

The South Wolds Academy & Sixth Form

Attendance Policy



Date approved by the Governing Body: November 2022

Date to be reviewed: November 2025

Updated August 2024

1) Introduction

The South Wolds Academy and Sixth Form is committed to providing an education of the highest quality for every student and recognises this can only be achieved by supporting and promoting excellent school attendance for all. This is based on the belief that only by attending school regularly and punctually will children and young people be able to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them. High attainment depends on good attendance (Appendix 1).

Poor attendance can also be a threat to the safety of individual students. The whole school community has a responsibility for ensuring good school attendance and has important roles to play. The purpose of the policy is to clarify everyone's role in this.

2) Academy's roles and responsibilities

All staff at The South Wolds Academy and Sixth Form have a key role to play in supporting and promoting excellent school attendance and will work to provide an environment in which all our students are eager to learn, feel valued members of the school community and look forward to coming to school every day. Staff also have a responsibility to set a good example in matters relating to their own attendance and punctuality.

The academy will ensure that an accurate register of attendance is completed in a timely fashion for each session.

A member of the Senior Leadership Team will oversee, direct and co-ordinate the school's work in promoting regular and improved attendance. As the Senior Attendance Champion, they will ensure the Attendance Policy is consistently applied throughout the school. The Senior Attendance Champion will also ensure that up-to-date attendance data is collated and reviewed weekly with the Attendance and Family Liaison Officer (AFLO); and that intervention is targeted to improve attendance as appropriate. The Senior Attendance Champion will work with other agencies including the local authority as appropriate. Where intervention is required, the academy will always look to support families to identify the reasons for absence and work together to remove any barriers to excellent attendance.

The Senior Attendance Champion is Oliver Askham - Assistant Head Teacher (AHT) Attendance & Inclusion - oaskham@southwolds.uk

3) Parents'/Carers' Responsibilities

As set out in section 444(1) of the 1996 Education Act, the responsibility for ensuring children receive an appropriate and full-time education rests with parents and carers. Parents and carers will be supported and encouraged by The South Wolds Academy and Sixth Form to fulfil this duty.

The South Wolds Academy and Sixth Form expects parents and carers will:

- ensure their children attend the school regularly
- support their children's attendance by keeping requests for absence to a minimum
- not expect the academy to automatically agree to any requests for absence, and not condone unjustified absence from school.
- notify the Academy on each day of any absence, by telephoning or emailing the school before 8.30am – clearly explaining the reason for the absence;
- ensure their children arrive at school on time;

- contact the Student Support Team without delay if they are concerned about any aspects of their children's welfare.

Appendix 3 sets out a reminder for parents/carers of key elements of the policy.

4) Students' Responsibilities

All students should be aware of the importance of regular school attendance. If they are having difficulties that may prevent them from attending school regularly, they should speak to their tutors, the AFLO or their HOY as soon as possible. Students should attend all their lessons on time, ready to learn.

5) Governors' Responsibilities

The governing body of The South Wolds Academy and Sixth Form shall make arrangements for ensuring that their functions relating to the conduct of the school are exercised with a view to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of young people who are pupils at the school. Governors will monitor overall attendance and the attendance of vulnerable groups of students as presented in the Head teacher's report.

6) Daily Attendance Protocols

The school day begins at 8.55am (the main gate closes at 8.50am - students are expected to be on site by this time) and ends at 3.20pm. If students arrive after 8.50am without a valid reason they will be deemed late to school and sanctions will be applied in line with the behaviour management policy. Students arriving at school after 9.15am are required to enter via The Bridge Reception.

The academy is required to mark the attendance register twice each day; once at the start of the day and once during the afternoon session. In the morning there is a dedicated registration period that runs from 8.55am until 9.15am and the register is taken by the tutor. The register for the afternoon session is taken by the class teacher for period 5. Registers close at 9.15am and 2.20pm respectively. There are sanctions in place for lateness at the beginning of the day, the afternoon session and all other lessons. These are outlined in section 11.

Any absence from registration will be marked as unauthorised unless leave has been granted by the school in advance or the reason for absence is known and accepted by the academy as legitimate. Where a reason for absence is given and accepted by the academy at a later stage, the register will be amended by the AFLO no later than 5 days after the session.

