



Attendance Policy

September 2024
Review September 2025
Policy written by C Unsworth

Attendance Policy

Rationale

At Westhoughton High School we **LEARN**:

- L**ook after each other
- E**njoy our school
- A**im high
- R**espect each other
- N**ever stop learning

There is a strong and obvious link between school attendance and student achievement. Regular attendance at school is vital, put simply, *absence* means *missed learning*; without consistent attendance the learning process becomes fragmented and is unsatisfactory.

Under Section 7 of the Education Act 1996, parents are responsible for making sure that their children of compulsory school age receive full-time education. Parents have a legal responsibility to ensure their child's regular attendance at the school where their child is registered. If a child of compulsory school age who is registered at a school fails to attend regularly at the school, then the parent is guilty of an offence under Section 444(1) of the Education Act 1996. Since March 2001 there has been a further offence where a parent, knowing that their child is failing to attend regularly at school, fails without reasonable justification to cause him/her to attend (Education Act 1996, section 444 (1A) as amended by the Criminal Justice and Court Service Act 2000). Any absence should be considered unauthorised unless there is a valid reason otherwise. Unauthorised absence at any level is considered unacceptable by both the school and local authority.

Roles and responsibilities

Westhoughton High school aims to:

- emphasise the importance to all students of maximum attendance at school as an essential pre-requisite for making full use of all educational opportunities and to maximise individual achievement;
- find supportive routes to improve attendance;
- make explicit to all relevant parties (teachers, parents/carers and students) our school's expectations on attendance levels;
- promote a consistent approach across our school towards all matters relating to attendance;
- ensure that accurate and up to date records of attendance are maintained and analysed to identify potential causes for concern;
- clarify the roles and responsibilities of all parties with respect to attendance;
- communicate to all relevant parties the legal position with respect to attendance and the categories of absence which are deemed "authorised";
- emphasise the need for home and school to work in close partnership to achieve high attendance.

The Governing Body of Westhoughton High School will:

- Support the school in ensuring that the importance and value of high attendance is promoted to students and families.
- Review the school's attendance policy annually and ensure the required resources are available to fully implement the policy.
- Regularly review attendance as a standing item at full governing body meetings and CSI committee meetings.
- Ensure that the school has clear systems in place to report, record and monitor attendance including those who are educated off site
- Ensure that there is robust analysis of attendance data and effective evaluation of intervention strategies

High attendance levels are achieved as a result of staff working closely together and knowing where their responsibilities lie. The specific roles and responsibilities of key staff are explained in **Appendix 4**. It is important that **all** members of staff are aware of the responsibilities so that when they take on the role permanently or in a temporary capacity, they know what is expected of them.

The Department for Education guidance 'Working together to improve school attendance' 2024 reinforces that schools, families and other agencies must work together to remove barriers to attendance. The principles of this guidance are outlined in **Appendix 2**.

Key Attendance Personnel

Mrs C Unsworth – Deputy Headteacher - Senior Attendance Champion/DSL

Mrs A Foster – Attendance Officer

Mrs K Clarke – Attendance administration

Mrs J Travis – Admissions administration Officer

In addition each year cohort has a Student Support Leader (SSL) and Student Progress Leader (SPL) who are responsible for the operational management, recording and monitoring of attendance for the students in their year group.

What is an acceptable attendance rate?

As part of our LEARN ethos we 'Aim high' and so we expect all of our students to achieve a minimum of 97% attendance. Students are expected to attend school every day between 8.33am and 3.15pm (2.15pm on Wednesdays). Regular and consistent attendance is important and repeated broken weeks are a cause for concern and so will be followed up by the school as part of our attendance protocols. Where a student's attendance falls below 90% this is classed as persistent absence and will require significant intervention and monitoring from school. School staff will communicate frequently with families to update around attendance concerns and progress.

Authorised Absences

The Department for Education (DfE) has issued guidelines to all schools detailing valid reasons for **authorised** or **justified** absences:

- (i) a child is too ill to attend or is receiving medical attention;
- (ii) days of religious observance, notified in advance;
- (iii) absence due to family circumstances (e.g. bereavement, serious illness);
- (iv) approved sporting activities, notified in advance.

Schools are expected to restrict other leaves of absence to the specific circumstances set out in regulation 11 of the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024. These circumstances are:

- Taking part in a regulated performance or employment abroad.
- Attending an interview
- Study leave – for public examinations only
- A temporary, time-limited part-time timetable (see later section in this policy for further information)
- Exceptional circumstances

For requests for leave of absence under the exceptional circumstances criteria Westhoughton High School expects that these will be made in writing and in advance with as much notice as possible. Each application will be considered individually taking into account the specific facts and circumstances and relevant background information.

The DfE and Westhoughton High School do not consider the need or desire for a holiday (or other absence for the purpose of leisure and recreation) to be an exceptional circumstance. Where there are unforeseen events affecting families which necessitate absence from school; the Headteacher will use professional discretion to make a decision as to whether the absence can be authorised.

