



# ATTENDANCE POLICY

# June

# 2021

# ONWARDS



# AIMS

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**CARE for everyone and encourage respect and tolerance

**E**NJOY education and rejoice in success



Moving Forward Together

## 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 all agencies and parents/carers to promote good attendance.
- Establish a staged system which supports parents/carers and challenges those whose attendance causes concern.
- 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. Students whose attendance is either very good or improved will be recognised through the School's rewards system.

**Parents/carers** – Under 'The Education Act 1996', parents/carers are responsible for ensuring that their child attends school regularly and in a punctual manner. In addition, the School expects that students are properly dressed and equipped and in a fit condition to learn. Parents/carers will be informed promptly of any concerns, which may arise over a child's attendance. Parents/carers 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 'Attendance Management' (see Appendix 1 at the rear of 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 absences, liaising closely with parents/carers. Staff will respond to all absences firmly and consistently.

**We expect our students to have an attendance rate above 97%**

## **We make no apology for raising the issue of attendance with parents/carers**

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

- Please see 'Appendix 1' for a brief summary of the School's procedures.
- The School's policy is underpinned by Section 444 of the Education Act 1996, which states that it is the responsibility of the parent to ensure that their child attends school regularly.
- The system is based on efficiency, whereby concerns are progressed through the procedures in an expedient manner. Support will be offered to those who require it.
- There is a major 'Attendance Data Drop' every **two** weeks and cases are acted upon swiftly. House staff monitor and track data and actions with regard to attendance. There is regular consultation with the Family Engagement and Attendance Intervention Lead. Families may receive the letters outlined in Appendix 1 (Stage 2) or be subject to further action, such as support from designated staff (see 'Appendix 2').
- Persistent absence without good reason may result in referral to the Local Authority for legal action.
- Attendance runs through whole-school self-review processes. House Progress Managers meet with tutors regularly to update cases, it is a major feature of House meetings and when House Progress Managers meet with their SLT links and the Headteacher three times per year on an individual basis. In addition, it is a standing item on Governing Body agendas.
- The School has a dedicated Family Engagement and Attendance Intervention Lead to address attendance issues.
- All absences must be authorised. Medical evidence is required for any unauthorised absences. Medical evidence is required for one-off absences of 5 days or more.
- 14 sessions or 7 days of absence triggers 'Medical Evidence'. This means that no more absences will be authorised without medical evidence (this can include appointment cards, copies of prescriptions or a dated letter from a medical practitioner).
- Parents/carers with children who have ten or more unauthorised absences may receive a Fixed Penalty Notice. Each case will be assessed on its merits.
- Parents/carers may be invited into school via a letter for an Attendance Panel meeting to discuss absences.
- The issue of attendance will be highlighted around the School and in key messages to students and parents/carers.
- It is recognised that some children struggle to attend school because of underlying emotional needs and the School follows the EBSN (Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance) guidance.
- **Disadvantaged groups of students will be monitored closely.**

### **Broken Weeks**

The School analyses 'broken weeks' data. This measures how many times a student has at least one day off per week. It is possible for some students to have a high attendance percentage, but to have a significant number of broken weeks.

### **Staff responsibilities**

**All staff are responsible for keeping accurate registers and alerting the attendance team where a student appears to be missing. Staff will alert the Attendance team if they are supervising a child outside the normal class.**

The **Deputy Headteacher** with responsibility for pastoral care will monitor overall School and House attendance and punctuality. He/she will ensure systems are updated and rigorous and formulate the School's Attendance and Punctuality Action Plan. Reports will be provided to the Headteacher and Governing Body. In addition, he/she will liaise with agencies regarding more serious attendance concerns and provide professional challenge to these agencies when appropriate. He/she will seek to secure the services of independent support consultants to provide additional support and challenge of our systems.

**House Progress Managers (HPMs)** are accountable for overall student attendance rates in their respective Houses. They will lead their Assistant Progress Manager (APMs) and tutors to ensure that systems are being followed and issues are identified and acted upon expediently. HPMs are accountable to the Deputy Headteacher and will work with the Education Welfare Service and other professionals, in order to address attendance issues. Daily home contact will take place for priority students. House Progress Managers will keep attendance as a major priority in their individual teams.

