

Westcountry Schools Trust (WeST)

## Attendance Policy for South Dartmoor Community College

### Mission Statement

Westcountry Schools Trust (WeST) holds a deep-seated belief in education and lifelong learning. Effective collaboration, mutual support and professional challenge will underpin our quest to ensure that all of the students and adults we serve are given every opportunity to fulfil their potential and succeed in life.

Person(s) responsible for updating the policy:	Richard Woodland, Director of Inclusion
Date Approved:	January 2023
Date of next review:	September 2023
Status:	Guidance

### WeST Core Values

WeST holds four core values which underpin the engagement, motivation and retention of employees, no matter what their role in the organisation.

- Collaboration**  
 Creating a shared vision and working effectively across boundaries in an equitable and inclusive way to skilfully influence and engage others. Building and securing value from relationships, developing self and others to achieve positive outcomes.
- Aspiration**  
 Having high expectations, modelling the delivery of high quality outcomes. Showing passion, persistence and resilience in seeking creative solutions to strive for continuous improvement and excellence.
- Integrity**  
 Acting always with the interests of children and young people at our heart, and with a consistent and uncompromising adherence to strong moral and ethical principles. Communicating with transparency and respect, creating a working environment based on trust and honesty.
- Compassion**  
 Recognising need in others and acting with positive intention to promote well-being and improve outcomes.

### Providing Accessible Formats

If you are unable to use this document and require it in a different format, please contact the Director of Inclusion.

# Attendance Policy on a Page

## Why is attendance important?

Excellent attendance at school is linked to better academic progress and attainment by ensuring pupils access a broad, balanced and knowledge-rich curriculum. It also ensures that pupils can benefit from the extra-curricular activities on offer at school that promote good social and emotional development.

Parents have a legal duty to ensure that their child has an appropriate education. For most children in the UK this means full-time attendance at school.

## How is attendance recorded?

Schools have a legal duty to take an attendance register twice a day. This is recorded on an electronic system called SIMS. Attendance is recorded each school day for an 'AM' and 'PM' mark. Where a pupil is absent from school the reason for this absence must be established as soon as possible and recorded on the SIMS attendance record.

## When should pupils attend school?

Pupils should attend on all school days as set out in the term dates available on the school website. Pupils should arrive by 08.40 am. The morning registration period is open for 20 minutes from this time. Pupils who arrive after this period will be marked as late.

## What should happen if a child cannot attend school?

Parents<sup>1</sup> should inform school as soon as possible that their child is unable to attend by phoning 01354 652230. If a child is absent for more than one day parents should continue to update the school of the reason why daily.

## Can a child miss school for a medical or dental appointment?

Wherever possible medical and dental appointments should be arranged out of school hours. Where absence to attend an appointment is unavoidable the pupil should miss as little of the school day as possible. School should be informed of the appointment in advance and the pupil should be 'signed-out' at the time of the appointment at main reception using the Inventory system.

## Can a child miss school for a family holiday?

The law only allows Headteachers to authorise absence in exceptional circumstances. These reasons are listed in the main attendance policy. Westcountry Schools Trust (WeST) does not support the authorisation of term-time holidays. If a parent is determined to take their child out of school for a family holiday, then they should use the correct form to inform the Headteacher in advance. Should a request for holiday be refused it is likely that a fixed penalty notice will be issued to both parents.

## What about children from forces families?

WeST recognises that special consideration should be given to the children of members of our armed forces. Headteachers will follow government guidance when considering request from forces families for children to be absent from school.

## Who is responsible for attendance?

Dan Vile – Assistant Headteacher Culture

Max Huntley – Attendance Manager

Tracey West – Attendance Officer

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<sup>1</sup> The definition of a parent can be found in the Education Act 1996, and this applies to the legislation to which this policy relates. In addition to the child's birth parents, references to parents in this policy include any person who has parental responsibility (which includes the local authority where it has a care order in respect of the child) and any person (for example, a foster carer) who has care of the child. To reflect this, this policy uses 'parent' to refer to both parents and carers

## Purpose

Excellent attendance allows children to access the opportunities provided by the school through its curriculum and extra-curricular activities.

This policy sets out the responsibilities of all members of the school community in ensuring excellent attendance. It establishes the legal framework and the responsibilities of all parties to promote, maintain and monitor attendance. It also lays out the school's response to poor attendance.

