WIRRAL GRAMMAR SCHOOL FOR GIRLS

ATTENDANCE POLICY

2025

We the Governing Body of Wirral Grammar School for Girls, having considered and reviewed the attached Policy, agree to accept all the statements, principles and procedures as listed in this document:

Reviewed at Curriculum Committee - October 2025

Approved at Full Governors - November 2025

This policy is due for review - September 2026

#EVERYDAYCOUNTS

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1. Introduction

Wirral Grammar School for Girls recognises that positive behaviour and good attendance are essential in order for pupils to get the most of their school experience, including their attainment, wellbeing and wider life chances.

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 either by attendance at a school or by education otherwise than at a school.

Where parents decide to have their child registered at school, they have an additional legal duty to ensure their child attends that school regularly, on time. This means their child 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.

The Department for Education (DfE) has produced statutory guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools, and local authorities. It is called "Working together to improve school attendance" and it includes a National Framework in relation to absence and the use of legal sanctions. Our School Attendance Policy reflects the requirements and principles of that guidance.

This policy is written with the above guidance in mind and underpins our school ethos to:

- promote children's welfare and safeguarding;
- ensure every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled;
- ensure that pupils succeed whilst at school;
- ensure that pupils have access to the widest possible range of opportunities at school, and when they leave school.

It seeks to ensure that all parties involved in the practicalities of school attendance are aware and informed of attendance matters in school and to outline the school's commitment to attendance matters. It details the responsibilities of individuals and groups involved and the procedures in place to promote and monitor pupil attendance.

In addition, all schools follow the DfE's statutory safeguarding guidance, Keeping Children Safe in Education, which emphasises the importance of understanding the potential vulnerabilities of children who are missing or absent from education.

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2

Our policy aims to raise and maintain levels of attendance by:

- Promoting a positive and welcoming atmosphere in which pupils feel safe, secure and valued;
- Raising and maintaining a whole school awareness of the importance of good attendance and punctuality;
- Ensuring that attendance is monitored effectively and reasons for absences are recorded promptly and consistently.

For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. **It is a rule of this school that pupils must attend every day, unless there are exceptional circumstances, and it is the *headteacher/principal*, not the parent, who can authorise the absence.**

1.1 Promoting Regular School Attendance

The need for **regular school attendance** is given a high priority by all Wirral schools.
The Supreme Court ruled in April 2017 (Platt v Isle of Wight) that **regular** attendance is **'in accordance with the rules prescribed by the school'**. In Wirral Schools, this is interpreted as **every day that the school requires a child to attend, unless the absence has been approved by the Headteacher.**

At Wirral Grammar School for Girls school, we believe in developing good patterns of attendance and set high expectations for the attendance and punctuality for all our pupils from the outset. It is a central part of our school's vision, values, ethos and day to day life. We recognise the strong connections between attendance, attainment, safeguarding and wellbeing.

The name and contact details of the Senior Attendance Champion (the senior leader responsible for the strategic approach to attendance in our school) is:

Sara Wheelock (Deputy Headteacher)

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is the responsibility of parents, pupils and all members of school staff.

To help us all to focus on this, we will:

- Submit a daily attendance return to the Department of Education, in line with the legal expectations placed on all schools;
- Share attendance information with the Local Authority;
- Build strong relationships and work jointly with families;
- Give parents/carers details on attendance in our newsletters;
- Promote the benefits of high attendance;
- Accurately complete admission and, with the exception of schools where all pupils are boarders, attendance registers and have effective day to day processes in place to follow-up absence as required by law;
- Celebrate good or improving attendance;
- Report to parents/carers regularly on their child's attendance and the impact on their progress;
- Contact parents/carers should their child's attendance fall below the school's target for attendance.

Unsurprisingly, children who are absent from school or who are persistently late, can soon fall behind with their learning. Research conducted by the Department for Education (DfE 2016) confirmed that, as the level of overall pupil absence increases, the likelihood of pupils achieving what they are capable of decreases.

Parents of children of compulsory school age are, by law, required to ensure that their children receive a suitable education through regular attendance at school or otherwise.

1.2 Definition of 'Parent'

For the purposes of this policy and other education related issues, a **parent** is as defined under section 576 of the Education Act 1996:

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

Having care of a child or young person means that a person with whom the child lives and who looks after the child, irrespective of their relationship with the child, is considered to be a parent in education law.

1.3 Understanding types of Absence

Any absence affects the routine of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning journey and ability to progress. Any pupil's absence or late arrival disrupts teaching routines and so may affect the learning of others in the same class. Ensuring a child's regular attendance at school is a parental responsibility and allowing absence from school, without a good reason, creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by the parent), as either **authorised** or **unauthorised**. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required. Each half-day is known as a 'session'.

Authorised absences are morning or afternoon sessions away from school for a genuine reason such as illness (although you may be asked to provide medical evidence for your child before this can be authorised), medical or dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable cause.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no 'leave' has been granted. This type of absence can lead to the school referring to the Local Authority for penalty notices and/or legal proceedings.

Unauthorised absence includes, (however this list is not exhaustive):

- parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily e.g. because they had a late night or for non-infectious illness or injury that would not affect their ability to learn;
- absences which have never been properly explained;
- children who arrive at school after the close of registration are marked using a 'U'. This indicates that they are in school for safeguarding purposes, however is counted as an absence for the session;
- shopping trips;
- looking after other children or children accompanying siblings or parents to medical appointments;
- their own or family birthdays;
- holidays taken during term time, not deemed 'for exceptional purposes' by the headteacher, including any arranged by other family members or friends;

- day trips;
- other leave of absence in term time which has not been agreed.

1.4 Persistent Absenteeism (PA) and Severe Absenteeism (SA)

A pupil is defined by the Government as a **'persistent absentee'** when they miss 10% or more schooling (19 days) across the school year for any reason; this can be authorised or unauthorised absence. Absence at this level will cause considerable damage to any pupil's education and we need the full support and co-operation of parents to resolve this. All pupils who have attendance levels of 90% or below are considered to be a persistent absentee.

A pupil who has missed 50% or more schooling (95 days) is defined by the Government as '**severely absent'**. Pupils within this cohort may find it more difficult to be in school or face bigger barriers to their regular attendance and, as such, are likely to need more intensive support

1.5 Understanding barriers to attendance

Whilst any child may occasionally have time off school because they are too unwell to attend, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any barriers preventing regular attendance are best resolved between the school, the parents and the child. If a parent thinks their child is reluctant to attend school, then we will work with that family to understand the root problem and provide any necessary support. We can use outside agencies to help with this, such as the School Nurse, Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing support services, a Child and Family Support Worker or the relevant Local Authority team/s. Where outside agencies are supporting the family, you may be invited to attend a Team Around the Family meeting (TAF) to consider what is working well and what needs to improve. An individual support plan will be agreed and subsequently reviewed.

Some pupils face greater barriers to attendance than their peers. These can include pupils who suffer from long-term medical conditions or who have special educational needs and disabilities, or other vulnerabilities. High expectations of attendance remain in place for these pupils, however we will work with families and pupils to support improved attendance whilst being mindful of the additional barriers faced. We can discuss reasonable adjustments and additional support from external partners, where appropriate.

Under the DfE's statutory guidance, schools are required to submit a sickness return to the Local Authority for all pupils who have missed/are likely to miss 15 or more school days (consecutive or cumulative) due to medical reasons/illness.Policies relating to Emotional Barriers to School Attendance and Section 19 - Access to Education are available.

2. Expectations to ensure delivery of this Policy across all Wirral Schools

2.1 Responsibilities & Expectations of Parents and Carers:

- ✓ To ensure that their child attends school every day that the school is open, unless there is a genuine and unavoidable reason that prevents them from so doing;
- ✓ To ensure that their child arrives at school on time **(*8:45am)***. A reason should be offered for any lateness;
- ✓ To inform school as soon as possible, by 'phone or in person, if their child is unable to attend on any day, together with the reason for absence. **(0151 644 8282 Option 1; email:absence@wirralgirls.co.uk)**
- ✓ To trust that school staff will contact them during the school day if a child is ill in school and needs to go home;
- ✓ To ensure that school has at least two sets of full contact details, and that these are kept updated;
- ✓ To make all medical appointments outside school hours whenever possible, and to inform school in advance of any medical appointments that cannot be scheduled out of school time. For absence to be authorised as a medical absence, schools do require evidence, such as an appointment card or letter;
- ✓ In the case of a primary school child, to ensure that their child is collected on time at the end of the school day;
- ✓ To take family holidays during school holiday periods, and to be aware that there is no entitlement to withdraw children for authorised leave of absence during term time. Any requests for leave of absence during term time should be made in writing and in advance to the head teacher. The request must be made not less than one month before the proposed date of absence
- ✓ To be aware of curriculum requirements and to be especially vigilant with regards to attendance during particularly important times such as GCSEs, A Levels and other exam periods;
- ✓ To provide evidence and advice from a health professional when needed to enable school to gain a greater understanding of their child's health issues;
- ✓ To talk to school staff as soon as possible should their child be reluctant to come to school for any reason, or if there are any other issues impacting on school attendance. This is so that any barriers to attendance can be quickly identified and overcome. In most cases the first point of contact should be the child's class teacher, form tutor or the Attendance Officer within the school

Absence Procedures:

- ✓ It is important that parents / carers keep in touch with school about all absences. This information is used to help determine whether children's absence is recorded in the register as authorised or unauthorised. The head teacher has the ultimate authority to determine whether absences are authorised or unauthorised. If parents do not communicate with school, and staff are unable to establish contact, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised.

2.2 Medical Evidence:

The most common reason for children being persistently absent from school is illness. When pupils are having repeat absences due to reported illness, schools may need more evidence and advice to help decide whether or not the absence should be authorised, and to see whether any additional support is required. Children can be reluctant to attend school from time to time, or there may be other issues affecting attendance. It is never advisable for parents to 'cover' for their absence or to give-in to pressure to excuse them from attending. Covering up gives the impression that attendance does not matter, and usually makes things worse. It is always better to get in touch with school, to share concerns, and to plan a way forward.

Schools can accept the following as medical evidence:

- ✓ GP certificate
- ✓ Letter from health professional
- ✓ Appointment card / letter (dated)
- ✓ Prescription / Medication in the name of the child
- ✓ Text message from GP or NHS confirming an appointment
- ✓ Care of the chemist – date stamped slip to show medical advice has been sought

See Appendix 3 for advice in relation to required absence periods for identified health issues.

In situations where a child's attendance record is of concern, usual practice would be for parents / carers to be invited into school to meet with an appropriate member of staff. This provides an opportunity for concerns from both home and school to be shared, and for an agreed plan of action to be put in place to address any identified difficulties.

