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1.0	New policy	21/06/2024	New school	ZJ
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Related Policies:

Policy Ref No.	Policy Name	Policy No.	Ref	Policy Name
OP/03	Anti-bullying	OP/06		Behaviour for Learning
OP/09	Complaints Policy and Procedure	OP/20		SEND
S/01	Child Protection and Safeguarding	S/10		Exclusion Policy
HS/06	Positive Mental Health and Wellbeing			

Attendance Policy

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This policy is in line with the Independent School Standards and the School Attendance: Guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities published by the DfE (May 2022 and updated August 2024). It supports the ethos, mission statement and vision of the school and should be read in conjunction with other whole school policies, particularly those relating to Positive Behaviour Management, Anti-Bullying and Equal Opportunities.

1. Statement and Vision

- 1.1 Watermelon Schools is an independent alternative day school for pupils aged 8-18 with a range of complex needs including SEMH and ASC. Our pupils have often had disrupted attendance at school in the past, often missing significant periods (years) of education and may have also experienced several school placements.
- 1.2 Watermelon Schools aims to enable each child to make the maximum progress possible. It acknowledges that in order for pupils to fulfil their potential, regular attendance is vital. Good attendance is crucial in helping all pupils achieve both academic and personal success. We strive to achieve attendance in line with mainstream school attendance. Attendance targets are monitored on a weekly basis and discussed at termly staff meetings.
- 1.3 We provide a caring, welcoming environment so that each member of the school community feels valued and supported. The strong pastoral ethos of the school, and our good links with our parents/carers, means that all staff work with students and their families to remove barriers to attendance by putting the right support in place.
- 1.4 At Watermelon Schools, we believe that all of our pupils, regardless of gender, ethnicity, ability, disability or sexuality are entitled to a high-quality education that will maximise their life chances. The school values each pupil and is committed to providing all with a high standard of education and opportunities for learning in order that they can best enjoy the experiences, opportunities and rewards of adult life. We ensure that the curriculum provided for each pupil is appropriate to their attainment, capability and need, to enable each child to engage with the education and learning.
- 1.5 We recognise that attendance monitoring is an important aspect of safeguarding. The school seeks to develop and maintain good relationships with parents/carers, and to communicate regularly and effectively with them over issues of attendance and punctuality.
- 1.6 This policy aims to show our commitment to meeting our obligations with regards to school attendance, including those laid out in the Department for Education's (DfE's) statutory guidance [on working together to improve school attendance \(applies from 19 August 2024\)](#), through our whole-school culture and ethos that values good attendance, including:
 - i. setting high expectations for the attendance and punctuality of all pupils
 - ii. promoting good attendance and the benefits of good attendance
 - iii. reducing absence, including persistent and severe absence
 - iv. ensuring every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled
 - v. acting early to address patterns of absence
 - vi. building strong relationships with families to make sure pupils have the support in place to attend school.

We will also promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

1.7 Absence from the school is likely to disadvantage pupils because:

- i. those absent miss planned teaching and learning opportunities
- ii. the deployment of support for pupils who are, or have been, absent can hinder the learning of other pupils
- iii. individual pupils' development of social skills and their social integration within their peer group may be hampered by repeated or significant absence
- iv. absence from school may be a result of other factors threatening the child's welfare and is therefore identified as a safeguarding risk factor

1.9 Poor level of punctuality is likely to disadvantage pupils because:

- i. learning opportunities within the lesson are missed
- ii. learning and concentration levels of other pupils within the lesson is disrupted
- iii. behaviour for learning may be compromised as other pupils may resent the disruption, whilst the pupil joining the lesson late may find it difficult to engage with the lesson once key learning episodes have been missed.

2. Purposes:

2.1 The purpose of the attendance policy is:

- i. to promote good attendance and excellent punctuality from all pupils at the school
- ii. to maintain a consistent approach to monitoring and recording the attendance of all pupils in the school by stating the responsibilities of school, staff, parents and guardians
- iii. to ensure the school is able to provide attendance data as required for monitoring by the commissioning local authorities
- iv. to support the school's safeguarding arrangements for all pupils
- v. to identify unauthorised absence, providing guidance for addressing instances of such absence.

3. Aims

3.1 Watermelon Schools strives to:

- i. maintain and improve the overall percentage attendance of students at school
- ii. maintain a framework which defines agreed roles and responsibilities and promotes consistency in carrying out designated tasks
- iii. provide support, advice and guidance to parents/carers and students
- iv. maintain and develop positive and consistent communication between home, the commissioning schools, local authorities and the school
- v. work effectively with external agencies when necessary
- vi. recognise the needs of the individual student when planning reintegration following significant periods of absence.

