

Whickham School



Attendance Policy



Attendance Policy

Principles

High levels of attendance are essential for pupils to fulfil their potential at school. The staff and governors of Whickham School fully recognise their responsibility to ensure pupils are in school and on time therefore having access to learning for the maximum number of days and hours. Every lesson counts. Therefore we have set every single pupil a minimum attendance expectation of 98%

Children who miss school frequently will undoubtedly have gaps in their learning and this can impede their achievement and ability to engage in lessons.

Our policy applies to all children and young people registered at this school and is shared with parents/carers on admission to the school.

In law compulsory school age applies to all children from the start of term commencing on or after the child's 5th birthday, until the last Friday in June during the academic year that the young person becomes 16.

Parents/carers who allow their child to be absent from school without a valid reason are committing an offence. The governors and staff of Whickham School work with parents, other professionals and agencies to ensure pupils are encouraged and supported to maintain high levels of attendance - at least 98%.

Mrs Maher, Deputy Headteacher is responsible for pupil attendance at Whickham School.

Mrs Tilllett-Hayes, the School Attendance Officer is responsible for monitoring the attendance of the whole school and for ensuring that appropriate interventions are applied to ensure high levels of attendance. The attendance officer is supported in her work by a Pastoral Support Officer and the Pastoral Leaders. Pastoral Leaders are responsible for the monitoring of their year group's attendance and for ensuring that appropriate interventions are applied to ensure high levels of attendance. The Assistant Headteacher Behaviour & Attitudes will monitor and support the Attendance Officer & Pastoral Leaders in attendance monitoring and intervention.

Aims and Objectives

To maintain high levels of attendance Whickham School has the following aims:

- To promote awareness of attendance and punctuality issues among all staff, parents and pupils
- To ensure that parents have an understanding of the responsibility placed on them for making sure their child attends at least 98% of the time and ensuring their child is punctual by setting out their obligation upon admission to the school and in the home school agreement
- To equip young people with the skills needed to take responsibility for school attendance and punctuality appropriate to their age and development
- To develop procedures for identifying , reporting and implementing positive intervention in cases of poor attendance and lateness
- To support pupils who have been experiencing any difficulties at home or at school which are preventing good attendance
- To establish a safe environment which demonstrates that every child matters

This policy ensures that all staff, parents and pupils are fully aware of the school's procedures to promote and maintain high levels of attendance.

Policy

Whickham School will undertake to follow the procedures set out in this policy below in accordance with our five stage Attendance Matters strategy (Fig 1):

- To maintain appropriate registration processes
- To maintain appropriate attendance data
- To communicate clearly the attendance procedure and expectations of the school to all staff, parents and pupils
- To have consistent and systematic daily records which give detail of any absence and lateness
- To follow up all absences and lateness if parents have not communicated with the school on the first day
- To discuss with parents what constitutes authorised and unauthorised absence (only the school can authorise absences, not parents)
- To strongly discourage unnecessary absence through holidays taken in term time
- To work with parents to improve attendance and punctuality
- To refer to Local Authority any pupil whose family fails to respond to school initiatives to improve attendance
- To report attendance statistics to the DfE and Local Authority as required
- To call parents to offer support and strategies for a return to school in accordance with Whickham Schools five stage attendance procedure
- To carry out home visits where no contact can be made, to ensure safeguarding of pupils

The Governing Body understands and will fulfil its responsibilities and will appoint nominated governor(s) or panel of governors for attendance issues.

All staff should be aware that they must report attendance or punctuality concerns to the Attendance Officer or relevant Pastoral Leader.

If a pupil who is subject to a Child Protection Plan is absent without explanation the school will notify the relevant social worker.

If a pupil who is in Local Authority Care (LAC) has attendance/punctuality issues then the carer and social worker will be involved.

If the absence for a LAC is not explained then police will be informed.

Registration

- Pupils must be in school by the first bell at 8.35am
- 8.55-9.00am tutors ensure that morning registration is completed by 9.00am.
- Periods 1,2,3,4 & 5 Class teacher responsible to ensure that class registers are taken.
- If electronic systems are not working, a tutor/class teacher to ensure a paper register is forwarded to the main office.
- Registers are “closed” for the morning session at the end of period 1.
- The school gates close at 8.35am.
- Any pupil arriving late, after the gates are closed should sign in outside the 6th form building giving explanation for lateness to the Attendance Officer.
- The school operates “ A First Day Response System” which means that parents are contacted on the first morning of an unreported absence.
- Parents/carers should always provide pupils with a note or telephone school to explain reasons for lateness. This is recorded by the Attendance Officer who is on Late Gate duty.
- Absence notes and medical evidence/information should be delivered directly to Pastoral Leaders / Attendance Officer.
- The Attendance Officer is responsible for monitoring lateness and sanctions for lateness (see appendix).