Please remember that parents and carers are encouraged to contact school at an early point should they have any concerns that are impacting on their child's school attendance.

We acknowledge that children are at a higher risk of missing school if they have issues around their emotional wellbeing and mental health. This can then lead to further problems in terms of children falling behind with work, and of feelings of social isolation. It is particularly important in these circumstances that parents / carers work together with school to ensure that appropriate help and support is offered to respond to concerns as they arise. Early Help means taking action to support a child, young person, or/and their family as soon as a problem emerges. School may also seek advice about sources of help and support from the Authority's Vulnerable Children's Panel in cases where concerns about a child's unauthorised absence are ongoing. Parents may also wish to use Family Toolbox **https://familytoolbox.co.uk/** to identify possible sources of support or encourage their child to access Zillo **https://www.zillowirral.co.uk/**

2.3 Responsibilities of School:

- ✓ To demonstrate a strong and inclusive whole school attendance ethos that helps pupils feel that they 'belong'.
- ✓ To promote the importance of good attendance to pupils and their parents/carers at every opportunity (via newsletters, assemblies, and any other communications between school and home).
- ✓ To establish effective procedures that enable staff to record, identify, and address concerns around overall pupil absence.
- ✓ To consistently record authorised and unauthorised absences using the correct DfE prescribed registration code (see Appendix 1). This duty also extends to ensuring that N coded absences are resolved in a timely manner. Parents should be made aware that if school cannot establish an acceptable reason for their child's absence, the missed sessions will be recorded as unauthorised absence.
- ✓ To have sensitive support systems in place for vulnerable pupils which recognise the complexity of children's lives and family circumstances.
- ✓ To inform the local authority of any part-time or flexible education arrangements in place for individual pupils, together with plans for tracking and review (See Appendix 4).
- ✓ To identify a senior leader who has overall responsibility for attendance, and who is also responsible for the achievement and wellbeing of all children who are on the school roll, but not

accessing education in the usual way, such as those pupils in alternative provision placements. The senior leader responsible for attendance is **Elizabeth de Boorder** and they can be contacted via the school office.

- ✓ To encourage open communication channels and partnership working between home and school to improve attendance and punctuality. This will include meetings with parents and carers in school, where any support needs can be identified and addressed, together with the joint formulation of realistic plans for improving individual pupils' attendance.
- ✓ To develop procedures for the reintegration of long term absentees. In addition school must have plans in place to support each persistently absent pupil and each severely absent pupil.
- ✓ To have support plans in place to ease pupils' transition between each phase of education especially when there is a change of school, with particular reference to the needs of more vulnerable children.
- ✓ To seek advice from the Authority's designated Locality Attendance Officer (LAO) both in respect of the management of whole school attendance matters, and of individual children whose attendance gives cause concern.
- ✓ To have a clear understanding of the roles and responsibilities of the school and other support agencies in relation to the provision of additional support for pupils whose attendance difficulties are symptomatic of wider family issues or / and indicative of safeguarding concerns where a multi-agency response is required seeking advice from the allocated Early Help worker as and when needed.
- ✓ To refer children into the Authority's Vulnerable Children's Panel for advice and support in situations where parents are reluctant to engage voluntarily with early help, and concerns about unauthorised absence are ongoing. Parents should be made aware that this will be the case.
- ✓ To engage in partnership working with the Authority's Attendance Service to ensure appropriate use of legal sanctions in order to reinforce parental responsibility for securing regular attendance.
- ✓ To analyse and evaluate a range of accurate attendance data to improve individual pupil and whole school performance, and to identify any vulnerable groups of pupils whose attendance is below what would be expected. There should be robust tracking procedures in place with respect to the attendance of pupils with special educational needs and disabilities, children in receipt of Pupil Premium, and children who are Looked After by the Authority or have an allocated Social Worker.
- ✓ To incentivise, reward and celebrate good and improved attendance on an individual, group, and whole school level – creating a positive culture in which good and improved attendance is highly valued. School can encourage ownership of their attendance reward schemes by seeking and acting on pupils' views in this respect.
- ✓ To provide governors with sufficient data and information about pupils who are not attending regularly or accessing education in the usual way, so that they can evaluate and challenge the effectiveness of school's arrangements.
- ✓ To refer children who are, or who are at risk of becoming, Children Missing from Education (CME) to the Local Authority in accordance with Wirral Policy.
- ✓ To notify the Local Authority of any child whose name is deleted from roll at parental request in order to pursue elective home education.

2.4 Expectations of School Staff:

First Day Contact
Parents should be encouraged to contact school on each morning that their child is absent. If a child is absent, and no contact from parent has been received by school:

- ✓ School will endeavour to telephone parents/carers to ascertain a reason for absence in accordance with 'first day contact' procedures.
- ✓ School may also telephone any other persons on the pupil's contact list if they are unable to make contact with the parent.
- ✓ Home welfare visits may also be undertaken in connection with concerns around a child's absence (particularly when parents do not respond to requests for contact from school staff).
- ✓ Priority tracking should take place where safeguarding is a known issue. School's Designated Safeguarding Lead / Children Looked After Lead should be alerted should there be any concerns in respect of the absence of children subject of Child In Need arrangements or Child Protection Plans, or children Looked After by the Local Authority.

The Attendance Officer is responsible for:

- ✓ Collating and recording registration and attendance information.
- ✓ Taking and recording messages from parents regarding absence.
- ✓ Making first day response calls to parents of absent children where no contact has been received.
- ✓ Informing the Head of Year/ Attendance Lead / Designated Safeguarding Lead of any cases where the explanation for absence gives potential cause for concern, and where additional support or intervention may be required.
- ✓ Recording details of children who arrive late.
- ✓ Sending out letters and emails to parents regarding attendance concerns.
- ✓ Administration work around school Attendance Panels (which can also involve the Authority's Locality Attendance Officer).
- ✓ Reporting daily and weekly attendance figures.
- ✓ Keeping an overview of whole school, class, and individual attendance rates, looking particularly at overall absence, levels of unauthorised absence, and patterns of absence.

2.5 Expectations of the Local Authority and Wirral Attendance Service

The Local Authority is expected:

- ➢ To promote regular school attendance of children in schools across the Authority, and to work towards breaking the cycle of poor attendance, reduced attainment, and social disadvantage.
- ➢ To meet regularly with attendance staff within school. In line with the Working Together To Improve School Attendance Guidance, if a meeting is requested by either school or the Local Authority it must happen
- ➢ To help schools in their work to reduce overall, persistent and severe pupil absence. This involves working with school staff, parents / carers, children, and various partner agencies to develop and implement practices which can help raise and sustain individual pupils' attendance levels.
- ➢ To carry out statutory duties in relation to the enforcement of school attendance.

- To carry out statutory duties in respect of the identification and tracking of children known to be, or at risk of becoming, missing from education (CME).

Tables of responsibilities for school attendance can be found at:

Summary table of responsibilities for school attendance (applies from 19 August 2024) (publishing.service.gov.uk)

Locality Attendance Officers, employed by the Local Authority, work strategically by offering support to schools, to reduce persistent absence and improve overall attendance.

Parents are expected to work with the school and local authority to address any attendance concerns. Parents should proactively engage with the support offered, aiming to resolve any problems together. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be resolved in this way, the school may consider more formal support and/or refer the child to the Local Authority. If attendance does not improve, legal action may be taken in the form of a Penalty Notice or prosecution in the Magistrates Court

2.6 Link with Safeguarding / Education Neglect

- ✓ Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is everyone's responsibility.
- ✓ Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is defined as: protecting children from maltreatment; preventing impairment of children's health or development; ensuring that children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care; and taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes.
- ✓ Schools have a key role in ensuring children and young people are kept safe. School staff are particularly important as they are in a position to identify concerns early, provide help for children, and prevent concerns from escalating.
- ✓ Every school has a designated safeguarding lead who will provide support to staff members to carry out their safeguarding duties and can liaise closely with other services such as children's social care and early help services.
- ✓ Schools should be alert to unauthorised absence as being a potential indicator of educational or wider neglect. Neglect is the most common reason for a child to be the subject of a Child Protection Plan in the UK.
- ✓ **Working Together 2020** identifies neglect as:
  'The persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development.

2.7 Stepped Interventions – *This Section Should be tailored to the school*

The following are examples of interventions which may be considered by schools to support the promotion of regular attendance:

97% - 95%	Early Warning	Early awareness raising, 'phone call home, monitored by class / form teachers
95% - 92%	School Monitoring	Letters of concern, concern escalated to Head of Year.
92% - 90%	School Intervention (stage 1)	Letters of concern, 1:1 meetings, home visits, concern escalated to senior staff
90% and below	Attendance Service and School Intervention (stage 2)	Attendance Panel, Parenting Contract, Attendance Report Card, Home Visits, Meeting with Locality Attendance Officer, Education Penalty Warning from LA / Penalty Notice (which could lead to prosecution)
Unauthorised attendance that falls below 75% can be an underlying risk factor and indicative of a safeguarding concern. All of the above should be underpinned by the offer of ongoing support to address identified difficulties. All pupils under 50% are classed as severely absent and must have a plan to support their attendance.		

2.8 Lateness

Regular and punctual attendance at school is a legal requirement. When children arrive late and miss the start of the school day, they can miss work and vital information for the day. Late arriving pupils also disrupt lessons, and this can be embarrassing and upsetting for the child. Lateness can also encourage absence, as some pupils would rather not attend school at all, than arrive late.

- ✓ Registers are marked by 8:50 a.m. If children arrive in class after this time, they will receive a late mark in the register (code L).
- ✓ In line with recommendations from the Department for Education (DfE), registers will close at 9:30 a.m. If children arrive after this time, they will be recorded as having arrived after closure of registers (code U). This counts as an unauthorised absence for that session.
- ✓ Any pupil arriving late should enter the school through the main entrance and be signed-in in accordance with school's procedures..
- ✓ If lateness becomes a regular occurrence, it will be treated in the same way as unauthorised absence, with parents/carers being contacted and invited into school to discuss the situation.
- ✓ Persistent lateness will lead to a school detention in line with the detention system
  - Five lates constitute a HoY detention and a letter sent home
  - Ten lates constitute an SLT detention and a letter home which is auto generated by a mail merge list
  - Fifteen lates and the parents are invited into school for a meeting with HoY/member of SLT.

2.9 Children with Medical Needs

- ✓ School's Governing Body must ensure that arrangements are in place to support pupils with medical conditions in school. Individual healthcare plans should be in place, and these should provide clarity about what needs to be done, when, and by whom in order to ensure that children with medical needs may access and enjoy the same opportunities at school as any other child (see DfE statutory guidance issued in April 2014: 'Supporting pupils at school with medical conditions').
- ✓ The primary aim of educating children and young people who have medical needs is to minimise, as far as possible, the disruption to their normal schooling by allowing them to continue their education and to progress as much as their medical needs allow. 'Medical needs' encompass both physical health and mental / emotional health issues.