3.1.1. To maintain and improve the overall percentage attendance of students at school

- i. all members of staff will apply the attendance policy consistently, detailing absences on appropriate forms.
- ii. the school and all members of staff should establish and maintain a high profile for attendance and punctuality.

3.1.2 To maintain a framework which defines roles and responsibilities, and promotes consistency in carrying out designated tasks

- i. a clear procedure for statutory registration is established, shared with parents/ carers and implemented
- ii. telephone contact with parents/carers is made after 9.30am on the first day of absence should parents/carers fail to notify the school
- iii. respond promptly to lateness, in respect of both parents/carers and students
- iv. internal procedures for tracking and responding to absence and lateness are implemented
- v. referrals to external agencies are made when necessary
- vi. attendance is reviewed regularly by the senior leadership team.

3.1.3 To provide support, advice and guidance to parents and students

- i. parents/carers are provided with prompt support should they express concerns regarding a student's attendance, attitude to school or punctuality
- ii. support for students who are apprehensive about attending the school is provided
- iii. concerns related to students' attendance or lateness with parents/carers are shared with parents/carers at an early stage
- iv. legal and academic guidelines are adhered to in the request of planned absence.

3.1.4 To develop positive and consistent communication between home and school

- i. our attendance policy and procedure are shared with parents
- ii. parents/carers should notify the school of their child's absence before 9am either via telephone or email
- iii. the school secretary will contact parents after 9:30 am should a notification of absence not been received.

3.1.5. To promote effective partnerships with the Education Social Work Service, and other services and agencies

- i. the headteacher is responsible for liaising with the Social Care Service and other agencies
- ii. the pastoral lead will carry out initial enquiries or intervention prior to referral and give priority to meetings arranged with external agencies
- iii. when necessary, the headteacher will organise multi-agency liaison meetings and develop an understanding of agency constraints and operating environments
- iv. the headteacher is also responsible for checking that students who leave this school have been enrolled at another school, pre-16. When there is cause for doubt, the relevant Local Authority will be informed. Post 16, we liaise with educational institutions with regard to special educational needs, access arrangements and sending students' files
- v. if a student attending the school with an Education, Health, Care Plan/is looked after/a child in need/on the Child Protection Register has an unexplained absence of more than five days, the headteacher will inform the Local Authority.

3.1.6. To recognise the needs of the individual pupil when planning reintegration following significant periods of absence

- i. we are sensitive to the individual needs and circumstances of students returning after prolonged absence
- ii. following liaison with both pupils and their parents/carers, a structured reintegration programme, with an agreed time scale, will be implemented to facilitate the student's return. A timescale will also be agreed for reviewing the reintegration plan.
- iii. pupils will be provided with a mentor to whom they can turn to for counselling and support
- iv. pupils are allocated a "safe place" where she/he may go during the day if the pressure of being at school becomes too much to cope with
- v. daily monitoring and feedback to staff will be implemented
- vi. all staff are kept informed through weekly staff briefings about the progress and needs of the student, including the possible need to go to their mentor or their 'safe place.'

4 The Law and guidance

4.1 This policy is based on the Department for Education's (DfE's) statutory guidance on [working together to improve school attendance \(applies from 19 August 2024\)](#) and school attendance parental responsibility measures. The guidance is based on the following pieces of legislation, which set out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- i. Part 6 of the [Education Act 1996](#)
- ii. Part 3 of the [Education Act 2002](#)
- iii. Part 7 of the [Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)
- iv. [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006 \(and 2010, 2011, 2013, and 2016 amendments\)](#)
- v. [The School Attendance \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2024](#)
- vi. [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013 and the 2024 amendment.](#)

It also refers to:

- i. [School census guidance](#)
- ii. [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#)
- iii. [Mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance: guidance for schools](#)
- iv. [The Independent School's Standards.](#)

5. The school's responsibilities

5.1 The school has set an attendance target of 90%. For those pupils who require a gradual transition into school, the school understands that attendance may fall below 90%. In this instance, the school will analyse the percentage of improved attendance compared to prior attendance together with an overall percentage of expected sessions.

5.2 The headteacher and senior leaders are responsible for ensuring that school attendance is effectively managed. This includes ensuring that records are kept in line with government guidance; evaluating whole

school attendance data and individual cases where attendance is of concern; planning appropriate interventions and appointing a member of staff to lead on attendance.

