



Attendance – Persistent Absenteeism Strategy

WARRINGTON PRIMARY ACADEMY TRUST

2022-25

V01 – July 2022

Persistent Absenteeism Strategy 2022-25

Since the start of the 2015/16 academic year, a pupil has been classified as a persistent absentee if they miss 10 per cent or more of their own possible sessions, rather than if they reach a standard threshold of absence sessions. Meaning, that if a pupil's overall absence rate is 10 percent or higher, they will be classified as persistently absent. The calculated absence percentage includes both authorised and unauthorised absence.

Strategy Priorities

- To reduce the level of persistent absenteeism within WPAT
- To identify pupils or groups of pupils who are at risk of becoming, or who are persistently absent
- To understand the reasons for persistent absence
- To ensure that persistent absence levels in schools are below national averages and significantly improving over time

In order to achieve these priorities we will:

- Effectively track and monitor the attendance of all pupils
- Compare and scrutinise the previous attendance of all pupils
- Scrutinise data to understand the reasons for persistent absence
- Train and upskill staff to enable them to identify and address barriers
- Effectively action plan to reduce persistent absenteeism for individual pupils and groups of pupils
- Develop robust strategies to address the reasons for persistence absence
- Ensure effective collaboration takes place with multi agency professionals and the Local Authorities

1. The Trust

The Trust understands that the reduction of persistent absence contributes to improving future life chances of pupils. The link between attendance and attainment in school is clear. The more a pupil is in school the more they increase their opportunity to fulfil their potential. The Trust drives the strategy to improve individual pupil and whole school levels of persistent absence.

Key Priorities

- 1.1 Offer a clear vision for attendance, underpinned by our core values and high expectations.
Communicating this vision to all levels
- 1.2 Ensure that staff and families understand that persistent absence from school is a potential safeguarding risk and understand their role in keeping children safe
- 1.3 To convey clear messages about how persistent absence affects attainment, wellbeing and wider outcomes
- 1.4 To empower schools to take responsibility and drive activity to reduce persistent absenteeism
- 1.5 To recognise that attendance is an important part of school improvement
- 1.6 To ensure schools are appropriately staffed and resourced (including the effective use of Pupil Premium) to create and maintain systems that result in improved persistent absence figures
- 1.7 To ensure each school has a designated attendance lead that forms part of the senior leadership team, with assigned responsibilities

- 1.8 To ensure Governor Committees have an accurate view and understanding of persistent absenteeism in school and engage in escalation procedures where appropriate

2. Governance

Effective governance is crucial to underpin the success of the school's Attendance Policy and in turn reduce persistent absence. It provides confident, strategic leadership to schools and creates robust accountability, oversight and assurance.

Key Priorities

- 2.1 Committees should have an accurate view and understanding of persistent absenteeism in their school and engage in escalation procedures where appropriate
- 2.2 To have accountability which supports the reduction of persistent absence
- 2.3 To ensure Governors receive appropriate information and training to develop their skills

3. School Leaders

School leadership embeds the strategic and operational elements of the school's attendance policy and reduces persistent absence. Leaders understand the relationship between persistent absence and the quality of the school's curriculum, ethos, behaviour and inclusivity. They make school a safe place where pupils want to be and where they receive the support they need to engage in learning.

Key Priorities

- 3.1 To deliver clear messages about expectations, routines and consequences to new pupils and families with regards to the importance of regular school attendance
- 3.2 To use physical presence to reinforce routines and expectations supporting school attendance
- 3.3 To regularly communicate expectations for attendance to staff, parents and pupils
- 3.4 To empower staff to take responsibility and drive activity to reduce persistent absenteeism
- 3.5 To establish and implement rewards for attendance and sanctions for absence
- 3.6 To monitor implementation of the school's Attendance Policy
- 3.7 To ensure data is analysed to identify reasons for absence, patterns, attendance of particular groups, attendance over time and impact of intervention
- 3.8 To establish, implement and monitor robust arrangements for to identify, support and report children missing education (CME)
- 3.9 To ensure the attendance lead takes responsibility for the championing and operational activity as outlined in the school's Attendance Policy
- 3.10 To ensure staff receive training and support to deploy attendance systems effectively
- 3.11 To develop bespoke and effective support for pupils with medical conditions, mental health problems and special educational needs to avoid them becoming persistently absent
- 3.12 To engage pupils in consultation and discussion regarding barriers to good attendance

4. Community Engagement

Parents and the wider community have a key role to reduce persistent absenteeism. Ensuring all members of the community are proactive in their support of children attending school regularly.

