The Westminster
Specialist College

Attendance Policy

2025/26

Approved by Board of Governors on:	
Signed by Chair of Governors:	P Coldicott
Head of College:	O Flowers
Lead Personnel:	**B Taylor**
Date of Review:	**12/9/2026**

Introduction

For our young adults to prosper in life they must recognise that attendance and punctuality is a key employability skill and reliability is an important life skill. Therefore, at The Westminster Specialist College attendance is a high priority and we will work with students, their families and external agencies to ensure good attendance is maintained. For students to have good attendance the College will endeavour to ensure that students feel safe and happy in their learning environment, whether this is at the college, their local community or in the workplace (i.e. Project Search).

Attendance is defined as being physically present at the college or at an alternative provision as per their individual curriculum or timetable, an example of this could be a work experience/supported internship.

Purpose

- To highlight and ensure that all students and advocates understand the importance of a student attending and engaging with learning opportunities, including any work experience/placements/internships.

- To highlight and ensure that all students and advocates understand that a learner's failure to attend college disadvantages them and may negatively affect successful outcomes.

This policy has been updated for the 2025/26 academic year to reflect the current context of The Westminster Specialist College. All students are from Sandwell Local Authority and are engaged in a range of pathways including college-based learning, DFN Project SEARCH (ASDA Oldbury and NHS Midland Metropolitan Hospital placements), and Outternships. Attendance expectations, monitoring, and support strategies apply equally across all settings.

Key Updates for 2025/26

- The college continues to expect a minimum of 80% attendance for all learners.
- Persistent unauthorised absences may affect a learner's ability to remain on a DFN Project SEARCH placement.

- Attendance is monitored via Arbor MIS and this is regularly reviewed

- The Family Support Worker plays a central role in early intervention, supporting reintegration and working with families to remove barriers to attendance.

- Attendance concerns are now explicitly linked to safeguarding and welfare review meetings.

- Governors with responsibility for Safeguarding and Welfare will review attendance trends termly.

Scope and Context
This Attendance Policy applies to all students enrolled directly on the college roll and those accessing provision through the Service Level Agreement (SLA) with The Westminster School. Attendance expectations, reporting, and escalation procedures apply consistently across both groups to ensure a fair and consistent approach.

Responsibilities
Interns on DFN Project SEARCH placements (ASDA Oldbury and NHS Midland Metropolitan Hospital) are required to notify their Job Coach directly, as well as the College Office, if they are unable to attend. This ensures that both the host employer and the college are informed in real time, supporting clear communication and maintaining professional expectations.

The Family Support Worker will continue to provide early help and intervention where attendance concerns arise, and governors with responsibility for Safeguarding and Welfare will monitor attendance trends termly.

Attendance Expectations

Students are expected to:

Attend all scheduled classes, tutorials, work placements, and other college-related activities as per their timetable.

Arrive on time for all lessons and stay for the full duration.

Notify the college in advance if they will be absent due to illness, appointments, or personal reasons.

Take ownership of reporting their absence as this would be an expectation of their potential employment contract in the future.

Provide medical evidence for any prolonged absences that may occur (i.e. minimum of 5 days)

Safeguarding

As per government guidance on attendance, The Westminster Specialist College staff will follow up any absences of students who have not arrived in college. This is in order to:

- ascertain the reason for absence
- ensure any proper safeguarding action is taken where applicable (being mindful of vulnerable adults missing in education)
- identify whether the absence was authorised or not; and,
- identify the correct code to use before entering it on to the college's electronic management information system.

The Westminster Specialist College has a defined agreed framework of recording attendance and students are registered each morning and afternoon on **Arbor**. Students are marked as present only if they are physically in attendance at the registration period. In all other cases they are registered using the N code (no reason yet provided), unless staff have prior knowledge of the reason for non-attendance.

Where absence is unavoidable, the student or advocate will notify college before the start time of 8.55am on **01215616884.**

If a student has not arrived in college by 9.30am, and there is no reason for absence given, then a member of college staff will contact the student and/or advocates immediately to ensure that the student is safe. This will be in most instances be the College Family Support Worker or a member of the class team.

The N code will subsequently be amended by the college Administrative Officer when a reason has been determined.

Authorised Absences

The following reasons are considered valid for authorised absences:

- Medical illness with proper documentation.

- Hospital or specialist appointments that cannot be arranged outside of college hours.

- Family emergencies or bereavement.

- College-approved work placements, internships, or career-related activities.

- Religious observances.

Unauthorised Absences

Unauthorised absences occur when a student misses college for reasons not listed under authorised absences. Persistent unauthorised absences may result in disciplinary action which are outlined later in this policy.

Attendance Expectations and Rest Days

- While the college expects **regular attendance in line with each student's agreed timetable**, it is recognised that some learners may have authorised **rest days** as part of their personalised programme.
- These arrangements will be clearly documented in the learner's timetable and reviewed termly.
- Rest days will not count as absences when agreed as part of a student's support plan.
- Students are expected to attend punctually on all timetabled days.

