



# **Oak CE Primary School Pupil Attendance Policy**

**Date: June 2021, Review: June 2023**

**Approved:**

## **Pupil Attendance Policy**

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## **1.0 INTRODUCTION AND STATEMENT OF INTENT**

**1.1** School regards regular attendance at school as essential to ensure the best possible learning outcomes for all children and that regular attendance at school is necessary to promote better life chances. The school's ethos encourages children to feel that their presence in school is important and that they are missed when they are absent or late.

There is a clear link between good attendance and high standards. For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and every child should be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

There is now more Government pressure on schools than ever before to ensure the regular attendance of children in their school. There is a legal requirement for schools to set targets for improving school attendance.

This policy sets out the principles and guidelines by which we seek to raise attendance, improve punctuality, to raise levels of achievement and to maximise opportunities both in school and in later life.

## **1.2 WHY REGULAR ATTENDANCE IS SO IMPORTANT**

Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any pupil's absence disrupts teaching routines so may affect the learning of others in the same class. Ensuring every child's regular attendance at school is the parent's/carer's responsibility and permitting absence from school without good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

The minimum expected attendance of a pupil in school is 96%. We expect all parents and pupils to work to this minimum standard. We will inform parent's by letter if a child's attendance is not meeting this expected standard. We will continue to monitor for a further 4 weeks and will invite parent's in to discuss if an improvement is not seen.

Attendance for the year

- 100% - no days absent
- 98% - 4 days absent
- 96% (minimum attendance level)- 8 days absent
- 90% - 19 days absent

## **2.0 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

**2.1 PROMOTING REGULAR ATTENDANCE** and helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility – parents, pupils and all members of school staff.

### **To help us all to focus on this we will:**

- Give parents details on attendance in our regular newsletters.
- Inform parent/carer's if we are concerned children's attendance is falling below the nationally expected 96%.
- Report to parent/carer's yearly on their child's attendance and punctuality.
- Monitor whole school attendance continuously.
- Celebrate and reward good attendance through a mix of displays and rewards for top attendance.
- Meet our Attendance Pupil Support Officer bi weekly to discuss attendance trends and refer Persistent Absentees.

## **3.0 UNDERSTANDING TYPES OF ABSENCE**

**3.1** Every half day absence from school is classified by the school (not by the parents) as either **AUTHORISED** or **UNAUTHORISED**. This is why information about the cause of absence is always required, preferably in writing.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason like illness, (please note we may require medical proof of illness) medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time (all routine medical and dental appointments should be made outside school hours) emergencies or other unavoidable cause. Absences for religious observance may also be authorised.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been given. This type of absence can lead to the Authority using sanctions and/or legal proceedings. This includes:

- Parents/carer's keeping children off school unnecessarily.
- Truancy before or during the school day.
- Absences which have never been properly explained.
- Shopping, looking after other children or birthdays.
- Day trips and holidays in term time which have not been agreed.
- Keeping children at home due to bad weather.
- Keeping children at home with a sniffle.

### **3.2 PERSISTENT ABSENTEEISM (PA)**

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when their attendance drops below 90% across the academic year **for whatever reason**. A fixed penalty notice to parents whose children become PA pupils will always be seriously considered. If this is not paid parents will then have a criminal record.

Missing 10% of school over an academic year is equivalent to nearly 4 weeks of missed education. During their time in primary school this means 27 weeks of missed education which is equivalent to missing 70% of a whole year at school. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we need parents/carer's fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

We monitor all absence thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority and parents/carer's will be informed of this immediately.

PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully through our pastoral system. All our PA pupils and their parents are subject to an Action Plan and the plan may include: allocation of additional support through a Mentor, individual incentive programmes and participation in group activities around raising attendance. All PA cases are automatically made known to the Local Authority Attendance and Pupil Support Service.