We expect absences to be kept to a minimum; **routine medical and dental appointments should be arranged out of school hours wherever possible.**

School will not routinely request medical evidence for absence due to illness. However, if absence rates reach a cause for concern then it may be necessary to put in place additional intervention, through liaison with health professionals, to ensure that absences can continue to be authorised if appropriate. Parents/Carers are encouraged to seek support from pastoral teams where there are ongoing issues with illness. Absence for planned medical appointments during the school day should be supported by an appointment card/letter wherever possible. Where absences for illness (I) reach 30 sessions within an academic year a referral will automatically be submitted to the Local Authority Attendance Team to assess if further intervention is required.

Unauthorised Absences

These are absences where:

- no acceptable explanation is provided by parent(s)/carers;
- the reason for the absence does not fall into one of the categories of **authorised** absence above
- the level of absence for illness has reached a concerning level and is not supported by medical evidence.

As examples, DfE guidelines state that the following activities would be classified as **unauthorised**:

- minding the house;
- caring for relatives;
- awaiting repair people;
- shopping;
- a birthday or family celebration.

Multiple sessions of unauthorised absence may result in further action including the issuing of a formal notice to improve and potentially a fixed penalty notice – see **Appendix 6** for further information. Significant attendance concerns may also be referred to the Local Authority attendance team for co-ordinated support and intervention.

Holidays

There is no automatic right to any holidays in term time and we strongly discourage holidays being taken as learning is disrupted and the lost time is detrimental to the educational progress of the child.

As outlined above, Headteachers may only grant leave of absence under specific criteria and **the DfE and Westhoughton High School do not consider the need or desire for a holiday (or other absence for the purpose of leisure and recreation) ordinarily to be an exceptional circumstance.**

We ask parents who feel it is absolutely unavoidable that they take their annual holiday (or any other proposed special occasions) during term time to notify the school by completing a leave of absence form via the link on the school website (**Appendix 7**) **at least four weeks in advance of the proposed date**, explaining the circumstances.

Westhoughton High school will **not** authorise holidays retrospectively.

Any requests for term time holidays must be made via a formal request in this way. Each request for leave will be considered individually by the Headteacher/ Deputy Headteacher and will take the following factors into account:

- Length of proposed leave
- School year of the student
- Student's general absence/attendance record
- Proximity of internal and public examinations
- Student's educational needs
- General welfare of the student
- Circumstances of the request
- Previous term time holidays taken
- When the request was made

The DFE guidelines outline that it is the **school** that judges whether an absence is authorised or not. With regard to holidays, the Headteacher must determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted. As a general guide any activity, holiday or event that can be arranged during the annual 13 week holiday time should not be authorised during the school term. A note from home does NOT automatically make an absence or holiday valid, justified or authorised. If the absence is approved by the Headteacher it will be marked as authorised (C), if not approved but still taken it will be recorded as unauthorised (G).

If an unauthorised holiday exceeds 9 sessions (4.5 days) it may result in the issuing of a fixed penalty notice as outlined in Appendix 6

Working within our Home/School Partnership

Securing a high level of attendance requires the school and home to work closely together. To this end, we ask parents/carers to:

- Do all you can to ensure your child arrives **on time** for school; morning registration begins at 8:33am and students should be in class by this time. We will monitor persistent late comers and action will be taken on the day of lateness. Our registers close at 9.15am at the end of the form time period. Students arriving after this time will be recorded as 'U' which classes as an unauthorised absence for the session.
- If your child is ill, notify the school **on the first day by calling the absence line on 01942 814122 or sending a message via School Synergy.**
- Notify the school of each day of absence if the absence continues;
- Get in touch with the year group pastoral team at an early stage about any concerns you have about your child's attendance and any emerging barriers.
- Inform the school as soon as possible if your child needs to leave the school site prior to the formal end of the school day at 3.15pm (2.15pm on Wednesdays).

In return, school will:

- Contact home on day 1 of absence if no message has been received from home;
- Contact home over any unexplained absences;
- Conduct visits to the home address to welfare check students if there are unexplained or prolonged absences.
- Follow up promptly any concerns parents/carers pass on to us that may be affecting their child's attitude to, or feeling of wellbeing in school;
- Support students to re-integrate into school after illness or other individual circumstances;
- Regularly and consistently remind students of the importance of good attendance and punctuality;
- Reward excellent or improving attendance and action any concerns promptly.

Attendance and Safeguarding

We believe that attendance at school is an important part of our safeguarding procedures. Where a student is not in school the attendance procedures will be followed to ensure that the student is safe.

Where a student is dual registered the school will maintain contact with the provider to ensure that there is a clear process in place to alert key worker in school to support if they are absent from their provision.

Where a student is CLA the school will liaise with the local authority to report attendance as requested by them. All CLA students will be placed on the vulnerable priority contact list for absence and contact will be made with Early Intervention Service EIS before 10.40am for any unexplained absences to ensure that support can be put in place with home contact.

Where a student is under a Child Protection Plan or has an allocated social worker they will be placed onto the vulnerable priority contact list for absence and contact will be made with EIS before 10.40am for any unexplained absences to ensure that support can be put in place with home contact.

Students who have attendance below 80% for any reason will be placed on the Vulnerable Student Register (VSR) and will be discussed at the weekly safeguarding team meeting.

