



WHICKHAM SCHOOL

Attendance Policy

Policy Review

Last reviewed	By who	Next review during
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Rationale

High levels of attendance are essential for pupils to fulfil their potential at school. Every lesson counts. Children who miss school frequently will undoubtedly have gaps in their learning and this can impede their achievement and ability to engage in lessons. Whickham School has a duty to ensure that all parents/carers fulfil this responsibility. Some pupils find it harder than others to attend school and it is therefore vital that school, other partner organisations, pupils and parents and carers work in partnership to remove any barriers.

Regular attendance is important in safeguarding children as it enables potential risks to be identified and support to be provided. Regular absence, particularly unexplained, can be an indicator of safeguarding concerns. Research shows that there is a strong link between regular absence from school and increased risk of harm within the family, peer group or in the community. It is therefore vital that all pupils are in school regularly. It is the legal responsibility of every parent to make sure their child receives an education. Parents/carers who allow their child to be absent from school without a valid reason are breaking the law and committing an offence.

Aims of this policy

- To set out our whole school approach to achieving high levels of attendance.
- To set out how we will work with pupils, parents and carers to ensure attendance is as high as possible.
- To ensure pupils, parents/carers and staff understand the importance of strong

attendance.

- To set out how the school will monitor and analyse attendance data and use this to put appropriate support and intervention into place.
- To ensure support is in place that enables strong attendance levels for every pupil.

The relationship between attendance and achievement

Pupils who attend school regularly make significantly stronger progress in their learning and achieve stronger GCSE, A level and vocational qualifications. DfE research shows that:

- Where a pupil is persistently absent (attendance falls below 90%) their average GCSE grade falls by one whole grade compared to other pupils.
- The overall absence rate of pupils not achieving grades 9 to 4 is over twice as high as those achieving grades 9 to 5.

In short, absence from school significantly impacts upon pupil achievement. This can in turn impact negatively upon the life chances of those pupils whose absence is high.

Attendance expectations

Whickham School expects pupils to attend school each day. We aim to develop a culture where all pupils can and want to be in school enjoying and benefiting from their learning. In order to achieve this the school will do the following things:

- Create a welcoming learning environment where pupils feel safe and able to learn effectively.
- Implement an ambitious and broad curriculum that supports the development of skills and knowledge that prepare pupils for life beyond school and enables the achievement of strong qualifications.
- Regularly communicate the importance of strong attendance and reward pupils whose attendance is high or improving rapidly.
- Monitor attendance data to identify patterns of poor attendance (at individual and cohort level) so that intervention can be timely and effective.
- Listen to and understand barriers to attendance and agree solutions to overcome problems.
- Work with pupils and parents/carers to remove barriers to attendance involving external agencies where appropriate.
- Formalise support where this is needed so that families have the security of a plan that can be achieved. This will include success criteria and detail the consequences of failing to adequately support the pupil.
- Where necessary, enforce attendance through statutory intervention.

Responsibilities

Parents/carers are responsible for:

- Understanding that it is their legal responsibility to ensure their child attends school and maintains good levels of attendance. We expect each child to attend Whickham School each day it is open.
- Contacting the school if their child is unable to attend **every day** that they are unable to attend. This must be done through a telephone call or via a google form on the ClassCharts app.
- Ensuring their child is punctual each day.
- Ensuring that the school has up to date contact details for parents and carers.
- Only requesting leave of absence in exceptional circumstances and well in advance of any absence.
- Not taking holidays during term time.
- Booking any medical appointments outside of the school day where possible.
- Ensuring that any evidence, e.g. medical notes, are emailed or delivered to the Pastoral Leader.
- Proactively engaging with the school about any support that is offered to improve attendance.

Where a parent or carer needs to contact the school to discuss an attendance issue they should email <mailto:attendance@whickhamschool.org> This email account is monitored each day by the Senior Pastoral Leader.

