

Attendance policy

The Westleigh School



THE WESTLEIGH SCHOOL
Aspiring & Achieving Together

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1. Aims

Our school aims to meet its obligations with regards to school attendance by:

- Promoting good attendance and reducing absence, including persistent absence
- Ensuring every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled
- Acting early to address patterns of absence

We will also support parents to perform their legal duty to ensure their children of compulsory school age attend regularly, and will promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

2. Legislation and guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the [school attendance guidance](#) from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on [school attendance parental responsibility measures](#). These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- [The Education Act 1996](#)
- [The Education Act 2002](#)
- [The Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2010](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2011](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2016](#)
- [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)

This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the [school census](#), which explains the persistent absence threshold.

This policy complies with our funding agreement and articles of association.

3. School procedures

3.1 Attendance register

By law, all schools (except those where all pupils are boarders) are required to keep an attendance register, and all pupils must be placed on this register.

The attendance register will be taken at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. It will mark whether every pupil is:

- Present
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity
- Absent
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

- The original entry
- The amended entry
- The reason for the amendment
- The date on which the amendment was made
- The name and position of the person who made the amendment

See appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes.

Every entry in the attendance register will be preserved for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

Pupils must arrive in school by **8.25am** on each school day.

The register for the first session will be taken at **8.30am** and will be kept open until **8.45am**. The register for the second session will be taken at **12.05am** and will be kept open until **1.05am**.

3.2 Unplanned absence

Parents must notify the school on the first day of an unplanned absence – for example, if their child is unable to attend due to ill health – by **8.00am** or as soon as practically possible (see also section 6).

What should I do if my child is ill?

- Firstly, decide if your child is too ill to attend school (see COVID Addendum if illness maybe COVID related). Each day the school is attended by a number of students who feel, under the weather or 'a bit sick'. The majority of these students improve during the day and have no problems as a result of their attending.
- If your child is too ill to attend, please ring the school (01942 202580 – press 1 when requested in order to report a student absent) on the first day, and on each subsequent day your child is unwell. You could also use the text service on 07860055144. You can also email directly to Student Services – Attendance@westleigh.wigan.sch.uk.
- Please note that medical evidence / GP note may be requested by the school for extended or recurrent periods of absence before the absence is authorised. Please download this medical certificate (see below), if required, ensuring it is stamped by the medical surgery.
- Medical Card Appointment Slip will be required for pre-arranged medical/dental appointments

If my child is absent from school, what can I expect will happen?

- On the first day of your child's absence you will receive a text from the school (if you have not already contacted the school) asking you to explain your child's absence.
- On the third day of the absence you may be expected to provide medical evidence in the form of a Doctor's note, appointment letter or card.
- If your child's absence is more frequent, you should expect to receive a letter informing you of your child's attendance level or a home visit.

If your child's absence is unacceptable or at a significant level (regardless of the reason for the absence), you should expect to be asked to attend a meeting in school to discuss support appropriate to your child.

Absence due to illness will be authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may ask parents to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents will be notified of this in advance.

3.3 Medical or dental appointments

Missing registration for a medical or dental appointment is counted as an authorised absence; advance notice is required for authorising these absences.

However, we encourage parents to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

If a medical appointment cannot be arranged out of school hours, then parents should inform the school in advance of the appointment that their child will be collected at a specific time. Proof of the appointment should be sent into school.

Applications for other types of absence in term time must also be made in advance. Information relating to whether the school can authorise such absences can be found in section 4.

3.4 Lateness and punctuality

A pupil who arrives late but before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code.

A pupil who arrives after the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code.

Any pupil who is late to school before or after registration closes parents will receive a text informing them of the lateness. Students will also receive a detention for persistent lateness.

3.5 Following up absence

The school will follow up any absences to ascertain the reason, ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary, identify whether the absence is approved or not and identify the correct attendance code to use.

School will make contact with parents who don't make contact regarding absence via the absence line. However, we urge parents and carers to inform school of absence on the first and each consecutive day of absence.

3.6 Reporting to parents

Parents will be informed of their child's attendance annually in the form of their written report.