Where a student has an EHCP their attendance will be monitored by the SEND team and any causes for concern with attendance will form part of their SEN review process.

Complex Circumstances

Westhoughton High School will take a supportive and proactive approach where a student has complex health needs or family circumstances which may impact on regular school attendance. Individual support plans will be created where appropriate in liaison with other agencies. Where this requires the completion of an Early Help Assessment the student will be allocated a key worker to oversee this process and co-ordinate any support required. If a student is hospitalised for a period of time the school will liaise with relevant medical teams and any educational support in place to ensure that continuity is sustained as much as possible -in an appropriate way to reflect individual circumstances.

Part-time timetables

All students are entitled to a full-time education. In line with Department for Education guidance, in very exceptional circumstances, where it is in a student's best interests, there may be a need for a temporary part-time timetable to meet their individual needs. Westhoughton High school will ensure that if any student is placed on a part-time timetable the following guidance is followed:

- The timetable is agreed by school staff, the student and by parents/carers
- The timetable is accompanied by a pastoral support plan
- A review date is set to monitor the impact of the timetable
- The timetable is kept in place for the shortest time necessary
- Relevant outside agencies are updated as appropriate, including the local authority attendance team and social workers/virtual school staff if relevant.
- Any absence as part of an agreed part-time timetable will be authorised under the appropriate coding (usually C2 unless absence is part of agreed medical appointments)

Children Missing Education

Westhoughton High School will follow Bolton Local Authority procedures with regards to students who are missing education.

Deletions from register

In accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024, pupils will only be deleted from the school register when one of the following circumstances applies:

- The student has been registered at another school
- The student is registered at one or more other schools and the other schools have agreed to the deletion
- The student has a school attendance order which has been changed to name another school
- The student had a school attendance order which has been revoked
- The parent of the student has notified the school in writing that the student will be leaving the school to be educated otherwise than at school
- The student no longer lives a reasonable distance from the school
- The student has not returned following a leave of absence
- The student has been continually absent from school for 20 school days
- The student is detained under a sentence of detention
- The student has died
- The student will be over compulsory school age and will not continue into the sixth form.
- The student has been permanently excluded from the school

Rewards for Good Attendance

To promote good attendance and to emphasise its importance Westhoughton High school offers a number of rewards and ensures that the recognition of high attendance and improving attendance is high profile. Attendance recognition features in form time sessions, year group assemblies and presentation evenings.

Attendances and absences are included in termly assessments, which are also sent home.

Early Help

Our attendance officer has oversight of attendance and works closely with pastoral and safeguarding teams and other agencies around welfare issues. Students who are giving cause for concern around attendance are discussed as a matter of course each week at the attendance team meeting. This may result in staff visiting homes, or seeing and supporting students in school. This work is a vital component in our efforts to secure high attendance. The Student Support Leader is available to assist parents / carers where difficulties arise and can be contacted at the school.

In extreme cases the school also initiates legal proceedings against parents who have not fulfilled their responsibility for getting their child to school. Before a case moves towards prosecution, parents / carers will be contacted and a Notice to Improve will be put in place in order to set targets to improve attendance levels. The prime aim of all action is to get the child attending school on a regular basis.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 Absence Codes – Recorded on registers
- Appendix 2 Working together to improve attendance
- Appendix 3 Staff Guide to Registers and Associated Procedures
- Appendix 4 Attendance - Roles & Responsibilities
- Appendix 5 Stages of Intervention
- Appendix 6 Bolton's penalty notice code of conduct – information for parents/carers
- Appendix 7 Request for Leave of Absence form

APPENDIX 1

Absence Codes – Recorded on registers

A	Present at registration
B	Attending any other approved educational activity
C1	Leave of absence for the purpose of participating in a regulated performance or undertaking regulated employment abroad.
C2	Leave of absence for a compulsory school age pupil subject to a part-time timetable
C	Leave of absence for exceptional circumstances
D	Dual registered at another school
E	Excluded but no alternative provision made
G	Holiday not granted by the school
I	Illness (not medical or dental appointment)
J1	Leave of absence for the purpose of attending an interview for employment or for admission to another educational institution
K	Attending education provision arranged by the local authority
L	Late but arrived before the register closed
M	Leave of absence for the purpose of attending a medical or dental appointment
N	Reason for absence not yet established
O	Absent in other or unknown circumstances
P	Participating in a supervised sporting activity
Q	Unable to attend school because of a lack of access arrangements
R	Religious observance
S	Study Leave
T	Parent travelling for occupational purposes
U	Arrived in school after registration closed
V	Educational visit or trip
W	Attending work experience
X	Non-compulsory school age pupil not required to attend school
Y1	Unable to attend due to transport normally provided not being available
Y2	Unable to attend due to widespread disruption to travel
Y3	Unable to attend due to part of the school premises being closed
Y4	Unable to attend due to the whole school site being unexpectedly closed
Y5	Unable to attend as pupil is in criminal justice detention
Y6	Unable to attend in accordance with public health guidance or law
Y7	Unable to attend because of any other unavoidable cause
Z	Prospective pupil not on admissions register
#	Planned whole or partial school closure
AEA	Authorised Educational Activity - counted as present.