### **4.0 ABSENCE PROCEDURES**

#### **4.1 If a child is absent parents/carer's must:**

- Contact school as soon as possible on the first day of absence via the school app or phone call. Medical evidence may be required if a child is absent through illness;
- If possible send a note in on the first day they return with an explanation of the absence – parents/carers should endeavour to do this even if they have already telephoned us;
- Or parents/carers can call into school and report to reception, they may arrange for a member of staff to speak with them if appropriate.

#### **4.2 If a child is absent school will:**

- Follow the LA / West Yorkshire Police first day calling protocols (see sections 9 &10)
- Contact parents/carer's by phone or text/app message on the first day of absence if we have not heard from them.
- The primary carer will be contacted by the office, if there is no response this will be passed on to the safeguarding team.
- A member of the safeguarding team will ring down the contact list until a reply is received. A text message may also be sent if they are currently working with the family.
- If no reply the Headteacher/Safeguarding team will risk assess the current level of concern and a home visit will be made by staff.

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- If contact is still not made school will contact the Police either online or via 101 to initiate a "safe and well" check.

### **We may also:**

- Invite parents/carers in to school to discuss the situation with our Attendance Worker/Attendance and Pupil Support Officer and/or member of the Senior Leadership Team /Headteacher if absences persist.
- Refer the matter to the Local Authority Attendance and Pupil Support Service Officer; if attendance falls below 90%.

## **TELEPHONE NUMBERS**

There are times when we need to contact parents/carer's about lots of things, including absence, so we need to have contact numbers at all times. There will be regular reminders on newsletters and social media about providing school with correct telephone numbers throughout the year.

At each parents' evening parents will be given a copy of their current contact details and asked to check and update the information held.

## **5.0 LATENESS**

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If a child misses the start of the day they can miss work and do not spend time with their class teacher, getting vital information and news for the day. Late arriving pupils also disrupt lessons; it can be embarrassing for the child and can also encourage absence.

- Children will receive a late mark if they are not in class by the end of registration.

If a child has a persistent late record parents/carer's will be asked to meet a member of staff to resolve the problem, but parents/carer's can approach us at any time if they are having problems getting children to school on time.

## **6.0 OTHER ABSENCES IN TERM TIME**

Taking extended absences in term time will affect a child's schooling as much as any other absence and we expect parents to help us by not taking children away in term time. There is **no** automatic entitlement in law to time off in school time.

The law states that an absence may be granted under exceptional circumstances but this is always at the head teacher's discretion.

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Parents/carers wishing to take their child out of school during term time must complete the **Leave of Absence Request Form** and return to the Headteacher **before** booking. The form is available from the school office.

At Oak CE Primary, absence will not be automatically granted, this means the absence would be class as 'unauthorised.'

Parents/carers must understand that by taking children out of school they are making a choice to miss out on part of their child's education.

If parents/carers take their child out of school and the leave has not been authorised by the Headteacher they may be fined £60.00 if paid within 28 days, rising to £120.00 if paid within 42 days. This is per parent and per child. Alternatively, the Local Authority may take legal action against you for the non-attendance of your child where the maximum penalty for an offence is £2500.

### **7.0 ATTENDANCE AND PUPIL SUPPORT SERVICE**

Parents are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any problem together. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, the school may refer the child to the Attendance and Pupil Support Officer from the Local Authority. He/She will also try to resolve the situation by agreement but, if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed and unauthorised absences persist, these officers can use sanctions such as Penalty Notices or prosecutions in the Magistrates Court. Full details of the options open to enforce attendance at school are available from the school or the Local Authority. Alternatively, parents/carers or children may wish to contact the APS themselves to ask for help or information. They are independent of the school and will give impartial advice. Their telephone number is available from the school office or by contacting the Local Education Authority.

### **8.0 SUMMARY**

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents and to promote attendance. Equally parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend regularly. All school staff are committed to working in partnership with parents, children and families to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible.