4. Authorised and unauthorised absence

4.1 Granting approval for term-time absence

The headteacher may not grant any leave of absence to pupils during term time unless they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the headteacher's discretion.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments – as explained in sections 3.2 and 3.3
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart
- Traveller pupils travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh Gypsies, Irish and Scottish Travellers, Showmen (fairground people) and Circus people, Bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and New Travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a Traveller family is known

to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision

4.2 Legal sanctions

Schools can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age. (see additional information at the end of this policy for more information on Education Penalty Notices).

If issued with a penalty notice, parents must pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the local authority.

The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice ultimately rests with the headteacher, following the local authority's code of conduct for issuing penalty notices. This may take into account:

- A number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year
- One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission
- Where an excluded pupil is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason

If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute the parent or withdraw the notice.

5. Strategies for promoting attendance

We want to work really closely with parents to support the very best attendance rates in our students, we urge parents and carers to talk to school around the barriers to good attendance so we can work together to overcome barriers and ensure good attendance.

We regularly reward our students for good and improved attendance rates across the year, for example:

Annually Students are consulted on what rewards they would like to receive.

Students are rewarded for excellent attendance in a number of ways:

Weekly: –

- Best form of the week – receive a trophy and are added to the leader board and a day's early lunch pass
- Most Improved form – receive a weeks early lunch pass to the school canteen

Termly: -

- 100% attendance - Certificates and 100% badges
- Best form of the term - receive a form breakfast

End of academic year:-

- 96%+ attendance - Certificate
- 100% attendance – Certificate and Gold Badge
- 100% attendance – entered into prize draw for each year group

Plus various other incentives which run across the year such as:-

- Christmas Selection Boxes
- Easter Eggs
- HERO (Here Every day Ready On-time)

6. Attendance monitoring

The attendance officer monitors pupil absence on a daily, weekly, monthly, termly and half termly basis.

Parents are expected to call the school in the morning if their child is going to be absent due to ill health (see section 3.2).

If a pupil's absence goes above 3 days we will contact the parents to discuss the reasons for this.

If after contacting parents a pupil's absence continue to rise, we will consider involving an education welfare officer.

The persistent absence threshold is 10%. If a pupil's individual overall absence rate is greater than or equal to 10%, the pupil will be classified as a persistent absentee.

Pupil-level absence data is collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. We compare our attendance data to the national average, and share this with governors.

7. Roles and responsibilities

Students will:

- Attend school every day.
- Arrive in school and to class on time - (persistent latecomers will be placed on the late detention list).
- Remain in class unless given permission to leave.
- Remain in school unless given permission to leave. Students leaving will collect an exit slip from the Data and Exams Office and will keep this on their person.
- Catch up missing work following absence.
- Be aware of their current attendance levels and their personalised target.

Parents will:

- Make sure their child attends school every day, unless too ill to attend and make contact with school on **every day** of illness.
- Make medical and other appointments outside of school hours except in emergencies. Where medical assistance is necessary in school hours parents should have the school medical attendance form stamped and signed by the doctors' surgery.
- Organise family holidays during school holiday periods.
- Support their child and school in aiming for full attendance at school.
- For extended periods of absences or recurrent absences further written confirmation may be requested

To support communication parents can use our In-touch Service – which is a Sims based messaging service that the school uses if we need to send a message to large numbers of parents and you can reply to this service if you wish. You can also contact school by phone on 01942 202580, or e-mail on - Attendance@westleigh.wigan.sch.uk.

Form Tutors will: including defined groups

- Mark all registers accurately and promptly in the first 10 minutes of each session.
- Using the school guidelines, absences must be registered using the appropriate code.
- Monitor students' attendance and discuss reasons for absence with students upon return.
- Will work with students to promote good attendance and address barriers, which stop them attending.
- Take an interest in students' welfare and alert the Head of Year if a student's attendance begins to cause concern.
- Counsel students whose attendance begins to deteriorate and log any concerns on cpoms.
- Refer a student whose attendance is irregular, or falls below an acceptable level, to the Head of Year.
- Promote good attendance during registration period through discussion and form activities.
- Assist students to monitor their own attendance and set targets each half term.
- Establish reasons for a student's absence and update ZB/LT so that absence is recorded accordingly.
- Monitor patterns in attendance levels and alert pastoral staff (HOY/ZB) as appropriate.