The academy has in place a system of first-day text messaging as an important safeguarding measure. This means that parents will be sent a text on the first day a student is absent without explanation to establish a reason for the absence. This helps to identify at an early stage students who do not have a good reason for absence or who may be absent without their parents' knowledge. The process of first-day messaging is overseen by the AFLO. If there is no response following the text message, parents will be contacted directly by phone by the ALFO or another member of the administrative team.

If we are unable to make contact with parents/carers where absence is unexplained, a home visit from the AFLO (or other appropriate member of staff) may take place. The academy will also consider engaging support from other agencies.

If a student is not able to attend for any reason parents or carers should contact the AFLO before 8.30am on the first day of absence to notify us and explain the absence. Contact should then be made on each subsequent day of absence.

Contact can be made in the following ways:

- **Email** absence@southwolds.uk
- **Telephone** 0115 9373506 and select option 2

7) Leaves of Absence

Leaves of absence will only be granted in exceptional circumstances. Each application will be considered individually, taking into account specific facts and circumstances. Where a leave of absence is required, this should be requested from the AFLO at the earliest opportunity and at least 24 hours before the absence is due to take place. Circumstances where a leave of absence will be authorised are outlined in section 8. The academy is responsible for determining the length of time any student can be absent.

8) Authorising Absence

We recognise the clear links between attendance and attainment and our responsibilities for safeguarding children. The inappropriate authorisation of an absence can be damaging to a student's education and welfare. Therefore, it is important that it is understood that a note or explanation from a student's parents or carers does not automatically mean an absence is authorised. The decision whether or not to authorise an absence will always rest with the Academy.

Absence will be authorised in the following circumstances:

- where leave has been granted by the academy in advance, for example a student is to participate in an approved performance or sporting activity or a student is involved in an exceptional special occasion. (In authorising such an absence the individual circumstances of the particular case and the student's overall pattern of attendance will be considered)
- where the academy is satisfied that the child is too ill to attend
- where the student has a medical appointment (although parents are encouraged to make these out of school hours wherever possible)
- where there is an unavoidable cause for the absence which is beyond the family's control, e.g. extreme weather conditions
- the absence occurs on a day exclusively set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the student's parents belong
- in other exceptional circumstances (e.g. a family bereavement) and for a limited and appropriate period.

Except in the circumstances described above, absences will be unauthorised. Some examples of reasons for not authorising absence would be:

- no explanation has been given by the parent
- the school is not satisfied with the explanation
- the student is staying at home to mind the house
- the student is shopping during school hours
- the student is absent for unexceptional reasons, e.g. a birthday
- the student is absent from school on a family holiday which has not been authorised

If no explanation about an absence is received by the school within 2 weeks, the absence may remain unauthorised. If the AFLO feels that a reason given by a parent or carer for an absence cannot be authorised then this will be discussed with the AHT Attendance & Inclusion who will make the final decision on the status of the absence. The AHT Attendance & Inclusion will also ensure that parents/carers are contacted where the absence is unauthorised.

9) Term Time Holidays

High Attainment depends on excellent attendance. Term-time holidays can have a significant impact on achievement and progress and therefore our policy is not to authorise any other than in the most exceptional circumstances. The fundamental principles for defining exceptional are rare, significant, unavoidable and short. By unavoidable we mean an event that could not reasonably be scheduled at another time.

In these circumstances an application must be made in writing, with appropriate evidence, to the AHT Attendance & Inclusion in advance of booking the intended holiday. The AHT Attendance & Inclusion will respond with a decision in writing within one working week. Even in exceptional circumstances we are unable to authorise any more than 10 school days of absence for term time holidays in one academic year.

If a holiday is taken during term time without being formally applied for or without being authorised as described above then the absence may be referred to the Local Authority who may issue a fine (section 16) in line with the Nottinghamshire County Council Local Code of Conduct.

10) Approved Educational Activity

Where a student is engaged in off-site approved educational activities, the school will check their attendance on a daily basis before entering the appropriate code in the register. Staff organising educational trips for the Academy will ensure that a final list of attendees is left with the AFLO before the trip.

