



# Attendance Policy

September 2023

Next Update: September 2025

Approved by: Chair of Trustees

Principal: Neil Bain

Designated Safeguard Lead

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## 1 Principles

Education is important. Missing school can have a detrimental effect on learning, the acquisition of life skills, self-esteem and future employment prospects. Children should be at school, on time and ready to learn, every day the school is open, unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. Permitting absence from school without a good reason is an offence by the parent that can result in legal action by the Local Authority.

We understand that children are sometimes ill or unhappy about attending school. Families can be going through unsettled times that can make regular school attendance difficult. Any problems with regular attendance, especially any concerns about possible bullying or learning difficulties, are best addressed promptly by the school, the parents and the child at an early stage. It is never better to cover up children's absences or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending without good reason. This gives the impression that school attendance does not matter and may make things worse.

Every half-day absence from school has to be recorded by staff at the school as either **AUTHORISED** or **UNAUTHORISED**. This is why information about the cause of each absence is always required, preferably in writing.

***Authorised absences*** are mornings or afternoons away from school for a reason like genuine illness or other unavoidable causes, or when permission has been given. Only the school can authorise an absence.

***Unauthorised absences*** are those which the staff at school do not consider reasonable and for which no permission has been given. These are an offence by the parent and include:

- keeping student off school without a good reason
- student leaving school before the a.m./p.m. register has been marked
- absences which have never been properly explained
- children who arrive at school too late to get a mark
- taking holidays that have not been approved by the school in advance

## 2 Procedures

The school has a special responsibility to reduce the number of children whose attendance is below 90% over the school year. This adds up to missing almost half a term. These are called "persistent absentees" by the Government, whatever the reason for their absence, including authorised absences. Special procedures may be applied to children at risk of falling into this category.

The school applies the following procedures in deciding how to deal with individual absences:

- Registration takes place 8.30am, after which time a student arriving will be deemed late. If a student is going to be absent, we require parents/carers to make contact via telephone or email with the Head of Student Services Tel: 01372 276499.

- Students that are not of compulsory education age are still expected to observe the above procedures and be in school full-time whilst on roll at Wemms Education Centre.
- If a student needs to go away during the term, a parent / carer request for leave must be sent to the Principal in good time. The Principal will not grant leave of absence for holidays or recreational purposes during term time. However, we are a culturally sensitive school, so those requiring permission to attend cultural events, fairs and or trips of this nature should apply.
- Compassionate leave due to a close family members death or illness will always be considered and given priority.

### **3 Students Absent from School**

The Wemms Education Centre is a specialist school for students with high anxiety, sometimes as a result of a diagnosed disability, which may be physical, mental or a combination of both, or as a result of trauma caused by external events e.g. bullying, illness in a parent and breakdown of relationships. Many of our students have been absent from school previously, sometimes for long periods. In order to break the pattern of absence from school, the following steps and procedures are in place and are followed by designated staff.

### **4 Identifying Absent Students**

- Students arrive at school, usually by taxis provided by the relevant Local Authority. They are expected to be on-site by 8.30 am.
- Parents are requested to inform the school by telephone or e-mail before this time if their child is unwell. If the absence is pre-booked e.g. a hospital appointment, therapy session, dentist etc, parents are expected to let the school know in advance.
- Upon arrival, the student goes to their form room, where the register is taken by the Form Tutor. At this time messages are given, uniforms and PE kit are checked and timetables are given out. Any changes e.g. teacher cover is explained and the student reassured. As the students have anxiety, this is a critically important part of the day if the student is to be ready to learn by 9 am. Special provision is given to students who find this part of the day stressful- a common reason for student absence is anxiety about unexpected change to the teaching day. These students may have an arrangement to be met by a member of the SAS (Student Assisted Services), SENCo or a named trusted adult or Key worker. This is agreed by the student concerned and is ideally a short term arrangement to engender confidence and reduce stress in order that attendance may be facilitated.
- Registration takes place at 8.30 am and an on-line register ensures staff have instant access to students who are not in school by 8.30 am, after which the student is deemed absent. The Form Tutor informs Head of Student Services; Attendance Officer and Deputy Attendance Officer of any absences on that day.
- Any student absent when the school has not received either an e-mail or telephone confirmation will be contacted by Head of Student Services, Attendance Officer or Deputy Attendance Officer and the outcome of the call logged and recorded. The Year Head, SENCo and Safeguarding DSL will be notified and expected to take relevant action. If there is no answer to a call or e-mail, this will be followed up later in the day.

