



Policy for

Primary Attendance and Absence

Prepared by:	Adopted by AET
KDS/LJ	Autumn 2025

Statement of intent

All AET policies are written to support our schools and communities. We do this by ensuring they are always in line with our Colleague Values:



Applying these values to everything we do means always acting with integrity, in the interests of others, being honest, open and transparent and putting the safety of our children first.

At Underwood West Academy we are committed to providing an education of the highest quality for all our pupils and creating a positive community where all pupils feel valued, welcomed and included. Excellent attendance is fundamental to ensuring that children and young people reach their full potential and have the best life chances and opportunities in their future lives. It is the responsibility of Cheshire East council, all schools, parents/carers and pupils to work in partnership to ensure that all our pupils receive an appropriate education suitable to their needs. As a school we strive to achieve a goal of at least 96% attendance.

We believe that strong attendance is paramount to develop the whole child. We believe that it takes character to develop strong attendance, creating habits which will help a pupil succeed in their future life. Attendance is everyone's business, all of the time. We will work with families through various means to ensure that all members of the school community are ambitious to secure the best attendance possible. As a school we effectively manage attendance through a system of prevention, early intervention and targeted support.

Under Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act, it is the legal responsibility of the parent to ensure their children attend school. Statistics show a direct link between underachievement and attendance below 95%. Regular attenders make better progress both socially and academically.

Legal framework

This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation and statutory guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

- Education Act 1996
- Equality Act 2010
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (As amended)
- The Children (Performances and Activities) (England) Regulations 2014
- Children and Young Persons Act 1963

- DfE (2024) 'Working together to improve school attendance'
- DfE (2024) 'Keeping children safe in education (KCSIE) 2024'
- DfE (2024) 'Children missing education'
- DfE (2024) 'Providing remote education'
- DfE (2024) 'Summary table of responsibilities for school attendance'

Expectations

As a parent –

- We expect your child to attend school every day and on time and any issues preventing attendance are discussed with the Attendance Team.
- We expect that, if your child is absent, you will inform the school giving a reason why by phone by 9am on the morning of absence, or alternatively report absence directly to the school office.
- If your child is absent due to medical appointment, they must attend school before and/or after the appointment and bring medical evidence (appointment card, letter or text message) to prove their absences.
- You should inform us promptly of any changes to your address or contact numbers.
- Attend attendance support meetings if invited.

As a school –

- We will contact you if there has been no contact made to school either via telephone or at the school office to report an absence. School staff will contact you by phone or will do a home visit to obtain a reason for the absence. This is because we have a duty to ensure your child's safety. You may be asked to provide evidence for the absence.
- Monitor your child's attendance and send you letters if it is cause for concern.
- The Attendance Team may contact you to discuss your child's attendance and explore ways in which school can support you to improve attendance.
- If we believe that your child is absent due to a holiday you may be issued with a penalty notice (fine).
- Monitor absence and invite parents to attend a meeting if your child's attendance is irregular.
- Please note that if your child's attendance falls below 92%, you may be contacted by the Attendance Team even if you have provided reasons for absences.
- Ask you to provide evidence if your child has poor attendance.
- Seek advice from the local authority and work in partnership to improve attendance

Authorised Absence

An authorised absence is when your child has been given permission to be absent from school. It is defined as:

- Genuine illness
- Medical or dental appointment (routine appointments should be made out of school time)
- Bereavement – at the Principal's discretion
- Religious observance – no more than two days per academic year

- Approved leave in term time where there are exceptional circumstances that have been authorised by the Principal

Authorised absence is at the Principal's discretion and you may be required to provide school with evidence of the absence.

Accepted evidence:

- Appointment card/letter/text message
- Letter from the GP
- Medication or prescription with the correct name and address detail
- Receipt from the pharmacy
- Notification from a medical professional

Routine doctor and dental appointments should be booked at the end of the day and during school holidays wherever possible. We know that sometimes you cannot choose hospital appointments, so please make sure you only take your child out of school for the appointment itself and return them when finished. Your child's absence may be marked as unauthorized for one of the morning or afternoon sessions if your child was expected to return to school or be in school beforehand. Evidence must be provided for all scheduled appointments.