## Linked Documents and Guidance

DfE (September 2022) [Working Together to Improve School Attendance](#)

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## Section 1: The Principles and Legal Framework Around Attendance

We expect the highest level of attendance and punctuality from every pupil. High levels of attendance will provide the opportunity for each pupil to develop their full potential during their time at school. Parents<sup>2</sup>, staff, pupils and those in governance must do all in their power to ensure this objective is achieved in line with the legal framework governing attendance and punctuality.

### The legal framework governing attendance

Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 states that:

*“The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him/her to receive efficient, full-time education suitable to his/her age, aptitude and ability and to any special educational needs he/she may have either by regular attendance<sup>3</sup> at school or otherwise.”*

Section 444 further states that:

*“The parent of a child of compulsory school age registered at school and failing to attend regularly is guilty of an offence punishable by law.”*

An offence is not committed if it can be demonstrated that:

- The pupil was absent with leave (authorised absence).
- The pupil was ill or prevented from attending by unavoidable cause.

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<sup>2</sup> The definition of a parent can be found in the Education Act 1996, and this applies to the legislation to which this policy relates. In addition to the child's birth parents, references to parents in this policy include any person who has parental responsibility (which includes the local authority where it has a care order in respect of the child) and any person (for example, a foster carer) who has care of the child. To reflect this, this policy uses 'parent' to refer to both parents and carers

<sup>3</sup> Whilst there is no legal definition of 'regular attendance' this was addressed in the [Supreme Court judgement](#) around term-time holidays in the case of *Isle of Wight v. Platt*

- The absence occurred on a day set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil/parent belongs.
- The absence meets the criteria set out for children of Traveller groups such as Gypsy/Roma families.

Failure to comply may lead to prosecution in the Magistrates Court where on conviction each parent would be liable to a fine up to £2500 and/or 3 months' imprisonment.

The Act also places a legal obligation on:

- The Local Authority (LA) to provide and enforce attendance.
- Schools to register attendance and notify the LA of a child's absence from school without authorisation of 10 or more days.
- Those in governance to make sure that school registers are kept; one for attendance and one for admissions.

## **Section 2: Roles and Responsibilities**

Trustees of Westcountry Schools Trust (WeST) will:

- Review and agree the Attendance Policy regularly following advice from the WeST Director of Education.

WeST Hub Advisory Boards (HABs) will:

- Monitor the implementation of the WeST Attendance Policy, and local school procedures.
- Monitor school-level attendance against WeST targets.
- Monitor local school attendance data and procedures for equal opportunity issues.

The WeST Director of Inclusion (DoI) will:

- Review and revise the WeST Attendance Policy regularly (in accordance with the review schedule) and ensure that local adaptations are in place across all schools in the trust.
- Monitor the attendance at each school to identify any patterns in the attendance of groups of pupils which may require targeted intervention.
- Work with staff in schools to implement targeted interventions to improve attendance.
- Report to the HABs three times a year on the attendance of schools within the hub.

The Headteacher will:

- Set a school attendance target as directed by the WeST Executive Leadership Team.
- Monitor progress of attendance of all pupils.

The senior leader with responsibility for attendance will:

- Oversee the attendance arrangements.
- Work with school staff to ensure the efficient running of the attendance system.
- Make periodic checks of the registers to monitor pupil absence.
- Make periodic checks on absence notes and the reasons for absence.
- Deal with issues of inadequate registering.
- Arrange appropriate training for staff.
- Determine whether to authorise any proposed absences requested on the school's official form, or absences which have taken place for which no request was made.
- Notify parents as appropriate that if a pupil of compulsory school age fails to attend regularly his/her parents commit an offence.
- Initiate strategies to improve attendance and train staff accordingly.
- Liaise with the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) over persistent absentees after school action has taken place. Referrals to the service need to be made by electronic means.
- Liaise with the Local Authority (LA) and police when they wish to exercise their powers to enforce truants to return to school.

In secondary schools Heads of Year will:

- Ensure that all pupil absences are noted and that communication (absence notes/ emails/ calls) is received from parents.
- Make regular checks on the efficiency of the registering.
- Make regular checks on absence notes.
- Ensure that all suspected truancy is followed up and dealt with.
- Contact parents over pupil absences where appropriate.
- Liaise with the senior leader in charge of attendance to review patterns of attendance/punctuality and agree appropriate intervention strategies.

