



# Whitby School

## Pupil Attendance Policy

### Governance Status

This policy will be reviewed every two years or sooner, when appropriate, for example, if new guidance or relevant legislation is issued.

Review dates	By Whom	Approval date
November 2024	Staff and Governors	February 2025
February 2027	Staff and Governors	1 April 2025

Signed by the Chair of Governors

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'G. Crosby', with a horizontal line underneath.

## **Principles**

At Whitby School, we are committed to ensuring that all parents/carers and pupils understand the absolute importance of high attendance for academic and social development. We aim to work in partnership with parents, pupils, all staff and governors to ensure that pupils are safe and learning. We aim to do this by creating a nurturing and secure learning environment which has the highest expectations of all pupils, so that they want to attend school and receive a good education.

Aims:

- To create high Levels of attendance and punctuality across the school, which are better than the national average
- To ensure that pupils are safe; securing parent/carer contact when they are absent so that the school knows (to the best of its knowledge) where the pupil is when absent.
- To monitor trends and patterns of individual, vulnerable pupils
- To work in partnership with parents/carers to support them and their child in establishing the highest possible levels of attendance and punctuality; while offering appropriate challenge
- To ensure that all pupils have equal and full access to the best education that we can offer in order to improve their academic outcomes
- To ensure that parents/carers are aware of their legal responsibilities

## **Expectations**

**The school is expected to:**

- promote good attendance and reduce absence, including persistent absence
- ensure every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled, and an atmosphere in school that is welcoming and supportive
- act early to address patterns of absence
- support parents to perform their legal duty to ensure their children attend regularly
- recognise and reward outstanding and good attendance and punctuality
- respond to any pupils' or parents' concerns which may impact upon that person's attendance or punctuality
- maintain accurate and regular records of AM and PM attendance and punctuality; ensuring that registers are taken for every lesson within the first 10 minutes, and that missing pupils are reported for safeguarding
- follow the pupil Attendance procedures
- as a safeguarding priority, contact parents when a pupil fails to attend and where no message has been received to explain absence by 8.55 am
- follow up unexplained absences to obtain explanations from parents/carers
- draw up a plan to maximise attendance in cases where there are long or frequent absences due to medical conditions

**Pupils are expected to:**

- attend school every day
- be on time for the start of the day and for the start of each lesson
- not leave the school site for any unauthorised reason

**Parents/carers are expected to:**

- be aware of their legal responsibilities
- ensure their child(ren) attend the school regularly
- ensure their child(ren) arrives punctually at the start of the day
- contact school, daily, of an absence and explain the reason for the absence
- apply to the Headteacher in advance for a period of absence where there are exceptional circumstances
- notify the school immediately of any changes to contact details
- work with the school where there are concerns about a pupil's attendance to address those concerns

- not ignore, agree with or condone their child's truancy
- support school attendance by not taking family holidays in term time

### **How parents can work to encourage excellent attendance**

Ensuring that your son/daughter attends school every day is one of the most important things you can do to help them to succeed in their education. Any absence affects the pattern of a child's education and multiple absences will seriously affect their learning. Any student's absence disrupts teaching and learning routines, so may affect the learning of others in the same class.

Ensuring regular attendance is a parent's/carer's legal responsibility and permitting absence from the school without good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

### **Understanding types of absence**

Every half day absence from the school must be classified by the school (not by parents/carers) as either authorised or unauthorised. Therefore, information about the cause of any absence is always required, by telephoning the school on the first day of absence and on every day that the child is absent from school. Please note that the school does have an answer machine service so that messages can be left out of school hours.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from the school for a reason such as illness or medical and dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time. Any other unavoidable causes are authorised at the discretion of the school in line with government legislation. However, wherever possible, appointments should be made out of school hours or towards the end of the school day to prevent loss of learning. The school can and does request medical evidence to support such appointments or absence if they occur on a frequent basis.

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 Local Authority using sanctions and/or legal proceedings. This includes: (Please note this list is not exhaustive)

- Parents/Carers keeping children from attending the school without good reason
- Truancy before or during the school day
- Absences which have never been properly explained
- Students who arrive in the school too late to get a mark
- Shopping, birthdays, hair appointments or looking after other children or family member
- Day trips and holidays in term time
- Not having the correct school uniform
- Visits from relatives

If your child is reluctant to attend the school or is having any problems which cause irregular attendance then this should be discussed between the school, the parents/carers, and the child. We do request that parents/carers do not keep their child off with minor ailments such as a headache or slight cold. If there are any concerns about your child's attendance, please contact our attendance team or your child's Care and Achievement Coordinator who will help.