- 5.3 School staff promote the school ethos and enable the school to keep accurate records of attendance. Records of attendance will be monitored by the pastoral lead on a weekly basis, evaluating the robustness of record keeping and identifying any patterns in attendance and/or lateness. Concerns will be acted upon immediately and communicated to parents and commissioners with the aim of reducing absence. Any safeguarding concerns will be investigated and addressed according to the school's child protection and safeguarding arrangements. Should absences persist, we shall arrange a meeting with the pupil, parent/carer and pastoral lead.
- 5.4 The pastoral lead and SENCO will put in place appropriate measures to support any pupil returning to school after a period of absence, including supporting their social reintegration with peers and addressing, as far as possible, learning missed whilst absent.
- 5.5 The school will notify Warwickshire Local Education Authority, or the local education authority responsible for the pupil's placement or in which area the pupil's home residence is registered, and/or commissioning schools in the following circumstances:
- i. if a pupil funded by the local education authority or school leaves the school
 - ii. if a pupil leaves the school does not know the pupil's new school placement
 - iii. if the school has information that the intention of the parent or guardian is to educate the pupil outside the school system, e.g., at home
 - iv. if a pupil has a medical condition certified by the school nurse that the pupil is unlikely to be in a fit state of health to attend school
 - v. if a pupil is permanently excluded
 - vi. if a pupil is absent from school without the headteacher's authorisation for a continuous period of ten days or more.
- 5.6 Records of attendance will be maintained by the school for 3 years from the date of entry and will be made available for inspection purposes as required.

6 Parent and carers responsibilities

- 6.1 The school recognises the vital role parents and carers have in helping pupils to attend school regularly and punctually. Support of parents/carers is essential; the school can only achieve high levels of punctuality and attendance with their support
- 6.2 Parents are expected to ensure that their children attend school regularly and are punctual. If a child's attendance is 90% or below, they are regarded by the government to be a 'persistent absentee.'
- 6.3 Watermelon Schools expects all parents/carers to fulfil the following duties:
- i. ensure that their child attends every day / timetabled lesson on time, excluding transition arrangements
 - ii. make every effort to inform the school in advance of their child's absence from school; wherever possible, parents and guardians should arrange pupils' medical and dental appointments for outside school hours

- iii. inform the school of their child's unplanned absence (before 8:30am) either via emailing the administrative staff at husein@watermelonschools.com or via telephone, leaving a voicemail if necessary
- iv. notify the school on the day of the absence and each subsequent day of absence, and advise when they are expected to return
- v. provide the school with more than 1 emergency contact number for their child
- vi. keep to any attendance contracts that they make with the school and/or local authority
- vii. seek support, where necessary, for maintaining good attendance, by contacting the pastoral lead.

7 School administrative staff responsibilities

7.1 The school's administrative staff will:

- i. communicate all information received regarding any pupil's absence or attendance to the pupil's key worker and pastoral leader
- ii. communicate any request made by a parent or guardian for a pupil's anticipated leave of absence to be authorised to the headteacher who will then communicate with the parent or guardian, as necessary
- iii. monitor and analyse attendance data
- iv. benchmark attendance data to identify areas of focus for improvement
- v. providing regular attendance reports to school staff and reporting concerns about attendance to the pastoral lead and the headteacher
- vi. Advise the headteacher when to issue fixed penalty notices.

7.2 The school operates a policy of first day calling. This means that if a child does not attend school and the school has not heard from a parent by 9:30am on the day of absence regarding this, the following procedures will apply:

- i. staff will contact the parent by phone, text and/or email as soon as possible after 9.30am on the first day of absence. Staff will continue to try to establish contact until a justification for the absence has been given by the parent
- ii. information obtained will be used to determine whether the absence is approved or not
- iii. an accurate entry in the attendance register will be made and the reason for absence communicated to the pupil's key worker
- iv. staff will call the parent on each day that the absence continues without explanation, to ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary
- v. if it has not been possible to ascertain the reason for a pupil's absence from school and the school cannot reach any of the pupil's emergency contacts, and it is not known that the pupil is safe at the immediate time, the school's procedures, described in our Child and Safeguarding Policy, will be invoked. The school may call the police.

8 Pastoral lead (DDSL) responsibilities

8.1 The pastoral lead will fulfil the following duties regarding attendance and punctuality and assist the school in meeting its aims. The pastoral lead will:

- i. lead, champion and improve attendance across the school
- ii. set a clear vision for improving and maintaining attendance
- iii. have a strong grasp of absence data and oversight of absence data analysis

- iv. monitor and review the records of attendance for all pupils in the school
- v. monitor and evaluate expectations and processes
- vi. monitor and evaluate progress in attendance
- vii. identify pupils whose levels of attendance give cause for concern, noting patterns of lateness or absence
- viii. establish and maintain effective systems for tackling absence, and ensure they are followed by all staff
- ix. liaise with pupils, parents/carers and external agencies, where needed
- x. build close and productive relationships with parents to discuss and tackle attendance issues
- xi. create intervention or reintegration plans in partnership with pupils and their parents/carers
- xii. deliver targeted intervention and support to pupils and families
- xiii. ensure that any patterns that may indicate a safeguarding concern regarding a pupil are investigated and addressed according to the School's Child Protection and Safeguarding arrangements
- xiv. work with education welfare officers to tackle persistent absence
- xv. report to the headteacher serious concerns regarding any individual pupil's attendance or welfare.