They may also carry out home visits to check on the welfare of a pupil.

Tutors/Class Teachers will:

- Ensure that pupils are registered accurately.
- Follow up cases of unaccounted for absence or unacceptable notes.
- Inform the pastoral team of any signs of suspected truancy.
- Inform the pastoral team of any possible underlying problems which might account for absences and lateness.
- Make pupils aware of their attendance at regular intervals.

In schools using Lesson Monitor for lesson-by-lesson registration teaching staff will:

- Inform Reception of the names of pupils who are absent without notification.
- Responsible for the accurate official registration of pupils at the beginning of each lesson, using SIMS Lesson Monitor.
- Welcome any pupil with long term absence back into the classroom without question ensuring that they can be supported to catch up missed work.

The Attendance Officer will:

- Enter attendance/absence data into SIMS, using Lesson Monitor.
- Prepare attendance records for tutors.
- Prepare reports as required for the Headteacher and others.
- Contact parents on the first day of absence.
- Support targeted pupils.
- Use 'broken weeks' analysis to consider whether to advise targeted intervention where there are attendance concerns, especially early in the academic year when % attendance may be skewed by the low number of school sessions.
- When attendance has reached Stage 1: (12 sessions of absence) we will send Letter 1 to inform parents/carers of the attendance concern and communicate the student's overall attendance.
- If there is no sustained improvement to attendance this will trigger Stage 2: (no sustained improvement to attendance) attendance contract meeting to be held with student.
- When further unauthorised absences have been accrued following Letter 2, this will trigger Stage 3: which will involve an invite to a meeting with the Head of Year and Attendance Manager via Letter 3. The EWO will be informed and may choose to escalate further.
- If further escalation is deemed necessary by the EWO and 10 unauthorised sessions have been accrued, then a case review will be called and you will be contacted directly by the Education Welfare Service and asked to attend a meeting with the EWO and the college.
- Notify tutors/class teachers of any patterns of absence.
- Liaise with the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) over persistent absentees after school action has taken place. Referrals to the service need to be made by electronic means.
- Monitor missing marks and notify the Assistant Head teacher, the teacher responsible for the register and their line manager weekly.

They may also carry out home visits.

The SENDCO will:

- Support pupils on the SEND register who have regular patterns of non-attendance.
- Be involved in any re-integration programme, where deemed necessary.
- Advise on or support with first day of absence calling for pupils with SEND.

The Education Welfare Officer (EWO) will:

- Liaise with the school staff regarding concerns over pupil absence.
- Support the school in improving the attendance of its pupils.
- Work with parents to ensure good school attendance.
- Attend timetabled meetings with school staff to deal with attendance/punctuality and welfare issues.
- Advise the school as to its legal obligations and complete appropriate paperwork for any legal proceedings.

They may also carry out home visits.

Pupils are required to:

- Attend all sessions in the school year unless they are ill or have an authorised absence ('Attending regularly' means registering before the attendance register is closed for the session).

Parents are required to:

- Be responsible for ensuring that their child attends school regularly and punctually in accordance with their legal obligations.
- Make any request for leave of absence on the school's official leave of absence form.
- Telephone school on the first day of absence and any subsequent days.
- Provide a note to cover any absence.
- Plan holidays outside of term time.
- Attend any meetings organised by the school and/or EWO to create an action plan to improve attendance.

### **Section 3: Expectations and processes of managing attendance and following-up on unexplained absence.**

#### **Expected Attendance**

The Law requires schools to be open to pupils for 190 days each year. Each day a legal register is taken for the 'AM' and 'PM' session. In addition, registers are taken for lesson attendance. All registers are recorded electronically on a database called SIMS. This information constitutes the legal attendance register for the school as such is shared with the LA and government for their reporting and monitoring purposes. The times of the daily registration are:

- Morning session, 'AM Registration': from 8:40 to 9:00am.
- Afternoon session, 'PM Registration': from 12:30 to 12:50pm.

Overall attendance is calculated on the legal requirement for pupils to attend 190 school days per year. As each day consists of two sessions ('AM' and 'PM') there are a total of 380 possible sessions in a school year. Therefore, if a pupil is ill for three days in a year, their attendance would be 98.4% because 3 days is 6 missed registration sessions and  $(374/380) \times 100 = 98.4\%$  attendance.