Teachers must ensure that:

- Registers are accurately marked within the first 10 minutes of tutorial time / lessons. The correct attendance codes must be used ([Attendance Codes](#)). A paper register must be completed if electronic systems are not working.
- Lateness is recorded in SIMS and that poor punctuality is challenged in line with behavioural expectations. These are detailed in our [Behaviour Policy](#).
- Where a pupil is late and does not have an appropriate reason that can be validated, staff are expected to ensure that the lateness is recorded (in SIMS) and staff must issue an appropriate sanction. These are detailed below:
 - ❖ When a pupil is late to a lesson during period 2, 3 or 5, the member of staff should keep the pupil at the end of the lesson to make up the learning time missed.
 - ❖ When a pupil is late to period 1 or 4, the member of staff should record the lateness and refer the pupil to Room 39 to make up the missed time at lunchtime. This should be recorded in ClassCharts.

- When a pupil is missing from a lesson, but marked as present in a previous lesson on the same day, teachers must highlight this to the Restorative Leader on duty.

Pastoral staff must ensure that:

- Contact is made with parents and carers of children where absence has not been communicated. The Attendance Officer will ensure that a call is made to the parents or carers on the first day of absence. Please see the agreed daily [process](#).
- A return to school meeting takes place with children after an absence. This is to ensure that pupils are aware of their attendance and the impact of being absent from school.
- Attendance for each year group (7-11) is checked on a daily basis. This must include checking any abnormalities in the daily register e.g. a pupil has missed one lesson. Investigation of why this has occurred and appropriate action must take place, e.g. call to parents or carers, isolation in BIS or discussion with teachers if there is an error in the register.
- All N codes are resolved within 5 school days (determining the correct absence code in each case)
- Punctuality is monitored and addressed on a daily basis. The Pastoral Leader for each year group should review the attendance register at the end of each day. Where a pupil is regularly late to lessons this should be identified and addressed. Sanctions are detailed in the pupil section but staff must also consider further work to address any underlying reasons for lateness e.g. concerns about classwork.
 - If a pupil is late to lessons 3 or more times in a week or the total cumulative number of minutes late for lessons exceeds 15 minutes an after school detention (60 minutes) will be set by the Pastoral Leader responsible for the year group.
 - Where a pupil is late to school without good reason the Attendance Officer will issue a break detention (20 minutes) on the same day. If the pupil does not attend, this will be upscaled to an after school detention on the following day (60 minutes).
 - Where a pupil is late to school on two or more occasions in the same week without good reason the Attendance Officer will issue them with an after school detention (60 minutes).

Pupils are responsible for:

- Being in school by 8.30am and in tutorial or assembly by 8.35am.
- Sign into reception if they are late.
- Be on time for all lessons

Attendance Support

Many children will experience normal but difficult emotions that make them nervous about attending school, such as worries about friendships, schoolwork, examinations or variable moods. It is important to note that these pupils are still expected to attend school regularly, in many instances, attendance at school may serve to help with the underlying issue as being away from school might exacerbate it, and a prolonged period of absence may heighten anxious feelings about attending in future. Our Attendance Team plays a critical role in working effectively with parents and carers. We work alongside families to ensure that such circumstances do not act as a barrier to regular attendance by mitigating anxious feelings in school as much as possible. The school has a mental health team who can support pupils with these issues.

Successfully treating the root causes of absence and removing barriers to attendance, at home, in school or more broadly requires school to work collaboratively with families. We will do this and ensure support is given to children or families experiencing challenges. We have a legal, but perhaps more importantly, a moral obligation to ensure every child attends school as much as possible.

Whickham School recognises that there will be times when it is not possible to attend school. On these occasions, we work closely with outside agencies such as Home & Hospital Tutor Service, Emotionally Based School Avoidance Team, Education Inclusion Panel and other platforms to ensure that a pupil's education is disrupted as little as possible.

Our Achievement Support room and Behaviour and Inclusion Support may provide support for pupils who have long-term attendance problems and, when necessary, Attendance Team staff will visit pupils in their own home.

Our Attendance Process and Interventions

We recognise that absence in the first half of the Autumn term may have a significant impact on the overall attendance percentage for a pupil. During the first half term of the year Pastoral Leaders will use professional judgement when as to whether intervention is necessary. However, it is important to ensure that poor attendance is identified and addressed early so to avoid absence becoming a habit. Therefore the following process will be used by the Attendance Team to monitor attendance, address poor attendance and communicate attendance information:

1. Each day pastoral leaders will review attendance information to identify:
 - Lateness to school
 - Poor punctuality to lessons
 - Absence from any lesson within the school day (if the pupil has attended school)
2. The school attendance officer will generate an absence list for each year group and ensure that where appropriate information has not been provided for the reason for absence, calls and home visits take place to investigate absence. Pastoral leaders may be asked to support this process.
3. The Attendance Officer will be at the school gate from 8.30am each morning to ensure any pupils who are late are recorded. A late list will be produced and shared with Pastoral Leaders. Pupils will be required to attend a late detention at break on the same day. The Attendance Officer will lead this detention.
4. The processes for identifying and addressing poor punctuality during the school day are recorded in the [Behaviour Policy](#). All staff are expected to follow these

processes.

