



POLICY DOCUMENT

Stratford-upon-Avon School is a company limited by guarantee, registered in England and Wales under number 7690776, whose registered office is Stratford-upon-Avon School, Alcester Road, Stratford-upon-Avon, Warwickshire CV37 9DH

ATTENDANCE POLICY

DISCLOSABLE UNDER FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000	Yes
TO BE PUBLISHED ON WEBSITE	Yes

POLICY OWNERSHIP	
Governor Committee:	Quality of Education
Attendance Governor	Mrs A Scott - Lee
Department responsible:	Quality of Education
Post-holder:	Mrs K Berwick Deputy Head Teacher & DSL
LINKED PROCEDURES REF:	
Responsible Person - Procedures	Mrs J Wilkinson Attendance Improvement Officer

POLICY REFERENCE	SUAS.P.1507.ATT02
POLICY IMPLEMENTATION DATE:	January 2025
PLANNED REVIEW INTERVAL:	1 Years
PLANNED NEXT REVIEW DATE:	January 2026

Stratford-upon-Avon School welcomes comments and suggestions from the public and staff about the contents and implementation of this policy. Please write to the Compliance Manager at the school address or email your comment to policy@stratfordschool.co.uk

i. **POLICY OUTLINE**

Stratford upon Avon School aims to maximise attendance rates in order to ensure that all pupils are able to take the fullest advantage of the learning experiences available to them.

ii. **PURPOSE**

The purpose of this policy is to ensure pupils attend school and to ensure support is given to those having difficulty attending.

iii. **IMPLICATIONS OF POLICY**

Compliance with the requirements and guidance laid out in this policy will ensure students attend school as often as possible. Failure to follow this policy will have negative impact of the education of pupils and may also put them at risk of child protection and safeguarding dangers.

iv. **EQUALITY**

Every policy will be subject of an Equality Analysis (EA) completed by the policy writer, which should be circulated to all those being consulted, with the draft policy.

v. **CONSULTATION**

Consultation will be with all staff holding significant financial responsibilities, prior to presentation for approval by the Governing Body (Pastoral Committee).

vi. **PROCEDURE**

Procedure is the method by which the strategic intent of the policy is realised, and is thus an 'instruction manual' on how the policy outcome is to be achieved.

The procedure which supports this policy is an independent document, for internal use by Academy staff. The procedure reference is shown on the Policy Identification Page.

The development or amendment of the procedure is at a tactical / operational level. There is therefore no necessity for active referral to the Governing Body **unless** the policy intent has been altered.

If there is significant change to the procedure element of the policy there may be a requirement to engage in the consultation process and refer to the Governing Body.

vii. **RELATED POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

- **Behaviour Policy** • **Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy**

viii. **DOCUMENT HISTORY**

The policy will be subject to regular review once ratified by the Governing Body. The history of the policy will be recorded using the chart following:

Date	Author /Reviewer	Amendment(s)	Approval/ adoption date
April 2015	K Berwick	Policy updated in line with Pastoral Governor requests	July 2015
10/15	K Berwick	Additional guidance from WAS added as Appendix 1	WAS appendix approved January 2019
01/19	K Berwick	Change of name from ACE to WAS	January 2019
01/22	J Wilkinson	Complete review and update	February 2022
01/23	J Wilkinson	Complete review and update	January 2023
01/24	J Wilkinson	Annual Review	January 2024
01/25	J Wilkinson	Annual review following DfE Updated Guidance to Schools (Sept 2024)	January 2025

Development/Monitoring/Review of this Policy

This Attendance Policy has been developed by following guidance from the Department for Education (DfE) 'working together to improve school attendance' 2024 and will be reviewed by the School Attendance Governor, Governing Body and Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) before publication.

The school will monitor the impact of the policy using:

- Attendance and absence reports and data dashboards
- Monitoring of Attendance Improvement Officer and College Leader concerns
- Monitoring of student behaviour data
- Monitoring of safeguarding issues raised via MyConcern

Scope of the Policy

This policy applies to all members of the school community (including staff, students, parents/carers, volunteers, visitors, community stakeholders) who support students and their attendance at school.

The Law – Legal Framework

The Education Act 1996 requires parents/carers or guardians to ensure their children receive efficient full-time education suitable to their age, ability and aptitude; to any special educational needs he may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise. A child is of compulsory school age at the beginning of the term following their 5th birthday.

Under the Education Act 1996, the Local Authority has a statutory responsibility to ensure that parents secure education for children of compulsory school age and where necessary, use legal enforcement.

Parents/carers and guardians have a legal responsibility to ensure their children receive efficient, full-time education by regular attendance at school or otherwise under section 7 of the Education Act 1996.

Section 576 Education Act 1996 defines 'parents' as:

- Any natural parent, whether married or not;
- Any parent who, although not a natural parent, has parental responsibility as defined in the Children Act (1989) for a child or young person;
- Any person who, although not a natural parent, has care of a child or young person.

If a child of compulsory school age fails to regularly attend the school which he/she is registered at, then the parent/guardian is guilty of an offence under section 444 of the Education Act 1996.