- Students who are absent for whatever reason are monitored by the DSL, SENCo and the Year Head. The monitoring usually takes place as a daily phone call or e-mail. If the absence is likely to be short term i.e; a self limiting illness like a cold or flu, an expected date of return is usually predictable and given by parents. Longer term absence – operations or broken bones, or hospital stay may require a home visit, on-line teaching or a phased return to school. The response to each incident of absence is individual to each case with the goal of returning the student to school as quickly and with as little stress as possible for student and family.
- If a student is unwell at school, the school undertakes to inform the parent as soon as possible and to send the student home if the severity of the illness warrants it. This is the responsibility of the Head of Student Services. Until the parents arrive to collect their child, responsibility for the welfare of the student is with Student Services, when they may be sent to the medical room with a member of the SAS. If there is cause to isolate from the rest of the school (e.g. in a case of vomiting) this will occur as soon as possible to avoid further contamination. The medical room will be deep cleaned as soon as possible. No medication will be administered without the express permission of the parents. In case of accident that may require a visit to A and E, no food or drink will be administered.
- Only the Principal and the Trustees may decide if the absence should be authorised or unauthorised.

## **5. Long Term Absence from School for Medical Reasons**

There are occasions where a long term absence from school is unavoidable due to long term illness or unexpected disability.

- The parents' responsibility is to keep the school informed by telephone and e-mail from the first day of absence.
- The parents should provide the relevant information from the Medical Authorities in the form of a written Diagnosis, sick note and/or GP letter.
- It will be helpful if the parents can give details of the treatment being received by student, within the bounds of patient confidentiality. This will allow the school to determine the correct support is given by seeking medical guidance. The school undertakes to contact the LEA for additional support for the student if the severity of the illness warrants it.
- Arrangements will be made with the Head of Student Services to meet reasonable adjustments to meet the medical needs of unwell students in order to facilitate their return to school and their learning.
- If the student requires the administration of medicine during the recovery period from long term illness, the parents should contact the school and make individual arrangements in line with the terms and conditions of the school Administration of Medicines Policy.

## **6. Long Term Absence from School for Other Reasons**

Long term absence from school without a medical cause can be as a result of many factors including, but not exclusively, family breakdown, family illness, neglect, abuse, criminal activity, bullying, cultural differences and other safeguarding issues. Long term absence has a negative impact on a students' ability to thrive, on their self esteem, ability to access future work, and the opportunity for the future. It is essential that the school monitor and are aware of potential difficulties and problems indicated by the long term absence.

- Absence from school may be an indicator of safeguarding issue.
- The Wemms Education Centre has a duty of care to its students and will do everything possible to identify the reasons for absence from school.
- The Wemms Education Centre has an Attendance Strategy to identify, monitor and encourage a successful return to school as quickly as possible. See appendices.

## Wemms Education Centre Attendance Strategy

### Improving attendance

Good attendance is vital to ensure students make the best possible progress. We understand that there may sometimes be legitimate reasons for short term, long term and continued sporadic absences. The interventions listed below, and the guide percentage attendance figures, are not exhaustive and will be applied on a case by case basis by the pastoral team.

### Actions

Please see Wemms 'Attendance Strategy' for a detailed breakdown of daily, weekly and termly actions for each stage.