APPENDIX 2 Working together to improve attendance

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 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.

APPENDIX 3

Staff Guide to Registers and Associated Procedures:

This section complements the Attendance Policy and should be read in conjunction with it. It deals with the practicalities of completing the registers and associated procedures to do with attendance. Registers are recorded in School Synergy and data is automatically transferred to SIMS. Registers are important legal documents. We rely on accurate input in order to follow up any concerns as well as for data analysis.

Marking the register

Form Tutors will be responsible for recording absences during form time and passing on any attendance related communications to the pastoral team and attendance officers where appropriate. **All staff** are responsible for flagging changes in attendance with the school office through every session of the school day. If there is a change in attendance and a student is missing from a class, all staff have a duty to report this.

Reading the registers

The registers information is read every morning during registration. It is important that the data entered is accurate and that there is a mark for **EVERY** student (everyone **must** fall into one of the three categories of present, absent or late). Staff must enter either 'present', 'absent' or 'late' (+ how many minutes late). **Schools have a responsibility for safeguarding the children in their care and it is vital that the information we have is as accurate as possible.**

We operate a policy of first day response regarding absence across the school. The Attendance team/SSLs contact parents of any child not registered/given a reason for absence in form time and lesson 1.

Communication with/from parents or carers

We ask all parents and carers to contact the school as early as possible on the **first** day of absence to notify us of their child's absence.

We do require **ALL** absences to be covered by an explanation. This can be done by letter, e-mail, phone call or note in the planner from parents/carers. Communication is required for every day of a period of absence. The Student Support leader will pursue any unexplained absences with parents/carers.

Lates

- Statutory Registration starts at 8:33am and students should be in form rooms by this time. Our registers close after a set period (currently 9.15am). Thereafter students' absence will be recorded as unauthorised (U) unless a valid reason is provided such as a medical or dental appointment.
- A student should only be marked as **late** when the teacher has completed the whole register and a student arrives after the register has been saved on the School Synergy system.
- It is important that we are consistent in our procedures across the school. Staff should record the late mark and the number of minutes late then re-send registers.
- Lates are counted as present when the data is collected; however, parents have been successfully prosecuted for failing to get their child to school consistently on time. Therefore, we will take a robust response to those who are regularly arriving late.

N.B. If for any reason staff are unable to take an electronic register, a paper register must be taken and given to the Attendance Admin Officer.

Attendance Data provided to form tutors

Form Tutors have access to any student's attendance data via School Synergy and PowerBi. In addition, summary data is provided on each set of assessments. Form tutors should be provided with regular data from the Student Support Leaders and Student Progress Leaders so that patterns can be picked up and addressed.

During reviewing and mentoring time, we expect all form tutors to refer to a range of performance data on their tutees, including that pertaining to attendance.

Summary of Procedures:

- Staff take accurate registers during registration and lessons, making use of appropriate codes (present, absent, late).
- All staff, particularly form tutors/SSL/SPLs should monitor attendance of individuals.
- Staff should raise issues of attendance and punctuality with student, parents and Student Support leaders or Student progress leaders as necessary. The focus should be on early intervention to try to bring about improvements in attendance as soon as possible.

APPENDIX 4

Attendance: roles, responsibilities and related tasks

Form Tutor/Teacher.

We are all responsible for safeguarding children in our school; therefore you should:

- Contribute to and support the continued development of a positive, welcoming, inclusive and safe environment for all students.
- Welcome students at the start of a session with a smile and a greeting.
- Mark registers accurately in tutor time and in all subject lessons – use the phrase ‘Good morning*name*/Good afternoon*name*’ as part of the register routine.
- Report any changes in attendance to the attendance officer immediately by updating the School Synergy system.
- Inform the Student Support leader of any students giving cause for concern.
- Assist students by making sure they are aware of their attendance/punctuality record and record attendance targets in their planners, where necessary;
- Welcome back students who have been absent and support with any gaps in learning;
- Keep attendance high profile by discussing attendance data with students and parents/carers during mentoring, Parents’ Evenings and academic reviewing / mentoring sessions.

Attendance Officer – Admin

You are responsible for the attendance aspects of safeguarding children across the school; therefore you will:

- Check attendance on School Synergy as a priority task;
- Liaise with Student Support Leaders regarding students who are late;
- Ensure all registers are complete and follow-up and log, where necessary informing the Deputy Headteacher of significant issues;
- Ensure codes are recorded accurately (**see Appendix 1**);
- Ensure first day contact made – vulnerable students checked and referred for home visit where necessary;
- Liaise with Attendance team weekly and monitor those students giving cause for concern.

