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# The Whitby High School

A Specialist Technology College

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## Attendance Policy

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Moving Forward Together

# AIMS

*“Where there is no vision, the people perish”*

*Proverb 29 v18*

We seek to fulfil the needs of learners in a caring, happy environment, enabling them to realise their true potential as young people and citizens.

We aim to enable our learners to:-

**P**REPARE for adult life in a happy, caring and purposeful environment

**A**CHIEVE their full potential regardless of individual need

**C**ARE for everyone and encourage respect and tolerance

**E**NJOY education and rejoice in success

## Attendance monitoring procedures at the Whitby High School

### Rationale

Reducing absence and persistent absence is a vital and integral part of schools' work to:

- Promote children's welfare and safeguarding.
- Ensure **every** student, regardless of race, social class or disability has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled.
- Ensure that students succeed whilst at school.
- Ensure that students have access to the widest possible range of opportunities when they leave school.

Poor attendance at school vastly diminishes students' chances of fulfilling their potential and, in turn, their life chances.

### Aims

- To highlight the importance of good attendance and punctuality and keep the issues at the forefront of day-to-day practice.
- Establish a consistent set of protocols which all Houses use across the school.
- Work in partnership with the Education Welfare Services, Family Support Officer and parents/carers to promote good attendance.
- Establish a staged system which supports parents/carers and challenges those whose attendance causes concern. This will involve Attendance Meetings, in partnership with the Education Welfare Service.
- Use data effectively to identify groups of students with attendance issues and put strategies into place to support them (vulnerable groups such as those on free school meals).

### Rights and Responsibilities

Improving attendance at The Whitby High School is the responsibility of everyone in the school community – students, parents and all staff.

**Students** - All students are expected to attend school and all of their lessons regularly and punctually. Students who do experience attendance difficulties will be offered prompt and sympathetic support, initially from their form tutor, and if the need should arise, from their respective House Progress or Assistant Progress Manager. Students whose attendance is either very good or improved will be recognised through the school's rewards system.

**Parents/carers** – Parents/carers are responsible for ensuring that their child attends school regularly, punctually, properly dressed and equipped and in a fit condition to learn. Parents will be informed promptly of any concerns, which may arise over a child's attendance. Parents should avoid, if at all possible, making medical/dental appointments for their child during school hours. Students whose attendance is a cause for concern will be placed on the school's 'staged system' (see relevant section in this policy).

**School** - Staff will endeavour to encourage good attendance and punctuality through personal example. Attendance is the responsibility of all school staff (not just teaching and pastoral staff). The

school will employ a range of strategies to encourage good attendance and punctuality and will investigate promptly all absenteeism, liaising closely with parents/carers. Staff will respond to all absenteeism firmly and consistently.

### **How do the attendance procedures work at The Whitby High School?**

- The whole idea of the system is that parents/carers whose children continue to cause concern will move through different stages, which offer support but also take necessary action if required.
- House staff will have a monthly consultation with the EWO and discuss students who are causing concern. Students may be placed on the staged system (see next page) or be subject to further action, such as Family Support Officer or EWO intervention.
- Following the consultation meetings, there will be a monthly Attendance Committee Meeting. This will involve the Deputy Headteacher responsible for pastoral care, House staff, the EWO, Family Support Officer and Attendance Officer. The 'big picture' in terms of attendance will be discussed, including data about vulnerable groups.
- House staff will feed back key actions and students causing concern at these meetings.
- Referrals to the Family Support Officer or EWO will also be finalised at this meeting, to ensure the most efficient use of resources.
- Any actions agreed must be tracked, followed through and reported on at the following committee meeting.
- Students will basically be monitored on a monthly basis. Those moving onto Stage 2 will be on 'medical evidence' and no more absences will be authorised without 'reasonable excuse'.
- Parents/carers with children who have ten or more unauthorised absences will receive a Fixed Penalty Notice.
- The Attendance Officer will keep a database, recording which letter parents/carers have received. This will avoid duplication.
- **Parents/carers must not have the same letter sent in the following review.**
- When Attendance Meetings are arranged with parents/carers, House staff will phone to remind them to attend before the meeting takes place.
- The issue of attendance will be highlighted around the school and in key messages to students. It will be a major focus in House meetings and briefings.
- **Those in receipt of Pupil Premium funding must be monitored closely.**
- **Common sense and judgement must pervade these procedures. The main aim is to provide structure but also allow flexibility within this. For example, if there is an urgent case, House Progress Managers do not have to wait until the next review point to act.**