Key	Leads	Responses	Acknowledgment / success
<b>Stage 1</b> <b>95%</b> <b>and</b> <b>above</b>	Tutors	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Attendance records sent home every half term.</li> <li>2. Tutors celebrate during tutor time.</li> <li>3. Tutor acknowledgements given (100% weeks).</li> <li>4. Tutor tracks to monitor, celebrate improvement in student's attendance or address students whose attendance is at risk of falling below 95%.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 100%-week email acknowledgements.</li> <li>2. Postcards for outstanding attendance.</li> <li>3. Bronze, Silver, Gold, Platinum certificates / badges.</li> <li>4. 100% termly attendance wall.</li> <li>5. 100% eligible for termly pizza lunch and film.</li> </ol>
<b>Stage 2</b> <b>Below</b> <b>95%</b> <b>and</b> <b>Above</b> <b>90%</b>	Tutors & Heads of Year	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Attendance records sent home every half term.</li> <li>2. 100%-week acknowledgements.</li> <li>3. Postcards for outstanding attendance.</li> <li>4. Bronze, Silver, Gold, Platinum certificates.</li> <li>5. 100% termly attendance wall.</li> <li>6. Eligible for reward trip.</li> <li>7. Form Tutors and/or Heads of Year have individual conversations with students for 'odd day' absences, effectively a 'return to school wellbeing' conversation. This will highlight any support/interventions that may be necessary to secure a student's future regular attendance.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 100%-week email acknowledgements.</li> <li>2. Postcards for outstanding attendance.</li> <li>3. Bronze, Silver, Gold, Platinum certificates / badges.</li> </ol>
<b>Stage 3</b> <b>90% -</b> <b>80%</b>	Tutors, Heads of Year and Attendance Lead	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Attendance records sent home every half term.</li> <li>2. Attendance is monitored daily by attendance lead and overseen by Asst HT responsible for Attendance.</li> <li>3. Asst HT analyses attendance data of those students less than 90% attendance.</li> <li>4. A phone call home by the attendance lead / Asst HT inform parents of concerns and informing them a letter will be sent home. This is a <b>Stage 1 Letter</b> informing parents that attendance is beginning to fall and is a concern.</li> <li>5. If attendance does not improve a face to face meeting is arranged which includes the</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Acknowledgement from heads of year of the sustained improvement in attendance through letters home, postcards, positive telephone calls home for securing some full weeks in school.</li> <li>2. Appropriate rewards set in school by heads of year for improved attendance</li> </ol>

		<p>student, parents and appropriate school staff to understand and address the reasons for absence – <b>Stage 2 Letter</b>.</p> <p><b>6.</b> Attendance Team and Pastoral Leads undertake home visits.</p> <p><b>7.</b> School use the mini bus daily to collect those students who are struggling to physically get to school/anxious.</p> <p><b>8.</b> If no improvements are seen <i>another</i> face to face meeting is arranged where parents are clearly informed about the potential legal impact/consequences of continued poor attendance. Targets and actions are reviewed.</p> <p><b>9.</b> School review daily the supports that are in place. Head of year and tutor have regular informal meetings in school with the student, telephone calls home are made and appropriate daily interventions are used. Liaison with the DSL.</p>	
<b>Stage 4 Below 80%</b>	Tutors, Heads of Year, Attendance Lead and Principal	<p><b>1.</b> Attendance records sent home every half term.</p> <p><b>2.</b> Attendance is monitored daily by school attendance lead, heads of year and overseen by Asst H/T responsible for Attendance.</p> <p><b>3.</b> If a student's attendance continues to fall ongoing face to face conversations are held with the parent and student that demonstrate that despite the work that school has undertaken attendance has not sufficiently improved or been sustained. Parents are informed that school will consider appropriate additional targeted support through Social Care, Early Help or other external support agencies and whether legal intervention now needs to be considered.</p> <p><b>4.</b> An Attendance Panel Meeting is held in school with the Principal, Assistant Principal, Head of Year, SENCO, DSL, other external agencies, parents and student. (Held half termly in school).</p> <p><b>5.</b> School review daily the supports that are in place. Head of Year and Attendance Lead have regular informal meetings in school with the student, telephone calls home are made and appropriate daily interventions as required.</p> <p><b>6.</b> Attendance professionals / pastoral staff undertake home visits.</p>	<p>1. Acknowledgement from Head of Year of the sustained improvement in attendance through letters home, postcards, positive telephone calls home for securing some full weeks in school.</p> <p>2. Appropriate rewards set in school by Head of Year for improved attendance.</p>