Schools must take the attendance register (roll call) at the beginning of each morning session and once during each afternoon session. On each occasion they must record whether every pupil is:

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

The school will record absences in line with the DfE Attendance coding guidelines as updated in Sept 2024.

Only the Headteacher or designated members of staff have the authority to authorise or unauthorise absences.

The school is obliged by law to differentiate between authorised and unauthorised absence. A letter, email or telephone message from a parent/carer does not in itself authorise an absence. Only if the school is satisfied as to the validity of the explanation offered will the absence be authorised.

Roles and Responsibilities

Improving student attendance at Stratford upon Avon School is the **responsibility of everyone in the school community**. The following section outlines roles and responsibilities of individuals and groups within the school alongside external stakeholders.

Governors/Board of Directors:

Governors are responsible for the approval of the school Attendance Policy and for reviewing the effectiveness of the policy. This will be carried out by the Governors receiving regular information about student attendance. A member of the Governing Body/Board has taken on the role of Attendance Governor. The role of the Attendance Governor will include:

- Regular meetings with the Attendance Improvement Officer
- Reporting to relevant Governors/Board/committee meeting

Headteacher and Senior Leaders:

- The Headteacher has a duty of care for ensuring satisfactory student attendance across the school, though the day-to-day responsibility for student attendance will be delegated to the DSL
- The Headteacher and (at least) another member of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) should be aware of the procedures to be followed with regards to student attendance concerns
- The Headteacher/ DSL are responsible for ensuring that they and other relevant staff receive suitable training, to enable them to carry out their student attendance monitoring roles and to train other colleagues, as relevant
- The Headteacher/Senior Leaders will ensure that there is a system in place to allow for monitoring and support of those in school who carry out a student attendance monitoring role. This is to provide a safety net and also support to those colleagues who take on important monitoring roles

Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL):

- Takes day to day responsibility for attendance issues and has a leading role in establishing and reviewing the school attendance policy/documents
- Ensures that all staff are aware of the procedures that need to be followed in the event of a student attendance concern
- Provides training and advice for staff
- Liaises with the Local Authority/relevant body
- Receives reports of student attendance concerns
- Meets regularly with the Attendance Governor to discuss current issues

- Reports regularly to Senior Leadership Team

The DSL should be trained in attendance issues and be aware of the potential for serious child protection safeguarding issues to arise from:

- Truancy, unsociable behaviour, secretiveness (phones, devices, location)
- CSE (child sexual exploitation) - potential or actual incidents of grooming
- County Lines – gang drug involvement
- Drug, vape & alcohol miss use
- Social media platforms – sharing of personal data, inappropriate on-line contact with adults/strangers, cyber-bullying, access to illegal/inappropriate materials, gaming addictions
- Mental health/self-harm concerns - always tired, lack of interest in family, friends, school
- Neglect in the home – physical, sexual or emotional
- Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE's)
- FGM (female genital mutilation)

Globally most Muslims do not practice FGM, it is neither a requirement nor a `Sunna` in Islam. We are aware that some UK communities are more at risk than others. FGM is illegal in the UK and considered to be child abuse. As such we will follow appropriate safeguarding procedure whenever FGM is a possible reason for absence from school or removal from roll.

Teaching and Support Staff:

Teaching and support staff are responsible for ensuring that:

- They have an up-to-date awareness of attendance/absence matters and of the school Attendance Policy and practices
- All students have a good understanding of school attendance expectations and the detrimental impact of absence on their social development, academic learning and progress in school
- They raise any attendance concerns to the Attendance Improvement Officer or relevant form tutor or College Leader
- Safeguarding concerns are reported via the MyConcern platform in school
- Parents/carers are informed promptly of any concerns which may arise over a child's attendance
- Parents/carers are written to by the school when appropriate throughout the academic year to offer guidance and support
- Parents/carers whose first language is not English or who have literacy problems will be offered appropriate support from school in matters of communication
- Calls to parents/carers/social worker/youth worker are made where necessary for absence concerns
- **Unreported student absence** is communicated to parents/carers via text and email alert messages following A.M & P.M roll call in line with DfE expectations

Students:

- All students including sixth form are expected to attend school by **8.45a.m every day** and arrive promptly to **all of their lessons**
- Students are expected to wear the correct school uniform and be well equipped and be ready to learn
- Should absence be necessary during a school day to attend an appointment, students are requested to register with their Period 1 and Period 4 teacher to secure daily attendance marks, to then be released from school by the Attendance Support Room (ASR) at the required time

- Students need to have a good understand of the correlation between attendance and absence, in relation to social, emotional health and academic progress and attainment at school
- Students must appreciate the school's aims and take personal responsibility for their daily attendance
- Students must feel able to raise issues of concern about their attendance with staff in school
- Students who experience attendance difficulties will be offered prompt and sympathetic support, initially from the form tutor, and if the need should arise from their College Leader, Progress Leader, Attendance Improvement Officer, Educational Welfare Coordinator or student mentor if appropriate
- Students should endeavour to develop skills and attributes to become a positive and contributing member of the school and wider community

Parents/Carers:

Are responsible for ensuring that:

Their child attends school regularly (*every day the school is open*) for an **8.45a.m** start, wearing the correct school uniform, with appropriate equipment and in a condition ready to learn.