In circumstances where a child has complex health needs and is medically unfit to attend school, referral may be made to The Home & Continuing Education Service which is a local authority service currently based at Pilgrim Street Arts Centre. Medical referrals to the Home & Continuing Education Service must come jointly from both school and an appropriate health professional.

2.10 Children on Part-Time Timetables

All pupils of compulsory school age are entitled to a full-time education. There may, however, be exceptional circumstances where a part-time timetable is needed as a time-limited intervention to respond to a child's individual needs. This must always be in agreement with the child's parent(s)/carer(s). Schools are required to submit information about such arrangements to Wirral Attendance Service using the template included as Appendix 4. Examples of when a part-time timetable may be considered are:

Medical issue
Emotional/Mental Health
Family/Friendship issue
Re-integration programme following absence
SEND – identified/awaiting specialist placement
SEND – unidentified/undiagnosed needs

2.11 Celebrating Good Attendance

It is important that schools recognise and celebrate good and improved attendance. This can be done in a variety of ways:

- Attendance Report Card;
- Attendance has a high profile in whole school assemblies each week;

2.12 Expectations of Pupils

Pupils are encouraged to participate fully in the life of the school and to obtain maximum benefit from the range of educational and other opportunities available to them.

Pupils are expected:

- To do all they can to attend school regularly and on time;
- To talk with a trusted adult about any issues that are making it difficult for them to come to school, or that are affecting their wellbeing in school.
- To be aware of their attendance targets, and to work towards achieving them.

3. School Attendance and the Law

New legislation was passed, The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 which introduced a National Framework in England. By law all children of compulsory school age must receive an appropriate full-time education (Education Act 1996). Parents have a legal duty to ensure their child attends school regularly at the school at which they are registered.

Parents may be recognised differently under education law, than under family law. Section 576 of the Education Act 1996 states that a 'parent', in relation to a child or young person, includes any person who is not a parent (from which can be inferred 'biological parent') but who has parental responsibility, or who has care of the child.

A person typically has care of a child or young person if they are the person with whom the child lives, either full or part-time and who looks after the child, irrespective of what their biological or legal relationship is with the child.

The Local Authority has a range of legal powers to promote and enforce regular school attendance:

- Penalty Notices (Section 444A Education Act 1996)
- Prosecution of Parents / Carers in Magistrates' Court (Section 444 (1) / Section 444(1A) Education Act 1996)
- Application to the Family Court for an Education Supervision Order in respect of the child (Children Act 1989)
- School Attendance Order (Section 437 Education Act 1996)
- Parenting Order (Section 8 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998)

Each case is considered on an individual basis, but the circumstances in which a Penalty Notice for non-attendance may be issued by the Local Authority include:

- Unauthorised absence from school
- Unauthorised leave of absence during term time
- Unwarranted delayed return from authorised leave of absence, e.g., in excess of the agreed number of days
- Persistent late arrival at school after the register has closed.

3.1 National Framework for Penalty Notices

There is now a single consistent national threshold for when a penalty notice must be considered by all schools in England, of 10 sessions (usually equivalent to 5 school days) of unauthorised absence within a rolling 10 school week period. The 10 sessions of absence do not have to be consecutive and can be made up of a combination of any type of unauthorised absence (G, O and/or U coded within the school's registers). The 10 school week period can span different terms, school years or education settings.

Sanctions may include issuing each parent (for each child) with a Penalty Notice for £160, reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days (for the first offence). A second Penalty Notice issued within a three year period will result in a fine of £160 per parent, per child. If a third offence is committed the matter may be referred to the local authority for consideration of prosecution via the Magistrates Court. If prosecution is instigated for irregular school attendance, each parent may receive a fine of up to £2500 and/or up to 3 months in prison. If a parent is found guilty in court, they will receive a criminal conviction.

There is no entitlement in law for pupils to take time off during the term to go on holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure or recreation, or to take part in protest activity in school hours. In addition, the Supreme Court has ruled that the definition of regular school attendance is "in accordance with the rules prescribed by the school."

The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 set out the statutory requirements for schools. All references to family holidays and extended leave have been removed. The amendments specify that headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are "exceptional circumstances" and they do not have any discretion to authorise up to ten days of absence each academic year.

It is a rule of this school that a leave of absence shall not be granted in term time unless there are reasons considered to be exceptional by the headteacher, irrespective of the child's overall attendance. Only the headteacher or his/her designate (**not the local authority**) may authorise such a request and all applications for a leave of absence must be made in writing, in advance, on the prescribed form provided by the school. Where a parent removes a child after their application for leave was refused or where no application was made to the school, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised. It is likely that penalty notices will be requested, in line with the National Framework in respect of each parent believed to be involved in the absence.

The Local Authority retains any revenue from the Education Penalty Notices to cover enforcement costs and support any work relating to school attendance.

Non-payment of an Education Penalty Notice will result in the withdrawal of the Notice, and would normally trigger prosecution proceedings at Magistrates Court under Section 444 Education Act 1996. There is no right of appeal by parents/carers against an Education Penalty Notice.

4. Deletion from Roll

For any pupil leaving Wirral Grammar School for Girls other than at the end of year 11, parents/carers are required to give notice to the school. This provides school with the following information: Child's name, class, current address, date of leaving, new home address, name of new school, address of new school. This information is essential to ensure that we know the whereabouts and may appropriately safeguard all of our pupils, even those who leave us.

It is crucial that parents keep school updated with current addresses and contact details for the pupil and key family members, in case of emergency.

Under Pupil Regulations 2006, all schools are now **legally required** to notify their Local Authority of **every new entry** to the admission register **within five days** of the pupil being enrolled. In addition to this, **every deletion** from the school register must also be notified to the Local Authority, as soon as the ground for deletion has been met in relation to that pupil, and in any event no later than the time at which the pupil's name is deleted from the register. This duty does not apply when a pupil's name is removed from the admission register at a standard transition point – when the pupil has completed the final year of education normally provided by that school.

Schools can only lawfully remove a child from their school roll under certain circumstances in accordance with Government Regulations (see Appendix 5). Schools are required to inform the Local Authority of the details of all children who are removed from roll at non-standard transition times. This is to be done by completing a deletion from roll form and submitting it via email or Anycomms to schoolattendance@wirral.gov.uk.

5. Elective Home Education

One of the grounds under which a child can lawfully be removed from a school roll is if a parent notifies the Headteacher in writing that they are withdrawing their child from school in order to take full responsibility for provision of the child's education. School must notify the Local Authority, as the Authority will then have responsibility for assessing the suitability of education that is being provided for the child. The Authority must first consent to elective home education when a child has special educational needs and is placed in specialist provision.

Schools and the Authority respect that it is a parental right to pursue elective home education. It is, however, important that when parents opt to home educate, this is a positive choice and in the best interests of the child, rather than the option of last resort. Parents should be aware that elective home education is not a route to obtaining a place in a school of their choice which may have previously been declined, or a way of accessing alternative provision.

6. Children Looked After (CLA)

The attendance of children in the care of the Local Authority is also monitored by the Headteacher and Governors of the Virtual School. Use of the B and C codes should be agreed with the

Headteacher of the Virtual School. The use of the N registration code for looked after children should be rare, as reasons for any absence should be obtained as a matter of priority. It is essential that contact is made with a child's social worker and the Authority's Virtual School team as soon as attendance concerns emerge. Attendance staff should routinely inform the school's designated teacher for looked after children of their looked after children's attendance rates.

7. Pupils Attending Off-Site Educational Provision

Any pupil who is attending off-site educational provision should be marked using registration code D or B by their main school (according to the circumstances of the individual placement).

Code B should be used when pupils are present at off-site educational provision that has been approved by school. School is ultimately responsible for the safeguarding of pupils educated off-site, and use of the B code signifies that the education is supervised and measures are in place to ensure the safeguarding and welfare of the pupil.

School must ensure that the B codes reflect the daily attendance of the pupil at the off-site provision. For example, if a pupil misses a day due to illness, then the main school attendance register will show this day as an I and not a B.

It is important for agreement and clarity to be reached between school and the off-site provision with respect to arrangements for daily tracking and follow-up of any absence. There should be daily communication between school and the off-site provision in respect of individual pupils' absence.

The law allows for dual registration of pupils at more than one school. The D code is used to signify that the pupil was not expected to attend the session because they were scheduled to attend the other school at which they are registered. Again, an agreement must be in place with respect to who has responsibility for the daily tracking of attendance and absence.

8. Absence Data

We use data to monitor, identify and support individual pupils or groups of pupils when their attendance needs to improve, and schools are required to submit pupil attendance data to the Department for Education on a daily basis Education (Information about Individual Pupils) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2024. Persistently and severely absent pupils are tracked and monitored carefully. We also combine this with academic tracking, as increased absence affects attainment.

We share information and work collaboratively with other schools in the area, local authorities, and other partners, when absence is at risk of becoming persistent or severe.

9. Monitoring and review

This policy will be reviewed annually by School and the Local Authority and updated in accordance with any new legislation or guidance, or changes to any other relevant procedures or documents. This policy should also be read in conjunction with the Authority's policies on Enforcement Procedures, Children Missing from Education, and Elective Home Education, Emotional Barriers to School Attendance and Access to Education..

Signed:S Wheelock

Date: 01/10/25

Date to be reviewed: September 2025

10. Appendices

Appendix 1	Pupil Registration
Appendix 2	Leave of Absence during term time (including Local Authority Application for Parents / Carers)
Appendix 3	Health Advice: exclusion table
Appendix 4	Guidance for Schools on the use of Reduced Timetables (including part-time agreement template)
Appendix 5	Removal from Roll: Lawful Grounds
Appendix 6	EBSA
Appendix 7	Education Penalty Notice Procedures
Appendix 8	DfE guidance and Wirral Attendance Service contacts

Appendix 1

Pupil Registration

Schools must take the attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day, and once during the second session. On each occasion, it must be recorded whether each pupil is:

- Present
- Attending an approved educational activity
- Absent

School must then follow-up on all pupil absences in order to:

- Ascertain the reason for absence
- Make sure that any safeguarding action is taken if needed
- Identify the correct registration code to insert in the electronic register

Nationally prescribed registration codes should be used consistently by all schools. These codes are used to give depth of meaning to the register and to provide statistical meaning to absences. Codes are all collected by DfE via download to the School Census System.