Student Support Leaders

Working with your SPL you are responsible for your team of form tutors; therefore you must:

- Ensure your form tutors are operating to our agreed procedures

Additionally, you should:

- Promote high overall attendance across your year group and low absence rates
- Liaise with form tutors over students who are persistently late
- Liaise at weekly meeting with Attendance Officer over targeted / vulnerable students on 90% attendance or below;
- Liaise with SPL to use assemblies regularly to reinforce the importance of punctuality and good attendance and praise students with consistently high punctuality and/or attendance;
- Monitor students and raise any concerns around attendance / welfare issues with attendance officer/safeguarding team;
- Hold meetings with students and/or parents/carers, liaising with attendance officer as appropriate;
- Communicate in writing with parents/carers to alert to attendance concerns/acknowledge improvements;
- Complete EHA with families as required.
- Conduct home visits and hold meetings according to need
- Develop bespoke plans to support individuals

Student Progress Leaders

Working with your SSL you are responsible for your team of form tutors; therefore you must:

- Ensure your form tutors are operating to our agreed procedures

Additionally you should:

- Promote high overall attendance across your year group and low absence rates
- Liaise with form tutors over students who are persistently late
- Liaise with SSL to ensure intervention plans are in place for targeted students.
- Liaise with SSL to use assemblies regularly to reinforce the importance of punctuality and good attendance and praise students with consistently high punctuality and/or attendance
- Monitor trends in attendance for identified groups within your year group cohort

Attendance Support Officer

You are responsible for working with our vulnerable young people, supporting families and ensuring a multi-agency approach is taken to care when appropriate; therefore you must:

- Meet weekly with Student Support Leaders to discuss attendance data
- Liaise with Safeguarding Team to produce a list of vulnerable families
- Liaise with Student Support Leader to discuss causes for concern and decide appropriate level of intervention and action(s);
- Develop bespoke plans to support individuals
- Support students and families, conducting home visits as appropriate;
- Follow appropriate escalation process with students and families giving cause for concern including the use of notices to improve. attendance contracts and the tracking of Fixed Penalty notices and fines;
- Set targets for those students whose attendance is 90% and below;
- Liaise with Early Intervention Service when absences persist and as letters/meetings and home visits have not had the desired impact (attendance levels falling into fixed penalty warning criteria);
- Prepare half-termly report summarising individual cases, level(s) of intervention and impact for Deputy Headteacher,
- Prepare case studies on 3 individual cases (including PA and FSM) on a termly basis showing impact of work of the team
- Utilise EHA to support families
- Prepare any documentation needed for a court route if other interventions fail
- Meet routinely with attendance support officer from the Local Authority Team