- They notify any absence from school including medical appointments or late arrival, by leaving a voicemail message on the school 24-hour student absence line **01789 209296**, or by emailing attendance@stratfordschool.co.uk by 9.00a.m on **each day of absence** to support school safeguarding processes
- They monitor their child's school attendance regularly via the My Child at School (MCAS) parent portal to ensure their child/ren are making the most of their educational opportunities in school
- They reach out to school at the earliest opportunity to request support should absence become a concern or 'habit'
- Routine medical/dental appointments are made outside of school hours where possible
- A confirmatory note is written in the student planner, to allow the student to leave class and sign out at the Attendance Support Room (ASR), to attend an appointment during the school day if required
- When requested by school, provide medical evidence from a healthcare professional to support long term absence, or repeated absences due to a known health/medical condition, where a reasonable adjustment is necessary to support learning in school

The Role of the Authority:

- Local authorities (LAs) are responsible by law, for making sure that registered pupils of compulsory school age attend their school regularly
- The LA employs Educational Caseworkers to monitor school attendance and to help parents meet their legal responsibilities
- Educational Caseworkers work closely with schools, students and parents/carers
- If your child is not attending school regularly, an Educational Caseworker may contact you
- For your child's sake you should co-operate with the Educational Caseworker to make sure your child overcomes attendance problems, to receive a proper and valuable education
- If you do not do everything you can to co-operate with the Educational Caseworker and school, the LA may have no choice but to issue a parenting order or apply for an education supervision order. This means that the court appoints a supervisor to help and give advice to you and your child

The LA can also prosecute you in a magistrate's court. This could result in parents/carers being fined up to £2500 for each child of attendance concern.

Policy Statements

Education - School

All staff will encourage good attendance and good punctuality through personal example. Attendance is the responsibility of all school staff, not just teaching and pastoral staff.

The school will be approachable and supportive to demonstrate that every child matters and will employ a range of support options to encourage good attendance and good punctuality, The school will liaise closely with students, parents/carers on a daily basis. Staff will investigate and respond to all absenteeism and lateness, fairly, firmly, consistently and with a duty of care, to help reduce absence from school, to support students' social and emotional development and academic outcomes.

Registration (Roll Call)

Students are expected to be in school by **8.45a.m for a prompt start to their Period 1 lesson** prior to the school gates being closed. A.M registration (roll call) will be taken at the start of Period 1 lesson, with P.M registration (roll call) taken at the start of Period 4 lesson. Registers will close 30 minutes after the start of P1 and P4 lesson. If a student fails to arrive before the register closes, they will be marked as 'absent'. The class teacher will amend the register entry to read 'late' provided the pupil reaches their classroom before the close of the register. Students with unreported roll call absence (no contact from home) will be notified to parents at the earliest opportunity and after morning registers have been taken.

The canteen is open from 8.10a.m with access to main school from 8.30a.m. We encourage all students to be in school in plenty of time to be ready to learn at 8.45a.m.

Late Arrival:

- Students arriving **after 8.45a.m** (published school start time) are recorded as **arriving late** under DfE guidelines and must enter school via the late entry door to provide a reason for their lateness
- We appreciate students travelling by local authority school bus have no control over their arrival time (exemption to a late mark may apply); and on occasions public transport. We would ask parents to report any persistent late arrivals direct to the travel company
- Students arriving after 9.00a.m must enter school via main reception to provide a reason for their lateness
- Students arriving after 9.15a.m without a valid reason will be recorded as an unauthorised late arrival
- Late arrival **must be avoided** to ensure a smooth start to everyone's day
- Late arrival **disrupts the flow of learning** in lessons, creating gaps in student knowledge
- Late arrival **sets a poor example** for later life opportunities, further education, apprenticeship, employment etc
- Late arrival if persistent without a genuine reason will be challenged, with parents/carers invited into school to discuss the concern

Welcoming over 1900 students onto the school site each day requires attendance and punctuality expectations to be met by all students, to ensure high standards are maintained. **Poor punctuality** can become a **'habit'** and our approach to tardiness is designed to re-educate student actions, to promote good punctuality as an essential life skill. We do appreciate travel plans may need to be adjusted from time to time, to take into account congestion, temporary traffic lights and roadworks etc. For students

travelling by car, setting off just 15 minutes earlier in the majority of cases ensures a prompt arrival to school.

If a student arrives late to school without a satisfactory explanation, staff in the Attendance Support Room will contact the parent/carer to confirm an after-school detention will be set, for the same day as the late arrival. Students will be expected to remain behind with their form tutor at the end of the day for 10 minutes.

