



# WHICKHAM SCHOOL

## Attendance Policy

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# 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 5<sup>th</sup> 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 Hall, the School Senior Pastoral Leader is responsible for monitoring the attendance of the whole school and for ensuring that appropriate interventions are applied to ensure high levels of attendance. Mrs Hall is supported in her work by an Attendance Coordinator, two Family Support Workers 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 Associate Deputy Headteacher Behaviour & Attitudes will monitor and support the Attendance Team & 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 coordinator 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 6<sup>th</sup> form building giving explanation for lateness to the Attendance coordinator .
- 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 coordinator who is on Late Gate duty.
- Absence notes and medical evidence/information should be delivered directly to Pastoral Leaders / Attendance coordinator .
- The Attendance coordinator 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. Parents / carers can report their child's absence online, using the Classcharts App.
- When the pupil returns to school parents / carer should, where possible, provide any required medical evidence to support their absence.

## 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 coordinator apply appropriate rewards and sanctions
- Where a student is late to school without good reason, they will be issued with a 20 minute same day lunchtime detention.
- Where a student is late to lessons 3 or more times in an academic week or for 15 minute or more in an academic week, a 60 minutes detention after school will be issued.
- 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 coordinator at least four weeks before the intended leave of absence. Requests for leave of absence will be considered by the Deputy Headteacher. Parents /carers can submit a leave of absence request via the school website.

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 Coordinator

## **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 Team to support high levels of pupil attendance
- The Deputy Headteacher and Senior Pastoral Leader for attendance produce an annual Attendance 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 Team receive daily information on lateness and are responsible for ensuring that appropriate interventions are applied to ensure high levels of attendance and excellent punctuality.
- Associate Deputy Headteacher, Senior Pastoral Leaders, 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 Senior Pastoral Leaders hold weekly meetings to monitor attendance and implement interventions fortnightly
- These meetings have a specific focus on pupils with less than 98% attendance, pupils classified as PA (Persistent Absence) which is less than 90% attendance and Severely Absent pupils which is less than 50% attendance.
- The Achievement Team may be used to support pupils with attendance concerns to address lost learning
- Behaviour and Inclusion Support may be used to support pupils with attendance issues
- 98-100% attendance is recognised by the Attendance Team, 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
- Patterns of attendance are analysed, particularly last day absence at the end of half term/term. Where patterns emerge, attendance expectations are made clear to



parents/carers.

- 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 Team / Pastoral Leaders, Associate Deputy Headteacher 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, Education Inclusion Panel and other platforms to ensure that a pupil's education is disrupted as little as possible.

The school's Achievement Support room and Behaviour and Inclusion Support may provide support for pupils who have long-term attendance problems and, when necessary, Pastoral Leaders, Achievement Coordinators and Family Support Workers or the Senior staff 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) Safeguarding Policy
- c) Equality Information & Objectives Policy
- d) Special Educational Needs & Disability 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 <b>authorised</b>	Not approved - The absence will be recorded as <b>unauthorised</b>	
Explanatory notes:		
Signed Attendance Officer:		Date:

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

ATTENDANCE	LOST LEARNING	OUTCOME/INTERVENTION
<b>100%</b>	Nothing missed Everything gained	Every chance of outstanding success
<b>99.5%</b>	<b>1 DAY</b> <b>5 LESSONS</b> WITHIN EXPECTATION	<b>STAGE 1 WITHIN EXPECTATIONS</b> Great chance of success <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>You must report any absences by 9AM by calling the absence line or via ClassCharts.</li> <li>Please try to make medical &amp; dental appointments out of school hours. Evidence will be required for absences due to appointments</li> </ul>
<b>99%</b>	<b>2 DAYS</b> <b>10 LESSONS</b> WITHIN EXPECTATION	
<b>98%</b>	<b>4 DAYS</b> <b>20 LESSONS</b> WITHIN EXPECTATION	
<b>97.99%</b>	Over <b>4 DAYS</b> Over <b>20 LESSONS</b> BELOW EXPECTATION CATCH UP REQUIRED	<b>STAGE 2 BELOW EXPECTATIONS</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Letter sent home</li> <li>Additional work set for lost learning via the Achievement Team</li> <li>Return to school interview with pupil</li> <li>Pupil placed on attendance report</li> </ul>
<b>95%</b>	<b>9.5 DAYS</b> <b>45 LESSONS</b> WORRYING, CHANCES OF FALLING BEHIND IMPACTING ON SUCCESS	<b>STAGE 3 BELOW EXPECTATIONS</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Letter sent home</li> <li>Parental meeting in school led by Senior Pastoral Leader</li> <li>Attendance Support Plan (ASP) created</li> <li>Pupil placed on Senior Pastoral Leader Report</li> <li>Attendance reviewed every 3 weeks</li> </ul>
<b>92%</b>	<b>15 DAYS</b> <b>70 LESSONS</b> LESS LIKELY TO SUCCEED & HARDER TO MAKE PROGRESS	<b>STAGE 4 SERIOUSLY BELOW EXPECTATIONS</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Letter sent home</li> <li>Parental meeting with Governors</li> <li>Parenting contract put in place</li> <li>Attendance reviewed every 3 weeks by Associate Deputy Headteacher</li> </ul>
<b>90%</b>	<b>19 DAYS</b> <b>95 LESSONS</b> LIKELY TO HAVE A DETRIMENTAL EFFECT ON ACHIEVEMENT & LIFE CHANCES	<b>STAGE 5 CRITICAL</b> At this stage pupils have reached Persistent Absentee Status We'll assess the interventions put in place during previous stage & where necessary pursue <b>LEGAL INTERVENTION</b> Penalty Notices are a minimum of £60 per parent/carer.

## Policy Review

Last reviewed	By who	Next review
July 2022	S Maher	July 2023