The Department for Education defines any pupil with below 90% attendance as Persistently Absent, and any pupil with attendance below 50% as Severely Absent.

#### **Monitoring**

Parents may request an up-to-date attendance report at any time during the school year. Please contact the Attendance Officer to request this.

The school will have regular checks to monitor attendance, including;

- Daily checks carried out by the attendance officer. Parents of pupils coded N (no reason yet provided) or O (unauthorised absence) for that day may expect a phone call from school to establish an explanation for their child's absence.
- Attendance concern letters are sent to parents to inform them when their attendance falls below 96%, subject to consideration of individual circumstances.
- Persistent absence letters are sent for information purposes, once a pupil's attendance falls below 90%, subject to consideration of individual circumstances.
- Pupils falling below 90% attendance, are placed into an attendance priority category. These pupils, and their parents may be asked to meet with Head of Year's, where barriers to attendance will be discussed, targets set, and support agreed as appropriate to improve attendance.
- Each week the attendance officer will analyse data patterns of attendance across the school by pupil groups to highlight areas for improvement.
- In line with DfE school census guidance at the end of each academic year, registers are reset, and attendance is started again for the next academic year. However, attendance concerns will be considered on a rolling 12-month basis.

WeST has access to all school attendance registers daily. WeST schools are participating in the Department for Education (DfE) data sharing trial. As such school attendance records, held on SIMS, are being shared with the DfE via the WONDE platform. The school provides attendance data to the LA and DfE at regular intervals during the academic year as part of statutory school accountability processes.

### **Truancy**

A pupil is deemed to be truanting when they are not where they are expected to be, as shown by their timetable, and does not have permission to be elsewhere.

- Pupils who truant from lessons, or leave the school site, are marked as an unauthorised absence.
- Parents are informed .
- Truancy will be dealt with in line with the school's Behaviour Policy.

### **Punctuality**

It is important to make the distinction between a late that occurs during the official registration period and a late that occurs after the official registration period. The registration period covers the time between 08:40 and 09:05 during the morning session.

The Attendance Officer will ensure the appropriate late code is recorded on SIMS:

- 'L' where a pupil arrives late but during the morning registration period (08:40 and 09:05). This does not affect the pupil's overall attendance figure.
- 'U' where a pupil arrives later after the morning registration period has closed (i.e. after 09:05 am)<sup>4</sup>. This will affect the pupil's overall attendance figure.

Pupils who become persistently absent will have parents contacted by the Attendance Officer. After the day of contacting, any lateness will be marked U on SIMS.

*Pupils that arrive late for morning registration (08:40-09:05) should go to Reception and sign in using the Inventory system as directed by reception staff and be recorded as in school. Reception staff should record this late, include the time, on ClassCharts. A note should be given to the pupil to take to their teacher.*

*Pupils who arrive late after the morning registration period (i.e. after 09:05) should also sign-in at Reception and will be marked as 'U'.*

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<sup>4</sup> There may be occasions where the 'C' code (other authorised circumstances) is used, e.g. if lateness is known to be the result of a pupil acting as a young carer. Such cases needed to be carefully considered and a record of the decision-making should be available for external scrutiny.

## **Signing-out**

There must always be an accurate record of all pupils on-site. Pupils must sign-out if they are leaving the school site.

*Staff will follow normal safeguarding procedures to ensure the safety of pupils asking to leave the site. Pupils should be signed out at Reception, producing proof of why they are leaving (an appointment card, note or such) if it is not already marked on SIMS.*

## **Long-term Medical Absence**

When a pupil is absent because of long-term illness, or an under-lying health condition an Individual Health Care Plan (IHCP) may be written alongside the parent and other appropriate stakeholders. This should provide a structure for the pupil to be re-integrated back into the classroom. An IHCP should only be completed once diagnosis is confirmed and the prognosis given by the medical team supporting the pupil.

## **Section 4: Absence, Persistent and Severe Absence and support for pupils and parents**

### **Absence**

We understand that pupils may be genuinely absent for obvious reasons, including: poor health or illness; bereavement; and other exceptional circumstances. Parents are required to inform the school as soon as possible of their child's absence. They must also give a reason for the absence. Pupils missing registration will be initially coded 'N' (No reason given), until an explanation has been given from the parent. It can then be changed to the appropriate code, for example 'I' (Illness). 'N' marks should be changed to 'O' (absent without authorisation) after 5 days if no reason has been identified for the absence.