School will still send notifications out via an Arbor message every Friday to all pupils who have been absent regardless of whether the absence is authorised or not. This helps parents keep a check on their child's attendance levels.

Unauthorised Absence

An unauthorised absence is when no explanation for absence has been given to school, or if the reason given does not meet guidelines set out by the Department for Education. It is defined as:

- Holidays in term time where permission has not been given by the school
- Late after the registers have closed
- Unexplained absence
- Taking the rest of the day off before or after a medical appointment
- Staying at home due to the illness of relatives
- Birthdays, weddings or anniversaries
- Transport issues eg car has broken down

It is important to note that it is the responsibility of the parent to ensure their child attends school regularly and on time. Regular, unauthorised absences may lead to a referral to the local authority regarding your child's poor attendance record. You could be asked to attend an attendance meeting. Failure to improve your child's attendance and engage with the Attendance **Team could** result in legal proceedings. If found guilty of failing to secure your child's regular school attendance could result in a fine of up to £1000 and a criminal record.

Continuing concerns around school attendance

School will start to ask for medical evidence before authorizing any further absences if your child's attendance falls below 90% and you are failing to engage with the Attendance Team eg not attending attendance support meetings you are invited to. Ultimately, parents/carers can be held accountable for failing to ensure that their children attend school punctually and regularly. Cheshire East Council's School Attendance Service carries out this statutory function to uphold the right of children to access their education.

When necessary statutory action will be taken under Section 444 Education Act 1996 or Education Supervision Order under the Children's Act 1989 this may take the form of a penalty notice, prosecution of parents in the Magistrates Court resulting in a fine or a statutory order.

Exceptional Circumstances

Parents do not have the right to remove their children from school during term time. Absence in term time will only be considered if parents/carers make a request to the school on the appropriate form giving exceptional reasons why the application for absence has been requested and provide information to support their application. Please note that the definition of 'exceptional' means 'very unusual'. Therefore, a second request for absence based on 'exceptional circumstances' is unlikely to be authorised.

The Department for Education states that **no child is expected to be absent from school on holiday during term time**. We expect that parents will take their children on holiday during the approved school holiday breaks. It should be noted that there are **175 days each year** when a child is on holiday from school.

Requests that **MAY** be considered:

- Bereavement of a close family member
- Participation in a sporting event at local, regional or national level
- Recognized examinations in music or dance
- Other exceptional circumstances agreed on an individual basis by the Principal

You will **NOT** be given permission for:

- Availability of cheaper holidays
- During any national assessments eg Phonics/Multiplication Check/SATs
- Trips away (eg day trips, shopping, events)
- Taking a long weekend away
- General family celebrations

The Principal will decide whether or not the absence will be authorised. Parents/carers, who take their children out of school during term time without authorisation will be issued with a penalty fine.

If your child is granted exceptional leave, your child must return to school on the agreed return date. If they do not we will have no alternative but to start proceedings to register your child as 'missing in education'. This could put your child at risk of losing their place at this school.

Children Missing in Education

If there is no contact between school and the family and the child's whereabouts are unknown, it is possible for a child to be removed from the school roll. This will only happen in circumstances where pupils do not return to school after an authorised period of absence or are absent from school without authorisation for twenty consecutive school days.

Persistent Absence – Attendance Team Intervention

When a pupil's absence falls to 90% or below they are classed as 'persistently absent' by the Department for Education. Parents/carers will be invited into school to meet with the Attendance team to discuss the reasons for poor attendance and to examine any support needs. Persistent absence can result in parents/carers being fined and ultimately prosecution if the issue persists.

Lateness

The school day begins at 8.45am. Gates close at 9am and any child arriving after this time must be signed in at the main office and a reason provided for their lateness. Late marks can lead to poor attendance. Children who arrive after 9.10am will have the session registered as an unauthorised absence. If your child is persistently late, you may be invited by the Attendance Team to attend a meeting to discuss this or you may be issued with an irregular attendance penalty notice (fine).

The board of trustees will ensure staff from different schools within the trust regularly share expertise and collaborate on interventions. Please see the Trust Development Plan for more details.