

# CHILDREN ABSENT FROM EDUCATION AND ATTENDANCE POLICY

Policy Review						
• Person(s) Responsible for this Policy		• Deputy Head (Pastoral)				
• Last Review:		• September 2025				
• Next Review:		• September 2026				
Staff are reminded that they may view any of the School’s other policies at any time online ( <a href="https://withamhallschool.sharepoint.com/sites/StaffNonAcademic/Shared Documents/Policies &amp; Handbooks/">https://withamhallschool.sharepoint.com/sites/StaffNonAcademic/Shared Documents/Policies &amp; Handbooks/</a> ); a hard copy may be requested from the School Office.						
<b>Externally available:</b>	Internal only		By request		On website	X

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## Key School Contacts

<p><b>School Attendance Champion</b> <b>(including EYFS provision)</b></p>	<p>Miss Katy Rule, Deputy Head (Pastoral) Email: krule@withamhall.com Telephone number: 01778 590222</p>
<p><b>School Office</b> <i>(to request a leave of absence from the Headmaster, and to report reasons for daily absence)</i></p>	<p>Email: secretary@withamhall.com Telephone: 01778 590222</p>

## Aims

The School aspires to high levels of attendance from all pupils. Good attendance is essential for all pupils to get the most out of their school experience, including their attainment, well-being and wider life chances.

The aims of this policy are as follows:

- to develop and maintain a whole school culture that promotes the benefits of good attendance;
- to ensure, so far as possible, that every pupil in the School is able to benefit from and make their full contribution to the life of the School;
- to prioritise and where possible improve attendance and punctuality across the School, reduce absence and set out the School's approach to the management of absence / non-attendance;
- to recognise the linkages between attendance / absence and pupil wellbeing, specifically ensuring a consistent whole school approach to safeguarding; and
- to help to promote a whole school culture of safety, equality and protection.

## Scope and application

This policy applies to the whole School, including the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). This policy is designed to address the specific statutory obligations on the School to record attendance and absence.

## Regulatory framework

School attendance is subject to various education laws and this policy is written to reflect these laws, recognising the guidance *'Working Together to Improve School Attendance'* (DfE, August 2024), *'Keeping Children Safe in Education'* (DfE, September 2025), and *'Children Missing Education'* (DfE, September 2025).

It should also be read in conjunction with the School's policies for 'Child Protection and Safeguarding', 'Children Missing Education', 'Behaviour', 'SEND', the 'Staff Handbook' and 'Staff Code of Conduct'.

## Publication and availability

This policy is published on the School website.

This policy is highlighted to Parents when pupils join the School and Parents will be reminded of it at the beginning of the school year and other times as deemed necessary. This policy is available in hard copy on request.

## Definitions and interpretation

Where the following words or phrases are used in this policy:

- references to **attendance** include references to attendance for all or part of the timetabled school day.
- references to a **Parent** means:
  - all natural parents, whether they are married or not;
  - any person who has parental responsibility for a pupil; and
  - any person who has day to day responsibility for a pupil (i.e. lives with and looks after a pupil).
- **SAC** means the School's attendance champion
- **Authorised** absence is when the school has accepted the explanation offered as satisfactory justification for the absence and given approval in advance. If no explanation is received, absence cannot be authorised.
- **Unauthorised** absence is when the school has not received a reason for absence or has not approved a pupil's absence after a parent's request.

## The importance of good attendance

The School recognises the importance of developing good patterns of attendance from the outset. This is an integral part of the School's ethos and culture. In building a culture of good school attendance it recognises:

- the importance of good attendance, alongside good behaviour, as a central part of the school's vision, values, ethos, and day to day life;
- the interplay between attendance and wider school improvement efforts, building it into strategies on attainment, behaviour, bullying, special educational needs support, supporting pupils with medical conditions and / or disabilities, mental health issues, safeguarding wellbeing, and support for disadvantaged pupils;
- the importance of setting high expectations for the attendance and punctuality of all pupils and communicating these regularly and effectively to pupils and Parents;
- that attendance is never "solved" and is a continuous process requiring revision and updating of messages, processes and strategies; and
- children missing education can act as a vital warning sign to a range of safeguarding issues, including neglect, sexual abuse and child sexual and criminal exploitation.

## School responsibilities

The School acknowledges that attendance is the essential foundation to securing positive outcomes for all pupils and that everyone has a responsibility to take proactive steps to manage and improve attendance across the School community.

The School will consistently promote the benefits of good attendance, setting high expectations for every pupil and consistently communicating those expectations to pupils and Parents. Where there are challenges to attendance, the School will work effectively and respectfully with pupils, their families and, where appropriate, local authorities to address them.