## **9.0 KIRKLEE FIRST DAY CALLING PROCEDURES / RATIONALE**

### **Emergency Contact and First-day Calling Procedures**

There have been three recent cases, which highlight the need for more robust emergency contacts and first-day calling procedures. These cases emphasise that these procedures are not only important for children who the school may consider 'Vulnerable' but actually important for all children as their absence in itself may be indicative that they have become vulnerable. The cases are summarised below for context:

- A mum died from an epileptic fit while bathing her children age 3 and 4. The next morning the school phoned home immediately after checking registers, no answer and so continued ringing through the contact list until they had an answer. A family member straight to the house and found mum had died, but the children were safe.
- A dad died from natural causes, Mum was working away from home, and the children were 2 and 4. In the morning Mum rang dad, no answer, but assumed he was doing the school run and continued with her working day. The school noted the absence of the 4 year old. They started first day calling 2 hours after registration and rang dad only, leaving a message. They did not ring anyone else on the contact list. They repeated the call to Dad at 3.40. Mum rang home at the end of her working day and now worried rang another school mum. Grandmother went to the home and could not gain access because of a key in the lock inside. The police gained entry at 8pm; the children had been alone with their deceased Dad all day.
- A mum died. School made a call to her when the child was not at school; the contact list was not used. No further calls were made. A letter was sent to the parent 3 days later. Eventually the house was entered 5 days later. The child, age 6 or 7 had also died. The child was non-verbal and had SEN.

As a result of these concerns please find below an example Emergency Contact form which asks for key information that may have been useful in the above and other circumstances, and also the recommended First-Day Calling Procedure.

It is expected that schools will review their current procedures and adopt these recommendations where appropriate. This is an example form that does not need to be used in its entirety if recommendations can be added into current forms/templates.

It is imperative that schools also consider what arrangements have been made when children have been placed in Alternative Provision around Emergency Contacts and First-Day Calling Procedures. In the context of a child being absent without contact from parent, please consider the following:

- Who is responsible for following up an absent child?
- Are the Emergency Contacts shared – when/how?
- Would the same first-day calling procedure be followed and by whom?
- Does the school accurately record the attendance of children in Alternative Provision?

### **First-Day Calling Procedure**

**Primary Schools**

- 1) Class registers completed and saved
- 2) Late children checked against registers if recorded separately
- 3) Absence calls listened to/attendance emails checked
- 4) First day text sent to first name on contact list within half an hour of school start time asking for response
- 5) If no response to text call first name on contact list within 45 minutes of school start time
- 6) Ring down contact list until reply is received, ensuring where possible that someone from outside of the family home has been contacted
- 7) If no reply send second text and email to first and second contacts on list
- 8) Alert HT/DSL that this child is absent and no contact has been made within an hour of school start time
- 9) HT/DSL to risk assess the current level of concern and consider whether circumstances warrant a home visit
- 10) Home visit to be made following decision at 9, where possible by school staff or any other agency involved with the child
- 11) Contact Police to initiate a "safe and well" check if all other stages have been completed and there is still no contact regarding the absent child. This should be done using the 101 number.

**COPY OF WEST YORKSHIRE POLICE TRUANCY LETTER**



Headquarters  
PO Box 9  
Laburnum Road  
Wakefield  
West Yorkshire  
WF1 3QP

Email: [coffice@westyorkshire.pnn.police.uk](mailto:coffice@westyorkshire.pnn.police.uk)

**DATE**

**ADDRESS**

Dear

On a regular basis, West Yorkshire Police (WYP) review their policies and operating procedures in key areas of work. As a result of some work on missing people, I am contacting you to inform you of some impending changes to our deployment practices that may have an impact on how we respond to some categories of incidents reported from schools.

West Yorkshire Police will always respond and take action where a child is considered to be vulnerable to exploitation, victimisation or harm. If there is any suspicion that a child is at risk of harm due to their absence then this should always be reported to police. However in order to better respond to these cases there is a need to differentiate them with cases where a child is absent from education but not at significant risk.

During 2018, WYP responded to 1149 missing person incidents from schools, of which 733 were reports of truants; we attended 438 of these. Many of these were young people who had left school without permission or failed to attend and WYP were asked to conduct checks on the schools behalf at the young person's home address. A consequence of this may be that our response to other pressing matters including other vulnerable missing young people where there is an immediate and real risk of significant harm, are delayed.