9. Headteacher responsibilities

9.1 The headteacher will fulfil the following duties regarding attendance and punctuality and assist the school in meeting its aims. The headteacher will:

- i. ensure the effective implementation of this policy at the school
- ii. monitor school-level absence data and report it to governors
- iii. support staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils
- iv. monitor the impact of any implemented attendance strategies
- v. issue fixed-penalty notices, where necessary, and/or authorising [role] to be able to do so
- vi. work with the parents to develop specific support, including where school transport is regularly being missed, and where pupils face in-school barriers
- vii. communicate with the local authority when a pupil with an education, health and care (EHC) plan has falling attendance, or where there are barriers to attendance that relate to the pupil's needs
- viii. communicate the school's high expectations for attendance and punctuality regularly to pupils and parents through all available channels.

10 Class Teacher/Key Worker Responsibilities

10.1 Class Teacher/Key Worker are responsible for:

- i. recording attendance for both morning and afternoon sessions on a daily basis
- ii. using the correct codes (see Appendix 1)
- iii. submitting this information to the school office promptly at the end of Check-in and Check-Out.

11 Recording Attendance

11.1 We will keep an electronic attendance register and place all pupils onto this register. We will take our attendance register at the start of Check-in and Check-Out. It will be marked, using the appropriate national attendance and absence codes from the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024, whether every pupil is:

- i. Present

- ii. Attending an approved off-site educational activity
- iii. Absent
- iv. Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

11.2 Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

- i. The original entry
- ii. The amended entry
- iii. The reason for the amendment
- iv. The date on which the amendment was made
- v. The name and position of the person who made the amendment (See Appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes).

We will also record:

- i. Whether the absence is authorised or not
- ii. The nature of the activity, where a pupil is attending an approved educational activity
- iii. The nature of circumstances, where a pupil is unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

12 The School Day and punctuality

12.1 The school day starts at 8:45am and ends at 3:15pm. The morning registration is open between 08:45am and 9:15am. Morning registration closes at 9:15am. A pupil arriving after the register has closed should be recorded as absent using code U, or another absence code that is more appropriate. Pupils arriving at school any time after 9.15am must report immediately to the main school office on arrival so that their presence may be recorded.

12.2 Parents who transport their children to school should ensure that their children are on the school premises by 8:45am. Parents whose children use transport arranged by the local authority or other providers should ensure that their children are ready to leave for school when their transport arrives. Please also note the responsibility for the safe transportation of students to and from school does not reside with the school.

13 Reporting an Absence

13.1 If a child is absent for any reason, the parent/carer should inform the school before 8:30am on each day of absence via the school office on 0121 349 0980 or via email to husein@watermelonschools.com providing the school with a reason for absence and an expected date of return (see appendix 2).

13.2 Should parents wish to discuss their child's absence in detail, please contact either the school secretary or the pastoral/attendance Lead (DDSL).

13.3 There are two categories of absence:

- i. Authorised (approved)
- ii. Unauthorised (not approved).

- 13.4 Authorised absence: absences can only be authorised by the headteacher. An absence is classified as authorised when a child has been away from school for a legitimate reason and the school has received notification from a parent.
- 13.5 Unauthorised absence: an absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of the school. An absence can be unauthorised even if the child is absent with the support of a parent.
- 13.6 Any absences for which the school has received no explanation, or when the school has reason to doubt the offered explanation, will be recorded as unauthorised absence.
- 13.7 A pupil's arrival after the close of registers, without an approved reason will be classified as an authorised absence.

14 Unplanned Absence

- 14.1 The pupil's parent must notify the school of the reason for the absence on the first day of an unplanned absence before 8.30am, or as soon as practically possible, by calling the school on 0121 349 0980, or contacting the school via email at husein@watermelonschools.com.
- 14.2 If it has not been possible to ascertain the reason for a pupil's absence and it is not known that the pupil is safe, the school's procedures, described in our Child and Safeguarding Policy, will be invoked e.g. a home visit.
- 14.3 If a child has a recognised contagious illness the school office will be able to advise how long they should be kept off school. If a child has a chronic, persistent or recurrent health issue this should be discussed with the headteacher or, pastoral/attendance Lead (DDSL), to enable the school to consider how it may best support their learning.
- 14.4 We will mark absence due to physical or mental illness as authorised, unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.
- 14.5 Where the absence is longer than 5 working days, or there are doubts about the authenticity of the illness, the school will ask for medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.
- 14.6 If a child's health related absences mean that their attendance is continuing to cause concern, the school may ask the parent to provide regular medical evidence of illness – this could be an appointment card, a prescription, prescribed medication or a doctor's note. This will enable the school to understand the nature of the illness and to consider the authorisation of absence for reasons of illness whilst providing appropriate support. Additional guidance can be found on the NHS website using the following link: <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/healthy-body/is-my-child-too-ill-for-school/>