For repeated late arrival without a genuine reason (x 2 per week) a 1-hour detention will be set, and parent/carer will be notified. This action is designed to enable students to reflect and take responsibility for their actions, to understand the value of being in lessons on time to make the most of their learning opportunities.

Form tutors will be sent a weekly record of absenteeism/lateness by the Attendance Improvement Officer, so that they can monitor the attendance of those students causing concern and discuss strategies to reduce absence/lateness where appropriate. The Attendance Improvement Officer will maintain an overview of the whole school picture.

Department for Education (DfE) – Persistent/Severe Absence Definition

A student is defined by the Government as a '**persistent absentee**' when they **miss 10%** or more of their possible attendance (equivalent to 1 day or more a fortnight) across the full school year and a '**severe absentee**' when they **miss 50%** or more of their possible attendance for any reason; this can be authorised or unauthorised absence.

This level of attendance may/will invariably have a detrimental impact on their social and emotional development, academic progress and educational outcomes. We will work closely with students, parents/carers and Warwickshire Attendance Service (WAS) to help resolve issues leading to persistent/severe absence. Parents/carers may be asked to provide **medical evidence** to support repeated or long term absence when appropriate, to confirm their child is unable to access their legally entitled full-time curriculum.

Authorised/Unauthorised Absence

It is vital that all members of staff are aware of the criteria for deciding whether or not to authorise an absence.

Stratford upon Avon School will decide how an absence is to be recorded in accordance with the latest DfE guidance, 'working together to improve school attendance' (*updated September 2024*).

Absence can be authorised if:

- The pupil was absent with agreed leave for an exceptional circumstance (defined as 'leave granted by any person authorised to do so by the governing body of the school'). For example, if a pupil is attending graduation of an older sibling
- The pupil was ill or prevented from attending by any unavoidable cause
- The absence occurred on a day exclusively set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong
- The school at which the child is a registered pupil is not within walking distance of the child's home, and no suitable arrangements have been made by the LA for any of the following:
 1. the child's transport to and from school

2. boarding accommodation for the child at or near the school, and
 3. enabling the child to become a registered pupil at a school nearer to his/her home
- The pupil is the child of traveller parents and the conditions as stated in the Education Act 1996 Section 444 (6) are met.
 - There is a family bereavement/funeral.
 - The pupil is attending an interview with either a prospective employer or in connection with an application for a place at an institute of further or higher education, or for a place at another school.
 - A Year 11 pupil is granted study leave.
 - For students classed as being persistently absent (P.A) or severely absent (S.A) from school, repeated absence will be challenged and may be unauthorised by the school should medical evidence or further verification not be forthcoming, i.e copy of a GP prescription, sight or photo of named and dated medicine, medical appointment card etc. We must be convinced repeated absences are genuine to ensure we do not condone truancy

Absence should be unauthorised if:

- No explanation is forthcoming and no response to absence alert messages sent home
- The school is dissatisfied with the explanation provided
- The pupil stays at home to mind the house or to look after siblings (the guidance suggests that absence in such cases should only be granted in exceptional circumstances).
- The pupil stays at home to look after pets
- The pupil is absent for unexceptional special occasion (e.g a birthday/treat/family gathering/event)
- The pupil is away from school on a family holiday without authorisation from school in writing
- Medical evidence is not provided for students with attendance below the DfE persistent absence (P.A) level of 90% and severe absence level of 50%

Leave of Absence – Holidays/Events/Family Gatherings/Days Out - During Term Time

The DfE 'Working Together to Improve School Attendance' 2024 guidance states:

“Generally, the DfE does not consider the need or a desire for a holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure and recreation to be an exceptional circumstance”.

We remind parents/carers that any absence has a detrimental impact on learning and outcomes.

Applications for leave of absence (LOA) must be **made in advance by the primary carer** (the adult who the child normally resides with for the majority of the time) and sent to the Attendance Improvement Officer at school for consideration. Written confirmation of the school's decision will be sent to the address we hold on file for the student.

Removing children from school disrupts the flow of their learning, creating gaps in their knowledge, and can lead to Fixed Penalty Notices being issued by the Local Authority (LA), Warwickshire Attendance Service (WAS), to each parent/carer of each child. Where a Fixed Penalty Notice is issued and not paid within the required time frame as set out on the notice, the matter will be referred to W.C.C Legal Services to consider instigating criminal proceedings under S444 Education Act 1996.

When pupils are absent from school without approval, we may refer to WAS (see appendix 1).