CODE	MEANING	CRITERIA	STATISTICAL VALUE
B	Attending any other approved Educational Activity	B code can only be used if the pupil is present at the activity under arrangements by school or LA in the session for which it is recorded The place is somewhere other than the school, another school where the pupil is registered, or a place where educational provision has been arranged for the pupil by a local authority The activity is of an educational nature The school has approved the pupil's attendance at the place of the activity The activity is supervised by a person considered by the school to have the appropriate skills,	Attending an approved educational activity (present)

		training, experience and knowledge to ensure that the activity takes place safely and fulfils the educational purpose for which the pupil's attendance has been approved	
C	Leave of absence exceptional circumstances	Exceptional circumstances No blanket approach School discretion Generally a need or desire for a holiday or tother absence for the purpose of leisure and recreation would not constitute an exceptional circumstance	Authorised absence
C1	Leave of absence – performance or regulated employment abroad	Performance license issued by LA or Body of Persons Approval issued by LA or Justice of Peace has given license for pupil to go abroad for performance or regulated purpose	Authorised absence
C2	Leave of absence – compulsory school age pupil subject to part-timetimetable	Exceptional circumstances If the school and a parent who the pupil normally lives with have agreed that, exceptionally, the pupil should temporarily	Authorised absence

		be educated only part time temporary	
D	Dual registered at another school	The school at which the pupil is scheduled to attend must record the pupil's attendance and absence with the relevant code Code d may only be used by either school for a session where the pupil is scheduled to attend the other school at which they are registered Schools should ensure that they have in place arrangements whereby all unexpected and unexplained absences are followed up promptly	Not a possible attendance (neither present nor absent)
E	Suspended or Permanently excluded with no alternative provision made	The pupil is suspended from school or permanently excluded from school, but their name is still entered in the admission register and no alternative provision has been made for the pupil to continue their education.	Authorised absence
G	Holiday not granted by school	The school has not granted a leave of absence and the pupil is absent for the purpose of a holiday.	Unauthorised absence

		A school cannot grant leave of absence retrospectively. If the parent did not apply in advance, leave of absence should not be granted.	
I	Illness (not medical appointment)	The pupil is unable to attend due to illness (Both physical and mental health related). Schools should advise parents to notify them on the first day the child is unable to attend due to illness.	Authorised absence
J1	Leave of absence for interview	Agreement in advance Application by parent child normally lives with In session absence recorded	Authorised absence
K	Attending Education Provision arranged by LA	The nature of provision must be recorded. Code K can only be used if the child is present at the provision	Attending an approved educational activity (present)
L	Late arrival before register is closed	The pupil was absent when the register started being taken but arrives before the register is closed	Attending (present)
M	Leave of absence for Medical or Dental Appointment	Agreement in advance Application by parent child normally lives with Minimum time necessary	Authorised absence

		Where pupil is absent at registration	
N	Reason for absence not yet established	Where absence is recorded as code N in the attendance register, the correct code should be entered as soon as the reason is ascertained, but no more than 5 school days after the session. Code N must not therefore be left on the pupil's attendance record indefinitely; if a reason for absence cannot be established within 5 school days, school must amend the pupil's record to Code O	Unauthorised absence
O	Absent in other or unknown circumstances	Where no reason for absence is established or the school is not satisfied that the reason given is one that would be recorded using one of the codes statistically classified as authorised	Unauthorised absence
P	Participating in a Sporting Activity. P code can only be used if the pupil is present at the activity.	P code can only be used if the pupil is present at the activity. The sporting activity must take place during the session for which it is recorded The place is somewhere other than the school, another school where the pupil is registered, or a place where educational provision has	Attending an approved educational activity (present)

		been arranged for the pupil by a local authority The activity is of an educational nature The school has approved the pupil's attendance at the place of the activity The activity is supervised by a person considered by the school to have the appropriate skills, training, experience and knowledge to ensure that the activity takes place safely and fulfils the educational purpose for which the pupil's attendance has been approved	
Q	Unable to attend school because of lack of access arrangements	There is a lack of access arrangements for a pupil whose home is in England if (a) a local authority have a duty to make travel arrangements in relation to the pupil for the purpose of facilitating the pupil's attendance at the school and have failed to discharge that duty (b) a local authority have a duty to make travel arrangements in relation to the pupil and have failed to discharge that duty or (c) the school is an independent school that is not a qualifying school and (i)	Not possible attendance

		the school is not within walking distance of the pupil's home (ii) no suitable arrangements have been made by a local authority for boarding accommodation for the pupil at or near the school and (iii) no suitable arrangements have been made by a local authority for enabling the pupil to become a registered pupil at a qualifying school nearer to their home.	
R	Religious Observance	The pupil is absent on a day that is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body the parent(s) belong to (not the parents themselves	Authorised absence
S	Leave of absence for studying for public examination		Authorised absence
T	Parent travelling for occupational purposes	The pupil is a mobile child and their parent(s) is travelling in the course of their trade or business and the pupil is travelling with them. A mobile child is a child of compulsory school age who has no fixed abode and whose parent(s) is engaged in a trade or business of such nature as to require	Authorised absence

		them to travel from place to place To help ensure continuity of education for pupils, when their parent(s) is travelling for occupational purposes in England, it is expected that the pupil should attend a school where their parent(s) is travelling and be dual registered at that school and their main school	
U	Arrived in school after registration closed	Where a pupil has arrived late after the register has closed but before the end of session Schools should actively discourage late arrival, be alert to patterns of late arrival and seek an explanation from the parent. All school are expected to set out in their attendance policy the length of time the register will be open, after which a pupil will be marked absent. This should be the same for every session and not longer than 30 minutes.	Unauthorised absence
V	Attending an Educational Visit or trip	The pupil is attending a place, other than the school or any other school at which they are a registered pupil, for an educational visit or trip	Attending an approved educational activity (present)

		Arranged by or on behalf of the school and supervised by a member of school staff	
W	Attending work experience	W code can only be used if the pupil is present at the activity under arrangements by school or LA in the session for which it is recorded The place is somewhere other than the school, another school where the pupil is registered, or a place where educational provision has been arranged for the pupil by a local authority The activity is of an educational nature The school has approved the pupil's attendance at the place for the activity The activity is supervised by a person considered by the school to have the appropriate skills, training, experience and knowledge to ensure that the activity takes place safely and fulfils the educational purpose for which the pupil's attendance has been approved	Attending an approved educational activity (present)
X	Non-compulsory school age pupil not required to attend school	For part-timeattendance Absence for timetabled sessions to use	Not a possible attendance(neither present or absent)

		appropriate code and not X	
Y1	Unable to attend due to transport normally provided not been available	The pupil is not able to attend because the school is not within walking distance of their home and the transport to and from school that is normally provided for the pupil by the school or Local Authority is not available	Not a possible attendance
Y2	Unable to attend due to widespread travel disruption	The pupil is unable to attend the school because of widespread disruption to travel caused by a local national or international emergency	Not a possible attendance
Y3	Unable to attend due to part of the school premises being closed	Part of the school premises is unavoidably out of use and the pupil is one of those that the school considers cannot practicably be accommodated in those parts of the premises that remain in use	Not a possible attendance
Y4	Unable to attend due to the whole school site being unexpectedly closed	Where a school was planned to be open for a session but the school is closed unexpectedly (eg due to adverse weather) the attendance register is not taken as usual because there is no school session. Instead every pupil listed in the admission register at the time must be marked	Not a possible attendance

		with code Y4 to record the fact that the school is closed	
Y5	Unable to attend as pupil is in criminal justice detention	The pupil is unable to attend the school because they are : In police detention Remanded to youth detention, awaiting trial or sentencing or Detained under a sentence of detention A pupil's absence should be recorded under code Y7 if they are unable to attend because they are serving a community based part of a sentence of detention, referral order or youth rehabilitation order that requires them to be absent during the school day	Not a possible attendance
Y6	Unable to attend in accordance with public health guidance or law	The pupil's travel to or attendance at the school would be: Contrary to any guidance relating to the incidence or transmission of infection or disease published by the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care or Prohibited by any legislation relating to the	Not a possible attendance

		incidence or transmission of infection or disease	
Y7	Unable to attend because of any other unavoidable cause	This code should be used only where something in the nature of an emergency has prevented the pupil from attending the session in question. The unavoidable cause must be something that affects the pupil not the parent. The fact that a parent has done all they can to secure the attendance of the pupil at the school does not , in itself mean the pupil has been prevented by unavoidable cause. Schools must also record the nature of the unavoidable cause.	Not a possible attendance

Appendix 2
Leave of Absence during Term Time

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2014 state that leave of absence shall not be granted unless:

- an application has been made in advance to the head teacher by a parent with whom the pupil normally resides; **and**
- the head teacher, or a person authorised by the head teacher, considers that leave of absence should be granted due to the **exceptional circumstances** relating to the application.

This policy clarifies:

- there is no entitlement in law for parents to take their child on authorised leave of absence during term-time without obtaining prior approval from the school.
- the procedures to be followed whereby parents/carers can make applications for their child to be granted discretionary leave of absence during term-time.
- that each application will be considered by head teachers according to the individual circumstances surrounding the request. Head teachers determine the number of days, if any, a child can be away from school.

The fundamental principles for defining 'exceptional' are events that are "rare, significant, unavoidable and short". By 'unavoidable' we mean an event that could not reasonably be scheduled at another time, outside of school term time, regardless of who has planned or paid for the holiday or absence (including grandparents or other family or friends).

The headteacher/school may discuss the leave of absence request with other education settings and/or the Local Authority to determine any exceptional circumstances.

If leave of absence is authorised, the school will not provide work for children to do during their absence. Parents are however advised to read with their children and encourage them to write a diary while they are away.

Parents should not presume that because they have submitted a request or they have told the school that it is automatically authorised

Education Penalty Notices for Unauthorised Leave of Absence during Term Time

Headteachers should write to the parents/carers to confirm whether or not their request for leave of absence has been approved. In cases where a request for leave has not been approved, parents should be informed that they face the possibility of being issued with penalty notices for failing to ensure their child's regular attendance at school should they go ahead with their plans.

In the case of a pupil granted leave of absence, but that pupil then fails to return to school within 5 school days (10 sessions) of the agreed return date, a request to issue penalty notices to the parents can be made to Wirral Attendance Service (unless the school is satisfied that the pupil is unable to attend by reason of sickness or other unavoidable cause).

Parents should also be advised that if their child fails to return to school within 10 school days of the given return date, and joint enquiries made by school and the authority have failed to locate the child's whereabouts, they run the risk of their child's name being removed from the school roll, with no guarantee of re-admission. Prior to removal of a pupil's name from the school's admissions register, school should discuss the pupil's individual circumstances with their named Locality

Attendance Officer or the CME Officer at Wirral Attendance Service. School and the Local Authority are jointly responsible for making all reasonable enquiries to locate a missing pupil prior to removal from roll.