Where a pupil becomes persistently absent (less than 90% attendance) due to illness, then the school may invite parents to provide medical evidence for any further absence. Medical evidence may include items such as a doctor's notes or certificates or hospital appointment letters.

### **Leave of Absence**

The Headteacher can only grant leave of absence in very exceptional cases. Headteachers should make decisions with due regard for the individual circumstances and attendance profile of the pupil concerned.

Should families wish to apply for leave of absence, a request form (see Appendix 2) can be collected from the Attendance Officer at least two weeks prior to the date leave is required. The form should be returned to the Attendance Officer, who will consult with the Headteacher and Head of Year, Parents will be advised of the outcome. Should parents wish to appeal this decision, this should be addressed in writing to the Headteacher as part of the WeST complaints process.

### **Support for pupils not maintaining expected levels of attendance**

Pupils will face a graduated level of support to meet their need for improving attendance. The most effective support is when clear lines of communication are established between all parties involved. The strategies we can employ will include (but are not limited to the following).

- **Early Intervention (8 sessions of absence)**

A supportive meeting between the student and the Head of Year/Pastoral Team will take place. Barriers to attendance will be discussed and support identified.

- **Stage 1 - Letter 1 (12 sessions of absence)**

Letter 1 will inform parents/carers of the attendance concern and communicate the students overall attendance. Support will be offered and parent/carers encouraged to contact the college to discuss any concerns. **From this point onwards absences will be unauthorised without further documentation to demonstrate the absence was completely unavoidable.**



- **Stage 2 - Letter 2 (No sustained improvement to attendance)**

Letter 2 will be sent following no sustained improvement to attendance. Support will be offered, parent/carers encouraged to contact the college to discuss any concerns. Students may now be discussed with the Education Welfare Officer. Attendance contract meeting to be held with student.

- **Stage 3 - Letter 3/Supportive Meeting (Further unauthorised absences accrued)**

Letter 3 will be triggered following no sustained improvement in attendance following Letter 2 or further unauthorised absences being accrued. Letter 3 will include an invite to meet with the Head of Year to identify support for the immediate improvement in attendance. Student now referred to Education Welfare Service. Attendance proforma to be completed with parent/carers and student.

- **Stage 4 – Case review with the Education Welfare Officer (10 or more unauthorised absences)**

If there is further unauthorised absences following Stage 3 or no sustained improvement has been made, then the Education Welfare Officer may call a meeting with the parent. You will be contacted directly by the Education Welfare Service and asked to attend a meeting, with the Education Welfare Officer and the college.

## Section 5: Parental Guidance for holiday requests

WeST believes that pupils benefit from full-time attendance at school so that they can access a broad, balanced and knowledge rich curriculum that promotes academic progress and attainment. Excellent attendance also ensures that pupils can benefit from the extra-curricular activities on offer at school that promote good social and emotional development. As such, WeST does not encourage its Headteachers to authorise requests for term-time holidays. Whilst WeST recognises that Headteachers may legally authorise such request in exceptional circumstances it is highly unlikely that this will be the case. This stance is in line with DfE guidance<sup>5</sup> (paragraph 30, page 13);

***“As head teachers should only grant leave of absences in exceptional circumstances, it is unlikely a leave of absence will be granted for the purposes of a family holiday”***

- From September 2013, the Government has legislated that no holidays will be authorised in term time<sup>6</sup>.
- Holidays not agreed by the school, but taken, are unauthorised absences and shown in the register by code ‘G’.
- If parents take their children on holiday during term time the Headteacher will request that the Local Authority issue a Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN).
- The school will act according to DfE and LA advice should there be any changes in legislation.

### What parents should consider

WeST recognises that it is often expensive to take a holiday during school breaks and that is why some parents may ask for term time leave for their children; this is not considered to be ‘exceptional circumstances.’ It is important that parents carefully consider the implications of taking their child out of school during term time. Research suggests that children who are taken out of school may never catch up on the work they have missed. This may affect test results and can be particularly harmful if the child is studying for final year examinations. Children who struggle with English or Mathematics may also find it even harder to cope when they return to school, while children of all ages may find it difficult to renew friendships with their classmates.