### **Staff responsibilities**

The **Deputy Headteacher** with responsibility for pastoral care will monitor overall school and House attendance and punctuality. He/she will liaise closely with the EWO, Family Support Officer, other agencies and the school Attendance Officer to ensure the system is rigorous and that attendance and punctuality concerns are addressed.

**House staff** will monitor attendance and punctuality closely and liaise with the Deputy Headteacher, EWO, Family Support Officer and parents/carers to ensure school systems are adhered to and that attendance and punctuality concerns are addressed and followed up.

**Form tutors** will monitor attendance and punctuality on a daily basis. Detentions will be issued for lateness and rewards issued for good attendance/punctuality. Tutors will liaise closely with House staff to ensure attendance and punctuality concerns are addressed. **If a student has been absent for more than three days without explanation, it is vital that tutors alert House staff to this.**

The **Attendance Officer** will monitor whole school attendance and provide data at the prescribed points in the review system. He/she is responsible for the 'day-to-day' running of the system. Registers will be checked during the school day and marks adjusted where appropriate. The Attendance Officer plays a key role in alerting staff about missing students. Data on punctuality will be issued to form tutors and Houses to follow up any issues. There will be regular liaison with the Deputy Headteacher in order to review and amend current systems. The Attendance Officer will also prepare data and documentation for the yearly registration inspection and assist in the implementation of the recommendations that arise from it.

### The Staged System

From September 2015, the government will be setting even more rigorous attendance targets and students with an attendance rate of less than 90% will be classed as 'persistently absent'.

The school has a clear set of procedures to monitor attendance. Should a child's attendance fall persistently below **95%**, a series of letters will be sent out and different procedures put into place:

Type of letter	What does it mean?
<b>Stage 1</b>	There is a general concern about your child's attendance and this letter is designed to alert you to this. Attendance will be monitored monthly.
<b>Stage 2</b>	<p>This means your child's attendance is becoming a concern – it is persistently below 90% or shows no signs of improvement.</p> <p>You are invited in to meet with the House Progress Manager (or Senior Staff in his/her absence) and Education Welfare Officer. Support is offered in this meeting.</p> <p>However, attendance targets will be set and if there is no improvement, further action (for example issuing Fixed Penalty Notices) will be taken. A Fixed Penalty Notice may be issued if parents/carers fail to attend these meetings.</p> <p><b>Further absences will not be authorised without medical evidence</b> (this can include a prescription or medicinal packaging).</p>
<b>Stage 3</b>	It is clear that all of the strategies outlined above have failed to improve the attendance of your child and there is no 'reasonable excuse' for absences. At this stage, you will be notified in writing that the matter is being formally referred to the EWO and further proceedings will be instigated.

An attendance rate of 90% equates to one day of absence per fortnight. Even a rate of 95% equates to ten days every school year. This is considerable and in the world of work, employers would be concerned about such a figure.

We realise that some students do have genuine illnesses and medical conditions. The school will do whatever it can to support such students. Again, good communication is the key.

### **Punctuality**

Good punctuality to school is also vital in a child's education. This sets the tone for the day and prepares students for the world of work, where poor punctuality is not tolerated by employers. **It is the parents'/carers' responsibility to ensure their child is punctual to school.** Persistent lateness due to parents'/carers' own circumstances is unacceptable and will be dealt with in accordance with school policy (outlined below). However, we do realise that there are times when students will be late due to no fault of their own. It would be helpful if parents/carers would send a note on such occasions, explaining why their child is late. The school will then take this into consideration. As in all cases of school discipline, the school's decision will be final.