Application for Leave During Term Time

Parents/Carers must ask permission for their child to be absent during term time, and it is at the Headteacher's discretion to decide whether or not the absence will be authorised. The Headteacher may authorise leave during term time for *exceptional circumstances only*. If leave is taken without permission, or no application is made, parents/carers risk being issued with an Education Penalty Notice.

Parents/Carers wishing to apply for their child to have leave of absence from school should complete this form and return it to school for authorisation at least two weeks before the proposed leave.

PARENT'S/CARER'S SECTION					
Surname of child				**First name**	
Date of birth		**Year**		**Class**	
Full name of parent (1)					
Address of parent (1)					
Postcode				**Telephone No.**	
Full name of parent (2)				**Telephone No.**	
Address of parent (2)					
Do you consider this request to be due to exceptional circumstances? If so, please outline the reasons why					
Departure and return date					
Would your child miss any national tests or examinations?					**Yes / No**
Has she/he had leave during term-time in the last 12 months? (If so, please give dates, reasons, and number of school days leave)					**Yes / No**
Are there any other siblings? If yes please state their name and the school they attend					**Yes / No**
Parent/Carer signature				**Date**	

SCHOOL SECTION

#EVERYDAYCOUNTS

Holiday in Term Time	(i) **approved** _____ school days		(ii) **not approved** _____ school days
Reasons			
Date discussed with parent/ carer and/or date informed of approval/ non-approval			
Headteacher's signature		Date	

Appendix 3

Health Advice

Infection	Absence Period	Comments
Athlete's Foot	None	Athlete's foot is not a serious condition. Treatment is recommended.
Chicken Pox	Five days from onset of rash and all the lesions have crusted over.	
Cold Sores (Herpes simplex)	None.	Avoid kissing and contact with the sores are generally mild and heal without treatment.
Conjunctivitis	None.	If an out/brake occurs, consult your local HPT.
Diarrhoea and vomiting	Whilst symptomatic and 48 hours after the last symptoms.	See section in chapter 9.
Diphtheria *	Exclusion is essential. Always consult with your local HPT.	Preventable by vaccination. Family contacts must be excluded until cleared to return by your local HPT.
Flu (influenza)	Until recovered	Report breakouts to your local HPT.
Glandular Fever	None	
Hand, Foot and Mouth	None	Contact your local HPT if many children are affected. Exclusion may be considered in some circumstances.
Headlice	None	Treatment recommended.
Hepatitis A*	Exclude until 7 days after onset of jaundice (or 7 days after symptom onset if no jaundice).	In an outbreak of Hepatitis, A, your local HPT will advise on control measures.
Hepatitis B*, C*, HIV	None	Hepatitis B and C and HIV are blood borne viruses that are not infectious through casual contact. Contact your local HPT for more advice.
Impetigo	Until lesions are crusted/healed or 48 hours after treatment.	Antibiotics treatment speeds healing and reduces the infectious period.
Measles*	Four days from onset of rash and recovered.	Preventable by vaccination (2 doses of MMR). Promote MMR for all pupils and staff. Pregnant staff contacts should seek prompt advice from their GP or midwife.
Meningococcal Meningitis/ septicaemia	Until recovered	Meningitis ACWY and B are preventable by vaccination (see national schedule @ www.nhs.uk) Your local HPT will advise on any action needed.
Meningitis* due to other bacteria	Until recovered	Hib and Pneumococcal meningitis are preventable by vaccination (see national schedule @ www.nhs.uk) Your local HPT will advice on any action needed.
Meningitis* Viral	None	Milder Illness than bacterial meningitis. Siblings or other close contacts of a case need to be excluded.
MRSA	None	Good hygiene, in particular handwashing and environmental cleaning, are important to minimise spread. Contact your local HPT for more information.

Infection	Absence Period	Comments
Mumps*	Five days after onset of swelling	Preventable by vaccination with 2 doses of MMR (see national schedule @ www.nhs.uk). Promote MMR for all pupils and staff.
Ringworm	Not usually required	Treatment is needed.
Rubella (German Measles)	Four days from onset	Preventable by vaccination with 2 doses of MMR (see national schedule @ www.nhs.uk). Promote MMR for all pupils and staff. Pregnant staff contacts should seek prompt advice from their GP or Midwife.
Scarlet Fever	Excluded until 24 hours of appropriate antibiotics	A person is infectious for 2-3 weeks if antibiotics are not administered. In the event of 2 or more cases please contact your local HPT.
Scabies	Can return after first treatment	Household and close contacts require treatment at the same time.
Slapped cheek/fifth disease/ parvo virus B19	None (once rash has developed	Pregnant contacts of case should consult with their GP or Midwife.
Threadworms	None	Treatment recommended for child & household
Tonsillitis	None	There are many causes but most cases are due to viruses and do not need an antibiotic treatment.
Tuberculosis (TB)	Always consult with your local HPT BEFORE disseminating information to staff/ parents/ carers	Only pulmonary (lung) TB is infectious to others. Needs close, prolonged contact spread.
Warts and Verrucae	None	Verrucae should be covered in swimming pools, gyms and changing rooms.
Whooping Cough (Pertussis)*	Two days from starting antibiotics treatment, or 21 days from onset of symptoms if no antibiotics	Preventable by vaccination. After treatment, Non-infections coughing may continue for any weeks. Your local HPT will organise any contact tracing.

*Denotes a notification disease. It is a statutory requirement that doctors report a notifiable disease to the proper officer of the local authority (usually a consultant in communicable disease control). Health protection Agency (2010) Guidance on infection control in schools and other childcare settings. HPA: London

Appendix 4

Guidance relating to part time timetables

1. Purpose

All schools, academies and free schools have a statutory duty to provide full-time education for all pupils. This guidance sets out Wirral Council's position on the use of part-time timetables. The guidance is for all schools, education settings and other professionals involved with providing support to children.

All children, regardless of their circumstances, are entitled to a full-time education which is suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs they may have. Local authorities have a duty to establish, as far as it is possible to do so, the identity of children of compulsory school age who are out of education in their area.

If a part-time/reduced timetable is implemented there must be a clear plan for support and reintegration to full-time education which is regularly reviewed and agreed with all interested parties

For the purposes of this guidance, a timetable is considered to be part-time when it consists of anything less than that which is provided to the majority of the pupils in that setting.

2. Introduction

The Department for Education (DfE) guidance 'Working Together to Improve School Attendance' provides the following guidance

"All pupils of compulsory school age are entitled to a full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude and any special educational needs they may have… In very exceptional circumstances, where it is in a pupil's best interests, there may be a need for a school to provide a pupil of compulsory school age with less than full-time education through a temporary part-time timetable to meet their individual needs. For example, where a medical condition prevents a pupil from attending school or another setting full-time and a part-time timetable is used to help the pupil access as much education as possible. A part-time timetable should not be used to manage a pupil's behaviour."

The statutory guidance is clear that any part-time timetable should have:

• the agreement of both the school and the parent the pupil normally lives with.

• a clear ambition and be part of the pupil's wider support, health care or reintegration plan.

• regular review dates which include the pupil and their parents to ensure it is only in place for the shortest time necessary.

• a proposed end date that considers the circumstances of the pupil, after which the pupil is expected to attend full-time, either at school or alternative provision. It can, however, be extended as part of the regular review process.

Where a part-time timetable is in place, this should always be in the best interests of the pupil. In agreeing to a part-time timetable, a school has agreed to a pupil being absent from school for part of the week or day and therefore must record the absence in line with the national absence codes (see section 7.3)

3. Legislative Context

All children of statutory school-age have the right to a suitable, full-time education.

Length of the school week - non-statutory guidance issued by the DfE in July 2023 sets out a framework for considering full-time education: *"The 32.5-hour minimum expectation includes the time in each day from the official start of the school day (i.e. morning registration) to the official end of the compulsory school day (i.e. official home time). The 32.5 hour minimum includes lunch times and other breaks as well as teaching time and any enrichment activities that all pupils are expected to attend. It does not include optional before or after school provision."*

The expectation does not apply to pupils in:

• early years (including in school settings) due to the age of pupils

• 16-19 education (including school sixth forms) due to the variation in their courses and having different guided learning hours

• specialist settings (special schools and alternative provision), due to the varying needs of their pupil cohorts and the particular operational challenges they may face."

This policy applies to **all** Wirral maintained schools, academies, free schools, special schools, and alternative provisions. The term 'schools' in this document should be taken to mean all these educational settings.

The term **'parents'** in this document should be taken to mean parents, carers, or those with parental responsibility for the pupil.

The implementation of a part-time/reduced timetable **must not**, under any circumstances, be treated as a long-term solution. Any part-time/reduced timetable agreement must have a realistic time limit by which point the pupil is expected to return to full-time education. If appropriate, some, or all, of this education could be provided by school commissioned Alternative Provision.

Where a part-time/reduced timetable does not have **clearly defined** objectives, a specified end date, a review process and parents' consent, implementation may be regarded as an unlawful exclusion.

4. Missing from home episodes

School and college staff should follow the school's procedures for dealing with pupils that go missing from education/home, particularly on repeat occasions, to help identify the risk of abuse and neglect, including sexual exploitation, and to help prevent the risks of them going missing in future.

It is essential that all staff are alert to signs to look out for and the individual triggers to be aware of when considering the risks of potential safeguarding concerns such as travelling to conflict zones, FGM and forced marriage.

5. Safeguarding

Sections 157 and 175 of the Education Act 2007 places a duty on Local Authorities and schools to exercise their functions with a view to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children. Schools must consider safeguarding issues and the impact this might have on a pupil when considering a part-time timetable.

Schools have safeguarding responsibility for all pupils on roll and therefore must be aware that even with parent/carer agreement to any part-time timetable arrangement they make, they are responsible for the safeguarding and welfare of all pupils on roll who are off-site during school hours.

It is clear that where a pupil is not in school, their vulnerability is likely to be increased. When deciding whether a part-time educational provision is appropriate, consideration must always be given to the welfare and safety of the pupil, as well as the risk of the pupil engaging in criminal activity, substance misuse or being at risk of exploitation or radicalisation whilst not in receipt of education during the school day.

Once school has considered any risks and evidence suggests that the pupil will be exposed to significant risk if not in school, then a part-time timetable **should not** be a considered option.

6. When considering the use of a part-time timetable

All pupils of compulsory school age are entitled to a full-time education. In very exceptional circumstances, where it is in a pupil's best interests, there may be a need for a temporary part-time timetable to meet their individual needs.