5. It is the responsibility of the Senior Pastoral Leader for Attendance to ensure that all absence is explained and, where appropriate, challenged each day. This information must also be communicated daily to the DfE. A spreadsheet should be used to record this information.
6. The Senior Pastoral Leader for Attendance will allocate visits to members of the Attendance team each day and ensure that the pupils who are to be picked up on our attendance bus are identified and arrangements are made with parents, carers and pupils. This information must be communicated by 4.30pm each day. Any safeguarding issues identified through this process must be communicated to the DSL.
7. All parents and carers will receive a start of year letter outlining expectations relating to attendance, the processes the school uses ensure strong attendance and the attendance of their child or children in the last academic year. An update on attendance and punctuality will be provided at the end of each half term. The Attendance Champion will lead this process.
8. Strong attendance and significant improvements to attendance will be celebrated and rewarded. This will be through:
 - Half termly letters to parents and carers.
 - Celebration assemblies
 - Regular praise from staff
 - Fab Friday certificates
 - ClassChart communications and points
9. Intervention will take place if a pupil's attendance falls into any of the following categories:
 - Stage 1 (attendance between 94% and 96.9%)
Between 6 and 12 days absent across the academic year
 - Stage 1 letter sent. The purpose of this letter is to raise awareness of the impact of non attendance.
 - Parents and carers are informed of who to contact for additional support.
 - The Attendance Officer monitors attendance and highlights further issues in the fortnightly attendance meeting.
 - Normal positive recognition processes are continued.
 - Stage 2 (attendance between 90% and 93.9%)
Between 13 and 19 days absent across the academic year
 - Attendance Officer analyses attendance to identify absence patterns
 - If no improvement in attendance, a stage 2 letter is sent to parents and carers. The purpose of this letter is to communicate to parents/carers that attendance has not improved and that the pupil will be placed upon attendance report. The Pastoral Leader will contact the parents or carers to discuss attendance.
 - Pupil discussed at the Year Team Attendance meeting and action taken to remove any barriers that exist to good attendance.
 - Normal positive recognition processes are continued.
 - Stage 3 (attendance that is below 90%)

**A pupil is considered persistently absent if attendance is below 90%
Over 19 days absence across an academic year**

- Stage 3 letter is sent. The purpose of this letter is to communicate that attendance is significantly below expectations and that attendance will be formally monitored by the Senior Pastoral Leader. It also highlights that 100% attendance is expected during this monitoring period unless medical evidence is provided. Parents and carers must attend school to discuss attendance.
 - An Attendance Plan will be developed with bespoke strategies to ensure attendance improves. The Senior Pastoral Leader - Attendance will coordinate the production, implementation and monitoring of this plan.
 - The Senior Pastoral Leader - Attendance will consider whether external agencies need to become involved with the Attendance Plan.
 - Legal intervention is considered.
 - Medical evidence is required when absences occur.
 - Consideration of referral to Governor or Senior Leader Attendance Panel.
- Stage 4 (attendance that is below 50%)
This is considered severe absence and is of extreme concern
The pupil is absent more from school than they are present.
 - Weekly meetings with parents/carers to implement and monitor the pupil Attendance Plan. The Senior Pastoral Leader - Attendance will continue to coordinate the production, implementation and monitoring of this plan.
 - Social Services must be made aware of attendance levels.
 - Legal intervention must be in place.
 - Referral to Governor or Senior Leader Attendance Panel.
 - An EHCP should be considered.
10. Where a pupil attends an alternative provision provider, is on a supported move, directed to attend another school for a period of time or being educated in any other place than Whickham School, the Attendance Team must check daily whether the pupil has attended. Any safeguarding concerns or unusual attendance patterns must be raised with the DSL. The Attendance Officer will ensure these checks take place each day.
11. The Attendance Officer will monitor attendance and punctuality on a weekly basis. Data will be analysed at various levels to identify trends or patterns. This information will be shared with Assistant Headteacher Attendance on a Monday morning (reflecting information from the last week and year to date). We will monitor and analyse attendance data for the following cohorts:
- a. Whole school
 - b. Individual year groups
 - c. Boys and girls
 - d. SEND
 - e. EAL
 - f. PP and FSM
 - g. LAC and pLAC
 - h. Pupils who have a multi agency plan
 - i. Pupils who are persistently or severely absent
12. Where pupils are identified as severely or persistently absent, the Attendance Champion will organise half termly senior leader and governor attendance panels.