- Reintegrate students who have had extended absence in a positive and welcoming way, ensuring they are ready to learn effectively.
- Make regular contact with parents regarding attendance issues and barriers stopping students attending daily.
- Feedback to HOY and agreed actions weekly to improve attendance.

The Head of Year will:

- Have oversight of the attendance of all students and forms in their year group, liaising constantly with other relevant professionals in and out of school.
- Set actions and follow-ups in weekly FT meetings.
- Consult with Form Tutors to raise levels of attendance.
- Liaise with the Attendance Officer and appropriate professionals in school **fortnightly** regarding attendance of students in their year group.
- Conduct joint interviews with the Attendance Officer for students whose attendance falls below 94% where deemed necessary.
- Co-ordinate support strategies for students returning to school after periods of absence.
- Ensure that parents are informed if their child truants from school and any consequences they may receive.
- Liaise with the Safeguarding Officer and Attendance Officer and Deputy Headteacher pastoral re: identified students in their year group and students who have extreme poor attendance.
- Do joint home visits with the Attendance Officer, students causing concern.
- Support Parents in getting students into school

All Teaching Staff will:

- Promote good attendance by providing meaningful and challenging learning experiences.
- Complete class registers promptly.
- Keep accurate records of attendance for their teaching groups.
- Be vigilant about non-attendance to lessons.
- Follow up non-attendance with students and alert the Head of Year and Head of Faculty regarding suspicious absences.
- Ensure students are able to make sense of learning activities and complete work following a periods of absence.
- Supervise students at lesson changeovers to encourage prompt arrival at lessons.

The Attendance Officer in conjunction with the Student Services Manager will:

- Authorise absence in registers when telephone calls from parents are received.
- If there is doubt as to the validity of the absence the Attendance officer will check with the Head of Year were needed.
- Text or telephone home on the first day of absence for students if a message has not been received. Follow-up calls will be made on subsequent days for students whose attendance is causing concern, or are known truants.
- Students deemed 'at risk, will be prioritised in chasing up absence. If no contact is made HOY, and Safeguarding Lead will be informed as subsequent actions taken.
- Produce all statistics/information/register totals/certificates re: attendance as required for Heads of Year and the Deputy Headteacher.
- Mark in the register students who are late and miss registration.

- Produce an attendance figures for year group for each form weekly.
- Inform parents if their child truants from school.
- Support Parents in getting students into school.
- Lead with any early helps that are open due to attendance.
- Co-ordinate support strategies to improve attendance within the year group.
- Monitor absences of students on daily basis.
- Attend weekly attendance meeting with Senior Leadership Team.
- Identify students with 10+ sessions absent and send the relevant letter to parents. Contact parents to discuss a student's attendance, inviting parents into school.
- Hold attendance meetings with students, parents and any appropriate outside agency representatives.
- Co-ordinate support strategies to improve attendance within the year group.
- To complete Action Plans for 25+ sessions absent.
- Carry out selected home visits.
- Liaise with SLT /HOY/Appropriate staff regarding attendance of students in their year groups.
- Take part in Attendance panels in severe cases when other interventions have been unsuccessful in improving attendance.
- Monitor outcomes from Attendance buyback fortnightly.
- Follow LA and National Guidelines on improving attendance.
- Along with Attendance Enforcement Team, be involved in the instigation of parenting contracts for parents and students with poor school attendance.
- Complete Wigan Referrals for students missing in education (CME) as per Wigan guidelines (see appendix 1)
- Provide full attendance analysis to Senior Leadership Team at the end of every academic year.
- Provide feedback to the Academy Council Education & Standards Committee as appropriate.

The Senior Leadership Team will:

- Be available to support Heads of Year, Safeguarding Officer, Pastoral Manager and Attendance Officer at attendance interviews.
- Lead an attendance panel in severe cases when other intervention has been unsuccessful in improving attendance.
- Liaise with Education Service to provide the best possible service for the school.
- Plan and support strategies to improve attendance.
- Co-ordinate the admission process for students.
- Present the attendance strategy and data to Academy Councillors.

The Academy Council will:

- Monitor attendance termly and review all strategies in place.