****A part-time timetable should not be used to manage a pupil's behaviour****

For a pupil to be considered for a part-time timetable, it would be expected that they fall within one of the following categories:

- **As part of an in-school support package:** The school, parent/carer and other professionals agree that a short-term (no longer than 6 weeks) reduced timetable would support a pupil who has become disaffected, to regain success. This would be a closely monitored intervention to address and manage the impact of significantly challenging behaviour or emotional or social needs.

- **Medical reasons:** A pupil has a serious medical condition where recovery is the priority outcome. These arrangements would be part of a "medical plan" agreed between the school and health professionals. Please see Supporting Pupils at School with medical conditions before offering a reduced timetable for this reason. https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/supporting-pupils-at-school-with-medical-conditions--3

- **Reintegration:** As part of a planned reintegration into school following an extended period out of school following exclusion, non-attendance, school refusal, etc. (no longer than 6 weeks).

7. NEXT STEPS – expected good practice

The following actions will assist you in ensuring your plans are effective for supporting the pupil with accessing their education.

7.1 Actions prior to/after the meeting

In circumstances where the school consider that it may be necessary to establish a reduced timetable for a pupil, the school should:

- **Convene a meeting to discuss the proposals for a reduced timetable**. This must include parent / carer. This should also include a member of Wirral Council where the pupil is a looked after child (a member of Virtual School), has an allocated social worker, or has a statement of SEN / Education Health and Care Plan (the EHCP Coordinator) and may include Early Help professionals who form part of any Team around the Family. If the professionals are unable to attend their views should be sought prior to the meeting and included in the planning stage.
- School cannot pursue a part-time timetable without parental/carer permission. This can be construed as an **unofficial exclusion**, which is unlawful, as the parent/carer has not

requested leave for their child and/or the school could be regarded as preventing the pupil from accessing the curriculum. If the parent/carer does not agree, the part-time timetable arrangements cannot be implemented. In these circumstances the school will have to consider alternative interventions.

- Ensure that the **Senior Attendance Champion** keeps a central record of all pupils on a part-time timetable and has robust mechanisms in place for ensuring the regular review of these arrangements.
- **Regular reviews** involving school attendance leads and/or input from the pupil's parents/carers should be held whilst the pupil is on a part-time/reduced timetable until they have been reintegrated back into full-time education. The first review should take place within 2 weeks of the date when the part-time/reduced timetable was implemented.
- Develop outcome and exit strategies that will identify to all stakeholders when the intervention has been successful
- **Consider** safeguarding measures for the duration of the reduced timetable.
- **Ensure** that the parent / carer agrees the plan and teaching hours. A reduction in hours cannot be implemented without parental / carer agreement.
- Consider completing an **Early Help Assessment Tool (EHAT)** to establish if there are wider needs and support is required from other partner agencies.
- **Monitor** the overall use of this strategy within the school and report this to governors each term.
- Ensure **effective communication** with parents / carer and Wirral Council regarding progress towards full-time reintegration to school.

7.2 The Plan

The pupil`s view must be recorded on the plan. The wishes and feelings of pupils should be sought prior to the development of a part-time timetable to understand how they experience school, their interests and likes and what they need from their network to access their education.

- In cases where it is agreed that a part-time/reduced timetable is appropriate, written agreement (signature) **must** be obtained from the pupil's parents before it can be implemented. In the absence of parental agreement, a part-time/reduced timetable cannot be implemented. Where parents do not agree to the use of a part-time/reduced timetable, this does not function as a valid reason to exclude a pupil from school (either on a fixed term or permanent basis) Nor should threat of exclusion be used to entice a parent into agreement.
- **Full context** is needed for Wirral attendance team to establish and understand the need for a 6-week part time timetable.
- **Signatures** are required or the form will be sent back to school.
- **The correct form is to be used.**
- All part-time/reduced timetable **plans must have a set date** for review. Should the pupil's needs or circumstances change prior to that date, the plan should be reviewed immediately and a new form completed and sent to the Wirral Attendance team.

- Once the part-time/reduced timetable has been agreed, schools must inform Wirral Attendance Team by submitting the **fully** completed form.
- Where a school is found to be operating a part-time/reduced timetable without having reported it to Wirral Attendance Team the linked **Locality Attendance Officer** (LAO) will contact the school and request that the relevant information is provided so that the part-time/reduced timetable can be monitored and added to the council computer system.

7.3 Recording/coding of part-time timetables

In August 2024, the DfE introduced a revised set of mandatory attendance and absences codes for schools to use in accordance with the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024. These regulations specify a code that schools are required to use when a part-time timetable has been agreed:

Code C2: Leave of absence for a compulsory school age pupil subject to a part-time timetable.

This code is classified for statistical purposes as authorised absence from school as the pupil is not required to attend. It must be used to denote those sessions that a pupil is not required to attend school in line with an agreed, part-time timetable.

Code C2 should only be used for pupils who are of compulsory school-age.

Any periods of absence due to an agreed part-time timetable for pupils of non-statutory school-age must be recorded using Code X: Non-compulsory school age pupil not required to attend school.

The guidance is also clear that the C2 code should not be used where a pupil is receiving a full-time education, but only part-time at their home school for example through dual registration, part-time unregistered alternative provision or flexischooling.

In line with this guidance, schools must take the attendance register at the beginning of the morning session of each school day and once during each afternoon session. On each occasion they must record whether every pupil is:

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

This mark should reflect the true whereabouts of all pupils at the time the register was taken. Pupils must not be marked present if they were not in school during registration. A pupil arriving after the register has closed in accordance with the agreed plan should be marked absent with code C2.

Code B: Attending any other approved educational activity

Where a pupil is attending an off-site educational activity such as an **unregistered alternative provision arranged or agreed by the school** the school should use **Code B.** Schools must also record the nature of the activity and the educational activity must take place during the session for which it is recorded.

Schools are responsible for the safeguarding and welfare of pupils educated off-site, that the education is supervised, and measures have been taken to safeguard the pupil.

Schools should ensure that they have in place arrangements whereby the provider of the educational activity notifies the school of any absences by the pupil. The school should record the pupil's absence using the relevant absence code.

This code must not be used for any unsupervised educational activity i.e., when a pupil is at home doing some schoolwork.

8. Additional consideration for vulnerable pupils

- **Pupils with an Education, Health, and Care Plan (EHCP)**

  A part-time/reduced timetable should only be used for a pupil with an EHCP in extremely limited circumstances. A pupil must not be placed on a part-time/reduced timetable because of their special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Doing so may constitute discrimination and a violation of the Equality Act 2010.

  At all times, Local Authorities and schools have a statutory duty to ensure that the educational provision specified in the pupil's EHCP is delivered to meet the pupil's needs. Therefore, the school must consult with Wirral Council's SEN Team prior to implementing a part-time/reduced timetable and consider whether an interim review of the EHCP is required (e.g., if the pupil's needs have changed).

- **Children in Care**

  A part-time/reduced timetable should only be used for a Child in Care in extremely limited circumstances and only after all other interventions have been explored and/or trialled.

  Before a part-time/reduced timetable can be implemented, the following requirements must be met:

  1. A formal review of the pupil's Personal Education Plan (PEP) must be completed.
  2. The pupil's Social Worker and the Virtual School must be consulted.
  3. Written consent must be obtained from those with parental responsibility (see below).

Consent issues can be complex for Children in Care but must always be considered. Where a pupil is looked after under a voluntary arrangement (Section 20 of the Children Act 1989), parental responsibility remains with their parents. In these circumstances, consent for the implementation of a part-time/reduced timetable must be obtained from the pupil's parents.

Where a pupil is looked after under provisions made by a Court-issued Care Order (Section 31 or Section 38 of the Children Act 1989), parental responsibility is shared between the local authority and parents. In these circumstances, consent for the implementation of a part-time/reduced timetable can be obtained from Wirral Council. However, the Council will also consult the pupil's parents, where appropriate, to obtain their views.

- **Children in Need and Children Subject to a Child Protection Plan**

Children in Need and children subject to a Child Protection Plan are classed as very vulnerable and may be placed at greater risk if placed on a part-time/reduced timetable. A part-time/reduced timetable should only be implemented in the most exceptional of circumstances and only after all other interventions have been explored and/or trialled.

Before a part-time/reduced timetable can be implemented, the following requirements must be met:

1. The school must formally consult with the pupil's Social Worker and secure agreement around the part-time/reduced timetable plan.
2. Any part-time/reduced timetable should only be implemented following a Core Group meeting.

9.**Wirral Council Responsibilities**

- Request copies of the agreed plans in relation to part time education.
- Ensure that reduced timetables are appropriately recorded.
- Ensure that copies of part time education plans are shared with Children's Social Care where pupils are subject to Child Protection or Child in Need plans.
- Ensure a copy of the plan is provided to the Virtual School when a pupil is Looked After.
- Discuss any cases with schools when a pupil has been on a reduced timetable for longer than 6 weeks or longer than the specified period in the original plan.
- Regularly monitor data (use of C2 code) in relation to the use of part time timetables and if concerns arise report back to the school.
- Challenge any inappropriate use of part time timetables.

10. Contact details

For advice and support please contact the Locality Attendance Officer for your school.

or

Damian Stormont, Attendance Service Manager,

0151 666 4964 – damianstormont@wirral.gov.uk

Julie Kelly, Senior Locality Attendance Officer,

0151 666 4935 – juliekelly2@wirral.gov.uk

PART-TIME TIMETABLE AGREEMENT FORM

ALL BOXES MUST BE COMPLETED OTHERWISE THE FORM WILL BE RETURNED

I have read & understood the Wirral Attendance Service guidance before completing the form ☐

If not typing please complete in BLOCK CAPITALS

Pupil Forename:	Pupil Surname:
Address:	Post Code:
Date of Birth:	Year Group:
School:	
Person completing and agreeing the Part-Time Timetable:	
Who is the member of SLT overseeing Part Time Timetables?	

Is the child currently known to social care?	YES		NO	
Child's social care status	CLA	CP	CiN	
Is the social worker in agreement with this plan? **This must be discussed with SW or LACES**	YES		NO	
Has an Early Help referral been considered?	YES		NO	
Has a referral to the Inclusion Team been considered?	YES		NO	
Child's SEN status	No identified SEN	K	EHCP	Under assessment
Who is the SENDSTART caseworker?				
Has the caseworker been informed?	YES		NO	
Is the pupil attending any other provision?	YES		NO	
If so, where?				
Has the pupil been on a part time timetable already this academic year? If so state how many	YES	No	How many?	