Absence

- If a pupil is to be absent parents / carers are requested to inform the school by telephone **every day** that their child is absent.
- When the pupil returns to school they should have a dated and signed note, blank ones are available in the pupil planner from the parent/carer indicating the reason for absence (even if a telephone call has been made) and including any required medical evidence.

Punctuality

At Whickham School and Sports College we believe in the principles that every lesson counts and that punctuality for school is a key requirement for good learning and preparation

for adult life. Parents/Carers are responsible for ensuring that their children attend regularly and punctually. Poor punctuality leads to missed learning opportunities and can have a seriously negative impact on a pupil's academic performance and future professional prospects. Pupils arriving after morning registers close during period 1 without a valid reason may lose a session mark which will impact on their attendance.

- It is the responsibility of all teachers to maintain accurate registers and record pupil lateness
- Pastoral Leaders monitor lateness in their year group and together with the Attendance Officer apply appropriate rewards and sanctions
- Where a pupil is late 3 or more times in an academic week, a 30 minute Friday after school detention will be necessary.
- Persistent lateness will impact attendance and can lead to formal proceedings being taken by the LA.

Requests for Leave of Absence during School Time

Parents are strongly advised not to take holidays/leave of absence during term time. The Government's guidance states that only under **exceptional circumstances** may the school consider giving permission for a child to be absent from school.

Requests for leave of absence (Fig 1) must be submitted to the Attendance Officer at least four weeks before the intended leave of absence. Requests for leave of absence will be considered by the Deputy Headteacher.

Where leave of absence is taken without a request or authorisation, the school may refer to the Local Authority Legal Intervention Team. Parents/carers who take excessive holidays/leave of absence in term time may be fined and ultimately prosecuted by the Local Authority.

If a parent/carers needs to discuss an attendance issue they should contact the Pastoral Leader or School Attendance Officer

School Strategies to Support and Reward High Levels of Attendance

- Whickham School & Sports College has an expectation that all pupils will have an attendance of at least 98% but will aim to have 100% attendance
- Whickham School & Sports College has a designated School Attendance Officer to support high levels of pupil attendance
- The Deputy Headteacher and School Attendance Officer produce annual Attendance / PA Action Plan to address specific attendance issues in the school
- First Day Response System promotes safeguarding and emphasises parent responsibility to inform school of all absence
- Pastoral Leaders & Attendance Officer receive daily information on lateness and are responsible for ensuring that appropriate interventions are applied to ensure high levels of attendance and excellent punctuality.
- Assistant Head Teacher, Pastoral Leaders and tutors will receive weekly reports of pupil attendance
- Pupil attendance is recorded on Module and annual school reports

Pastoral Leaders/School Attendance Officer Attendance Monitoring, Intervention & Support

- Pastoral Leaders and School Attendance Officer hold weekly meetings to monitor attendance and implement interventions fortnightly
- These meetings have a specific focus on pupils with less than 98% attendance and pupils classified as PA (Persistent Absence) which is less than 90% attendance.
- The Achievement & Intervention Team may be used to support pupils with attendance concerns to address lost learning
- The Nurture Unit within the Library or Behaviour and Inclusion Support may be used to support pupils with attendance issues
- The Peer Support Day during year 6 transition supports year 6 pupils with identified attendance issues
- 98-100% attendance is recognised by the Attendance Officer, Pastoral Leaders and School rewards system
- Attendance is recorded on Modular reports and forms part of school's academic mentoring
- Attendance Codes are analysed on daily basis
- Incidents of truancy are treated seriously, parents contacted and appropriate sanctions applied

- The Governors' Behaviour and Attendance Sub-committee will meet with pupils and their family to support School Attendance Officer / Pastoral Leaders and the Deputy Headteacher for Pastoral Care where the normal range of strategies have not significantly improved attendance (see Fig 2)
- Where all the above strategies fail to bring a significant improvement in attendance the school has a duty to refer the case to the Local Authority's Legal Intervention Team resulting in a possible referral to the Magistrate's Court for legal proceedings and fines.