14.7 If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised, and parents will be notified of this in advance.

15. Planned Absence (limited to one full day or less)

15.1 Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the pupil's parent notifies the school in advance of the appointment. To do this, parents should call the school 5 working days in advance on 0121 349 0980 or contact the school via email at husein@watermelonschools.com.

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

15.3 The pupil's parent must also apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence.

16 Lateness

16.1 If a pupil arrives at school after the school day has begun or leaves prior to the end of the school day, they will need to be signed in or out by the responsible adult.

16.2 Where there are delays to transport causing lateness, staff will determine the reason for lateness and will take any appropriate action with a view to improving punctuality.

16.3 Once in school, pupils are supervised between lessons and staff will address any punctuality issues during tutor time. Patterns of punctuality will be monitored across the school, and where this is concern for individual pupils, it will be addressed through the individual behaviour management plan which is in place for all pupils.

16.4 Where a child's lateness is a cause for concern, the school will notify the parents in writing, summarising attendance and minutes late for a specified period. The school may choose to invite parents to a meeting to understand the factors contributing to lateness and see whether support may be offered and/or set a punctuality target for a fixed period.

17 Approval for Term-Time Absence

17.1 The headteacher will allow pupils to be absent from the school site for certain educational activities, or to attend other schools or settings.

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

- i. taking part in a regulated performance, or regulated employment abroad
- ii. attending an interview
- iii. study leave
- iv. a temporary, time-limited part-time timetable

- v. exceptional circumstances (as decided by the headteacher)
- 17.3 A leave of absence is granted at the headteacher's discretion, including the length of time the pupil is authorised to be absent for.
- 17.4 Leave of absence will not be granted for a pupil to take part in protest activity during school hours.
As a leave of absence will only be granted in exceptional circumstances, it is unlikely a leave of absence will be granted for the purposes of a family holiday and please not any request for holiday during term time should be made 6 school weeks in advance.
- 17.5 The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant background context behind the request.
- 17.6 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. Applications for Leave of Absence must be made in advance and in writing to the Headteacher. Failure to do so will result in the absence being recorded as "unauthorised". This may result in legal action against the parent, by way of a Fixed Penalty Notice. Applications for Leave of Absence which are made in advance and refused will result in the absence being recorded as "unauthorised". This may result in legal action against the parent, by way of a Fixed Penalty Notice, if the child is absent from school during that period. Each application for a Leave of Absence will be considered on a case-by-case basis and on its own merits.
- 17.7 Any request should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated and, where possible, at least 5 working days before the absence, and in accordance with any leave of absence request form, accessible by emailing the school at: husein@watermelonschools.com. The headteacher may require evidence to support any request for leave of absence.
- 17.8 Other valid reasons for **authorised absence** include (but are not limited to):
- i. illness (including mental-health illness) and medical/dental appointments
 - ii. religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parent(s) belong(s). If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parent's religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart
 - iii. parent(s) travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh gypsies, Irish and Scottish travellers, showmen (fairground people) and circus people, bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and new travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school, but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision
 - iv. if the pupil is currently suspended or excluded from school (and no alternative provision has been made).
- 17.8 Other reasons the school may allow a pupil to be absent from the school site, which are not classified as absences, include (but are not limited to):
- i. attending an offsite approved educational activity, sporting activity or visit or trip arranged by the school
 - ii. attending another school at which the pupil is also registered (dual registration)
 - iii. attending provision arranged by the local authority
 - iv. attending work experience

- v. if there is any other unavoidable cause for the pupil not to attend school, such as disruption to travel caused by an emergency, a lack of access arrangements, or because the school premises are closed.

18 Medical Appointments

18.1 Parents should seek to minimise absence for medical appointments by:

- i. where possible, making medical appointments outside of school hours
- ii. ensuring that the child is only absent for the time necessary to attend the appointment, where possible attending school before and after the appointment.

18.2 When a child has an unavoidable appointment during school hours, the school should be notified of it at the earliest opportunity. The school may request evidence of the medical appointment. Pupils who are absent for part of the school day due to attending essential appointments will need to be signed in or out at the school office by the responsible adult. On occasions, where a child has regular medical appointments, which may fall during the school day, arrangements may be made for the appointments to take place on the school premises. The parent/carer or school may choose to discuss the possibility of this, to minimise absence.