Any absence from school may lead to a child experiencing problems, such as difficulties securing basic skills of reading, writing and maths which are fundamental to progress through out school. However, absence at certain times of year can be particularly problematic, e.g.

- Closeness to exams or tests.

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<sup>5</sup> DfE (September 2022): [Working Together to Improve School Attendance](#)

<sup>6</sup> This was tested in the [Isle of Wight v. Platt case](#), upon which the Supreme Court made a judgement WeST Attendance Policy (January 2023)

- During GCSEs, A-levels and other examination courses.
- During the first year at a new school.
- At the beginning of a new school term.

If the school refuses a request for term time leave and the child is still taken out of school, this will be recorded as unauthorised absence and may lead to a £60/£120 fine per parent, for each child.

### **The Law**

The law does not say that parents have an automatic right to take their child out of school for holidays during term time. However, in *exceptional circumstances* the Headteacher may authorise, in advance, requests for periods of leave. The request for leave must come from a parent with whom the child normally resides.

If a child then stays away from school for more than the authorised period, this must be recorded as unauthorised absence and could be quoted in a prosecution for poor attendance. If the child is away from school for a total of 4 weeks or more, the school may have to take the child off roll unless there is a good reason for the continued absence, such as illness. In these circumstances it is up to the parent to inform the school, as once removed from roll there is no guarantee that the child will regain a place at the school.

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 came into force on 1 September 2013. The amendments make it clear that Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. Headteachers should determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted.

Holiday prices, and the fact that the parents have booked a holiday before checking with the school, are not exceptional circumstances.

### **Other absence from school will be authorised if it is for the following reasons:**

- Genuine illness.
- Unavoidable medical / dental appointments (but these should be arranged out of school hours if possible).
- Days of religious observance.
- Exceptional circumstances, such as bereavement.
- Seeing a parent who is on leave from the armed forces<sup>7</sup>.
- External examinations.
- When Traveller children go on the road with their parents, where the school is informed beforehand.

Other absence from school will not be authorised, for example:

- For any type of shopping.
- Looking after siblings or parents.
- Minding the house.
- Birthdays.
- Resting after a late night.
- Relatives visiting or visiting relatives.
- Because holidays are cheaper in term time.
- More than one day for a family wedding.

### **Fixed Penalty Notices**

The school will issue and administer penalty notices according to Local Authority procedures.

The penalty is £60, for each parent per child, if paid within 21 days or £120 if paid within 28 days. Failure to pay may result in prosecution where on conviction parents would be liable to a fine of up to £2500.

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<sup>7</sup> Due consideration should be given to the guidance, [MOD advice to headteachers: term-time absence for service children](#)  
WeST Attendance Policy (January 2023)

- Penalty notices may be issued where it is determined that to do so would be an effective and appropriate addition to ongoing casework with a pupil and their parent. The Headteacher will be informed if this action is taken.
- Where feasible, parents should be warned of the possibility of a penalty notice being issued and invited to make representations to the school.

## **Section 6: Strategies for promoting school attendance**

WeST recognises that positively promoting excellent attendance (above 98%) will have the biggest impact on a pupil's attainment and wellbeing. Intrinsic motivators, such as a developing a pupil's own desire and ambition to attend school regularly and do well, are always preferably to extrinsic motivators such as school rewards systems. However, WeST recognises that in some circumstances rewards and incentives can play a role in promoting good school attendance by recognising pupil achievement, especially where attendance improves through a pupil's actions to overcome barriers to attendance. It is important to ensure that any such rewards and incentives are applied fairly and that they do not discriminate against either groups or individual pupils.

Schools in WeST will pay careful consideration to the Equality Act 2010 to ensure that individuals with protected characteristics are not discriminated against. As such, WeST does not agree with rewarding pupils for 100% attendance as this may discriminate against pupils, e.g. those with under-lying health conditions for whom 100% attendance is unachievable.

Rewards that may be used at our school are:

- Praise Shop.
- Cinema trips.
- Pizza parties.
- Attendance certificates.
- Shopping vouchers.
- Weekly tutor challenge with prizes.
- Celebration assemblies.
- Lunch passes.
- Attendance cups.