Dept of Education Guidance 2019 states:

“Where school staff have concerns about a child, they should use their professional judgement and knowledge of the individual pupil to inform their decision as to whether welfare concerns should be escalated.”

College of Policing Authorise Professional Practice (APP) Missing People states:

*‘The police are entitled to expect parents and carers, including staff acting in a parenting role in care homes, to accept normal parenting responsibilities and undertake reasonable actions to try and establish the whereabouts of the individual.’*

*‘Truancing is not normally something that should be dealt with as a missing person investigation.’*

The changes are part of our efforts to focus on responding to the most vulnerable people. Reported truants will still be identified by School Liaison Officers to conduct longer term partnership working opportunities but will not be deployed to unless specific criteria exists.

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From 1<sup>st</sup> February 2020 West Yorkshire Police will adopt the following approach:

*Where a person is reported to have left school premises without the permission of staff at that location, or failed to attend at school as planned, they will not be recorded as a missing person or require a police deployment unless either a) or b) applies:*

- a) It is considered that there is an **immediate and real risk** that the child will suffer **significant harm** or **cause significant harm to another person** if they are not found.*
- b) Where there is an agreement in place between the school and the police that the young person should be treated as missing immediately in all circumstances.*

*An immediate and real risk is one that is present at that time and not a risk which may arise at some point in the future.*

*The risk is not just of any harm. It must be of significant harm. Examples of significant harm could be from violence, sexual offending or self-harm.*

We will of course review our position if further information becomes available that will affect the understanding of the risk posed. All other incidents will be recorded and closed as 'truant' but no police action will be taken and the call handler will make it clear that WYP intend to take no action unless the situation changes.

We believe that the change to deployment policy will be in the best interest of safeguarding in West Yorkshire. It will free up capacity to concentrate on those individuals who are genuinely at the greatest risk of harm.

If you have information that is non-urgent about any vulnerable persons or intelligence as to children who may be at risk of any kind of exploitation, that can be fed through the West Yorkshire Police Partnership Intelligence Portal (PIP). By submitting information this way, it will ensure it is assessed and actioned to the most appropriate department who will be able to progress enquiries. Should you be unclear as to how to login or submit information via the PIP, then please contact your local point of contact who will be able to assist with all queries (the list of these contacts are attached to this letter).

For your information attached is some guidance we have prepared for schools in order to assist your risk assessments of individuals and set our expectations of the basic enquiries that should be completed before a young person is reported missing if not deemed to be a truant. We accept you will be aware of and doing a lot of this already.

Our aim is, as always, to work in partnership to better understand and mitigate the risks that our respective areas of work present. Our local neighbourhood teams, school liaison officers and missing from home co-ordinators will continue to work with your schools to protect vulnerable young people from harm.

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Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

Yours sincerely

### PROPOSED DEPLOYMENT POLICY

Children who are absent from school are not necessarily always missing people who require police intervention. In most cases the child or young person will return to home or school within a short period of time or can easily be located with some basic enquiries.

It is recommended that the following be adopted as a deployment protocol by West Yorkshire Police:

Where a person is reported to have left school premises without the permission of staff at that location, or failed to attend at school as planned, they will not be recorded as a missing person or require a police deployment unless either a) or b) applies:

- a) It is considered that there is an **immediate and real risk** that the child will suffer **significant harm** or **cause significant harm to another person** if they are not found.
- b) Where there is an agreement in place between the school and the police that the young person should be treated as missing immediately in all circumstances.

An immediate and real risk is one that is present at that time and not a risk which may arise at some point in the future. The risk is not just of any harm. It must be of significant harm. Examples of significant harm could be from violence, sexual offending or self harm.