19. Sanctions

19.1 Our school will make use of the full range of potential sanctions – including, but not limited to, those listed below – to tackle poor attendance. Decisions will be made on an individual, case-by-case basis.

20 Penalty Notices

20.1 The headteacher (or someone authorised by them), local authority or the police can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age, by issuing a penalty notice.

20.2 If the school issues a penalty notice, it will check with the local authority before doing so, and send it a copy of any penalty notice issued.

20.3 Before issuing a penalty notice, the school will consider the individual case, including:

- i. Whether the national threshold for considering a penalty notice has been met (10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks)
- ii. Whether a penalty notice is the best available tool to improve attendance for that pupil
- iii. Whether further support, a notice to improve or another legal intervention would be a more appropriate solution
- iv. Whether any obligations that the school has under the Equality Act 2010 make issuing a penalty notice inappropriate.

20.4 Each parent who is liable for the pupil's offence(s) can be issued with a penalty notice, but this will usually only be the parent/parents who allowed the absence.

- 20.5 The payment must be made directly to the local authority, regardless of who issues the notice. If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute or withdraw the notice.
- 20.6 If issued with a **first** penalty notice, the parent must pay £80 within 21 days, or £160 within 28 days.
- 20.7 If a **second** penalty notice is issued to the same parent in respect of the same pupil, the parent must pay £160 if paid within 28 days.
- 20.8 A **third** penalty notice cannot be issued to the same parent in respect of the same child within 3 years of the date of the issue of the first penalty notice. In a case where the national threshold is met for a third time within those 3 years, alternative action will be taken instead.
- 20.9 A penalty notice may also be issued where parents allow their child to be present in a public place during school hours without reasonable justification, during the first 5 days of a suspension or exclusion (where the school has notified the parents that the pupil must not be present in a public place on that day). These penalty notices are not included in the National Framework, not subject to the same considerations about support being provided, and do not count towards the limit as part of the escalation process.
- 20.10 In these cases, the parent must pay £60 within 21 days, or £120.

21 Notices to Improve

- 21.1 If the national threshold has been met and support is appropriate, but parents do not engage with offers of support, the school may offer a notice to improve to give parents a final chance to engage with support. Notices to improve will be issued in line with processes set out in the local code of conduct for the local authority area in which the pupil attends school.

They will include:

- i. details of the pupil's attendance record and of the offences
- ii. the benefits of regular attendance and the duty of parents under [section 7 of the Education Act 1996](#)
- iii. details of the support provided so far
- iv. opportunities for further support, or to access previously provided support that was not engaged with
- v. a clear warning that a penalty notice may be issued if attendance doesn't improve within the improvement period, along with details of what sufficient improvement looks like, which will be decided on a case-by-case basis
- vi. a clear timeframe of between 3 and 6 weeks for the improvement period
- vii. the grounds on which a penalty notice may be issued before the end of the improvement period.

22 Promoting Regular Attendance

- 22.1 Watermelon Schools promotes regular attendance and punctuality through all aspects of daily school life, for example, during assemblies, lessons, PSHE, careers, mentoring time, meetings, external courses, half-termly rewards, end of year rewards, parent consultations, progress reports, school events and modelling by staff.

- 22.2 We believe that excellent attendance plays a crucial role in student success. To encourage and celebrate good attendance, we recognise the commitment of students who consistently attend school. Students with outstanding attendance can receive certificates of achievement/ recognition termly and be entered into prize draws for exciting rewards. Additionally, students who maintain outstanding attendance throughout the year will be celebrated in special assemblies and may qualify for end-of-year rewards, and recognition in school newsletters. We believe that recognising and rewarding good attendance reinforces the importance of regular school participation and motivates students to engage fully in their education.
- 22.2 Where appropriate, in accordance with the needs of the child, a transitional timetable may be put in place to support and enable integration to a full-time timetable. A transitional timetable would: identify the reasons for a transitional timetable, specify the timetable, include an action plan with review points to enable integration to a full-time timetable, be compiled with parental involvement and signed by the parent.
- 22.3 Broadly, if a child's attendance falls between 70% and 90%, a parent will be contacted, and we will consider putting an action plan into place. Broadly, if a child's attendance falls below 70%, we will implement an action plan. However, due to the number of children in the school with mental health issues, each pupil will be considered on a case-by-case basis based on their individual circumstances.
- 22.4 **Pupils absent due to complex barriers to attendance.** We recognise that some pupils face complex barriers to regular attendance. These barriers can stem from personal, family, or school-related issues. Our approach is grounded in understanding each pupil's individual circumstances and working collaboratively with families and support networks to address the root causes. Our approach could include pastoral support, review of timetables, safe spaces and staff support, mentorship and peer support and academic support.
- 22.5 **Pupils absent due to mental or physical ill health.** We take a holistic, inclusive approach to ensure that these pupils can access education and thrive despite the challenges they face. Our approach could include collaborative planning, external support, regular communication, flexible learning approaches and pastoral care. Our pupils have an education health and care (EHC) plan so when their attendance falls, or the school becomes aware of barriers to attendance that related to the pupil's needs, the school will inform the local authority.
- 22.6 **Pupils returning to school after a lengthy or unavoidable period of absence** We are committed to supporting pupils who are returning after a lengthy or unavoidable period of absence. We understand that reintegration can be challenging, and we provide a carefully tailored approach to help pupils transition smoothly back into the school environment. This process is collaborative, involving the pupil, family, and relevant school staff to ensure the pupil feels supported both academically and emotionally.

