

# Whickham School and Sports College



## Attendance Policy 2018



# Attendance Policy

## Principles

High levels of attendance are essential for pupils to fulfil their potential at school. The staff and governors of Whickham School & Sports College 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 & Sports College 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 &

Sports College. Mrs Tillet-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 Heads of Year. Heads of Year 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 Head of Key Stage Three and Head of Key Stage Four will monitor and support the relevant Heads of Year in attendance monitoring and intervention.

## Aims and Objectives

To maintain high levels of attendance Whickham School & Sports College 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.

## Procedures

Whickham School & Sports College will undertake to follow the procedures set out in this policy below.

- 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 when a child has been absent for more than 3 days
- 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 Head of Year.

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 8.40am
- 8.45-9.10am tutors ensure that morning registration is completed by 9.10am.
- Periods 1,2,3,4 & 5 Class teacher responsible to ensure that class registers are taken.
- If electronic systems are not working tutor/class teacher to ensure a paper register is forwarded to main office.
- Registers are “closed” for the morning session during period 1
- The school gates close at 8.40am.
- Any pupil arriving late, after the gates are closed should sign in at the 6<sup>th</sup> 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 should be signed and dated by tutors and forwarded to Heads of Year.
- 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).

## 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.

- It is the responsibility of all teachers to maintain accurate registers and record pupil lateness
- Heads of Year monitor lateness in their year group and apply appropriate rewards and sanctions
- If punctuality issues persist, these may be referred to the school's Attendance Officer.
- Persistent lateness 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. Some parents have been under the impression that pupils are allowed 10 days holiday from school in any one year. This is **not** the case. The Government's guidance states **that under special circumstances** the school **may** consider giving permission for a child to be absent from school for a maximum of 10 days in any one school year.

Requests for leave of absence must be submitted to the Head of Year at least four weeks before the intended leave of absence. Requests for leave of absence will be considered by the Associate Deputy Headteacher - Pastoral(see Appendix)

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

If a parent/carer needs to discuss an attendance issue they should contact the Head of Year 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
- Associate 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
- Heads of Year receive daily information on lateness and are responsible for ensuring that appropriate interventions are applied to ensure high levels of attendance and absence
- Heads of Key Stage, Heads of Year and tutors receive weekly reports of pupil attendance
- pupil attendance is recorded on Module and annual school reports

## Heads of Year/School Attendance Officer Attendance Monitoring, Intervention & Support

- Heads of Year 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 95% attendance and pupils classified as PA (Persistent Absence) which is less than 90% attendance.
- Learning Mentors may be used to counsel or support pupils with attendance concerns
- 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
- 100% attendance is recognised by Heads of Year and School rewards points 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 /Heads of Key Stage and the Deputy Headteacher for Pastoral Care where the normal range of strategies outlined above has not significantly improved attendance
- Where all the above strategies fail to bring a significant improvement in attendance the school may bring cases of poor attendance to the Local Authority's now Legal Intervention Team . The Local Authority-Legal Intervention Team will work with families for a period of 6 weeks, following the 6 weeks they may issue a Fixed Penalty Notice, parenting order or refer the case to Magistrate's Court for legal proceedings.

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 as to ensure that a pupil's education is disrupted as little as possible.

The school's Library and Behaviour and Inclusion Support provide support for pupils who have long-term attendance problems and, when necessary, Progress Officers, Head of Year 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

Policy Accepted .....

### **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

#### (iv) Request for Leave of Absence during Term Time

### Whickham School & Sport College



### 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.

Over the past few years we have had a growing number of requests for holidays in term time. Some parents have been under the impression that pupils are allowed 10 days holiday from school in any one year. This is **not** the case. The Government's guidance states **that under special circumstances** the school **may** consider giving permission for a child to be absent from school for a maximum of 10 days in any one school year.

An absence of ten school days results in your child missing 49 school lessons and means the highest attendance they can achieve in that school year is 95%. This is well below the average attendance for the majority of Whickham pupils and this level of attendance does not allow for any other additional absence that may occur.

In line with Government guidance, holiday leave of absence will only be granted **under special circumstances**.

Permission will not be granted:

- If the pupil is due to take an examination during the period of the leave of absence
- If the pupil already has less than 95% attendance
- If the leave of absence is requested in the first four weeks of September

In making the decision about the leave of absence, the school will consider the pupil's attendance record as well as their attitude to learning. If permission is granted, your child will be expected to collect work from teachers and this work must be completed in addition to the usual homework set by staff.

NAME OF PUPIL:	TUTOR GROUP:
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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:	
Details of any other requests for leave of absence in school term time:	
Signature of parent / carer:	Date:
<b>To be completed by Head of Year</b>	
pupil attendance over the last 12 months:	
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 Head of Key Stage:	Date:

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

**Please submit this form to the relevant Head of Year at least four weeks before the intended leave of absence. Your request will be considered and you will receive a letter within 8 days of**

receipt .

## **(v) 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 need to be aware that an attendance of 95% means that the equivalent of 10 school days have been missed.

#### **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 in 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 head of year

#### **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 Head of Year in advance and a written response from the school will follow.

Authorisation may be declined where attendance is unsatisfactory (below 98%) or where authorisation is requested during an examination period or in the first 4 weeks of September.

Parents/carers should request leave of absence for other special circumstances using the same procedure.

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

#### **Attendance monitoring and intervention strategies**

Attendance is monitored in the first instance by the relevant head of year.

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(s)/carer(s) on the day of absence. Absences are followed up routinely with the pupil by their tutor.

In general attendance is addressed in stages as follows. Discretion is used where there are extenuating circumstances (e.g. long term medical issue) or at the start of the year where a

small amount of absence makes a significant percentage difference. Attendance percentages become relevant at the end of Term 1 and this is when Persistent Absentees are identified. However Heads of Year will act on early warning signs in Term 1. Heads of Year also routinely meet with pupils to discuss absences.

#### Stage 1 Intervention (95%)

When attendance drops to 90% or below or a particular pattern of poor attendance/punctuality is noticed then pupils move onto a stage 1 intervention. A stage 1 letter will go home. The Head of Year will contact parents.

#### Stage 2 Intervention (90% - pupil classed as PA)

At this stage a pupil is missing, on average 1.5 school days a fortnight. The pupil is formally classed as a persistent absentee. A stage 2 letter will go home. A meeting will be held between the Head of Year and the pupil. The pupil will go on an attendance report.

#### Stage 3 Intervention (Stage 2 failure or 80%)

At this stage a pupil is missing, on average, 2.5 days a fortnight. A formal meeting will be held with parents. An attendance action plan will be produced and the pupil will be required to sign. This will normally involve a period of monitoring against agreed attendance targets of between 2 and 4 weeks. Academic monitoring and referral to the pupil support officer may also take place. The Head of Year will contact parents at the end of the monitoring cycle.

#### Stage 4

If a pupil has not improved their attendance sufficiently through strategies employed in stages 1-3 then they will be asked to consider whether they feel that they should continue with their studies.

Year 12 pupils with significant attendance concerns may not be able to progress into Year 13.

*Where there are significant attendance concerns sixth-formers and parents/carers will be invited to meet with the Governors' Behaviour and Attendance Sub-Committee.*