Students are expected to be in school by 8.25 am and in form by 8.30 am. If students arrive in school after 8.30, they are late and will be marked accordingly on the register. The school adopts a 'zero tolerance' approach to lateness and those students who are late without explanation will be detained after school on the same day. Persistent lateness will lead to more serious sanctions. Senior staff will also run 'late gates' on occasion and students who are late on these days will be put in a 30-minute after-school detention on the same day. Parents/carers will be notified via text about this.

**Remember, every minute counts.** If a child is ten minutes late every day, this equates to nearly seven days of absence from lessons over a school year.

Students coming to school after registration without valid reason will be given a 'U' mark. Ten 'U' marks will lead to a Fixed Penalty Notice being issued.

### **Reporting absence**

Parents/carers are expected to contact the school daily to report absence. On the child's return to school, a note should be given to their form tutor explaining why they were absent. **It is vital that absences are reported, as unreported absences are classified as unauthorised after ten days.** This may trigger Education Welfare Officer involvement. Parents/carers will be notified by letter if there are unexplained absences but good communication with the school can prevent this from happening.

### **Text alerts for absent students**

The school operates a texting service to inform parents/carers if their child has no mark on the register in the morning. Texts are usually sent at 9.30 am. As previously stated, good communication will prevent this from happening. From time to time, texts are sent in error. We apologise for any concern this may cause.

## **Medical appointments**

Parents/carers should inform the school if their child has a medical appointment. This will prevent a text being sent home on the day of the appointment. It is vital that students sign into school following appointments. If a child arrives before 10.30, they will be marked late rather than absent on the school attendance register.

## **Young carers**

We realise that being a young carer is an immensely challenging situation. This is taken into consideration when dealing with attendance and punctuality issues. Support will be offered by the school whenever possible. Indeed, the school will make every effort to ensure the root cause of any lateness is made apparent and appropriate support is sourced. Please see the '**Young Carers' Policy** for more information.

## **Students missing from class/leaving the school site**

This is monitored by the Attendance Officer. However, it is vital that staff alert the main office/the Attendance Officer when they have witnessed students leaving the school site without permission.

## **Alternative provision**

A small number of students attend alternative placements as a means of increasing engagement in education. Attendance is monitored weekly by the Attendance Officer and House staff. House and Senior staff also conduct monthly visits to alternative education placements and a proforma is completed. There is close liaison between the school and placements to ensure any attendance issues are resolved.

## **Leave of absence from school (namely holidays)**

The school does not encourage any leave of absence to be taken during term time. We recognise that holidays can be much cheaper during term time and that work commitments can make taking holidays during school breaks difficult, but doing this can be disruptive both to children's learning and the school.

The government has issued strict guidelines to schools regarding leave of absence for students. Under these guidelines, Headteachers are not able to grant leave of absence for students during term time unless there are **exceptional** circumstances and please be advised there are **very few** exceptions.

Should parents/carers wish to seek leave of absence for their child, the procedure is to write to the Headteacher to seek authorisation. Please include the reasons why leave of absence is being sought. Each case will be considered on its merits but please be aware that it is highly unlikely any holiday time will be authorised. The Headteacher will determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted.

Please note: there is a common misconception that parents/carers can remove their child from school for up to ten days a year for the purpose of family holidays – this is not the case.

Should parents/carers take a holiday in term time without school consent, the absence will be unauthorised. A fixed penalty notice will also be issued, along with Education Welfare Service involvement.