23. Monitoring Attendance

- 23.1 The school will monitor attendance and absence data (including punctuality) half-termly, termly and yearly across the school and at an individual pupil, year group and cohort level. Specific pupil information will be shared with the DfE on request.
- 23.2 The school will:

- i. analyse attendance and absence data regularly to identify pupils, groups or cohorts that need additional support with their attendance, and
- ii. identify pupils whose absences may be a cause for concern, especially those who demonstrate patterns of persistent or severe absence
- iii. conduct thorough analysis of half-termly, termly, and full-year data to identify patterns and trends
- iv. look at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence, and then develop strategies to address these patterns.

24. Using Data to Improve Attendance

24.1 The school will:

- i. develop targeted actions to address patterns of absence (of all severities) of individual pupils, groups or cohorts that it has identified via data analysis
- ii. provide targeted support to the pupils it has identified whose absences may be a cause for concern, especially those who demonstrate patterns of persistent or severe absence, and their families
- iii. provide regular attendance reports to key workers to facilitate discussions with pupils and families, and to the governing board and school leaders (including special educational needs co-ordinator) and designated safeguarding lead and pupil premium lead
- iv. use data to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place in order to modify them and inform future strategies
- v. share information and work collaboratively with other schools in the area, local authorities and other partners where a pupil's absence is at risk of becoming persistent or severe, including keeping them informed regarding specific pupils, where appropriate.

25. Reducing Persistent and Severe Absence

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

25.2 The school will:

- i. use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence
- ii. consider potential safeguarding issues and, where suspected or present, address them in line with Keeping Children Safe in Education
- iii. hold regular meetings with the parents of pupils who the school (and/or local authority) considers to be vulnerable or at risk of persistent or severe absence, or who are persistently or severely absent, to:
 - Discuss attendance and engagement at school
 - Listen, and understand barriers to attendance
 - Explain the help that is available
 - Explain the potential consequences of, and sanctions for, persistent and severe absence
 - Review any existing actions or interventions
- iv. hold regular meetings with the parents of pupils who the school (and/or local authority) considers to be vulnerable or at risk
- v. provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance, in conjunction with the local authority, where relevant

- vi. consider alternative support that could be put in place to remove any barriers to attendance and re-engage these pupils. In doing so, the school will sensitively consider some of the reasons for absence
- vii. implement sanctions, where necessary.

26. Monitoring Arrangements

26.1 The headteacher has overall responsibility for monitoring whole school attendance and evaluating the effectiveness of the school's policy and procedures. The following monitoring and evaluation procedures will be applied:

- i. data will be collected and analysed weekly by the pastoral lead; patterns of absence and punctuality will be identified and addressed
- ii. trends in patterns and reasons for absence will be analysed half-termly
- iii. trends across particular groups of pupils (FSM, ethnic groups, gender), forms or years will be identified and addressed half termly
- iv. data will be evaluated against the school's target, past performance, use of codes and persistent absence
- v. to contextualise and understand attendance, other data may also be considered, e.g. attendance of pupils at previous education placements, duration of the current educational placement, travel distance and time, and percentage on days when attendance is required (where a transitional timetable is in place)
- iv. attendance data will inform action planning and will be linked to the school development plan and future revisions of the whole school's Attendance Policy
- v. attendance data will be returned promptly to the commissioning local authority as requested
- vi. evaluation of the effectiveness of the school's systems for registration, identification of attendance issues and dealing with lateness will be on-going with a formal review taking place annually
- vii. the impact of any interventions will be evaluated half-termly.