Strategies for promoting good attendance:

- Stratford upon Avon School will offer an environment in which students feel safe, welcomed, valued, and supported. The school's ethos will demonstrate that students feel their presence in school is important, that they will be missed when they are absent/late and that follow up action will be taken.
- A varied and flexible curriculum will be offered to all students. Every effort will be made to ensure that learning tasks are matched to students' needs
- Parents will be reminded regularly (via the school website, attendance/curriculum emails, academic reports, Bromcom - My Child at School (MCAS) portal, the school prospectus, parents' evenings etc.) of the importance of regular attendance and the impact of absence
- Both teaching and pastoral staff in school will listen carefully to students and parents/carers concerns to help resolve any in school barriers to student learning
- Staff may signpost families to external agencies for appropriate support, when necessary, to help improve student welfare and attendance levels
- Attendance and absence data will be regularly collected and analysed by the Attendance Improvement Officer, College Leaders and Progress Leaders to help identify patterns of student absence
- Attendance support meetings will be offered to students and parents/carers to plan a way forward to reduce absence, allowing school actions plans to be developed
- Formal school attendance targets will be set for students of concern
- The Attendance Improvement Officer will monitor school action plans and feedback to relevant staff in school including form tutors should absence concerns continue
- Attendance expectations will be a regular feature in college assemblies and tutor group time
- Parents/carers may be asked to provide medical evidence to authorise persistent/severe absences. Medical evidence can be confirmation of an appointment (GP/hospital letter, appointment card, text, email etc), copy of a prescription, sight of prescribed medication This will allow appropriate support measures to be considered after a short period of ill health if necessary
- To support *longer term* ongoing student absence due to a physical or emotional health need, school may ask parent/carer to provide a medical evidence letter from a GP or healthcare professional, should parent/carer request reasonable adjustments be made. Professional healthcare guidance to indicate appropriate long term support strategies, to facilitate a return to full-time education is very useful for school staff to be aware of
- Students who are absent through illness for any *extended period of time* may (when appropriate) be re-integrated back into school upon their return, via an individually tailored reintegration programme as agreed by their College Leader (phased return)
- College Leaders and the Assistant Head for Inclusion will (when appropriate) liaise with external agencies when this may serve to support and assist students, who are experiencing attendance difficulties
- The Attendance Improvement Officer alongside pastoral College Leaders will have termly targeted support meetings with Warwickshire Attendance Service (WAS), who monitor students in school with persistent absence (below 90%) and severe absence (below 50%)
- A referral to WAS may be made to seek guidance and support should high levels of **unauthorised absence persist**, despite support options being offered by school but not taken up or where there is poor engagement from a parent/carer
- WAS may issue an Attendance Contract to parents/carers to help secure improved levels of engagement and school attendance

- The Headteacher will make an annual report to the school's governing body on attendance matters. In addition, it is recommended that the Headteacher reports on attendance to the governors termly
- Visits will be made to feeder primary schools to ensure the smoothest possible secondary school transfer. Discussions with primary school teachers will seek to identify those pupils who may require extra support during this process. They may be supported by:
 - Group work
 - Parent groups
 - Project work for identified groups of youngsters who may be vulnerable to poor attendance

Education – students

All students must attend school regularly (*every day the school is open*) to learn successfully and to achieve their individual potential. All students have a personal responsibility for their attendance level in school and must be mindful of taking absence.

- Students must feel safe in school and know who to report any concerns to
- Students are encouraged to engage with their form tutor, College Leader or an appropriate member of staff to highlight any barriers to their learning in school and to request support when necessary
- Students are actively encouraged to participate in a wide range of extra-curricular activities to enhance their experiences and time at school. This can have such a positive effect on their social and emotional health, friendship groups and outcomes at school

Education – parents/carers

The importance of regular school attendance cannot be overestimated.

It is essential to secure a valuable and good education to enhance future life chances and establishing it must be a **daily priority for schools**, parents/carers and students alike. Support, influence, guidance from home and family cooperation with school staff is essential, to allow students every opportunity to thrive and feel proud of their education.

The reasons why attendance problems arise are many and varied. They are often complex and require sensitive and professional handling.

Children who do not attend school regularly diminish the value of the education provided for them. They may also damage the learning of other because of the disruption that can be caused to other students. It is the duty of parents/carers to secure education for their children and for the Local Authority (LA) to ensure that this duty is carried out.

Warwickshire Attendance Service (WAS) carries out this duty on behalf of the Local Authority. WAS also carries out a number of other duties relating to the welfare of children in the education setting and with employment matter concerning school age children.

Periods of Remote Learning at Home – Exceptional Circumstances

There may be rare occasions when children are expected to work from home (as directed by the DfE or school), by accessing remote learning online under the supervision of parents/carers.

When appropriate there may be a mixture of 'live' teacher led lessons and complimentary work set for timetabled lessons. Students will be expected to log into each session to complete the work set and feedback to their teachers if appropriate. Students will also be expected to log into their tutor group session as requested by their form tutor. The tutor registration mark will enable school staff to complete a welfare check to ensure students are 'safe & well' at home and will satisfy the school's safeguarding requirements. Students who fail to engage with remote learning, or parents/carers who fail to engage with staff making contact to check on welfare, may result in a 'Child Missing in Education' referral to the Local Authority for investigation.

The same high standards of behaviour will be expected when accessing remote schooling, as in the school classroom. Staff will monitor remote lessons and contact home should concerns arise. Students experiencing problems with accessing remote learning from home should contact their form tutor in the first instance for support. College Leaders and Progress Leaders will monitor 'learning from home' and contact parents/carers if they have any concerns regarding student engagement or welfare.