## **Persistent Absence**

According to the Department for Education, "a pupil enrolment is identified as persistently absent if 10% or more of possible sessions are missed, and severely absent if more than 50% of possible sessions are missed." (Pupil absence in schools in England 2022-23).

Therefore, in line with UK Law, students at Whitby School with attendance of 90% or less are classed as persistent absentees (PA).

A student becomes a 'persistent absentee' (PA) when they miss 10% or more of their attendance across the academic year for whatever reason. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to their educational prospects. As a school we need parents/carers support and co-operation to tackle this. Absence is monitored thoroughly. If any case that is seen to have reached the PA mark or is at risk of moving towards PA, conversations will be held with the student and their care and achievement co-ordinator and/or form tutor to work together to increase attendance.

### **Absence Procedures**

If your child is absent, you must contact the school by 8.55 am on the first day of absence and any subsequent days they are absent. Ideally this should be done via the My Child at School app or by calling the school - Telephone number 01947 601901 - Option 1 (voicemail facility available).

It is also possible to email - [absence@whitbyschool.co.uk](mailto:absence@whitbyschool.co.uk)

If your child is absent and we have not received a reason, we will telephone or text on the first day of absence, we may also make a home visit.

For safeguarding reasons, it may be necessary to request Police welfare home visits and / or social care support.

### **Failure to ensure regular school attendance**

Please note that the school takes its duty of safeguarding the welfare of all its pupils very seriously. As such, unexplained or extended absence, or a lack of contact from parents/carers may lead us to involve other agencies.

Whitby School will attempt to support all pupils to achieve maximum possible attendance and will inform parents/carers when attendance starts to fall.

- Where a pupil is failing to attend school regularly, an attendance action plan will be drawn up in consultation with the family, and possibly external agencies
- Where unauthorised attendance is falling to a level causing concern, parental meetings will be held to discuss ways to improve, and an Initial Warning Letter will be sent to parents/carers
- If attendance fails to improve after 10 days, then an Attendance Panel Meeting will be held
- After a further 20 days of monitoring, if there is no improvement, there may be another Attendance Panel meeting, or a PACE Panel meeting (Police And Criminal Evidence Act) chaired by the Local Authority

## **Formal attendance monitoring/Legal Intervention**

Section 7 Education Act 1996 outlines the duty of which parents must secure education for children of a compulsory school age. If a pupil fails to attend school regularly the parent could be found guilty of an offence under Section 444 1/1A Education Act 1996.

Formal attendance monitoring/ legal intervention may be considered appropriate in the following circumstances:

- Long term persistent absence
- Overt truancy (including pupils caught on truancy sweeps).
- Parentally condoned absences.
- Unauthorised leave of absence in term-time.
- Unexplained absence i.e. no reason given for absence.
- Persistent late arrival at school (after the register has closed).
- Excluded pupil present in a public place during the school hours of the school where the pupil is on roll.

To ensure compliance with the North Yorkshire School Attendance Monitoring procedures:

- An initial warning letter will be issued. Within this, students will be given a 10-day period to show improvement of their attendance.
- This will be followed by a 20-day panel meeting to review attendance during this period.

If there has been no further improvement, following the 20-day monitoring period then this will be referred to the local authority where a Police And Criminal Evidence Act (1984) Formal Caution interview will be conducted by the Local Authority. This will then be at the discretion of the Local Authority to consider issuing:

- Case Review
- Notice to Improve / Fixed Penalty
- an Education Supervision Order
- Prosecution in the Magistrates Court under Section 444 1/1A Education Act 1996.

The first Penalty Notice issued to a parent in respect of a particular child 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 child will be charged 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 Penalty Notice.

In a case where the national threshold is met for the third time (or subsequent times) 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.

### **Telephone Numbers**

There are times when we need to contact parents/carers about a range of matters, for example if your child is unwell or we need to make contact if your child has an unexplained absence, so we need to always have your up-to-date contact numbers.

Please note no student is sent home unwell without contacting a parent or carer. We expect all students to be collected by an adult when they are unwell.

### **Concern with attendance**

If we have a concern regarding your child's attendance, we may: -

- Contact via telephone
- Send out a letter/email
- Make a home visit
- Meet weekly with your child to support their attendance

If attendance continues to decline, we will send you a letter to identify our initial concerns your child will also enter a 10-day monitoring period where students are required to have 100% attendance during this time. Failure to improve attendance will result in an invitation into the academy to complete an Attendance Support Plan. This will be monitored over an additional 20-day period by our attendance team. If your child's attendance does not significantly improve, you will be invited to attend a Police and Criminal Evidence Act (1984) Formal Caution interview with the Local Authority for statutory intervention. Invitation to such could mean a panel decision, no further action taken, a notice to improve, review meeting, educational supervision order or Prosecution Education Act 1996 S444 (1,1A).