- *Whilst the police have a legal duty to act when there is an immediate, real and substantial risk that the child will suffer serious harm, the decision has been made that the force will also deploy where there is an immediate and real risk that the child will suffer significant harm which brings this policy in line with the Police's public duty (police core functions) and is in line with the national direction of missing people statutory guidance. Following feedback it was also felt that the removal of the word substantial from the policy wording was necessary to reduce the risk of the threshold being artificially raised by officers and therefore increasing the risk of harm to young people.*

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### **The risk can arise in any way:**

The risk can arise due to risk posed to the young person by others, or a risk they pose to themselves such as self-harm or suicide.

When assessing risk account should be taken of all the circumstances. Those circumstances may include the young person's age, any other vulnerabilities or disabilities, their mental health.

Where concerns about the young person relate more to their long term behaviour, care or home environment it is unlikely that an 'immediate and real risk' will arise.

The information that establishes the risk may come from any source. Sources may include school staff, parents, police information.

Where school staff notify the police of a person having left or failed to attend school premises, they should be asked whether there is an **immediate and real risk** that the child will suffer **significant harm** and/or cause significant harm to any other person if they are not found. If school staff state there is such a risk:

- i) The staff member should be asked to clarify the nature of that risk and detail why it is thought to exist;
- ii) The call handler should record the staff member's comments on the Storm log;
- iii) If the caller believes that there is an immediate and real risk but the call taker does not deem there to be;
- iv) The reporting person should be told that no deployment will occur at this time until an Inspector has confirmed the risk, has agreed to deploy and the school has been re-contacted;
- v) The staff member should be asked to supply any contact details and any other information in their possession that may help in locating the person;
- vi) The Storm log should be passed to the District Inspector for review.
- vii) If the Inspector agrees that there is an immediate and real risk, the school should be re-contacted and informed that the police will deploy.
- viii) If the Inspector does not agree that there is an immediate and real risk;
  - the Inspector should contact the reporting person to discuss the risks and try to find agreement on the risk level.
  - if no agreement on the risk level can be reached, the inspector will have the final decision on police deployment and must ensure the school is aware of his/her decision."

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The Inspector must record the rationale for his/ her decision on the Storm log using the National Decision Model. In making this assessment all available information should be considered, including a thorough check of West Yorkshire Police systems.

### **PARTNERSHIP EXPECTATIONS**

#### **Reporting and Investigation**

Some Districts have arranged local protocols with schools to improve the quality of reporting of concern and missing person's incidents.

In order to be assured that a missing person is reported only in circumstances where a police response is required, the school should take steps to establish the level of risk and therefore the level of intervention by determining the following:

#### **Risk Assessments**

- a) The nature and reasons for absence (consider recent events or precipitating factors)
- b) Ascertaining the likely intentions of the young person
- c) Establishing the likely whereabouts and well-being of the young person

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- d) Has the young person gone absent before and if so what is the pattern of their previous absent behaviour? Consider where and when young persons have been found and their accounts regarding their absence.
- e) The potential risk factors relating to the absence incident; are they:
  - 1. Likely to visit a known abuser?
  - 2. At risk of child sexual exploitation?
  - 3. Likely to take drugs or alcohol?
  - 4. Vulnerable in any other ways (self harm, criminal exploitation, county lines etc)

Schools should consider pre-preparing risk assessments for those young persons that are frequently absent from school, or those young persons that are deemed at risk should they absent themselves:

- 1. How likely is it that the young person will go missing:
  - a) What factors or potential incidents may act as a trigger incident and lead to the young person going absent?
  - b) Are there any other circumstances, behaviour or indicators that suggest that the young person may go absent in the future?
- 2. What action ought to be taken if the young person goes absent:
  - a) Determine if the young person should be reported as a missing person
  - b) Take initial actions to locate the young person
  - c) Carry out any other reasonable enquiries to determine risk or young person's location.
  - d) Schools should ensure that they have up to date photographs of their students, and are able to pass them to police (preferably electronically) in the event that they are reported as a missing person.