### The Whitby High School Attendance Procedures

Attendance Category	Action Taken	Monitoring Procedures
<b>1) 95 - 100%</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attendance rewards and certificates</li> <li>• Termly prize draw</li> <li>• Weekly House Points</li> <li>• Standard letter for missing marks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tutor monitors fluctuations in attendance</li> <li>• Send 'Stage 1' letter if there is a general concern as a means of highlighting the issue</li> </ul>
<b>2) 90 - 95%</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tutor level monitoring and intervention</li> <li>• 'Stage 1' letter if persistently below 95%</li> <li>• Text messaging service when absent</li> <li>• Standard letter for missing marks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Phone call if student remains in these percentage boundaries</li> <li>• Student placed on House attendance monitoring list</li> <li>• Focus for Family Support Officer</li> <li>• If attendance deteriorates, move on to 'Stage 2'</li> </ul>
<b>3) 85 - 90% Persistent Absence (from September 2015)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 'Stage 2' letter with attendance certificate</li> <li>• Mitigating circumstances- send 'Stage 1' letter</li> <li>• House intervention</li> <li>• Text messaging service when absent</li> <li>• Medical evidence needed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Remain on House attendance monitoring list as a priority case</li> <li>• Student goes back to tutor monitoring if attendance improves</li> <li>• If attendance deteriorates, send 'Stage 3' letter and invite to Attendance Meeting</li> <li>• Use EWO/FSO if necessary</li> </ul>
<b>4) 80 - 85%</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monitor closely – priority cases</li> <li>• Text messaging service when absent</li> <li>• Medical evidence needed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Remain on Stage 3 if attendance fails to improve</li> <li>• Review progress against attendance targets set in meeting</li> <li>• Constant monitoring, even if attendance improves slightly</li> <li>• If attendance deteriorates, liaise with EWO to establish next steps</li> </ul>

Students with attendance under 80% will have been referred to the EWO. Necessary action will be taken, for example involving the Medical Needs Team or pursuing further proceedings through the EWO.



**'Professional judgement' underpins the system. Should a student's attendance improve and then deteriorate, they should move to the next stage.**

## **Appendix 1 - Strategies for Promoting Attendance**

The Whitby High School will offer an environment in which students feel valued and welcomed. The school's ethos aims to demonstrate that students are important, that they will be missed when they are absent or late and that follow up action will be taken.

A varied and flexible curriculum will be offered to all students. Every effort will be made to ensure that learning tasks are matched to students' needs.

Attendance data will be regularly collected and analysed in order to help identify patterns, set targets, correlate attendance with achievement, and support and inform policy and practice (see previous information in this policy).

Good attendance will be recognised through the use of the reward system. 100% attendance awards will be presented at the end of each school term and year.

Parents will be reminded regularly (via newsletters, the school brochure, parents' evenings) of the importance of good attendance.

Students who are absent through sickness for any extended period of time will (when appropriate) have work sent home to them and will be re-integrated back into school upon their return. If needed, the appropriate House will make a Medical Needs Team referral (serious cases).

Students who have been absent for whatever reason for an extended period of time will (when appropriate) have individually tailored reintegration programmes prepared for them. This may involve time in the Study Support Centre.

House Progress and Assistant Progress Managers will have regular meeting with the school's Education Welfare Office in order to identify and support those students who are experiencing attendance difficulties.

Visits will be made to feeder primary schools in order to ensure the smoothest possible secondary transfer. Discussions with primary school teachers will seek to identify those students who may require extra support during this process.

## **Appendix 2 – Attendance Committee Meetings 2015 - 16**

### **What is the purpose of the meetings?**

- To keep the issue of attendance at the forefront of our practice
- To appreciate the 'wider picture' in terms of whole-school attendance
- To involve all parties in the discussion about attendance
- To deploy people effectively through a 'joined-up' approach
- To closely monitor overall attendance rates and the rates of vulnerable groups and implement strategies to address any emerging issues

### **Who attends the Committee Meetings?**

- The Deputy Headteacher responsible for attendance
- The Attendance Officer
- The Education Welfare Officer
- The Family Support Officer
- House Progress Managers

### **What is the format?**

- The meeting is designed to bring everyone involved in attendance together following House consultations with the EWO
- Key data will be shared: whole school attendance, broken down by House and attendance data of vulnerable groups
- House Progress Managers will come to the meeting with lists of students who are going onto the 'staged' system (including those who require an attendance meeting) and these will be given to the Attendance Officer
- Urgent referrals which have emerged will be discussed
- Cases will be shared out between the EWO and Family Support Officer to monitor
- The Attendance Officer will add the information given to their 'attendance tracker' and send out the necessary letters
- The meeting will be 'business-like' and will last no more than 40 minutes

### **Committee Meetings are held once a month (all start at 3.20 pm)**