As attendance is so important, the school and Academy Councillors took the decision, some time ago, not to authorise holidays taken in school time. A two-week holiday taken during school time results in a loss of learning time of more than 5%. This makes it impossible for a child to record a good attendance record even if they lose no time at all through illness.

Parents who choose to remove their children from school for a holiday of 5 days or more may be served with a Fixed Penalty Notice by the Education Service

8. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Deputy Head teacher. At every review, the policy will be shared with the governing board.

9. Links with other policies

This policy is linked to our child protection and safeguarding policy

10. Additional Information

What is acceptable attendance?

The School expects all students to aim for 100% attendance. Any attendance level below 96% would initiate intervention by the school. This could be as simple as a 'chat' with the form teacher or may, in more severe circumstances, lead to the involvement of agencies outside of the school.

How does the school record absence?

- The school uses an electronic system of attendance registration that is updated within each lesson by the form teacher or subject teacher.
- The system records whether the child is present or absent.
- Absence is categorised as being authorised (agreed and accepted by the school as being appropriate) or unauthorised.
- Examples of authorised absence would be genuine illness, medical appointments etc.
- Examples of unauthorised absence would be truancy, attendance levels that have fallen below an acceptable level and or are not supported by medical evidence, prolonged periods of absence without a medical certificate and unauthorised holidays in term time.
- The codes used are mandatory codes as issued by the government.

Can a student take a holiday in term time?

- The school and headteacher's stance is that, normally, holidays taken in term time will result in unauthorised absence marks being entered in the register. This reflects the government and local authority view that holidays should not be taken in school term time.
- If you feel there are exceptional circumstances behind your request for a holiday, please contact the school to discuss your reasons and to make your application.
- The decision to grant holiday requests lies solely with the Headteacher.

If my child has an unacceptable level of unauthorised absence, what can I expect may happen?

- You will be contacted by the school, either by telephone, letter and/or visit to your home in order that the level of, and reasons for, your child's absence can be discussed with you.
- A plan of action will be compiled that is aimed at helping and supporting you to improve your child's school attendance.
- A failure to comply with any such plan without valid reason will, if your child's school attendance does not improve, result in a referral being made to The Education Service who will ensure your child regularly attends school.
- Further poor school attendance by your child may result in legal action being taken against you by the local authority, which is by a referral to the Attendance Enforcement Team. You may initially be issued with an Education Penalty Notice (fine).
- See the information provided below in "How will I know then I am to receive an Education Penalty notice" with regards to the required criteria to receive an Educational Penalty Notice.

What is an Education Penalty Notice?

An Education Penalty Notice is a fine issued to parents or carers and can be either £60 per parent or carer or per child (if the payment is made with 21 days or receipt) or £120 per parent or carer or per child if not paid within 21 days of the original fine being issued (if paid after this, but within 28 days). If the fine is not paid – legal proceeding will commence. Education Penalty Notices are issued by first class post to your home and will explain how and where to send your payment. You must pay the whole of the amount owing in one payment. You cannot pay in instalments or just pay part of the amount.

What does the law say about non-attendance?

Under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996, parents or carers may be taken to court and prosecuted if their child does not attend school regularly and their absences are unauthorised (or in other words, the school cannot or has not given permission for them to be off school).

In 2003, the Anti-Social Behaviour Act provided an alternative means of tackling non-attendance in schools. Under Section 23 of the Act, Local Education Authorities and other designated bodies were given the powers to issue Education Penalty Notices to parents or carers who are considered capable of, but unwilling to work towards improving their child's attendance.

How will I know when I am going to receive an Education Penalty Notice?

A generic warning letter is sent at the start of the academic year and you will receive a reminder termly, it outlines the criteria need to be met to be issued. How many absences will result in the issuing of an Education Penalty Notice?

- Children under 90% attendance who have 10 sessions (5 days) of unauthorised absence.
- Children who have 20 sessions (10 days) of unauthorised absence
- Persistently arrives late for school after the close of registration and this also applies for taking leave during the current term without the permission of the school.

Can you appeal against an Education Penalty Notice?

There isn't a legal right of appeal after an Education Penalty Notice has been issued. You can, however, contact the issuer if you have a complaint, for example, if you believe that the Education Penalty Notice has been issued to the wrong person.

What happens if you don't pay the Education Penalty Notice?