#EVERYDAYCOUNTS

What other support is the child accessing whilst on the part time timetable? E.g Branch, CAMHS, GP,HSIS, MHST, ELSA, etc	

Context behind the need for the part time timetable:

Reason for part time timetable: please tick **ONLY ONE** option

Medical issue
Emotional/Mental Health
Family/Friendship issue
Re-integration programme following absence
SEND – identified/awaiting specialist placement
SEND – unidentified/undiagnosed needs

Timetable (please insert the hours that the child is expected to be in school):

Week beginning (Date) **Example 02/09/2025**	**Monday** **0900-1100**	**Tuesday** **0900-1100**	**Wednesday** **0900-1100**	**Thursday** **0900-1100**	**Friday** **0900-1100**	**Total** **10hrs**
Week 1						
Week 2						
Week 3						
Week 4						
Week 5						
Week 6						

Childs view - The wishes and feelings the pupil should be sought before completing this part-time timetable in order to make clear what the objectives are and to understand how they experience school, their interests and likes and what they need from their network to access their education

Other key issues discussed: (please ensure you record any other issues/key points not captured above)

Parent 1

Title		Forename		Surname	
Address				Post Code	
Tel No.					
email					
Relationship to Pupil					

Parent 2

Title		Forename		Surname	
Address				Post Code	
Tel No.					
email					
Relationship to Pupil					

Date of meeting agreeing the part-time timetable:	
Who attended meeting ?	
Start date of part-time timetable:	
Review date of part-time timetable:	
End date of part-time timetable: This should be no later than 6 weeks after the start date and if no end date is stated we will automatically end the part time timetable on our records at the end of the half term **See next page for re integration plan***	

End of reduced timetable

Reintegration plan: what is the plan to reintegrate pupil back in to school, what support is needed? (Examples, is there a named member of staff pupil can go to, time out pass, quiet area, break time plans, friendship support etc)

I agree that my child has been placed on a part-time timetable for a limited period and will be marked absent (C2) for any sessions when not in school

I have discussed the matter fully with the school and agree, during the period of the part-time timetable to:

- take full responsibility for my child when they are not in school
- ensure there is a regular flow of communication between school and home
- take full responsibility for the health and safety of my child when they are not in school

Signature (Parent/Carer):	Date:

I give permission for my child to make their own way to and from school at the agreed times, for the duration of this part-time timetable (secondary school only). Signature (Parent/Carer):	Date:

During the period of the part-time timetable the school will:

- monitor the effectiveness of the part-time timetable
- hold a review on the agreed date and inform Wirral Attendance Service of the outcome
- mark the school register with a C2 for any session missed due to the agreed plan.

Signature (School):	Date:

As the pupil on the part time timetable, I am aware that this is a time limited intervention and that if it is not working can be ended before the agreed end date. I am also aware that where other support is being offered, I must access this.

Signature (Pupil):	Date:

Appendix 5

Grounds for deleting a pupil from the school admission register

	Grounds for deleting a pupil of compulsory school age from the school admission register set out in the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024
1	**9(1)(a)** the pupil has been registered at another school, unless— (i) a school attendance order naming the school is in force in relation to the pupil; (ii) the pupil is a mobile child, and the school is their main school; or (iii) the proprietor has agreed with a person with control of the pupil's attendance at the other school, or is such a person and has decided, that the pupil should be registered at more than one school
2	**9(1)(b)** the pupil was admitted to the school for nursery education and— (i) they have completed such education and would, if they continued attending the school, be transferred to a reception, or more senior, class at the school; but (ii) the proprietor does not have reasonable grounds to believe that the pupil will attend the school again;
3	**9(1)(c)** the pupil is also registered as a pupil at one or more other schools and— (i) the proprietor does not have reasonable grounds to believe that the pupil will attend the school again; (ii) the proprietor of each other school where the pupil is registered has consented to the deletion; (iii) there is no school attendance order naming the school in force in relation to the pupil; and (iv) the pupil is not a mobile child or, if they are, the school is not their main school;
4	**9(1)(d)** a school attendance order relating to the pupil and formerly naming the school has been amended by the relevant local authority to substitute the name of the school with that of another school;
5	**9(1)(e)** a school attendance order relating to the pupil and naming the school has been revoked by the relevant local authority on the ground that arrangements have been made for the pupil to receive suitable education otherwise than at school;

6	**9(1)(f)** a parent of the pupil has told the proprietor in writing that the pupil will no longer attend the school after a certain day and will receive education otherwise than at school and— (i) that day has passed; and (ii) there is no school attendance order naming the school in force in relation to the pupil;
7	**9(1)(g)** the pupil no longer normally lives a reasonable distance from the school and— (i) the proprietor does not have reasonable grounds to believe that the pupil will attend the school again; and (ii) the pupil is not a boarder;
8	**9(1)(h)** the pupil has been given leave of absence and— (i) the pupil has not attended the school within the ten school days immediately after the end of the period of leave; (ii) the proprietor does not have reasonable grounds to believe that the pupil is unable to attend because of sickness or an unavoidable cause; and (iii) the proprietor and the local authority have jointly made reasonable efforts to find out the pupil's location and circumstances but— (aa) they have not succeeded; or (bb) they have succeeded, and they agree that there are no reasonable grounds to believe that the pupil will attend the school again, taking into account any reasonable steps they could take (either jointly or separately) to secure the pupil's attendance;
9	**9(1)(i)** the pupil has been continuously absent from the school for at least twenty school days and— (i) none of the circumstances mentioned in Table 2 in regulation 10(3) or in any row of Table 3 in regulation 10(4) other than the final three rows applied to the pupil at any point during that period; (ii) the proprietor does not have reasonable grounds to believe that the pupil is unable to attend because of sickness or an unavoidable cause; and (iii) the proprietor and the local authority have jointly made reasonable efforts to find out the pupil's location and circumstances but— (aa) they have not succeeded; or (bb) they have succeeded, and they agree that there are no reasonable grounds to believe that the pupil will attend the school again, taking into account any reasonable steps they could take (either jointly or separately) to secure the pupil's attendance;
10	**9(1)(j)** the pupil is detained under a sentence of detention and the proprietor does not have reasonable grounds to believe that the pupil will attend the school after they cease to be detained under that sentence;
11	**9(1)(k)** the pupil has died;

12	**9(1)(l)** the pupil will be over compulsory school age by the next time the school meets and— (i) the proprietor does not have reasonable grounds to believe that the pupil will attend the school again; or (ii) the pupil does not meet the academic entry requirements to be transferred to the school's sixth form
13	**9(1)(m)** the pupil is a boarder at the school and— (i) the school is a school maintained by a local authority or is an Academy; (ii) charges for the pupil's board and lodging are payable by a parent of the pupil; and (iii) those charges remain unpaid by the parent at the end of the school term to which they relate
14	**9(1)(n)** the pupil has ceased to be a pupil at the school and the school is not— (i) a school maintained by a local authority; or (ii) an Academy; or
15	**9(1)(o)** the pupil has been permanently excluded from the school**.**

Appendix 6

The Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA) strategy has been created in response to a number of children and young people who experience emotionally based barriers to attendance and/or education engagement. Led by Wirral Educational Psychology Team, in collaboration with Wirral Parent/Carer Participation Wirral, the strategy aims "to educate and empower parents / carers and professionals around emotionally based school avoidance (EBSA) to improve the emotional well-being of children, young people and their families." The strategy has recently completed its first year of operation, which has included:

- The development and purchasing of resources for all Wirral schools
- Free training to Wirral schools and local authority staff
- Designated webpages with signposting to parent and professional support.
- The purchasing of telepresence robots, which will be rolled out to schools as an offer to support pupil re-integration.

A working group, that oversees the EBSA strategy, includes representatives from Wirral Attendance Team, further promoting multi-agency working and collaboration. By empowering professionals and families to support children and young people with emotionally based barriers to education, it is anticipated that this in turn will increase the overall attendance and education engagement of pupils by better identifying at risk pupils and implementing support at the earliest opportunity before attendance significantly declines.

SENDLO Wirral. Wirral's Local Offer of SEND Services

Appendix 7

EDUCATION PENALTY NOTICES PROCEDURE

FOR UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE AND EXCLUSIONS

Introduction

Parents are responsible for ensuring full time, regular and punctual attendance of their child, who is of compulsory school age, suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and any special needs they may have, at school or otherwise.

Regular and full-time attendance of pupils at school is both a legal requirement and essential for pupils to maximise their educational opportunities.

Regular attendance has been defined by the Supreme Court (6th April 2017) to mean "in accordance with the rules prescribed by the school".

Full time is the whole of the time education is being offered – ie the timetable of the school

A child reaches compulsory school age on or after their fifth birthday. If they turn 5 between 1 January and 31 March they are of compulsory school age on 31 March; if they turn 5 between 1 April and 31 August they are of compulsory school age on 31 August. If they turn 5 between 1 September and 31 December, then they are of compulsory school age on 31st December.

A child continues to be of compulsory school age until the last Friday of June in the school year that they reach sixteen.

Wirral Council seeks to ensure that every child and young person receives the maximum benefit from the education opportunities provided by the Local Authority.

Wirral Council expects that all schools have a whole school approach to attendance which ensures early intervention and support for students with attendance difficulties.

All schools must include respective reference to the possible use of legal action for unauthorised absence within their school attendance and behaviour policy.

The Local Authority has the prime responsibility for the introduction of this unauthorised absence procedure with schools and Merseyside Police being partners.

The purpose of this local code of conduct is to ensure that penalty notices for school absence are issued in a manner that is fair and consistent across Wirral. The code sets out the arrangements for administering penalty notices in Wirral and must be adhered to by anyone issuing a penalty notice for school absence in this area. The code complies with relevant regulations and the Department for Education's national framework for penalty notices as set out in the 'Working together to improve school attendance' guidance.

This local code of conduct for Wirral is in line with the National Code of Conduct issued by the Department for Education.

The national framework for penalty notices is based on the principles that penalty notices should only be used in cases where: • support is not appropriate (e.g. a term time holiday) or where support has been provided and not engaged with or not worked, and • they are the most appropriate tool to change parental behaviour and improve attendance for that particular family.

Where difficulties arise with school attendance, professionals should take a 'support first' approach in line with the DfE's 'Working together to improve school attendance' guidance, only resorting to legal enforcement when necessary. The aim is that the need for legal enforcement is reduced by taking a supportive approach to tackle the barriers to attendance and intervening early before absence becomes entrenched.

For the most vulnerable pupils, regular attendance is also an important protective factor and often the best opportunity for needs to be identified and support provided.

1. Legislation

1.1 Penalty notices may be issued to a parent as an alternative to prosecution for irregular school attendance under s444 of the Education Act 1996. They can only be issued in relation to pupils of compulsory school age in maintained schools, pupil referral units, academy schools, AP academies, and certain offsite places as set out in section 444A(1)(b).

1.2 The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007 (and subsequent amendments) set out how penalty notices for school absence must be used.