		<p><b>7.</b> School use the mini bus daily to collect those students who are struggling to physically get to school/anxious.</p> <p><b>8.</b> Once school have exhausted all avenues of support/interventions, school will request a Legal Assessment Meeting with the Local Authority to discuss the case and continued poor school attendance. Parent and other relevant school staff and external professionals are invited. <b>Stage 3 Letter</b> is sent to parents.</p> <p><b>9.</b> Attendance Consultant to prepare case for FPN or Level 1 Prosecution.</p>	
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## Appendices

## Attendance Meeting

### Stage (.....)

Student	
Year	
Attendance 2022/23	
Attendance to date 2023	
Date of initial meeting	
Present at meeting	

This attendance intervention agreement has been made in a bid to improve the student's attendance to school and timetabled lessons. The aim of the agreement is for the student to return full time to all timetabled lessons.

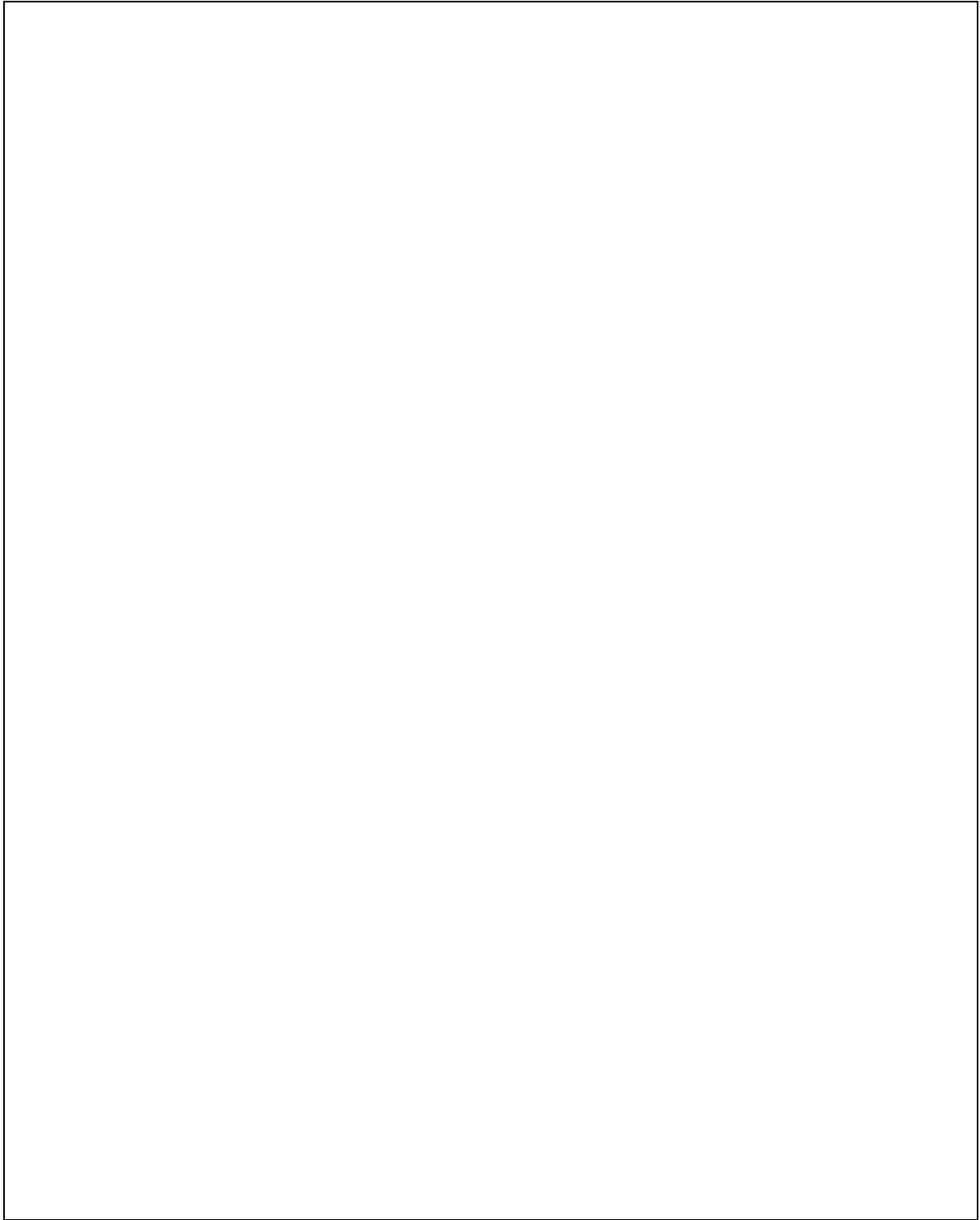
This agreement has been made with the support of parents / carers. Throughout the process the student will be supported in school.