Requests for Leave of Absence during School Time

Requests for leave of absence 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 Miss Tumelty, Assistant Headteacher and Attendance Champion. The attendance register must be kept in accordance with the [School Attendance \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2024](#). Regulation 10 sets out the contents of the attendance register.

Parents /carers can submit a leave of absence request via the school website.

Penalty Notices

Where difficulties arise with school attendance, Whickham School will take a 'support first' approach in line with the DfE's '[Working together to improve school attendance](#)' guidance, only resorting to legal enforcement when necessary. The aim is that the need for legal enforcement is reduced by taking a supportive approach to tackle the barriers to attendance and intervening early before absence becomes entrenched.

Penalty notices are issued to parents and carers as an alternative to prosecution where they have failed to ensure that their child of compulsory school age regularly attends our school where they are registered or, in certain cases, at a place where alternative provision is provided. A penalty notice can be issued to each parent liable for the offence(s).

Penalty notices will only be used in cases where:

- support is not appropriate (e.g. a term time holiday) or where support has been provided and not engaged with or not worked, and
- they are the most appropriate tool to change parental behaviour and improve attendance for that particular family.

Whickham School will consider whether a penalty notice is appropriate when a pupil reaches the national threshold for considering a penalty notice. Judgements will be made on individual cases to ensure fairness and consistency. The threshold for a penalty notice is 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks. A school week means any week in which there is at least one school session. This can be met with any combination of unauthorised absence (e.g. 4 sessions of holiday taken in term time plus 6 sessions of arriving late after the register closes all within 10 school weeks). These sessions can be consecutive (e.g. 10 sessions of holiday in one week) or not (e.g. 6 sessions of unauthorised absence taken in 1 week and 1 per week for the next 4 weeks). The period of 10 school weeks can also span different terms or school years (e.g. 2 sessions of unauthorised absence in the Summer Term and a further 8 within the Autumn Term).

A penalty notice is an out of court settlement which is intended to change behaviour without the need for criminal prosecution. If repeated penalty notices are being issued and they are not working to change behaviour they are unlikely to be the most appropriate tool. Therefore, from autumn term 2024, only 2 penalty notices can be issued to the same parent in respect of the same child within a 3 year rolling period and any second notice within that period is charged at a higher rate:

- The first penalty notice issued to a parent in respect of a particular pupil will be charged at £160 if paid within 28 days. This will be reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days.

- A second penalty notice issued to the same parent in respect of the same pupil is charged at a flat rate of £160 if paid within 28 days.
- A third penalty notice cannot be issued to the same parent in respect of the same child within 3 years of the date of issue of the first. In a case where the national threshold is met for a third time (or subsequent times) within those 3 years, alternative action should be taken instead. This will often include considering prosecution, but may include other tools such as one of the other attendance legal interventions.

Whickham School adheres to the [Local Code of Conduct](#) for issuing fixed penalty notices.

Legislation

This policy meets the requirements of working together to improve school attendance (DfE).

- **Education Supervision Orders** - Further information can be found on Page 51 of [Working Together to Improve School Attendance \(Updated August 2024\)](#)
- **Attendance Prosecution Order**- Further information can be found on Page 52 of [Working Together to Improve School Attendance \(Updated August 2024\)](#)
- **Parenting Orders** - Further information can be found on Page 54 of [Working Together to Improve School Attendance \(Updated August 2024\)](#)

Appendix 1 - Whickham School Request for Leave of Absence during Term Time

Holiday leave of absence will only be granted under exceptional circumstances and is generally not allowed.

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:

This form can be completed [online](#).

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