11) Lateness and Punctuality

Lateness can cause significant disruption to a student's education and the education of others in their classes. Students are therefore expected to arrive on time every day. As outlined in section 3, where students arrive after 9.15am they are required to enter the academy via The Bridge reception. If students arrive after 8.55am and there is no valid reason for the lateness then a lunchtime 'Late to School' detention will be set. If this detention is not attended, the sanction will increase in severity.

Where students arrive after the registers have closed at 9.15am and 2.20pm, this will be recorded on the register as "U" - Late (after registers close). Students who arrive after 8.55am but before the registers close will be recorded as "L" - Late (before registers close).

Lateness and punctuality is monitored weekly by the AFLO and AHT Attendance & Inclusion. Where lateness and issues with punctuality are a concern parents will be contacted to address the issue. If problems persist, support from other agencies and where lateness occurs after the register has closed the use of fines will be considered.

Lateness to lessons is monitored daily by the pastoral team using Class Charts and appropriate sanctions are applied where necessary.

12) Post-registration Truancy

Post-registration truancy occurs when a student who registers in the morning or afternoon:

- leaves the premises without permission
- fails to attend a lesson without good reason

This means the student will not be receiving a full-time education, and also potentially renders themselves vulnerable to harm. A robust process is in place to identify incidences of post-registration truancy. Where this occurs we will contact parents/carers immediately and will impose sanctions in line with our behaviour policy.

13) Promoting & Incentivising Good Attendance

Attendance has a very high profile at The South Wolds Academy and Sixth Form and is regularly discussed at assemblies and in tutor groups. Parents are regularly reminded in newsletters and school meetings about the importance of good attendance and its links to attainment, and weekly attendance figures are displayed prominently in school.

Good attendance is identified and rewarded throughout the year with achievement points being awarded weekly for excellent attendance, weekly rewards for the tutor group with the highest attendance and high and improving attendance is used as the basis for at least one of our half-termly rewards.

14) Collection & Analysis of Data

Attendance is monitored weekly by class, tutor and year group and by reasons for absence. It is also analysed by gender, ethnicity, students with special educational needs and those who are vulnerable to poor attendance. Current attendance data is looked at against attendance in previous weeks, months, terms and years to establish patterns and trends. This analysis drives decisions regarding intervention and aims to target support where it is required.

15) Reducing Persistent and Severe Absence

Department for Education guidance defines attendance that is below 90% as persistent absence and attendance below 50% as severe absence.

Where persistent or severe absence is identified the AFLO and AHT Attendance & Inclusion will work together with parents/carers to improve attendance. The academy operates a graduated process that puts the emphasis on supporting families to ensure that students are in school and learning. Parents and carers will be included at all stages and any action plans will be shared and regularly reviewed. Approaches will be tailored to the needs of the individual and could include:

- Identifying the reasons for absence
- Identifying barriers to good attendance
- Identifying members of staff to mentor/provide support
- The creation of an attendance action plan
- Meeting with parents/carers to discuss/review action plans
- Home visits
- Assessment/Re-assessment of educational needs
- Timetable adjustments
- Referral to other agencies

As part of the graduated approach support services will be accessed where appropriate or necessary which may include working with the local authority or other agencies such as The Early Help Unit, Family Support, social services or CAMHS to provide more formalised support.

16) Fines

In circumstances where the academy's graduated, support focused response to poor attendance is unsuccessful it may be appropriate to request that the local authority issue a fine.

Under the national rules, all schools are required to consider a fine when a child has missed 10 or more am or pm sessions for unauthorised reasons.

From August 2024, the fine for school absences is **£80 if paid within 21 days**, or **£160 if paid within 28 days**.

In the case of repeated fines, (a parent receives a second fine for the same child within any three-year period), this will be charged at the higher rate of £160.

Fines per parent will be capped to two fines within any three-year period. Once this limit has been reached, other action such as a parenting order or prosecution will be considered.

If you're prosecuted and attend court because your child hasn't been attending school, you could get a fine of up to £2,500.

Fines can be issued by the local authority for one or a combination of the reasons below:

- Unauthorised leave/holidays during term time for 10 or more sessions (5 days)
- Attendance of 90% or less over a school term with 10 or more unauthorised sessions (5 days) and where parents/carers have failed to work with the school to address and improve the situation.
- Late arrival at school (after the attendance register has closed) with 10 avoidable late marks or more over the period of 10 school weeks after normal school procedures and sanctions have been followed.
- A combination of unauthorised absence and avoidable lateness (after the attendance register has closed) of 10 sessions or more over a rolling period of 10 school weeks.
- If parents/carers do not make sure their child is not in a public place during the first 5 days of exclusion from school without a good reason.