If you don't pay an Education Penalty Notice within 28 days of receipt, The Education Service can take you to court (the Magistrates court) under the Education Act for the original offence of poor attendance by your child. If proven, you may be fined anything up to £2500 and/or be sentenced to up to 3 months in prison. In addition, you may be subject to a court order, for example, a Parenting Order.

Will I be taken to court if I pay the Education Penalty Notice but my child is still missing school?

If you pay the Education Penalty Notice within 28 days of receipt, you won't be taken to court for the period of absences covered in the Education Penalty Notice. If, however, your child continues to have periods of unauthorised absences which are not covered in the Notice after the payment of the Education Penalty Notice, you may be taken to court – depending on the circumstances.

What kind of unauthorised absences result in the issuing of an Education Penalty Notice?

- Where students are openly truanting.
- Unauthorised absence from school.
- Holidays taken in term time which the Headteacher has not authorised.
- An unacceptable delayed return from an extended holiday if the parents or carers haven't got permission beforehand from the school.
- Regular late arrival at school (after the Register has closed).
- For more information on Education Penalty Notices please visit the Department for Education Website www.gov.uk/df

Appendix 1: attendance codes

The following codes are taken from the DfE's guidance on school attendance.

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	Pupil is present at morning registration
\	Present (pm)	Pupil is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Pupil arrives late before register has closed
B	Off-site educational activity	Pupil is at a supervised off-site educational activity approved by the school
D	Dual registered	Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
J	Interview	Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
P	Sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
V	Educational trip or visit	Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised, or approved, by the school
W	Work experience	Pupil is on a work experience placement

Code	Definition	Scenario
Authorised absence		
C	Authorised leave of absence	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
E	Excluded	Pupil has been excluded but no alternative provision has been made
H	Authorised holiday	Pupil has been allowed to go on holiday due to exceptional circumstances
I	Illness	School has been notified that a pupil will be absent due to illness
M	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment

R	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance
S	Study leave	Year 11 pupil is on study leave during their public examinations
T	Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence	Pupil from a Traveller community is travelling, as agreed with the school
Unauthorised absence		
G	Unauthorised holiday	Pupil is on a holiday that was not approved by the school
N	Reason not provided	Pupil is absent for an unknown reason (this code should be amended when the reason emerges, or replaced with code O if no reason for absence has been provided after a reasonable amount of time)
O	Unauthorised absence	School is not satisfied with reason for pupil's absence
U	Arrival after registration	Pupil arrived at school after the register closed