Analysis and Feedback	Time scale
Pupils	Continuous: meetings, tutor time, assemblies, noticeboards
Staff	Continuous / weekly/ half-termly (formal)
Parents	Continuous / reports (formal)
Commissioners	As agreed
LA	As agreed

Appendix 1

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

The registration system

The school will use an electronic management console for keeping the school attendance records. The following national codes will be used to record attendance information.

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	Pupil is present at morning registration
\	Present (pm)	Pupil is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Pupil arrives late before register has closed
Attending a place other than the school		
K	Attending education provision arranged by the local authority	Pupil is attending a place other than a school at which they are registered, for educational provision arranged by the local authority
V	Attending an educational visit or trip	Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised or approved by the school
P	Participating in a sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
W	Attending work experience	Pupil is on an approved work experience placement
B	Attending any other approved educational activity	Pupil is attending a place for an approved educational activity that is not a sporting activity or work experience
D	Dual registered	Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
Absent – leave of absence		
C1	Participating in a regulated performance or undertaking regulated employment abroad	Pupil is undertaking employment (paid or unpaid) during school hours, approved by the school
M	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment

J1	Interview	Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
S	Study leave	Pupil has been granted leave of absence to study for a public examination
X	Not required to be in school	Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
C2	Part-time timetable	Pupil is not in school due to having a part-time timetable
C	Exceptional circumstances	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
Absent – other authorised reasons		
T	Parent travelling for occupational purposes	Pupil is a 'mobile child' who is travelling with their parent(s) who are travelling for occupational purposes
R	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance
I	Illness (not medical or dental appointment)	Pupil is unable to attend due to illness (either related to physical or mental health)
E	Suspended or excluded	Pupil has been suspended or excluded from school and no alternative provision has been made
Absent – unable to attend school because of unavoidable cause		
Q	Lack of access arrangements	Pupil is unable to attend school because the local authority has failed to make access arrangements to enable attendance at school
Y1	Transport not available	Pupil is unable to attend because school is not within walking distance of their home and the transport normally provided is not available
Y2	Widespread disruption to travel	Pupil is unable to attend because of widespread disruption to travel caused by a local, national or international emergency

Y3	Part of school premises closed	Pupil is unable to attend because they cannot practicably be accommodated in the part of the premises that remains open
Y4	Whole school site unexpectedly closed	Every pupil absent as the school is closed unexpectedly (e.g. due to adverse weather)
Y5	Criminal justice detention	Pupil is unable to attend as they are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In police detention • Remanded to youth detention, awaiting trial or sentencing, or • Detained under a sentence of detention
Y6	Public health guidance or law	Pupil's travel to or attendance at the school would be prohibited under public health guidance or law
Y7	Any other unavoidable cause	To be used where an unavoidable cause is not covered by the other codes
Absent – unauthorised absence		
G	Holiday not granted by the school	Pupil is absent for the purpose of a holiday, not approved by the school
N	Reason for absence not yet established	Reason for absence has not been established before the register closes
O	Absent in other or unknown circumstances	No reason for absence has been established, or the school isn't satisfied that the reason given would be recorded using one of the codes for authorised absence
U	Arrived in school after registration closed	Pupil has arrived late, after the register has closed but before the end of session
Administrative codes		
Z	Prospective pupil not on admission register	Pupil has not joined school yet but has been registered
#	Planned whole-school closure	Whole-school closures that are known and planned in advance, including school holidays

Additional

Registers by law must be kept for 3 years.

Entries in paper registers must be in ink.

All corrections must be visible (no correcting fluid)

Register Security

The registers must be safely stored when not used to record attendance.

Appendix 2

SCHOOL GUIDE: Attendance Protocol

PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITY

TARGET

Support the school with the attendance target of 90%. For pupils with a gradual transition, the school understands that attendance may fall below 90%.



FIRST DAY

Calls the school before 8.30am (01676 478177) or email: admin6034@millhouseschool.co.uk



FURTHER DAYS

Notify the school on the day of the absence and each subsequent day of absence, and advise when they are expected to return

AFTER FIVE DAYS

For absence which is longer than 5 working days, provide regular medical evidence e.g. weekly doctor's note or appointment card

SUPPORT

Seek support, where the student continues not to attend school e.g. by contacting the pastoral lead



SCHOOL RESPONSIBILITY

REGISTERS

Ensure registers are completed promptly and accurately



FIRST DAY CALLING

If a child does not attend school and the school has not heard from a parent by 9:30am on the day of absence, staff will contact the parent by phone, text and/or email

SAFE AND WELL CHECK

If it has not been possible to ascertain the reason for a pupil's absence and it is not known that the pupil is safe, the school's procedures, described in our Child and Safeguarding Policy, will be invoked e.g. a home visit



DATA ANALYSIS

Review the attendance data to identify patterns and initiate appropriate actions