1.3 A penalty notice can only be issued by an authorised officer: that is, a headteacher or a deputy or assistant head authorised by them, an authorised local authority officer or a police constable.

1.4 The national framework for penalty notices is published in statutory guidance 'Working together to improve school attendance'. It provides further national guidance on the operation of penalty notice schemes for school absence in England.

2. Who is a parent?

2.1 For the purposes of this protocol and other school attendance issues, a parent is as defined under section 576 of the Education Act 1996

- All natural parents, whether they are married or not;
- any person who, although not a natural parent, has parental responsibility (as defined in the Children Act 1989) for a child or young person;
- any person who, although not a natural parent, has care of a child or young person. Having care of a child or young person means that a person with whom the child lives and who looks after the child, irrespective of what their relationship is with the child, is considered to be a parent in education law.
- Parents who do not ordinarily reside with the child may also be subject to Education Penalty Notices depending on the circumstances.

2.2 The Local Authority, with the help of the school, will decide who comes within the definition of a parent in respect of a particular pupil.

2.3 Throughout this document, references to 'parent' mean each and every parent coming within the definition, whether acting jointly or separately, and should not be taken to mean that provisions only apply to 'parent' in the singular.

2.4 Penalty notices will usually be issued to the parent or parents with day to day responsibility for the pupil's attendance or the parent or parents who have allowed the absence (regardless of which parent has applied for a leave of absence).

3 Circumstances When Penalty Notices Will Be Issued

3.1 Penalty Notices will be issued by Wirral Council where any of the following occur:

(A) The child has had 10 or more sessions, where a session is a half day, of unauthorised absence in a period of 10 school weeks with the absences being recorded with one of, or a combination of the following codes:
(i) code G (the pupil is absent without leave for the purpose of a holiday),
(ii) code N (the circumstances of the pupil's absence have not yet been established),
(iii) code O (none of the other rows of Table 3 in regulation 10(3) of the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 applies), and
(iv) code U (the pupil attended after the taking of the register ended but before the end of the session, where no other code applies)

(A) If, in an individual case the local authority (or other authorised officer) believes a penalty notice would be appropriate, they retain the discretion to issue one before the threshold is met. . This might apply for example, where parents are deliberately avoiding the national threshold by taking several term time holidays below threshold, or for repeated absence for birthdays or other family events. If local authorities wish to exercise this discretion to issue a penalty notice earlier in such circumstances

(B) An exclusion has taken place and the parent has allowed the child to be present in a public place during school hours, without reasonable justification, during the first five days of a fixed or permanent exclusion. In this case there would not be the expectation for support to have been offered or a notice to improve attendance to have been issued before a penalty notice is issued.

If repeated penalty notices are being issued and they are not working to change behaviour they are unlikely to be most appropriate tool. The national framework for penalty notices sets out that a maximum of 2 penalty notices per child, per parent can be issued within a rolling 3-year period. If the national threshold is met for a third time (or subsequent times) within 3 years, another tool should be used. In this case a prosecution via the Magistrates' Court will be sought. This will also be the case where a penalty notice has been issued but not paid resulting in a prosecution if the parent then commits any further offence.

Where a child has moved into the area within the rolling three year period, checks will be made with any previous authority to see if any penalty notices have been issued. The same will apply for any child leaving the Wirral in that any new Local Authority will be able to check via email to crossborder.penaltynotice@wirral.gov.uk

3.2 Penalty Notices will be issued to each parent for each child. The exception to this would be were a parent has taken a child on unauthorised leave of absence without the consent of the other

parent. The issuing of the penalty notices is based on the information held by schools so it is important that parents keep schools updated with any changes to information.

3.3 Where children in one family attend more than one school and request leave of absence the schools should, as much as possible, agree the decision with each other. However, any disagreement between schools will not prevent penalty notices being issued.

3.4 The deadline for Education Penalty Notice requests for any academic year will be 31st August after the summer term. The only exception to this will be holidays taken in the last week of term in July with the deadline for these being the end of the first full week back in school in September.

3.5 Head Teachers or member of the SLT or the Attendance Lead may submit a request electronically via email (educationpenaltynotices@wirral.gov.uk) or Anycomms to the Wirral Attendance Service using the appropriate proforma.It is vital that all details are double checked and are accurate in relation to the form as inaccuracies will result in the Education Penalty Notices either not being issued or withdrawn. All Full names of parents/ carers / guardians need to be included.

3.6 Wirral Council will issue Notice to Improve Attendance letters on behalf of all schools and academies. Schools must ensure that before they request a notice to improve that they have:

- Advised parents, in writing, at the start of the academic year (or when their child commences school mid-term) of the need for regular attendance and the possible consequences of failing to do so.
- Can evidence the steps taken to support an improvement in attendance. This should include invitations to formal meetings which parents may have failed to attend. We recommend that a parent is given 7 days' notice of any meeting and that at least 2 opportunities to attend are given. These opportunities can be as close together as practically possible but giving the parents the 7 days' notice.
- Maintain accurate registration records and a chronology of interventions and parental responses.
- Demonstrated consideration of the child's circumstances (including whether this is a child in need or whether a referral to Early Help is appropriate).

3.7 In the first instance the response from Wirral Attendance Service may be a Notice to Improve Attendance letter to the parents emphasising that attendance must improve within 15 school days. Further unauthorised absence within this 15 day period may lead to the issuing of an Education Penalty Notice. As in paragraph 3.1 (B) there may be times when a penalty notice is issued without a Notice to Improve Attendance letter having been sent.

4 Leave of absence

4.1 In the case of leave of absence in term time schools must ensure that they have advised parents, in writing, at the beginning of each academic year of the school policy on leave of absence. This should include the fact that leave of absence cannot be authorised retrospectively.

4.2 School will also need to provide a copy of the written leave of absence request submitted by parent and a copy of any response sent to the parent along with an attendance certificate.

4.3 Any requests for an Education Penalty Notice should be submitted as soon as possible after the pupil's return to school following unauthorised leave of absence, and no later than two months after the leave of absence. Requests should not be submitted before the leave of absence or saved until the end of term.

4.4 Headteachers are responsible for determining whether leave of absence is authorised or not and whether an Education Penalty Notice should be issued. Schools should work together to achieve consistency within and across Locality Partnerships and other mechanisms in relation to leave of absence.

4.5 Education Penalty notices will be issued to each parent for each child. The exception to this would be where a parent has taken a child on unauthorised leave of absence without the consent of the other parent.

4.6 Where children in one family attend more than one school and request leave of absence the schools should agree the decision with each other as much as possible.

4.7 Notice to Improve Attendance letters will not be issued for leave of absence.

5 Excluded pupils

5.1 An Education Penalty Notice for excluded students may only be issued where it can be wholly established that:

- The student has been excluded (either fixed-term or permanently) from a school, Academy or alternative provision in the LA area and that the school or alternative provider has followed all agreed processes in notifying parents and the LA.
- The student has been permanently excluded from a school outside the LA area but is a resident of the LA.
- The parent/carer received notice of their responsibility for the first five days of the exclusion, those five 'specified days of exclusion' were clearly identified and the possible consequences of failing to adhere to this were explained.
- The student was present in a public place within the first five days of a fixed or permanent exclusion.
- The parent cannot prove that the student was present in a public place with reasonable justification.

5.2 Referrals for notices relating to exclusions will only be accepted from Police and Police Community Support Officers. This provision is in addition to the independent powers of Merseyside Police and does not fetter their discretion. In some circumstances consideration may also be given to the use of an Acceptable Behaviour Contract in consultation with the Anti-Social Behaviour Team.

5.3 For the purposes of this protocol:

- school hours means a school session or a break between sessions on the same school day
- a public place means any highways or other place to which the public have access but does not include a school
- the days of an exclusions are known as the specified days

6 Withdrawal of Education Penalty Notices

Once issued an Education Penalty Notice may only be withdrawn in the following circumstances:

- it ought not to have been issued
- It ought not to have been issued to the person named as the recipient
- It contains a material error
- It has not been paid in full, and the LA has not, and does not intend to, instigate proceedings

7 Payment Of Education Penalty Notices

7.1 Arrangements for payment will be detailed on the Education Penalty Notice.

7.2 Payment of the Education Penalty Notice discharges the parent's liability for the period in question and they cannot subsequently be prosecuted under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 for the period covered by the Education Penalty Notice.

7.3 Payment of an Education Penalty Notice is £80 if paid within 21 days and £160 if paid after this time but within 28 days for the first offence. For any second offence by the same parent relating to the same child the fixed penalty amount will be £160

7.4 The Local Authority retains any revenue from the Education Penalty Notices to cover enforcement costs and support work relating to school attendance

8 Non-payment Of Education Penalty Notices

Non-payment of an Education Penalty Notice will result in the withdrawal of the notice and will normally trigger a prosecution of parents by Wirral Attendance Service under Section 444 Education Act 1996.

9 Right of appeal

In accordance with Department for Education Guidance there is no right of appeal but where a parent wishes to contest the issuing of an Education Penalty Notice they should contact Wirral Attendance Service (as outlined on the Education Penalty Notice) and/or opt to face proceedings in the Magistrates' Court, where all of the issues relating to their Education Penalty Notice can be fully debated.

10 Policy And Publicity

All School Attendance Policies should include information on the use of Education Penalty Notices and this will be brought to the attention of all parents. The LA will include information on the use of Education Penalty Notices in promotional/public information material.

11 Reporting And Review

Wirral Attendance Service will report to partners on the deployment and outcomes of Education Penalty Notices and will review this protocol at regular intervals.

This document was agreed with the following:
Wirral Primary Headteachers,
Wirral Secondary Headteachers,
Wirral Special School Headteachers,
Attendance staff from Wirral schools

All present at Working together to Improve School Attendance Conference on 1st July 2024

And is effective from 1st September 2024 until such time as it is reviewed which will be at least every two years.

This was reviewed in September 2025.

Appendix 8

Statutory Guidance:

- Working together to improve school attendance (applies from 19 August 2024) (publishing.service.gov.uk)
- Summary table of responsibilities for school attendance (applies from 19 August 2024) (publishing.service.gov.uk)
- Is my child too ill for school? - NHS (www.nhs.uk)
- Children missing education
- Keeping children safe in education
- Education for children with health needs who cannot attend school
- School exclusion

Wirral Attendance Service Contacts:

- School Attendance: schoolattendance@wirral.gov.uk
- Enforcement Action: educationpenaltynotices@wirral.gov.uk
- Children Missing from Education: cme@wirral.gov.uk
- Elective Home Education: ehe@wirral.gov.uk
- Children in Entertainment / Child Employment Licensing: childlicensing@wirral.gov.uk