17) Children Missing in Education

Where a student fails to attend school regularly or has been absent without the school's permission for a continuous period of 10 days or more we will follow Nottinghamshire Local Authority Guidance on Children who are at risk of missing education.

Associated policies and documents:

DfE Working Together to Improve School Attendance (August 2024)

EMET Child Protection & Safeguarding Policy

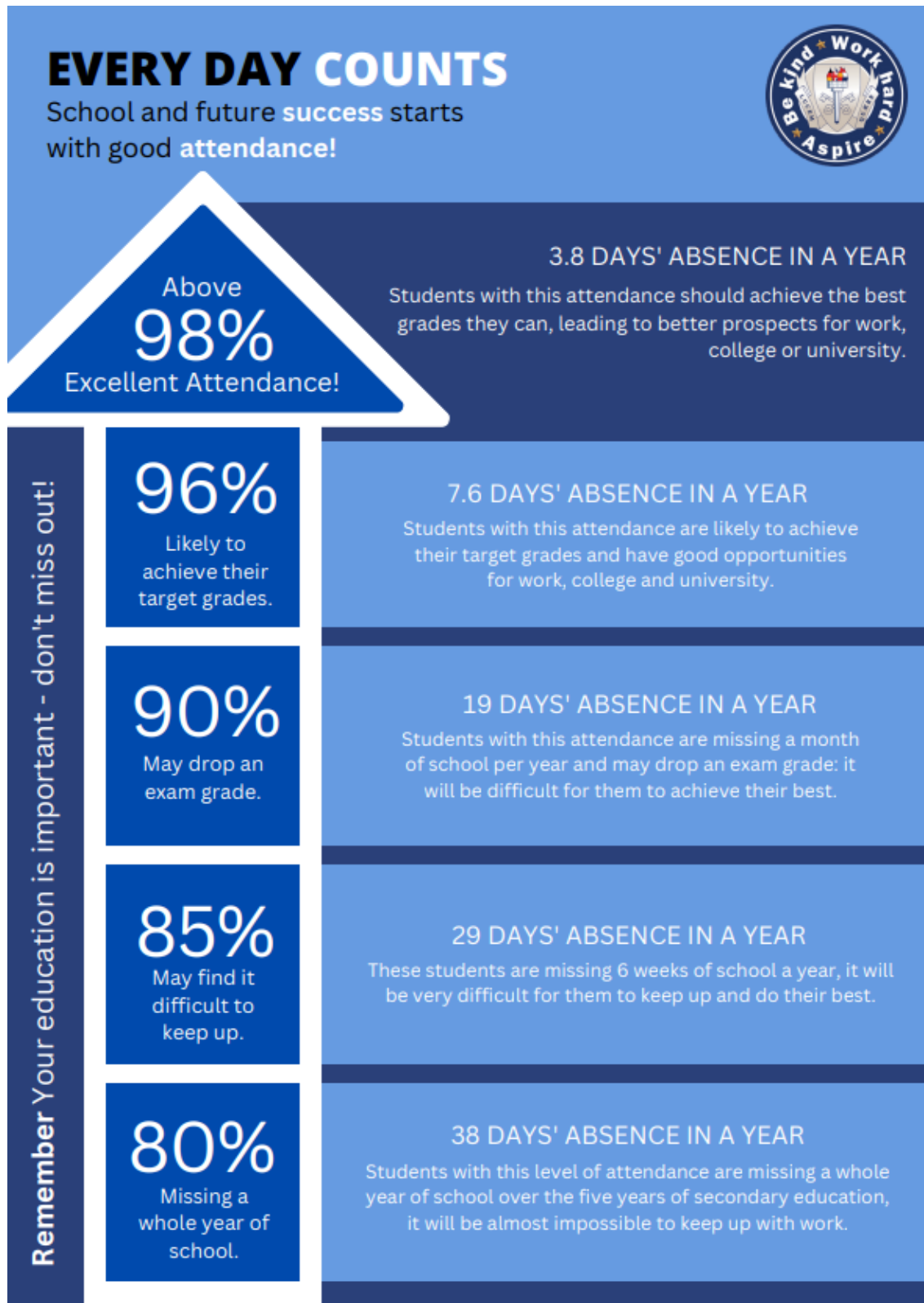
EMET Equality Policy

SWA Behaviour and Rewards Policy

SWA Anti Bullying Policy

Appendix 1

The following information shows how school attendance can affect your child's future progress.