The School will respond to non-attendance and/ or lateness proactively, firmly, consistently and with care, with appropriate reference to this policy, its safeguarding and behaviour policies and the School's terms and conditions. It will act in a proportionate and targeted way in response to data or intelligence and ensure intervention is regularly reviewed.

The School will have robust systems in place to track and record attendance, reasons for absence and patterns at an individual level and by cohorts or groups in order to identify pupils at risk of non-attendance and those who are persistently absent and it will monitor and analyse this data regularly to facilitate early intervention to address issues.

## ***Admissions Register***

The Admissions Register (sometimes referred to as the school roll) must, by law contain specific personal details of every pupil in the school along with the date of admission or re-admission to the school, information regarding parents and carers, and details of the school last attended. A pupil's name can only lawfully be deleted from the admission register for a reason set out in regulation 8 of the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2026, as amended.

When a pupil joins or leaves the school, or is dual registered the school email the 'change of roll' to [rollchanges@lincolnshire.gov.uk](mailto:rollchanges@lincolnshire.gov.uk) which includes forwarding information about where the pupil will be educated after Witham Hall. If the school has not been provided information about the school the pupil is moving to, they will be registered as a 'Child Missing from Education' in the same way, including to the residential local authority, and the family will be contacted by the relevant local authority.

The school will also inform the Lincolnshire Inclusion and Attendance team if any pupil is on an agreed, temporary, reduced timetable (exceptional circumstances only), or parents elect to home educate their child.

## **Staff responsibilities**

### ***The School Attendance Champion (SAC)***

A senior member of staff of the School's leadership team is the SAC and has overall responsibility for championing and improving attendance in school. Details of the individual appointed are at the front of this policy.

The SAC's responsibilities are:

- a. to establish and maintain effective systems for tackling absence and make sure the systems are followed by all staff;
- b. to regularly monitor and evaluate progress, including the efficacy of the school's strategies and processes;
- c. to have oversight of and analyse attendance data;
- d. report attendance data and interventions to the Local Authority; and
- e. to communicate clear messages on the importance of attendance to pupils and Parents.
- f. discuss any concerns about attendance or persistent absence with Parents, or direct the Head of Pre-Prep, Headmaster or a senior member of the pastoral team to do so if more appropriate

### ***Staff with specific responsibilities for attendance:***

The School Secretary has responsibility for checking attendance daily and following up with parents for any unexpected absences each morning. They will;

- record all absence requests made in advance and populate the electronic registers
- make enquiries about unexplained absences, including those within the school day, and follow up with parent to ensure that an explanation has been formally given to the School;
- cross-reference with entries made in the 'Late Book' and ensure the electronic registers are accurate
- look out for trends or patterns in a pupil's attendance and inform the SAC of any specific concerns;

Matrons check the afternoon registers and seek to check any amendments to pupil arrangements since the morning register, informing relevant teaching or pastoral staff as necessary.

### ***All staff***

The School ensures that all teaching and non-teaching staff know the importance of good attendance and are consistent in their communication with pupils and Parents about it.

Teaching staff are required to take an electronic register at 0825 and 1215 each day. A further register is taken by hand at 1715 for pupils staying for evening activities and boarding, utilising a printed version of the electronic registers taken earlier in the day.

Duty staff sign pupils up to boarding from 1900, and boarding staff complete the final part of the register when pupils are safely in bed.

## Pupil responsibilities

School attendance is important to pupil attainment, wellbeing and development. The School therefore has high expectations of pupils as to their attendance.

Pupils should be aware that:

- they are expected to be present in-person for the duration of each School day;
- they are expected to arrive on time and attend all timetabled lessons;
- they should not leave a lesson or the School site without permission or otherwise in accordance with School rules;
- they should engage with the School's arrangements for recording and managing attendance, including if they are late as set out in this policy;
- any unexplained absence will be followed up;
- persistent lateness or non-attendance will result in action being taken by the School. This may take the form of:
  - offers of support to seek to identify and address any barriers to attendance;
  - communication with Parents;
  - reporting to other agencies such as children's social care; and
- If pupils are having difficulties that might discourage or prevent them from attending School or specific lessons regularly, they may speak to any member of staff, although the School encourages them to speak to their Form Tutor or to the Deputy Head (Pastoral) in the first instance. Pupils are entitled to expect this information to be managed sensitively.

## Additional Needs

The School recognises some pupils may find it harder than others to attend School, and will work with those pupils and parents to try to remove barriers to attendance by building strong and trusting relationships and working together to put the right support in place.

- The School will make reasonable adjustments where a pupil has a disability that puts them at a substantial disadvantage, in comparison with pupils without a disability, in relation to school attendance.
- It will also work with Parents, and where appropriate with the local authority, to develop specific support approaches for attendance for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities e.g. ensuring the provision outlined in a pupil's education, health and care plan is accessed.