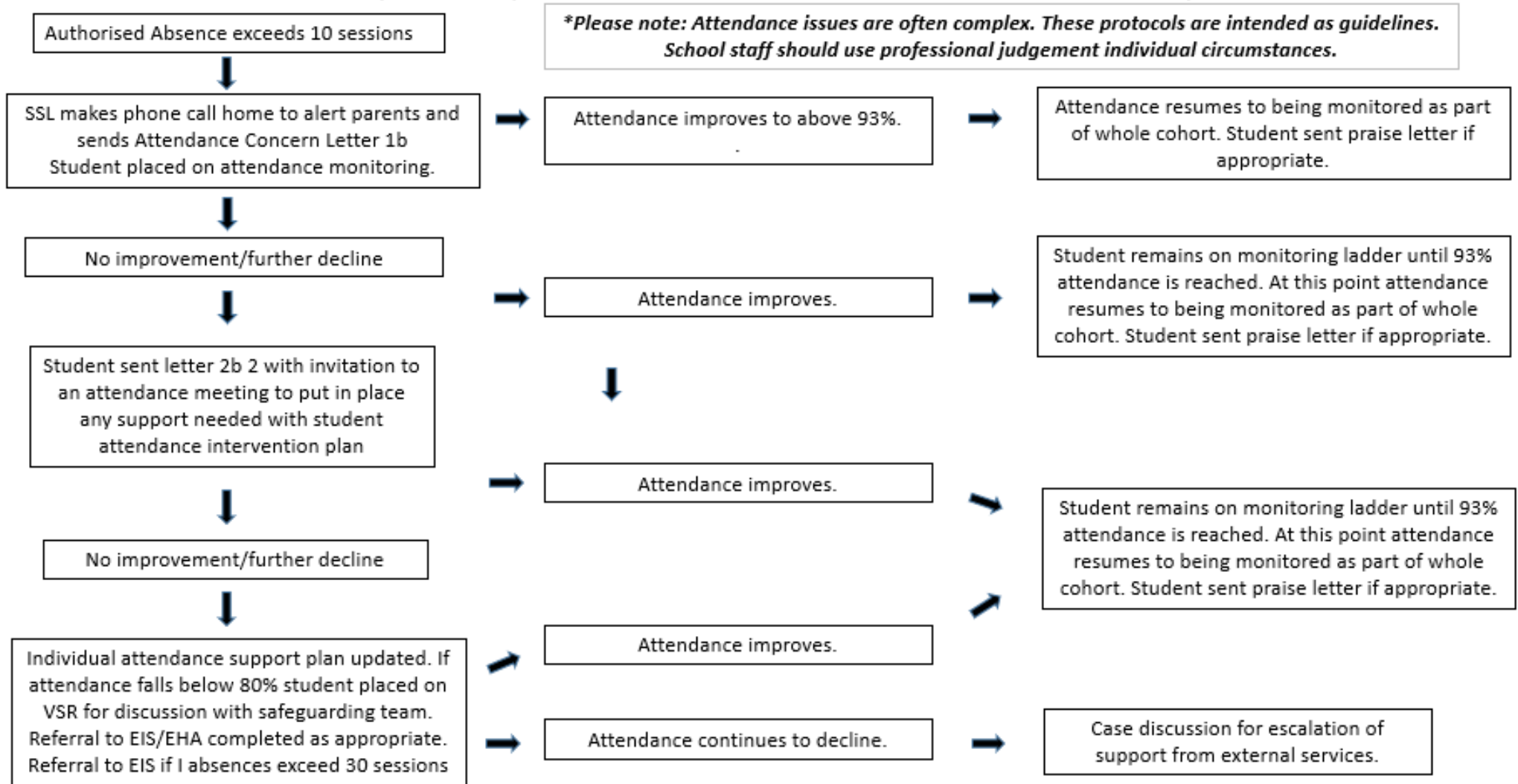
Deputy Headteacher

You are responsible for behaviour, attendance and safeguarding procedures across our school; therefore you must:

- Ensure the team follows these procedures so that attendance levels are high and absence is low, with no child missed out
- Meet Attendance Officer regularly (minimum twice per half term) to discuss individual cases and overview of attendance data;
- Analyse data to identify trends, areas of improvement and areas needing improvement;
- Investigate strategies to improve attendance of all students;
- Liaise with Attendance Officer and wider student support team regarding individual cases and trends in sub-groups (Below 90%/PA, CLA, FSM, gender, year group);
- Report impact of strategies to Headteacher, wider SLT, Governing body (Community Students and Inclusion) and School Improvement Partner.
- Meet routinely with attendance support officer from the Local Authority Team

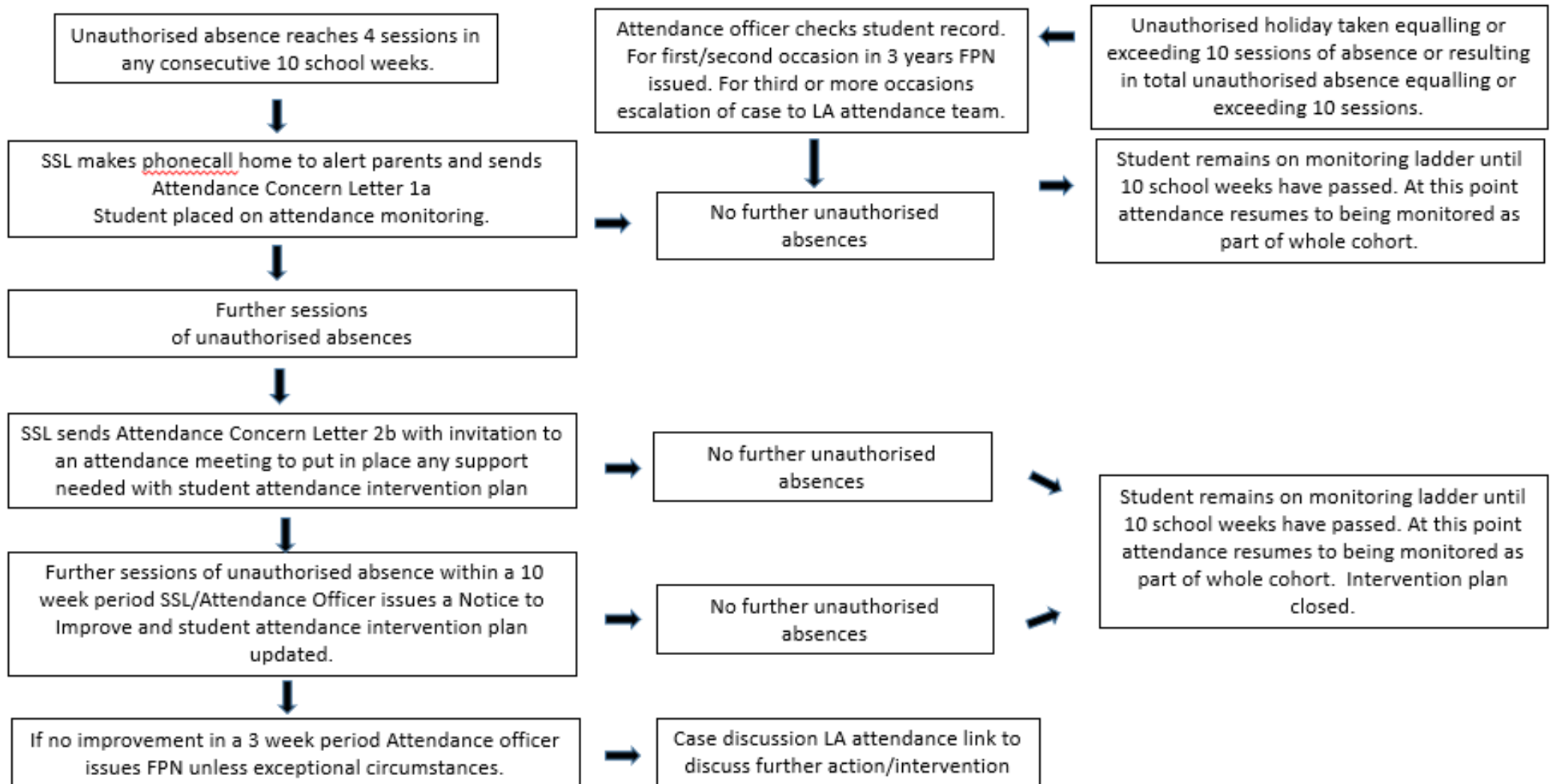
Attendance Concern Protocols – High absence