The school recognises that there will be times when it is not possible to attend school. On these occasions, the school works closely with outside agencies such as Home & Hospital Tutor Service and e-learning platforms to ensure that a pupil's education is disrupted as little as possible.

The school's Library and Behaviour and Inclusion Support may provide support for pupils who have long-term attendance problems and, when necessary, Pastoral Leaders, Achievement and Intervention Co-ordinators or the School Attendance Officer will visit pupils in their own home.

Conclusion

Good attendance is a prerequisite for a successful school career and a key preparation for adult life. The school will work in partnership with parents in assisting them to make sure their children attend school regularly and punctually. Advising the school at the earliest possible stage of any attendance issue will avoid attendance problems later on.

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures and to promote attendance. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure their children attend school.

Related Policies

It is expected that all school policies encourage pupils to attend school. Of particular importance are:

- a) Anti-bullying Policy
- b) Child Protection Policy

- c) Citizenship for Life Policy
- d) Equal opportunities Policy
- e) Curriculum Policy
- f) Learning Support Policy

The Law

Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 states that it is the parents/carers responsibility to ensure their child attends school regularly and punctually. Failure to do so is an offence punishable by law.

The school has a duty to ensure that all parents/carers fulfil this responsibility.

You may be issued with a Penalty Notice or prosecuted in the Magistrates Court if your child is not attending school both regularly and punctually.

Penalty Notices

Penalty Notices were introduced by the Anti-Social Behaviour Act (2003) as an alternative to prosecution in court.

A Penalty Notice may be issued if:

- A parent/carer fails to ensure their child's regular and punctual school attendance.
- A child is taken on holiday during term time without authorisation from the Head Teacher
- A child is persistently late for school after the register has closed.
- A child is in a public place during the first five days of an exclusion from school

How much is a Penalty Notice?

- £60 per parent -if payment is within 21 days
- £120-per parent if payment is within 28 days

Failure to pay a Penalty notice will result in the Legal Intervention Team commencing

proceedings in the Magistrates Court for the original offence of failing to ensure a child's regular attendance at school.

Magistrates Court

Prosecution in the Magistrates court can result in a fine up to £2500 and / or a parenting Order or a community sentence for each parent/carer.

Fig 1

Whickham School Request for Leave of Absence during Term Time

High levels of pupil attendance are a significant factor in the academic success of pupils at Whickham School. In line with Government guidance, holiday leave of absence will only be granted **under exceptional circumstances**.

NAME OF PUPIL:	TUTOR GROUP:
Name of Parent / Carer:	

Contact Telephone No:	
First Date of Absence:	Last Day of Absence:
Number of days of absence from school:	
Reason for request for leave of absence during school term time:	
Signature of parent / carer:	Date:
Having considered the request for leave of absence the decision is:	
Approved - The absence will be recorded as authorised	Not approved - The absence will be recorded as unauthorised
Explanatory notes:	
Signed Attendance Officer:	Date:

Please remember that unauthorised attendance below 98% may lead to legal proceedings

Fig 2

ATTENDANCE MATTERS

Our strategy to ensure attendance expectations are met fall into five stages.

Whilst we will always include cumulative attendance percentages on all correspondence with parents/carers, our strategy is based on the number of days of absence in relation to the maximum achievable attendance in an academic year.