### **Lateness**

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If a student misses the start of the day, they can miss work and vital information and news for the day. Students who arrive late also disrupt the learning in lessons.

How we manage lateness:

- The school day starts at 8.55am. We expect all students to be in their form rooms by 8.55am
- If a pupil arrives at the school after 8.55am they MUST sign in at the main reception where a behavioural consequence will be issued to the student.

At 9.25am the registers will be closed. In accordance with the regulations, if a student arrives after this time, they may receive a mark that shows them to be on site, but this will not count as a present mark and will mean they have an unauthorised absence, this code is a U. This may mean that you could be issued with an Education Penalty Notice if the problem persists.

## **Holidays in Term Time**

Due to recent changes in Government guidelines, schools are not able to authorise holidays in term-time.

If a holiday is taken in term time, it will be recorded as an unauthorised absence and it may result in a Fixed Penalty Notice, under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996. This will result in a fine.

The first Penalty Notice issued to a parent in respect of a particular child 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 child will be charged 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 Penalty Notice.

In a case where the national threshold is met for the third time (or subsequent times) 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

However, under exceptional circumstances you can apply directly to the Headteacher for "leave of absence" although the Government guidance states "Headteachers would not be expected to class any term time holiday as exceptional".

Parents or carers considering taking a student out of school during term-time need to follow the procedure below:

### **APPLICATION FOR STUDENT LEAVE OF ABSENCE IN EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES DURING TERM TIME**

This form should be completed by the parent/carer and returned to the school as far in advance as possible and preferably at least 4 weeks before the first date of the period of leave being requested. Parents/carers must obtain the school's permission before making any arrangements for leave in exceptional circumstances, otherwise the absence will be recorded as unauthorised.

No parent/carer can demand leave of absence as of right. The Education regulations state that applications for leave must be made in advance by a parent with whom the child lives and can only be authorised by the school in exceptional circumstances. Each application is considered individually by the school. The following are examples of the criteria for leave of absence, which may be considered as 'exceptional':

- Service personnel returning from active deployment
- Where inflexibility of the parents' leave or working arrangement is part of the organisational or company policy. This would need to be evidenced by the production or confirmation from the organisation/company
- Where leave is recommended as part of a parent's or child's rehabilitation from medical or emotional problems. Evidence must be provided
- When a family needs to spend time together to support each other during or after a crisis.

This is not an exhaustive list and Headteachers must consider the individual circumstances of each case when making a decision on this matter. Where a Headteacher feels that there may be exceptional circumstances which do not fit the criteria, they may refer to the local authority for advice. The decision of the Headteacher is final. Parents who take a child on leave in term-time without the permission of the school risk being issued with a penalty notice fine for unauthorised absences.

Taking a student on leave during term time interrupts teaching and learning and can disrupt educational progress. Before completing this application form parent/carers are asked to consider the effect on their child's continuity of education.

- All holidays will be classed as unauthorised, unless you receive confirmation in writing from the school that the holiday has been authorised. All holidays that are unauthorised will be referred to the Local Authority to issue a Fixed Penalty Notice
- The first Penalty Notice issued to a parent in respect of a particular child 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 child will be charged 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 Penalty Notice.
- In a case where the national threshold is met for the third time (or subsequent times) 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.

Money raised via fines is only used by the local authority to cover the costs of administering the system, and to fund attendance support. Any extra money is returned to the government.

### **School Targets**

The school aims to improve attendance and reduce persistent absence, and you have a vital part to play in meeting these targets.

Whilst we strive for every student to achieve 100% attendance, the minimum level of attendance for this school is 97% and we will keep you updated regularly about how your child's attendance compares to this target.

### **Our Attendance Team**

The Attendance Team consists of the following staff:

Deputy Headteacher and DSL: Miss Caddell

Assistant Headteachers: Mrs Bradley and Mrs Mallender

Attendance officer: Mrs E Draper

Head of Year 7: Mrs A Harrison and Miss D Reddy

Care and Achievement Co-ordinator: Miss A Clarkson

Head of Year 8: Mr A Raw

Care and Achievement Co-ordinator: Mrs Hutton and Mrs Wilson

Head of Year 9: Mrs J Cassell-Osowski

Care and Achievement Co-ordinator: Mr D Jackson



Head of Year 10: Mrs A Scales

Care and Achievement Co-ordinator: Mrs H Ross

Head of Year 11: Mrs A Ruberry

Care and Achievement Co-ordinator: Mr D Taylor

Sixth Form

Assistant Headteacher: Mr A Wheelan

Care and Achievement Co-ordinator: Mr J Daley

### **Summary**

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

All school staff are committed to working with parents/carers and students as the best way to ensure as high level of attendance as possible.