.*
- *Regularly review attendance data, discuss, and challenge trends, and help school leaders focus improvement efforts on the individual pupils or cohorts who need it most.*
- *Ensure school staff receive adequate training on attendance.'*

Working together to improve school attendance 2024 DfE

'Strategies for improving school attendance begin at board level, therefore all academy trust boards, and governing bodies of maintained schools should take an active role in attendance improvement, support their school(s) to prioritise attendance, and work together with school leaders to set whole school attendance cultures. This should include:

- *Setting high expectations of all leaders, staff, pupils, and parents.*
- *Recognising that absence is a symptom and that improving pupil's attendance is part of improving the pupil's overall welfare. This can be achieved by prioritising attendance in strategies, such as raising attainment, behaviour and combatting bullying, special educational needs and disabilities, wellbeing, and safeguarding.*
- *Ensuring their schools' attendance management processes are delivered effectively, and that consistent attendance support is provided for pupils who require it most by prioritising the staff and resources needed. This includes ensuring schools engage and work effectively with the local authority School Attendance Support Team and wider local partners and services.*

- *Ensuring high aspirations are maintained for all pupils, but that processes and support are adapted to the individual needs of particular pupils. This includes those with long term illnesses, special educational needs and disabilities, pupils with a social worker and pupils from cohorts with historically lower attendance such as those eligible for free school meals.*
- *Repeatedly evaluating the effectiveness of their school(s)' processes and improvement efforts to ensure they are meeting the needs of pupils as experiences and barriers to attendance evolve.*
- *Boards may also wish to have a governor or trustee that focusses on attendance.'*

Working together to improve school attendance August 2024 DfE

The governing body at Wistow School will review attendance data at every Full Governing Body. This will include:

- Overall attendance as well as attendance for groups including Pupil Premium children, children with SEND – benchmarked against national and regional data where this is available
- Data on persistent absenteeism and, when appropriate, severe persistent absenteeism
- Data on punctuality including any school actions to improve the punctuality of families who are regularly late

As a school we recognise the importance of working together to improve attendance for all pupils and we strive to do our best for all our pupils and families in ensuring they are in school, learning to their full potential.

Further information for parents around Attendance, the following link is useful:

https://www.gov.uk/school-attendance-absence