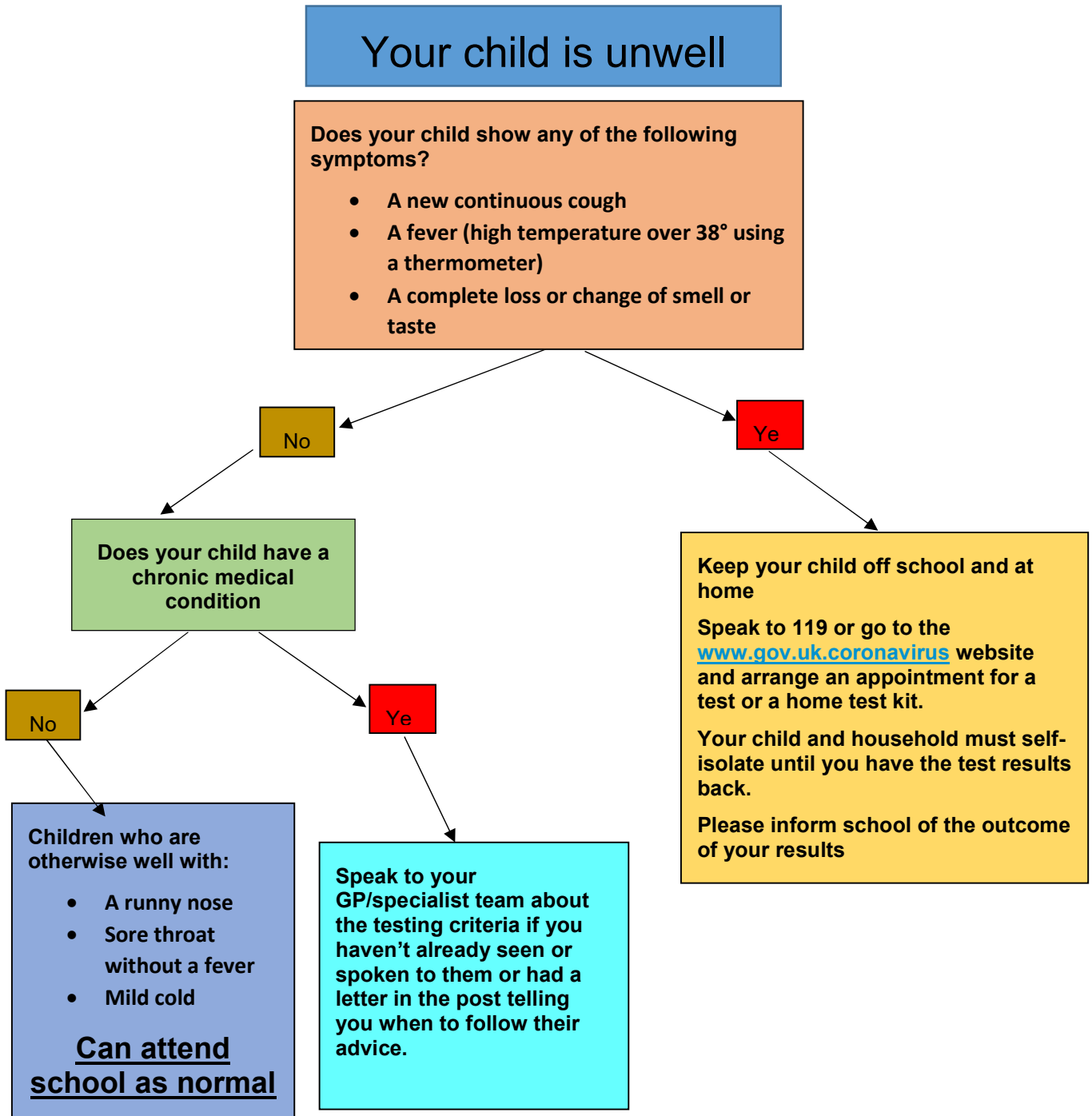
Code	Definition	Scenario
X	Not required to be in school	Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
Y	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances	School site is closed, there is disruption to travel as a result of a local/national emergency, or pupil is in custody
Z	Pupil not on admission register	Register set up but pupil has not yet joined the school
#	Planned school closure	Whole or partial school closure due to half-term/bank holiday/INSET day

Addendum due to Covid -19

- When making contact with School to report your child's absence, please give details of nature of illness, if you contact school just to report your child is unwell – School will contact you to for further information about the nature of the illness.
- If your child is just feeling under the weather or a bit sick we would still expect them to attend school. However, please check the current NHS guidance on what signs to look out for and follow them. We ask that you still contact school. There is a flowchart below to support parents with their decision making.
- If self-isolating due to Covid 19 – welfare calls may be made to you, during your isolation period.
- We will not request medical confirmation from you if you are self-isolating – however if you have been contacted by the track and trace team we may ask to see the correspondence from them.
- If you have been contacted by the Track and Trace system and your child is in school – Please contact us immediately so that we can make arrangements with you to get your child home safe.
- Some rewards will not be able to take place and will be reintroduced at a later stage.

After 5 months away from formal education attendance to school is more important than ever.

Parents have told us they are confused when to keep their child off school, therefore we hope the flowchart below gives some clarity on how to decide if your child needs to stay off school.



Good attendance and good GCSE results are very closely linked.

Know Your Symptoms

Covid-19

- ✓ Fever
- ✓ Dry cough
- ✓ Fatigue
- ✓ Shortness of breath

Flu

- ✓ Fever
- ✓ Dry Cough
- ✓ Runny Nose
- ✓ Headache
- ✓ Sore Throat
- ✓ Muscle/Joint Pain

Cold

- ✓ Cough
- ✓ Sore Throat
- ✓ Aches & Pains
- ✓ Watery eyes
- ✓ Runny/stuff nose

Allergies

- ✓ Sneezing
- ✓ Coughing
- ✓ Itchy eyes
- ✓ Runny/stuffy nose