Pupils with long-term attendance problems

Truancy – What do we mean?

There is no identikit truant because reasons for non-attendance at school or to lessons can be varied and often complex. Children may fail to attend school for a number of reasons, including illness (physical or emotional), family bereavement, visits to the country of origin, family holidays, being a young carer, unhappiness at school, peer pressure or finally a defiant rejection of parental or school expectations.

The term 'truancy' has generally been used where the decision to miss school is taken by the child without parental or other authority permission and where the child uses the time for his or her own purpose. This truancy is seen as either a response to unhappiness, or more commonly a small act of rebellion. It does not encompass the many other occasions on which a child may not attend school for other reasons.

Some of the most important factors behind truancy lie outside of school, most often in family relationships and external pressures. But how schools operate can make a great difference in shaping whether children do in fact truant.

What school and the Warwickshire Attendance Service (WAS) service can do:

The three major areas of influence upon non-attendance (individual, family and social, and school factors) require close co-operation between a range of services to reduce truancy.

Strategies to tackle truancy in Warwickshire:

- Schools having a proactive school attendance policy
- Joint working between schools and WAS to effectively reduce persistent and unauthorised absence
- School targets in line with DfE target setting guidelines
- Governors taking an active role in monitoring their school's performance on attendance
- LA targets to reduce unauthorised absence
- Publish data on schools' performance on attendance
- Computerised roll call/lesson registrations so schools can identify patterns and possible cures

- Curriculum – initiatives on opening up opportunities at KS4
- Police/community support officers powers to reduce truants
- Attendance contracts – a voluntary agreement between parents/carers, Warwickshire Attendance Service (WAS) and school setting clear expectations and goals
- Parenting Order – where a parent has been convicted of failing to secure a child’s attendance at school. Court will be able to impose a parenting order for up to 12 months. It can include specific obligations upon the parent (e.g. parent escorts the child to school)
- Fixed Penalty Notices and prosecution of parents where appropriate, who fail to ensure that their child attends regularly

“School Avoidance / School Refusal”

Principles:

Often youngsters reluctant/refusing to attend school have complex, inter-relating difficulties arising from health (physical or emotional), family, social and educational factors.

In cases where non-attendance becomes well established, involvement of professionals beyond the school may be indicated. It is important that their respective roles and responsibilities are agreed and that clear procedures for liaison, consultation and collaboration are established.

The key principles under-pinning roles, responsibilities and procedures are:

- The school retains responsibility for ensuring that the involvement of the various agencies is gained, as appropriate
- The group of involved professionals is jointly responsible for the decision to seek to involve a further professional group
- Decisions to involve a given professional group will be based on:
 - clarification of the roles and responsibilities of each group
 - responsibilities of each group for example, experience
- Withdrawal from a case by any professional group follows the agreement of the existing stakeholder group

School Responsibilities in relation to School Avoidance / School Refusal:

To develop a school culture that operates to reduce the risk of school refusal. This may include policy and practice regarding:

- Bullying and other forms of harassment, including racial, sexual harassment
- Social inclusion
- Extra-curricular opportunities
- Mentoring schemes
- Special Educational Needs

To raise teachers’ awareness of the indicators of a child at risk of school refusal.

- Training
- School policy regarding the respective roles of SEND and pastoral care staff
- Engage with parents
- Investigate promptly with a sensitive approach any school-based difficulties and respond
- Consult Warwickshire Attendance Service (WAS)
- Consult School Health staff

- Avoid any indication on condoning absence

To identify a named person to ensure referral to other agencies, as appropriate.

- This is the role of the Assistant Head for inclusion

Warwickshire Attendance Service (WAS) Responsibilities in relation to School Avoidance / School Refusal:

To advise schools of their responsibilities in relation to individual cases i.e. support implementation of school's responsibilities. In collaboration with the school, to advise parents of:

- The legal position
- Their responsibilities
- Signpost available support and intervention services/agencies where appropriate

In addition:

- To liaise with school health advisers
- To plan further action on the basis of agreed approaches
- To discuss with school and family the possible need for:
 - Further social/academic assessment
 - Further within school support, for example, by SEND support services

To establish and maintain Warwickshire County Council's database re children out of school

Educational Psychology Service (EPS) Responsibilities in relation to School Refusal:

- To consult with those already involved
- Where necessary, to carry out further assessments
To advise on future case management, generally

Health Service Responsibilities in Relation to Medically Certified Ill Health / School Avoidance / Refusal:

School Health

To provide consultation to parents, school and WAS about possible Child and Adolescent Mental Health (CAMHS) concerns, and about other health issues. As appropriate to communicate such concerns to child's G.P and CAMHS/RISE support services.

General Practitioners (G.P)

G.P's have been asked to liaise with schools, either directly (with parents/carers permission) or through School Health staff, when presented with cases of absence due to confirmed medical need or school avoidance/school refusal.