### **Prior to contacting the Police**

When a young person appears to have gone missing from school and there are no immediate concerns as listed above, **the school should take all reasonable and practical steps before** contacting the police unless the risk is so high that any delay will impact upon the immediate safety of the young person these include:

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- a) contacting parent(s)/guardian(s) to update them as to the young person being absent from school and to enquire about possible triggers for the absence
- b) searching the schools premises, grounds and immediate locality of the school
- c) telephoning and sending an SMS (text) message to the young person's mobile phone and checking their open source social media accounts if these are accessible
- d) making enquiries with the young person's friends
- e) attending at the young person's home address

In addition to the above enquiries, the following should be completed by schools prior to contacting the police **if practicable**:

- f) checking the places frequented by the young person (e.g. local parks, shop fronts)
- g) attending at addresses frequented by the young person (e.g. nearby relatives/friends addresses)
- h) making enquiries with the young person's relatives
- i) making enquiries with the young person's providers of education (if outside school) or work placement, community groups or places of worship if appropriate
- j) contacting professionals who support the young person or their family (e.g. social workers, families first workers) for further information.

If the whereabouts of the young person are known, or believed to be known, the school should only request police assistance to recover the young person if:

- a) the school is being prevented from obtaining access to the young person
- b) there is evidence to suggest that the young person is at immediate risk of serious harm
- c) police assistance is necessary to prevent a breach of the peace due to a threat of violence or disorder.

### **Initial Reporting to Police**

The school, wherever possible, should complete the above risk assessment prior to police attendance. Should a young person be regularly missing then those details that are not likely to change (name, date of birth, address, family contacts etc) should be completed in advance and saved electronically as a template to be passed to police.

Police will require:

- a) All information required to complete the Initial Reporting Form including the risk assessment. This includes personal details, family and friends contact details, time, date and location of last sighting, recent behaviour and any specific, identifiable risks including any risk of sexual exploitation
- b) Details of all enquiries to locate the young person conducted so far
- c) Any information relating to the location of the missing person
- d) A current photograph of the missing person with consent of the Parent/Guardian to share on social media to try and locate the young person
- e) Consent from Parent/Guardian to share information to assist in locating the young person

### **Responsibilities during the absence**

The Police will investigate all cases falling within the definition of missing in accordance with the Police Missing Persons Policy and National Guidance. Where appropriate the school will be expected to assist in finding the young person and to work co-operatively with police during any enquiry.

Following any report of a missing person to police, the school should inform and update parent(s)/guardian(s) and other appropriate agencies. If the incident is logged as a truant and the caller has been advised that the police will not be deploying then the caller should advise the parent(s)/guardian(s) of this when notifying them of the young person's absence.

The school should make a record of all actions taken throughout the period a young person is recorded as missing in relation to their welfare, and fully update police on those actions at the appropriate time.

On the young person's return and once debriefed, schools should review the risk assessment regarding the young person going missing in future, and should consider measures to prevent it from re-occurring. Identified threats and risks should be discussed with the young person's parents/carers/guardian and consideration should be given to a multi-agency strategy meeting regarding the young person if appropriate.

### **Police Intelligence Portal Information**

To Request Access to the West Yorkshire Police Partnership Intelligence Portal go to this email address:

<https://www.westyorkshire.police.uk/form/intelligence-portal-request-form>

#### **West Yorkshire Police PIP points of Contact**

##### **Bradford**

**PS Matt Catlow**

[Matthew.Catlow@westyorkshire.pnn.police.uk](mailto:Matthew.Catlow@westyorkshire.pnn.police.uk)

##### **Wakefield**

**DI Jo Loftus**

[Jo.Loftus@westyorkshire.pnn.police.uk](mailto:Jo.Loftus@westyorkshire.pnn.police.uk)

##### **Calderdale**

**DS Matt Dalton**

[matthew.dalton@westyorkshire.pnn.police.uk](mailto:matthew.dalton@westyorkshire.pnn.police.uk)

##### **Kirklees**

**DI Mark Catney**

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##### **Leeds**

**DS David Parkin**

[david.parkin1@westyorkshire.pnn.police.uk](mailto:david.parkin1@westyorkshire.pnn.police.uk)

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*Please note that these contacts are for issues with the PIP and should not be used as an alternative means of reporting matters to West Yorkshire Police.*