## Letter 1 (12 or more sessions of absence) (Appendix 1a)

Date of Printing

Address

Dear Parents Name

**Re: «chosen\_forename» «chosen\_surname»**

**Date of Birth: «date\_of\_birth»**

Our aim, as a college, is to support parents/carers and students, where appropriate, to ensure that all students attend school regularly in order to get the best from their education. A student's attendance should be at 95% or above for them to gain full benefit from the educational opportunities available to them during their time at school.

We have been monitoring the attendance of all students in all year groups and note that «chosen\_forename»'s attendance is at «percentage\_attendance», including «total\_unauthorised\_absences» unauthorised sessions of absence. As absence is an early indicator of potential issues affecting your child we wanted to contact you to detail how you can access further support.

It is the legal responsibility of parent/carers to ensure that students attend school to the best of their ability and we encourage working in partnership with parents to identify any potential barriers to attendance and support improved engagement with education.

If you, as parent, consider that there are issues that impact on your child's ability to attend school regularly, then it may be possible for the school to access some additional support at school level or under Early Help. If you would like us to explore support from additional services then please let the school know. Please visit <https://www.dcfp.org.uk/early-help/> or contact me if you feel this could be useful or would like additional information.

It is integral to our support processes that we have a clear understanding of issues or problems that may affect your child's wellbeing and ability to attend school regularly. Please complete the following survey should you be aware of any such issues affecting your child. The survey will enable the school to respond with appropriate support.

We welcome your continued support in this matter and I am available to discuss any concerns you may have with regard to your child's attendance or wellbeing. Please email [attendance@southdartmoor.devon.sch.uk](mailto:attendance@southdartmoor.devon.sch.uk) in the first instance.

Best wishes

Head of Year

Enc. Early Help Leaflet/Registration Certificate

## Appendix 1b – Letter 2 (no sustained improvement to attendance)

Date of Printing

Address

Dear Parents Name

**Re: Student Name**

**Date of Birth: DOB**

We are concerned that Students Name attendance has fallen to 0.00 with 0 unauthorised sessions of absence. A copy of the attendance record is enclosed. A student's attendance should be at 95% or above in order for them to gain full benefit from the educational opportunities available to them during their time at school.

In our initial letter we invited you to discuss any concerns you may have about your child's attendance or wellbeing by emailing [attendance@southdartmoor.devon.sch.uk](mailto:attendance@southdartmoor.devon.sch.uk), completing the survey or getting in touch with me directly. However, if there are any outstanding issues from your initial contact or further concerns that need to be brought to our attention, please contact the school at your earliest convenience.

Should absences continue, and the college is not sufficiently satisfied that the reasons for the absences were completely unavoidable, the college may now escalate this with the Education Welfare Service.

If you, as parent, consider that there are issues that impact on your child's ability to attend school regularly, then it may be possible for the school to access some additional support at school level or under Early Help. If you would like us to explore support from additional services then please let the school know. Please visit <https://www.dcfp.org.uk/early-help/> or contact me if you feel this could be useful or would like additional information.

It is integral to our support processes that we have a clear understanding of issues or problems that may affect your child's wellbeing and ability to attend school regularly. Please complete the following survey should you be aware of any such issues affecting your child. The survey will enable the school to respond with appropriate support.

We actively encourage engagement from parent/carers to support positive change and to identify appropriate next steps. If you feel it would be beneficial to meet to discuss the ongoing attendance concerns, please contact the school to arrange a meeting.

Best wishes

Head of Year

Enc. Early Help Leaflet/Registration Certificate

## Appendix 1c – Letter 3 (10 or more unauthorised absences)

Date of Printing

Address

Dear Parents Name

**Re: Student Name**

**Date of Birth: DOB**

I am very concerned that Students Name attendance has fallen to 0.00 with 0 unauthorised sessions of absence. A copy of the attendance record is enclosed. A student's attendance should be at 95% or above in order for them to gain full benefit from the educational opportunities available to them during their time at school.

As we stated in our initial letter, it is the legal responsibility of the parent/carer to provide the college with sufficient detail and documentation to satisfy them that any absence has been completely unavoidable.

We also invited you to discuss any concerns you may have with regard to your child's attendance or wellbeing by emailing [attendance@southdartmoor.devon.sch.uk](mailto:attendance@southdartmoor.devon.sch.uk).

Should absences continue, and the college is not sufficiently satisfied that the reasons for the absences were completely unavoidable, the college may escalate this with the Education Welfare Service.