Child and Adolescent Mental Health (CAMHS) concerns

CAMHS/RISE professionals may become involved with cases where school reluctance/school refusal is a concern before the case is brought to the attention of Warwickshire Attendance Service (WAS). If this happens it would be helpful, if the family is willing, to inform the school's named person. (From within the Education Service, referrals to CAMHS would not normally be expected prior to consultation with the school's E.P.)

Children who are unable to attend school for medically certified health reasons

The school retains responsibility for the delivery of a student's education for as long as the pupil is on the school roll. Sick children must not be taken off the school register without the consent of their parents/carers and prior consultation with the LA, even after long absences arising from ill health. Some pupils may be too sick or unwell to do any schoolwork, but schools should not assume that students away from school because of ill health are unable to work. The school should ensure that:

- A GP/healthcare professional, medical evidence letter is requested of a parent/carer, to confirm the need for absence plus suggested support strategies to facilitate education
- All long-term non-attendance related to **medically certified** ill health be this physical or emotional, is properly authorised and regularly monitored by a GP/healthcare professional
- Advice and assistance are sought as appropriate from the School Health Service and/or the WAS Service when requested by either the parent or school
- A referral is made via the school inclusion team for school Flex Learning support to be considered where appropriate
- The LA will be advised of students who are not in a position to access their legally entitled full-time education

The Assistant Head for Inclusion, College Leaders and Educational Welfare Coordinator are the staff nominated as responsible for co-ordinating educational provision, for each pupil unable to attend school because of long term **medically certified** ill health. The school will work closely with students and parents/carers to ensure the delivery of education remains our priority.

The nominated members of staff must;

- Consider the possibility of providing a short-term reduced timetable to support a phased return
- Consider the possibility of education via school Flex Learning, when a pupil has been absent for two weeks or more, or when there is a series of absence of one week or more
- Or when it is considered that the long-term health needs of the student may result in intermittent attendance, which could have a significant impact on the students' education
- Contact parents/carers to discuss student needs or reasonable adjustments and make appropriate educational provision
- If appropriate liaise with the school Flex Learning, Educational Welfare Coordinator to ensure mutually acceptable arrangements have been made with parents/carers for a suitable programme of work, the regular setting, supervision, marking and collection of work for students signed off school
- Consider with parents/carers whether it would be appropriate for any member of the school staff to undertake a pastoral visit to home or hospital, or whether it would be appropriate to encourage school friends to write or visit
- Liaise with all relevant Education, Health or Social Service professionals
- Maintain records of all pupils for whom the LA is providing education out of school

Procedures for Tracking and Monitoring Pupils Out of School

Warwickshire Attendance Service (WAS) is the service responsible for tracking and monitoring pupils out of school.

Elective Home Education - EHE

For parents/carers opting to educate their child otherwise than at school (elective home education) the following information should be carefully considered, to ensure a fully informed decision is being made.

The school does not recommend or endorse Elective Home Education, as we believe the best interest of the child's social and emotional development, learning, progress, achievements and outcomes are best secured by attending lessons in school on a regular basis. Conducted by professional teaching staff with pastoral guidance and support. However, we acknowledge this is a parental right should this decision be made after fully reviewing LA and schools' guidance.

- To de-register a student from the school roll, written confirmation from the primary parent/carer will be required confirming 'education otherwise than at school' (EHE). A 10-day cooling off period will be allowed to ensure the decision to home educate is the most appropriate option to be taken by the family
- A centrally held Local Authority register of all home educated children is managed by the Principal Lead at Warwickshire County Council (W.C.C)
- Schools will forward to the LA a copy of the de-registration letter or email received from the primary parent/carer, together with a school exit form confirming the removal from school roll due to Elective Home Education or education otherwise than at school
- The LA will carry out a home visit to explain the monitoring system and whether parents/carers are clear on all the implications of elective home education
- An annual LA inspection occurs with the family

Procedures for checking children who move away from a school without notice.

Regulation 9. (1) G. The Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 1995.

- Where a pupil of compulsory school age has been continuously absent for four weeks or more, his/her name may not be deleted from the admission register until both the school and the local education authority have failed after reasonable enquiry, to locate the pupil.
- School should carry out all reasonable parent/carer, friends, neighbour enquiries which could include:
 - Telephone calls, email, text
 - Letter to parents/carers
 - Any information from peers/friendship groups
 - Contact with any other known associates or professionals
 - Home Visit
 - Check with neighbours/local residents

If the child is known to be on the Child Protection Register the school will advise the registrar immediately.

- If child is out of school for 2 weeks (10 school days) without explanation being given, despite the school's best attempts to contact parents/carers, home and student, then referral to Warwickshire County Council's Child Missing Education (CME) team happens as a matter of course.

WAS Caseworkers will then carry out those enquiries which are appropriate:

(Timeline 2 weeks)

- Home visit immediately
 - Check with neighbours to establish if family have moved
 - Contact emergency numbers
 - Contact child's friends
 - Contact Housing Association
 - Contact other services involved
 - Contact health agencies
-
- If no information found, LA agree with school if appropriate to remove the child from the school roll
 - Common Transfer file to be uploaded onto 'School2School' database
 - If the local authority the family have moved to is known, Warwickshire Attendance Service (WAS) will write to them with details of the family and attendance concerns

Useful Information for Parents/Carers - Vital Statistics on Attending School

Each year there are 190 statutory school days, which means that if your child misses 8 days, they are out of school more than they are in school. This means there are 185 days for:

- Shopping and social activities
- Birthday treats and trips
- Holidays or family gatherings

Use these 185 days: not valuable school time!