Attendance levels are monitored by SSL on weekly basis. Overall attendance and unauthorised attendance levels used as key indicators for intervention.



Attendance Concern Protocols – Unauthorised Absence

Attendance levels are monitored by SSL on weekly basis. Overall attendance and unauthorised attendance levels used as key indicators for intervention.



Letter 1 a – Unauthorised absences concerns

We are writing to inform you that *****'s attendance is at **% and has reached a level that is cause for concern. Absence from school will inevitably affect pupil progress and so we are keen to work with you to improve your child's attendance.

Your child currently has four or more sessions of unauthorised absence on their record – a session is half a school day. As a result of this I need to inform you that you are at risk of further action which may ultimately include a Penalty Notice and a fine of £160. Please note that if your child arrives at school after our registration period closes at 9.15am they will receive the attendance code 'U' which is also classified as a session of unauthorised absence.

Your child has now been placed on attendance monitoring. Should your child's attendance not show improvement in the coming weeks we will contact you again to request that you come to meet with us in school for an attendance support meeting where we can discuss the next steps of working with you.

It is extremely important that you continue to contact school on each day of absence to explain the reason why your child is unable to attend.

Our attendance and pastoral support teams are happy to offer advice and support if your child is experiencing any difficulties in attending school.

We want to give all of our students the best possible chances of success whilst at school and beyond. There is a clear link between attendance to school and academic attainment, in short missing school means missing out on valuable learning experiences.

We very much appreciate your support in ensuring that your child aims for the highest possible attendance levels.

If you would like to discuss this letter further or would like to request assistance in improving your child's attendance to school please do not hesitate to contact us.

Yours sincerely

Student Support Leader

Letter 1b – Concerns about high levels of absence

We are writing to inform you that *****'s attendance is at **% and therefore has reached a level that is cause for concern.

Whilst we appreciate that everyone can suffer from illness, absence from school will inevitably affect pupil progress and so we are keen to work with you to improve your child's attendance. If there are other factors which are creating challenge for your child to attend school it is important that you work with us so that we can try to find strategies to help.

We will be monitoring the situation closely over the coming weeks. So far we have authorised absence for illness however should there be any further decline in attendance we may require you to provide medical evidence to enable future periods of illness to be recorded in this way.

It is extremely important that you contact school on each day of absence to explain the reason why your child is unable to attend. Our attendance and pastoral support teams are happy to offer advice and support if your child is experiencing any difficulties in attending school.

We want to give all of our students the best possible chances of success whilst at school and beyond. There is a clear link between attendance to school and academic attainment, in short missing school means missing out on valuable learning experiences.

We very much appreciate your support in ensuring that your child aims for the highest possible attendance levels.

If you would like to discuss this letter further or would like to request assistance in improving your child's attendance to school please do not hesitate to contact us.

Yours sincerely

Student Support Leader

Letter 2a - Continued concerns about unauthorised absence – invite to support meeting

We wrote to you on **** to alert you to concerns about ****'s attendance, in particular the number of sessions of unauthorised absence on their record. Unfortunately, since that letter your child has had further periods of unauthorised absence. We would now like you to attend an attendance support meeting in school so that we can discuss how we can work together to improve your child's attendance.

The meeting will take place on *****. If you are unable to attend at this time please contact us as soon as possible to rearrange.

If you do not engage with this meeting, then your child's attendance will continue to be monitored. Further sessions of unauthorised absence may result in us issuing you with a formal notice to improve and put you at significant risk of further action which may ultimately include a Penalty Notice and a fine of £160.

We would strongly encourage you to come into school to work with us to put in place a plan for your child.

In the meantime, it is extremely important that you continue to contact school on each day of absence to explain the reason why your child is unable to attend.

Yours sincerely

Student Support Leader

Letter 2b – Continued concerns about high levels of absence – invite to meeting

We wrote to you on ***** to alert you to concerns about ***** 's attendance. Since that letter your child has had further periods of absence. We would now like you to attend an attendance support meeting in school so that we can discuss how we can work together to improve your child's attendance.

The meeting will take place on *****. If you are unable to attend at this time please contact us as soon as possible to rearrange.

If you do not engage with this meeting, then your child's attendance will continue to be monitored. However, as we have already outlined to you should there be any further decline in attendance we may require you to provide medical evidence to enable future periods of illness to be recorded in this way. Please note that where absences for illness exceed 30 sessions in an academic year we are required to automatically make a referral to the Local authority attendance team.