If you, the parent, consider that there are issues which impact on your child's ability to attend school regularly, then it may be possible for the school to access some additional support under Early Help. If you would like us to explore this with you then please let the school know. Please visit <https://www.dcfp.org.uk/early-help/> or contact me if you feel this could be useful or would like additional information.

If you feel it would be beneficial to meet to discuss the ongoing attendance concerns, please contact the school to arrange a meeting.

Best wishes

Head of Year

Enc. Early Help Leaflet/Registration Certificate

## 1d – Lateness Letter

Date

Dear

### Lateness to school

Excellent attendance is important in ensuring that pupils are safe and able to access the opportunities at school that lead to success. This includes arriving to school on time and attending all lessons punctually.

I am writing to express concern over Name's attendance this year. According to their Registration Certificate (enclosed) Name has been arriving late to school and/or lessons.

Arriving late can have negative effects, including:

- Leaving pupils unsure about their schoolwork, finding it hard to catch-up and becoming anxious about getting left behind.
- Loss of curriculum time which can lead to poor results in tests or examinations.
- Disruption to friendship groups leading a pupil to feel left out.
- A less positive reference, as prospective employers or training providers often enquire about attendance and punctuality.

Please contact me to discuss Name's attendance and punctuality. It is important that we understand the reasons for Name's absence and any barriers or difficulties that they face in attending school or arriving at lessons on time. We want to work together with you, to ensure that Name can achieve success.

Yours sincerely

Head of Year

Enc. Registration Certificate, Year to Date

# S2

## A request by a parent, that a future absence/period of absence be authorised by a school/college/academy

Schools are only allowed by law, to authorise non-medical absences if requested in advance by a parent with whom the pupil normally resides. A school can only authorise such a request if they are satisfied that there are “exceptional circumstances” which apply. However, even if there are exceptional circumstances, schools can still consider any other relevant factors such as previous attendance rates; the ability of the pupil to catch-up on missed work; the wider impact of missing the specified period of time.

Devon County Council’s advice is that schools must be extremely cautious about approving such requests if the pupil’s education is likely to be significantly impacted upon.

Parents should ensure that they know whether the absence will be authorised or not before they go away as an unauthorised absence will likely result in a penalty notice or court summons being issued to each parent for each pupil affected. It is therefore recommended that this completed form is sent into the school **at least three school weeks** before the intended absence.

***To be completed by a parent with whom the child(ren) lives.***

Child’s name: ..... Class/Year Group: .....

Child’s name: ..... Class/Year Group: .....

Full name(s) of all parents going away with the child(ren) listed above:  
Parent 1: .....  
Parent 2: .....

Period Absent: **From** ..... **To**.....

Number of school days that will be missed: .....

Please explain the reason for the absence (consider that the school will use this to determine whether the “exceptional circumstances” criteria is met.

You are asked to sign this request to confirm that the information provided above is correct, and that you have read the warning contained in the Additional Information overleaf.

Name of parent completing this form: ..... Signed:.....

Date: .....



***For school use. To be completed by a member of staff so authorised***

Date form received in school: .....

Pupils current attendance rate: .....%

Number of unauthorised absences in last 6 months: .....

**Absence authorised – the school authorises the above absence as requested, satisfied that exceptional circumstances apply to this specific request.**

**Absence unauthorised – the school is unable to authorise the absences specified overleaf.**

If request is unauthorised, the main reason(s) are: (please tick all/any that apply)

- Circumstances not deemed to be exceptional       Current attendance rate is low
- The period covered by this request (length)       Number of unauthorised absences is high
- The time of the school year       Other (please specify)

.....  
.....  
.....

**Signed** (member of staff making determination): .....      **Designation:**.....

**Date parent notified of school decision:** .....

**Additional information for parents.**

If this request is unauthorised by the school, a penalty notice may be issued by Devon County Council. A penalty notice offers a parent the opportunity of dealing with a potential offence without going to court, by paying a penalty. If parents can't afford to pay, or for any other reason do not take the offer of paying the notice within a set time, then the case will proceed to a magistrates court. The provision of penalty notices is set by Regulations and the amount of the penalty, timeframe for payment or payment method are not able to be varied by Devon County Council.

**Parents should note that only one penalty notice per parent per child will normally be issued within a two year period.** Any second 'offence' within a two year period will be referred straight to court.