Rationale for Rest Days
Rest days are built into some students' programmes where it is considered necessary to support:

- **Medical or mental health needs** – ensuring learners can sustain attendance on agreed days.
- **Energy and stamina management** – recognising that some students with SEND may require recovery time to maintain progress.
- **Transition planning** – allowing a phased increase in attendance as students build capacity and confidence.
- **Individualised timetables** – ensuring the balance of work placement, curriculum, and wellbeing is appropriate to each learner.

Rest days are agreed through discussion with the student, family, and relevant professionals, and are reviewed termly to ensure they remain appropriate.

Appointments

Students who need to leave during the college day for appointments must show the appointment card or a letter from the parent/carer/advocate to the teaching staff before leaving. Students arriving late due to medical appointments must also show on arrival their appointment card or letter. This is to ensure the safety of all learners.

Attendance will be taken twice in the day, am and pm. The Westminster Specialist College is based upon students attending up to 5 days a week and completing up to 30 hours per week.

Advice and guidance for learners and parents/carers/advocates

- Attendance is reviewed on a weekly basis and any concerns passed to the Head of College. Attendance would not be expected to fall below 80% during each academic year.
- Holidays should not be taken in term-time and will be recorded as unauthorised absence. The college will endeavour to support students to understand the holiday periods and how they change once they access the world of work. Work will be completed with students in order for them to recognise what notice period may be required for a holiday, once they are in Employment.
- Absences in term-time can only be authorized in exceptional circumstances. This could be up to 15 days per academic year. 'Exceptional' circumstances are those which do not happen regularly or are not expected.
- The student or advocate may make a specific request for absence in writing in advance to the Head of College who must be satisfied that there are exceptional circumstances based on the individual facts and circumstances of the case which warrant the leave. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the Head of College's discretion.
- Any student refusing to engage in learning who leaves the college/work experience/placement during a session will be marked in the register as absent.

Religious absence

The college will authorise one day per religious festival e.g. Eid (i.e. the day set aside by the religious body of which a learner and/or parent/carer is a member). This will be marked in the register with an R mark. Any additional leave must be requested in advance and this can only be authorized if it is fitting that exceptional circumstances apply. (marked as a C mark)

Poor Attendance

If attendance falls below 80%, a meeting will be arranged with the Head of College to ascertain issues surrounding attendance with the student and parents/carers/advocates and to discuss any appropriate support.

If attendance does not improve, a further meeting will be arranged to ascertain difficulties with attendance and strategies to improve attendance. If attendance does not improve after the 2nd meeting a verbal warning will be issued by the Head of College.

If attendance does not improve after the verbal warning has been given a meeting will be arranged and a written warning will be issued and the student maybe withdrawn from the

programme at The Westminster Specialist College. The College will inform the local authority of any withdrawal.

Support for Attendance

The college understands that students may face challenges that affect attendance, such as medical conditions or personal issues. Support is available through:

- College class team and pastoral support team (i.e. Family Support Worker).

- Flexible learning plans for students

- Engagement with external agencies, where necessary, to address barriers to attendance.

Reintegration of Students following a significant period of absence

The Westminster Specialist College recognises and is sensitive to the needs and circumstances of students who return following a period of significant absence. The student and advocates will be consulted in this process. All relevant staff will be involved and informed of the process. A timescale for a plan of reintegration should be agreed if applicable.

Those People responsible for attendance matters in this college are:

B Taylor, Vice Principal of the College

D Taylor, Family Support Worker

Monitoring Attendance

Attendance will be monitored on a two-week cycle. This is reviewed by the Principal and Vice Principal of the college.

Attendance below 80% may trigger a review with the student, and a support plan could be developed to help them meet the required attendance levels.

Regular communication with caregivers or support workers (where applicable) will be maintained for students identified as at-risk due to low attendance.

Moving to a new address/school

If a situation arises where a student is moving address or to a new college then the school will need the following information from the student or an advocate

- The new address
- The date when the student will commence living from this address

If a student is moving to a new college or education establishment then the student or the advocate will need to inform us of where this is and the proposed start date.

Working with External Agencies/Education Providers

Due to the nature of the curriculum (i.e. Project Search) and the organisation, the college will work with several organisations. The college will put in measures to ensure that the attendance of a student on a work placement, project search or community visit is recorded within the timescales outlined in this policy. Where the college is working alongside students from other schools or colleges agreements will be put in place to ensure that attendance procedures are robust.

Review of the Policy

This policy will be reviewed annually by the college administration in consultation with students and staff to ensure it remains relevant and supportive of the students' needs.

The next review date for this policy is **September 2026**

Contact Information

For any questions about this attendance policy or to discuss attendance, please contact the college's administration office at 01215616884