- Where a pupil has an education, health and care plan the School will communicate with the local authority where the pupil's attendance falls or the School become aware of barriers to attendance that relate to the pupil's needs.
- Suitable strategies and support will also be considered for pupils with any social, emotional or mental health issue that is affecting their attendance.
- Where barriers are outside of the School's control, the School will work with Parents and pupils to identify alternative sources of support or consider, where appropriate, making a referral for Early Help.
- The School will make a sickness return to the local authority if a pupil is recorded in the attendance register as absent using the national absence code I (unable to attend because of sickness) and there are reasonable grounds to believe that the pupil will have to miss 15 consecutive or cumulative school days or more for illness or the pupil's total number of school days missed during the current school year because of illness (whether consecutive or cumulative) will reach or exceed 15 school days. The school may request medical evidence to support the reasons for any prolonged period of absence.

## Parent/ Carer responsibilities

The law entitles every child of compulsory school age to an efficient, full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude and any special educational need they may have. It is the legal responsibility of every parent to make sure their child receives that education. This means pupils must attend every day that the School is open, except in a small number of allowable circumstances such as being too ill to attend or being given permission for an absence in advance from the School.

Parents should prioritise the attendance of their child, and arrange appointments, family events and holidays outside of school hours and term dates. When this is not possible, or where a pupil has an important, one-off event, parents should write to the Headmaster to seek permission for the absence in advance. This can be done by emailing his Personal Assistant at [secretary@withamhall.com](mailto:secretary@withamhall.com). The school may ask for evidence of medical appointments or procedures, or a doctor's note for prolonged periods of absence.

If permission is not sought in advance, this will be recorded as an unauthorised absence and would be included in data shared with the Local Authority.

Parents have a responsibility to ensure their child is dropped off in good time in the mornings to be able to reach their Form Room before the morning register is taken.

## ***Reporting absence***

If a pupil is to be absent from School for any reason, the parent / carer should contact the School Office [secretary@withamhall.com](mailto:secretary@withamhall.com)/ 01778 590222 by 0820am on first morning of absence. The Form Tutor should also be copied in to any emails.

Where a pupil is ill, the School should be notified of the nature of the illness and parents should provide an estimated date of return to school (i.e. after 48 hours from the last incident of sickness or diarrhoea). There is no need for parents to separately contact the school office each day that their child is absent from school up to the anticipated date of return. If a child continues to be absent

beyond the anticipated date of return, parents will be contacted to confirm the reasons for the ongoing absence.

If a child feels unwell during the school day, they will be assessed by a matron who will determine if they are well enough to return to lessons or whether they should be collected from school.

Apart from in exceptional circumstances, pupils who are too unwell to attend school are expected to rest and recuperate. Therefore, there is no expectation that work will be set for completion at home.

## **Monitoring Attendance**

The School will undertake regular data analysis to identify and provide additional support to pupils or pupil cohorts that need it, and to look at historic and emerging patterns across the School and develop strategies to address them. Such analysis may include:

- conducting thorough analysis of half-termly, termly, and full year data to identify patterns and trends;
- benchmarking attendance data at whole school, year group and cohort level to identify areas of focus for improvement;
- devising specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data;
- monitoring the impact of school-wide attendance efforts, including any specific strategies implemented; and
- providing data and reports to the board of governors and the Local Authority to support its work.

### ***Attendance Thresholds***

The following thresholds of attendance are used to monitor pupils for any significant risks associated with low attendance. This data is discussed by the SAC with the Local Authority in regular 'Targeted Support Meetings' (TSM) as part of the statutory guidance on improving school attendance.

95% - 100% attendance	Expected
91%-94%	At risk of persistent absence
80%-90%	Persistent absence
51%-79%	At risk of sever absence
0%-50%	Severe absence

The school recognises that individual pupils and their families may encounter additional challenges that might impact their attendance. Families that require additional support should, in the first instance, contact their child's form tutor who will liaise with the Deputy Head (Pastoral).

Regular checks are made of the school's attendance data. For children whose absence from school is categorised as 'persistent' -10% or more – more detailed analysis is undertaken. If the absence is

predominantly due to illness or other unplanned circumstances (rather than due to authorised leave of absence, granted in advance) the school will contact parents. An explanation will be provided of how the child's level of absence is approaching the definition of 'persistent' and a discussion initiated to ascertain whether there are additional challenges the child is currently facing that are impacting on their attendance.

For pupil's whose attendance falls into the 'at risk of sever absence' category, parents will be invited in to meet with the Head of Pre-Prep or Deputy Head (Pastoral), and/or the Headmaster to discuss a support plan for ensuring more regular attendance.

Following this discussion, if any subsequent support to improve attendance is not sufficient to address the challenges being faced by the child in question, the school will work in conjunction with the local (based on the county of residence) Children's Safeguarding Board; Early Help Team; the Lincolnshire Attendance Team; or any other relevant external agencies, including the child's GP, to access further support.