Appendix 2 - Registration Codes

Present Codes	
/ \	present during registration
B	educated off site and taster days and do not fit K, V, P or W codes
K	attending provision arranged by the local authority
L	arrived after the register has started but before it has closed
P	Sporting activity with prior agreement from school
V	educational visit or trip
W	work experience
Absent Codes	
Authorised Absences	
C	exceptional circumstances
C1	in a regulated performance/undertaking regulated employment abroad
C2	absent due to part-time timetable
D	dual registered
E	suspended or permanently excluded
I	illness (not medical or dental appointments)
J1	job/school/college interview
M	medical or dental appointment
Q	unable to attend because of a lack of access arrangements
R	religious observance (only 1 day allowed, any more coded as C if agreed)
S	study leave
T	parent travelling for occupational purposes
X	non-compulsory school age pupil not required to attend school
Y1	unable to attend due to transport provided not being available
Y2	unable to attend due to widespread transport disruption
Y3	unable to attend due to part of the school premises being closed
Y4	unable to attend due to whole school closure
Y5	unable to attend as pupil is in criminal justice detention
Y6	unable to attend in accordance with public health guidance or law
Y7	unable to attend due to other avoidable cause (must affect the pupil NOT the parent)
Unauthorised Absence	
G	holiday (not agreed)
N	reason for absence not yet established (must be corrected within 5 days)
O	absent in other or unknown circumstances
U	late after register has closed
Z	pupil not yet on register
#	planned whole school closure (e.g. holidays, insets and polling station days)

Appendix 3

The South Wolds Academy and Sixth Form

ATTENDANCE POLICY: A GUIDE FOR PARENTS

1) When does my child need to be in school? Your child should be at school in good time for registration. The morning register will be called promptly at 8.55am and the afternoon register at 2.20pm. Warning bells ring at 8:50am and 2.15pm to signal that students should start moving to their classrooms. 5 minutes movement time signalled by the bell is incorporated at the end of break and at lesson changeovers to allow students the time they need to make their way to lesson on time.

2) What happens if my child is late? They will be marked in the register as late and dealt with in line with the behaviour policy. Students who are Late to school without a valid reason will be placed in an after school detention. Lateness to lesson results in a lunchtime detention. The severity of sanction is increased if this detention is not attended.

We will seek to work in partnership with you to improve punctuality where it is a consistent problem. Registers close at 9:15am and 2.20pm. Any child who arrives after the register closes has to be marked as absent for the session. If you are unable to give a legitimate reason then the absence will be unauthorised.

3) Does the school need letters explaining my child's absence or will a phone call do? We would expect a parent/carer to telephone or email the school on every day of absence, before 8.30am to notify us and explain the absence. If this is not possible then we will need a written explanation. If we require more information about the reason for an absence we will contact you.

4) Will you authorise all absences? No – the circumstances when we will authorise absences are explained in the Attendance Policy. The decision on whether or not to authorise an absence rests with the academy.

5) Can I take my child on a holiday during the school term? Only in very exceptional circumstances will we authorise holidays in term time. These are set out clearly in the Attendance Policy.

6) Will the school contact me if my child is absent? The school operates a first day response to absences: we will contact you if we have not heard from you. This is because we believe it is our responsibility to ensure your child's safety as well as their regular school attendance. If we are concerned about aspects of your child's attendance or punctuality we will contact you to discuss the best way forward. We would also encourage you to contact Student Support if you wish to discuss any aspect of attendance or punctuality.

7) My child is trying to avoid coming to school. What should I do? Contact your child's tutor, Head of Year or Student Support immediately. Your child could be avoiding school for a number of reasons – difficulties with school work, bullying, friendship problems, family difficulties. It is important that we identify the reason for your child's reluctance to attend school and work together to tackle the problem.