Key Priorities

- 4.1 To encourage parents/carers and the wider community to have high aspirations for their children's attendance at school
- 4.2 To support parents to understand barriers to good attendance
- 4.3 To develop a positive partnership so parents respond positively to requests and challenge from school
- 4.4 To engage community businesses, partners and residents to promote good attendance and report non-attendance

5. Pupils at risk of persistent absence

One of our guiding principles is to be ambitious for all our children. To achieve high standards we need to support pupils to attend school regularly. Sometimes there may be barriers or challenges to this good attendance. Some persistent absence may be for reasons that are unavoidable or justifiable, such as an operation or medical treatment. In which case attendance may not improve above PA for the current academic year. The focus for these PA pupils is on meeting their academic and pastoral needs.

In other cases the barriers may be complex and include:

- Illness, both chronic and acute – physical and mental
- Family responsibilities, e.g., young carer
- Trauma
- Anxiety
- Transportation difficulties
- Housing and food insecurity
- Frequent school changes
- Academic and behavioural difficulties
- Social challenges
- Bullying
- Negative attitudes of parents due to their own school experience
- Undiagnosed disability or special educational need

These barriers can be supported and addressed through:

- 5.1 Following a tiered graduated approach to addressing the signs of poor attendance at the earliest opportunity
- 5.2 A robust escalation procedure in place in each school, initiated before absence becomes a problem. These procedures will be outlined in each school's individual Attendance Policy and reflect the school's context
- 5.3 The establishment of evidence-based interventions to address barriers
- 5.4 Monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness and quality of escalation procedures and intervention. For example, through use of case studies, pupil/parent voice, or data analysis

- 5.5 Establishment of effective service level agreements with external partners to support persistently absent pupils, including:
 - 5.5.1 Local authority attendance and welfare services
 - 5.5.2 Alternative providers
 - 5.5.3 School nursing and mental health professionals
 - 5.5.4 Children's Social care
- 5.6 Upskilling staff to support pupils with complex needs through high quality CPD and training and engagement in quality mark activity
- 5.7 Regularly emphasising to parents and pupils the importance of good attendance
- 5.8 Promotion of the next steps in the sequence of the curriculum and school calendar to motivate pupils to be in the classroom
- 5.9 Promotion of rewards and celebration of small and large steps in improved attendance
- 5.10 The application of rewards and sanctions consistently
- 5.11 Proactively promoting attendance as part of staff induction
- 5.12 Consideration of individual needs and vulnerabilities of pupils
- 5.13 Meeting with pupils to discuss their absence, patterns and barriers
- 5.14 Establishment of individual action planning to address barriers, provide additional support and set targets
- 5.15 Consideration of support for re-engagement, including what that looks like for vulnerable pupils
- 5.16 Processes that welcome back pupils following absence and provide good catch-up systems to support pupils, removing barriers and increasing confidence. This may include targeted intervention to address gaps in learning
- 5.17 Regular contact with parents to discuss attendance. With messages delivered in a direct and 'straight talking' manner
- 5.18 Partnership working with external agencies and professionals to engage with or seek support or escalation
- 5.19 The consideration of taking legal action to support parental engagement and reduce persistent absence

6. Absence due to illness

One group of children who may be persistently absent are those with long-term illness. In these cases schools will maintain clear links with parents and gather appropriate information to support the pupil. Including gaining consent to access medical information relating to a pupil and making a record of this.

Tiered Approach

Our approach to reducing persistent absence is underpinned by early intervention and a structured response across the Trust.



Warrington Multi academy Trust – Persistent Absence Strategy

“Children First, Resilience, Pioneering”

ref Summary responsibilities for Attendance DFE May 2022

1 Universal

The Trust Attendance Policy is implemented

Robust first day response and daily absence tracking

Named Trustee/Governors responsible for attendance portfolio

Dedicated senior leader championing and driving activity

Robust and accurate data tracked and monitored – reported and analysed

Trust Education Inclusion Hub supports good attendance practice and promotes evidence-based intervention

High quality CPD for staff

Early intervention when patterns emerge or extended absence starts

Exploration of any unidentified needs or eligibility, e.g., SEND, Pupil Premium

Holistic support for vulnerable groups identified through data scrutiny and analysis

Discussions with external agencies or professionals to seek advice and support

Pupil/parent voice is gathered to understand and address barriers

Understanding of any medical needs that may impact good attendance. Requesting medical evidence where required

Evidence from professionals of underlying medical conditions is sought

Relationships are built with families and communication is effective



2 Targeted

School welfare teams support families and pupils at risk of persistent absence with regular communication and interaction, including home visits

Additional specialist support is sourced including a whole family plan and use of SEND statutory processes

Work takes place with families to address the reasons for absence including in-school barriers. Where there is a lack of parental engagement formal conversations identify the potential for formalised or legal intervention in the future

Attendance data reviews lead to targeted bespoke support for pupils where required

3 Specialist

Local Authority EWO Fast Track Prosecution service is in place and used where appropriate

Active collaboration with multi-agency services and professionals. Becoming the lead practitioner when appropriate

Where there are safeguarding concerns intensive support through statutory children's social care is built into attendance plans

Statutory assessment of needs takes place to support any underlying complex needs that are affecting attendance