Minutes of the meeting

Summary of barriers to regular attendance as identified by parents/carers/student/school

Action	Duration/review date	Further details/comments

Review
Date
Present



Template letter – Stage 1 (attendance below 90%)

Letter of concern

Date

Dear Parent/ Carer

Re:

DOB:

As has been discussed on the telephone with (STAFF NAME), we are concerned at the number of absences (NAME) has had since the start of the year.

(NAME)'s attendance is currently XX%.

Our concern is that their academic progress will be affected if this number of absences continues. It is expected for students to attend regularly and we hope to see an improvement.

If you would like to discuss this matter please contact me as soon as possible to arrange a convenient appointment.

Yours sincerely

Principal

Template letter – Stage 2 (attendance below 90%)

Letter of concern

Date

Dear Parent/ Carer

Re:

DOB:

Your son/ daughter's attendance during this academic year continues to be a cause for concern. Your child's attendance report is attached and shows the current percentage of attendance.

I would like to invite you to a meeting at Wemms Education Centre on (DATE) at (TIME) to discuss (NAME)'s attendance, as I am concerned that his/her attendance does not appear to be making any positive improvements.

This meeting will be useful to discuss how we can work together to improve the attendance of your child in order that we do not have to consider any legal action.

Please make every effort to attend this meeting so we can help to support you in securing (NAME)'s regular school attendance.

Yours sincerely

Principal

Template letter – Stage 3 (attendance below 80%)

Letter of concern

Date

Dear Parent/ Carer

Re:

DOB:

A registered pupil at Wemms Education Centre

I am concerned that (NAME)'s attendance at Wemms Education Centre continues to be unsatisfactory.

Since (DATE) he/she has been absent from school on (NUMBER) occasions out of a possible (NUMBER).

As there does not appear to be a legitimate explanation for (NAMES)'s unsatisfactory school attendance, I must remind you of your legal responsibility that under the terms of Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 which states that: 'the parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him to receive efficient full time education suitable to –

a) his age, ability and aptitude and

b) any special educational needs he may have either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.'

Sections 444 (1) and (1A) of the Education Act 1996 state that: 'if a child of compulsory school age who is a registered pupil at school fails to attend regularly at the school, his parent is guilty of an offence 444(1). If in the circumstances mentioned in subsection (1) the parent knows that his child is failing to attend regularly at the school and fails to cause him to do so, he is guilty of an offence 444(1A).'

I must advise you that unless (NAME) resumes regular school attendance or you support a legitimate reason for the absences within the next ten days the local authority will consider taking legal proceedings against you.

If you would like to discuss this matter please contact me as soon as possible to arrange a convenient appointment.

Yours sincerely

Principal