### ***Reporting duties***

The School has statutory reporting obligations if a pupil fails to regularly attend and their absence is unauthorised. The School must report unauthorised absences for a continuous period of 10 days or more to the local authority.

Action will also be taken in accordance with the Missing child policy and safeguarding and child protection policy if any absence of a pupil from the School gives rise to a concern about their welfare.

## **Information Sharing**

Personal information on attendance will only be shared in line with legal obligations and having regard to government guidance on attendance, safeguarding and children missing education.

The School, local authorities and other local partners should work jointly and share data on individual cases where it is of benefit to a pupil (e.g. health services where there are medical conditions or the police where there are extra-familiar harms).

The schools will attend regular targeting support meetings (TSM) with the Local Authority.

The School is legally required to share information from the registers with the local authority. As a minimum this includes:

- New pupil and deletion returns;
- Attendance returns;
- Sickness returns.

Where appropriate, the School is expected to inform a pupil's social worker and/or youth offending team worker if there are unexplained absences.

## School Arrangements

### ***Managing attendance***

The School monitors, records and shares data about pupil attendance and as part of its duty to safeguard and protect pupils and promote attendance. It accurately completes admission and attendance registers as required by law. The admission and attendance registers are kept electronically and retained by the School for the relevant time period as stated by law, currently for a period of at least 6 years.

The School expects all pupils to be present at School for the whole of the School day. The below table outlines arrival times and departure times for pupils at Witham Hall. Also detailed are the times when attendance registers are taken. Any pupils arriving after morning registration will be recorded as 'late' and should sign in at the School Office.

Year Group	Earliest Arrival Time	Time at which the school day begins	Time at which morning register closes	Time at which afternoon register closes	Time at which school day finishes	After-school club availability	Latest departure time	Saturday School
<b>Pre-Prep</b>								
Reception	0815*	0815	0830	1315	1530	Crèche & clubs available	1800	No
Year 1	0815*	0815	0830	1315	1530	Crèche and clubs available	1800	No
Year 2	0815*	0815	0830	1315	1530	Crèche & clubs available	1800	No
Year 3	0815*	0815	0830	1315	1530	Crèche and clubs available	1800	No
<b>Prep School</b>								
Year 4	0800*	0815	<b>0825</b>	1300	1715	Yes	1900	1230 departure
Year 5	0800*	0815	<b>0825</b>	1300	1715	Yes	1900	1230 departure (when not in fixtures)
Year 6	0800*	0815	<b>0825</b>	1300	1715	Yes	1900	1230 departure (when not in fixtures)
Year 7	0800*	0815	<b>0825</b>	1300	1715	Yes	1900	1230 departure (when not in fixtures)

Year 8	0800*	0815	<b>0825</b>	1300	1715	Yes	1900	1230 departure (when not in fixtures)
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\* Breakfast club available by prior arrangement for pupils not boarding the night before (Sensory Circuits available by invitation only); information regarding costs is available on enquiry

## Attendance and Registration Codes

The School uses the appropriate national attendance and absence codes system to enable it to record and monitor attendance and absence in a consistent way which complies with regulation 10 of the Attendance Regulations.

Attendance is recorded twice a day, once in the morning and once in the afternoon.

The attendance register is kept electronically and a printed copy is made twice a day which staff use to sign pupils out of school, into tea, and up to boarding. The AM printed registers are confidentially shredded each day, and the PM printed registers are kept securely for a period of 1 year.

The following codes are used to record pupil attendance on 3sys (attendance codes), as well as indicate the departure and evening arrangements for pupils (registration codes).

Attendance Codes (3sys 'Registration')	
/\	Present
B	Educated off site
C	Other authorised circumstance
D	Dual Registered
E	Excluded
F	Extended family holiday
G	Family holiday (not agreed/excess)
H	Family holiday (agreed)
I	Illness
J	Interview (educational establishment)
L	Late
M	Medical/dental appointment
O	Unauthorised absence
P	Approved sporting activity
R	Religious observance
V	Educational visit/trip
X	Not required to be in school
Y	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances
#	School closed

Registration Codes (3sys 'AM' or 'PM')	
1	Boarding and Normal Tea
2	Boarding and Late Tea
3	Boarding and No Tea
4	Signing out after 5:15 and Normal Tea
5	Signing out after 5:15 and Late Tea
6	Signing out after 5:15 and No Tea
7	Going home at normal time
8	Going home directly from another venue
9	Going home early with permission
A	Pre-Prep – staying for Activity/Creche

NB/ pupils attending an away match will be registered as an '8' unless returning to school before 1715, or for boarding or activities. Pupils attending a home match will be registered as a '7' unless staying for boarding or activities. All pupil must sign-out with the member of staff taking their match before leaving.