ATTENDANCE	LOST LEARNING	OUTCOME/INTERVENTION
100%	Nothing missed Everything gained	Every chance of outstanding success
99.5%	1 DAY 5 LESSONS WITHIN EXPECTATION	STAGE 1 WITHIN EXPECTATIONS Great chance of success You must call the attendance line to report any absences by 9AM. We understand that sometimes children are poorly but would ask you to prepare your family for the world of work where absences often go unpaid. Please try to make medical & dental appointments out of school hours. Evidence will be required for absences due to appointments.
99%	2 DAYS 10 LESSONS WITHIN EXPECTATION	
98%	4 DAYS 20 LESSONS WITHIN EXPECTATION	
97.99%	Over 4 DAYS Over 20 LESSONS BELOW EXPECTATION CATCH UP REQUIRED	STAGE 2 BELOW EXPECTATIONS A letter will be sent home to remind parents/carers of our expectations ADDITIONAL WORK WILL BE NECESSARY FOR LESSONS MISSED
95%	9.5 DAYS 45 LESSONS WORRYING, CHANCES OF FALLING BEHIND IMPACTING ON SUCCESS	STAGE 3 BELOW EXPECTATIONS We'll invite Parents/Carers into school for an informal meeting with a view to addressing any barriers to attending school. We aim to resolve issues and put attendance incentives in place.
92%	15 DAYS 70 LESSONS LESS LIKELY TO SUCCEED & HARDER TO MAKE PROGRESS	STAGE 4 SERIOUSLY BELOW EXPECTATIONS We'll invite Parents/Carers into School for a formal meeting with Senior Leadership & the Board of Governors. During this meeting, we'll establish the need for any necessary support from external agencies. PUPILS WILL BE PUT ON ATTENDANCE REPORT A FOUR WEEK REVIEW PERIOD WILL BE AGREED
90%	19 DAYS 95 LESSONS LIKELY TO HAVE A DETRIMENTAL EFFECT ON ACHIEVEMENT & LIFE CHANCES	STAGE 5 CRITICAL At this stage pupils have reached Persistent Absentee Status We'll assess the interventions put in place during previous stage & where necessary pursue LEGAL INTERVENTION Penalty Notices are a minimum of £60 per parent/carer.

*Medical evidence can include any of the following: Doctor's notes, prescriptions, Labels from prescribed medication obtained during the period of absence, appointment letters/cards, referral letters.

Sixth Form

Sixth Form Attendance Policy

Given the clear link between attendance and attainment a high level of attendance in the Sixth Form is incredibly important. All Sixth Form pupils are set a minimum expected attendance target of 98%.

Pupils

Pupils are expected to attend all lessons punctually. Pupils must also attend both am and pm registration daily. In addition to timetabled lessons pupils will also have flexible study time on their timetable. Pupils are not required to remain on site during study time unless specifically timetabled to be with a member of staff at this time.

Pupils should make every effort to make medical/dental appointments out of school hours.

Parents/Carers

We encourage parents to take an active interest in ensuring pupils attend school regularly and punctually. Parents will be informed of attendance figures on interim and full reports and will be alerted whenever problems arise.

Parents/carers should phone the sixth form reception if the pupil is ill, leaving a message for their Pastoral Leader

Leave of Absence

We strongly discourage pupils from taking leave of absence during term time as this can have a significantly detrimental affect on progress. The request must be made in writing to their Pastoral Leader in advance and a written response from the school will follow. Leave of absence requests will only be authorised in exceptional circumstances.

Pupils whose total period of absence extends beyond four weeks without a satisfactory reason being given risk being removed from the school roll.

Attendance Monitoring & Intervention Strategies

Attendance is monitored in the first instance by the relevant Pastoral Leader and Attendance Officer. Due to the nature of the sixth form, attendance is monitored on a lesson by lesson basis. Lesson absences will trigger a text from the Sixth Form Administrator to a pupil's parent/carers on the day of absence. Absences are followed up routinely with the pupil by their tutor.

Our strategy to ensure attendance expectations are met fall into five stages. Whilst we will always include cumulative attendance percentages on all correspondence with parents/carers, our strategy is based on the **number of days of absence** in relation to the **maximum achievable attendance** in an academic year.

ATTENDANCE MATTERS POLICY

Stage 1

98%-100% Attendance

Excellent

attendance with every chance of success.

Stage 2

Below 98% Attendance

More than 4 days of absence. A letter will be sent home to remind parent/carer of our expectations

Stage 3

Below 95% Attendance

More than 9 days of absence. We'll invite Parents/Carers into school for an informal meeting with a view to addressing any barriers to attending school. We aim to resolve issues and put attendance incentives in place.

Stage 4

Below 90% Attendance - Persistent Absence

More than 15 days of absence. We'll invite Parents/Carers into School for a formal meeting with the Attendance Officer, Senior Leadership Team and School Governors. During this meeting, we'll establish the need for any necessary support from external agencies. Pupils will be put on an Attendance Report and a 4 week review period will be agreed. An attendance contract must be signed by pupils and parents.

Stage 5

Where attendance continues to decline

If a pupil has not improved their attendance sufficiently through strategies employed in stages 2-4, they will be asked to consider whether they feel that they should continue with their studies at Whickham School.

It's important to note that Year 12 pupils with significant attendance concerns may not be able to progress into Year 13.

Approved by:	Mrs S Maher
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