None of the above are authorised reasons for being out of school and time off school will hinder your child's learning and progress. Unauthorised absence marks will appear on your child's official school attendance report and may lead to legal action being taken against you as the parents/carers.

'Every Day Counts' to ensure your child's future success Remember school time is precious – don't waste it!

- 1 day absent from school = 5 lessons missed = gaps in knowledge
- 95% Attendance = 1 days absent per month = 10 school days missed per year
- 90% Attendance = 2 days absent per month = 10 lessons missed per month
- 80% Attendance = 1 day absent per week = 200 lessons missed per year
- 17 days absence between Year 7 & 11 = 1 GCSE grade reduction

Unnecessary days off school can soon mount and students are responsible for the catching up of work missed. Attending school every day is the right choice for 'your child' and 'our student'.

Some Good Advice to Children and Young People

Good reasons to attend school:

- To grow and develop personal resilience – this enables students to face everyday challenges, cope with flexible or changing situations and participate fully in their school and home life
- Friendships – an opportunity for understanding and cooperation with others
- Education and learning – key component for lifelong success
- Knowledge – development of ideas and interests
- Opportunities and choices – to support future learning and careers
- Games/team activities – to enhance life skills and appreciation of others

10 tips to help you get there:

- Go to bed at a reasonable time to unwind and maintain good overall health
- Turn off electronic devices to promote quality sleep and to restore energy
- Make sure the alarm is set to wake you early enough to be in school on time
- Eat well - allow enough time for breakfast, fuel for the body – just like ‘fuel for a car’
- Set off in good time to get to the bus stop with the correct bus pass/fare
- Pack your bag the night before and be well prepared – good time management skills
- Make sure your uniform is ready including a tie, school planner and equipment
- If you find your homework hard, or if you have not done it, talk to your parents/carers/teachers
- If you are having difficulties at school, find an adult you trust for advice and support
- Use social media platforms sensibly and only communicate with people ***you actually know in person***

Remember

- We genuinely care and we are here to help to remove barriers to learning, to ensure all young people receive a good quality full-time education that they are legally entitled to
- Early support measures help to resolve absence issues leading to greater attendance at school

MCAS – My Child at School Parental Portal

Please check to ensure the details we hold on file are up to date and accurate, in respect of parent/carer address, parent/carer email address, parent/carer contact numbers and emergency contact details.

This is essential and will ensure first aid staff are able to contact you if the need arises, should your child become unwell or have an accident at school. It will also allow for teaching/pastoral staff to contact home with praise or to raise a concern.

Amendments to the information we hold can be made by sending an email to admin@stratfordschool.co.uk.

Parents/carers are encouraged to monitor their child’s roll call and class register attendance marks regularly and discuss any concerns with their child or form tutor if necessary.

Data protection

See the school Data Protection policy.

Leave of Absence

- 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.

Expectations

- A leave of absence is granted entirely at the school's discretion. Permission for a Leave of Absence from a school may only be given by a person who the school's proprietor has authorised to do so (an authorised person).
- Schools must judge each application individually considering the specific facts and circumstances and relevant background context behind each request.
- Generally, a need or desire for a holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure and recreation would not constitute an exceptional circumstance.
- Where a leave of absence is granted, the school will determine the number of days a pupil can be absent from school.
- 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 school may also request further information on the application and supporting documentation where appropriate.
- It is advised that if the resident parent has not received notification or a response regarding the leave of absence application, it is their responsibility to ascertain if the leave is authorised prior to the start of the leave.
- 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.
- 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'.
- All matters of unauthorised absence relating to a Leave of Absence will be referred to the Warwickshire Attendance Service of Warwickshire County Council. Penalty notices are issued in accordance with Warwickshire County Council's Code of Conduct for Penalty Notices and in the first instance, as an alternative to prosecution proceedings.
- 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.

Leave of Absence taken in the academic year 2024-25

The law relating to Penalty Notices changed with effect from 19 August 2024. Therefore, Penalty Notices issued for Leave of Absence taken from September 2024 will be issued in accordance with the updated legislation.

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).

- First Leave of Absence Offence: The amount of £160 to be paid within 28 days, this is reduced to £80 each child if paid within 21 days.
- Second Leave of Absence Offence within a 3-year period (from the date of issue of the first penalty notice): The amount of £160 paid within 28 days. No reduced amount.
- Third Leave of Absence offence within a 3-year period (from the date of issue of the first penalty notice). A Penalty Notice will not be issued, and the matter will be referred to Warwickshire County Council's Legal Services to consider instigating criminal prosecution proceedings under S444 of Education Act 1996.