We would strongly encourage you to come into school to work with us to put in place a plan for your child.

In the meantime, it is extremely important that you continue to contact school on each day of absence to explain the reason why your child is unable to attend.

Yours sincerely

Student Support Leader

**School Attendance
Notice to Improve
(Please read this letter carefully)**

School attendance is hugely important. For your child to gain the full benefit from their education, for their learning, wellbeing and wider development, they need to attend on time, every day possible.

You (parent name) are a parent/carer of (student name) who is a registered student at Westhoughton High School.

School have offered support to you and your family to try and help improve (student's name) attendance, including:

- Telephone calls/Synergy messages. The school contacted you on (dates), when your child was absent to understand why your child was absent and to offer their support with and issues your child may be having.
- An attendance overview letter (1a). The school wrote to you, letting you know about (student's name)'s attendance, the impact of their continued absence, and inviting you to contact the school to discuss the situation further.
- An attendance support meeting invite (2a). The school invited you to a meeting to discuss your child's unauthorised absences and to offer support to ensure that their attendance improved. You were notified of the consequences should your child continue to have unauthorised absence and you did not effectively engage with the support offered.

Unfortunately, despite the support that was offered, attendance remains as cause for concern. Between (warning start date) and (warning end date) (student name) failed to attend regularly at Westhoughton High School, which resulted in 10 sessions (half days) or more of unauthorised absences being recorded. Please see the attached registration certificate for details.

You now have 15 school days (3 weeks) in which to improve your child's attendance. During this time your child must show significant improvements in attendance and avoid having any unauthorised absences from school during this period. Should we not see sufficient improvement and further unauthorised absences taking place during this period, a Penalty Notice may be requested. A penalty notice is charged at £160 if paid within 28 days, with the opportunity to pay a reduced amount of £80 if paid within 21 days. If you have previously been issued a penalty notice in the last 3 years you will not be offered the opportunity to pay the reduced amount. Please note that a Penalty Notice may be issued as soon as an unauthorised absence is recorded.

If you wish to discuss this notice, or discuss what further support is available, please contact school as soon as possible. You should contact your child's Student Support Leader or our school Attendance officer Mrs A Foster.

Yours sincerely

Mrs C Unsworth
Deputy Headteacher

Appendix 6

Bolton Council

Important Update – Changes to Education-related Penalty Notices

Information for Parents

You may be aware that the Department for Education has recently announced national changes to penalty notices issued for unauthorised absence in term time. These changes will come into effect on 19 August 2024.

The changes to be aware of are:

- Penalty notices issued for offences that take place after 19 August 2024 will be charged at a new rate of £160 per parent per child. This can be paid at £80 if paid within 21 days.
- Any second penalty notice issued to the same parent for the same child within a rolling 3-year period will be issued at the rate of £160 to be paid within 28 days with no option for a discounted rate.
- The threshold at which a penalty notice must be considered is set at 10 sessions (equivalent to 5 days) of unauthorised absence within a rolling 10-school week period (1). This may include absences because of arriving late after the register closes. The 10 school weeks may span different terms or school years.
- A maximum of 2 penalty notices may be issued to a parent for the same child within a rolling 3-year period, so at the 3rd (or subsequent) offence(s) another course of action will need to be considered (such as prosecution or one of the other attendance legal interventions).
- Only penalty notices issued for absences taking place after 19 August 2024 will count towards the above thresholds.

Please see examples below for further clarification:

1. A penalty notice issued for any offence that begins prior to the 19 August will be issued under the existing rules. Therefore, it will (a) be charged at £60/£120, (b) not count towards the escalation whereby a second penalty notice within 3 years is charged at a flat rate of £160 and there is a limit of 2 penalty notices within 3 years and (c) will be issued in line with the LA thresholds for the 2023-24 academic year. This is regardless of whether the penalty notice is issued before or after the 19 August.

For example, if a parent takes a pupil out of school without authorised leave of absence in term time for 10 sessions or more in July 2024 but the penalty notice is not issued until September the old rules will be followed, including being

charged at the old rates of £60/£120. The penalty notice will not count towards the escalation.

2. A penalty notice issued for any offence that begins after 19 August will be issued under the new rules. Therefore, it will be (a) charged at £80/£160, (b) count towards the escalation, and (c) be issued in line with the new national threshold of 10 sessions in 10 weeks.

For example, a parent takes a pupil out of school for 5 days in the first week of the new term at the beginning of September 2024, the new rules will be followed.

Any term time holidays that are taken after the start of the 2024/25 academic year will be treated under the new legislation as the new rules apply to any offences committed from 19 August 2024, regardless of when the holiday is booked.

Appendix 7

Parents do not have an automatic right to take their children out of school for holidays during term time. By law you must ask permission to miss school. Parents wishing to apply for their child to have leave from school should complete this form for authorisation. We would like any submissions to be made at least 4 weeks in advance of the proposed date; School will not retrospectively grant any leave of absence. Applications for leave will be considered on a case by case basis, please include all relevant information.

Your request will be considered by the Headteacher / Deputy Headteacher and you will receive written notification to your address on file to inform you of the decision regarding authorisation.