**Form tutors** will monitor attendance and punctuality on a daily basis. The key focus is for those students on an attendance rate of between 90% and 97%. Form tutors will make contact with the families of Pupil Premium students on the first day of absence. Tutors will liaise closely with House staff to ensure attendance and punctuality concerns are addressed. **If a student has been absent for two days without explanation, it is vital that tutors alert House staff to this.**

The **Attendance Team** consists of three staff. The Family Engagement and **Attendance Lead** has overall responsibility for making the 'system' in this policy work on the ground. He/she will manage the Attendance Officer. In addition, he/she will meet fortnightly with House staff and identify priority cases and actions. Please see **Appendix 2** for further details.

### **Student 'Attendance Report'**

Students whose attendance is causing concern may be placed on Attendance Report. This will be monitored by the form tutor. This measure is usually, but not always, for students whose attendance is less than 90%.

### **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. **Under The Education Act 1996, 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 for ten minutes. Students late twice in a week will be kept for 30 minutes on a Friday, or a following day if absent. Persistent lateness will lead to conversations with home and possibly further consequences. Text messages will be sent home to inform parents/carers if their child has arrived late to school.

**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 closes, without valid reason, will be given a 'U' mark. This affects a student's attendance, as a 'U' mark is classed as an unauthorised absence for that session (half of the day). Ten 'U' marks within a term will, in all probability, 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 (electronically or on paper) to their form tutor explaining why they were absent. **It is vital that absences are reported, as unreported absences are classified as unauthorised.** Ten unauthorised absences within a term may trigger a Fixed Penalty Notice. 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.

### **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, having provided proof of a medical appointment, they will be marked late rather than a medical absence on the School attendance register. Please endeavour to make such appointments outside of school hours.

### **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.

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

This is the responsibility of all staff. Teaching staff must alert the Attendance team immediately if a child is absent from class. The same procedure applies if students are witnessed when 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 daily by the Attendance Officer. 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 (including holiday requests)**

Please complete a 'Leave of Absence' form for requests for known absences. This has been sent to all parents. It can be accessed by using this link: <http://www.whitbyhigh.org/page36.html>  
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.

**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 and a Fixed Penalty Notice will be issued.**

## Appendix 1 - FLOWCHART OF ATTENDANCE MANAGEMENT AT TWHS

### STAGE 1

- Data to be analysed on a 2-3 week basis (at least twice a half term)
- Data to focus on:

**97% and below**

**14+ " codes (ongoing throughout the year)**

**10 'G' codes (within a term i.e. Autumn, Spring, Summer)**

**10 + 'O' and 'U' codes (termly as above)**

**Persistent absence threshold (to ensure that all students on this list are being supported appropriately)**



### STAGE 2

- Decisions to be made which letters need to be sent out to parents  
**\*\*Letter 1** (which is a general concern letter) will, in most cases, need to have been sent prior to sending **Letter 2** (Attendance Panel Meeting Letter)**\*\***
- **Letter 2 – Attendance Panel Meeting Letter/Invite** for parent. The LA views this as an early intervention tool. It is expected that an Action Plan will be drawn up to support a student's attendance.
- A time for this **Letter 2** meeting needs to be allocated. The HPM will lead this meeting (this meeting can be for unauthorised **and/or** authorised absences). Even if parents do not attend a meeting an **Action Plan** should be drawn up in their absence, as this forms part of the evidence for any future legal processes.
- **Medical Evidence Letter** – this can be considered (once the threshold of 14+ sessions of absence has been reached) at **any** stage of the process when it becomes appropriate to do so.

Should the measures taken above not lead to an improvement in attendance, the Education Welfare Service will become involved and the School will pursue Fixed Penalty notices and court action in order to improve attendance.



## **Appendix 2 - The role of specific staff in Attendance Monitoring**

<b>Form tutors</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keep attendance at the forefront of priorities</li> <li>• Check registers and correct erroneous codes daily</li> <li>• Ensure students are aware of data</li> <li>• Monitor the '90-95%' cohort closely</li> <li>• Inform House by the end of the second day of absence for a child (first day if PP)</li> <li>• Regular conversations with students to promote the importance of attendance</li> <li>• Monitor students who are on Attendance Report</li> </ul>	<b>House Leaders</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lead the drive to improve attendance within the House</li> <li>• Lead the form tutors and ensure cases are acted on</li> <li>• Ensure the issue of attendance is given a high profile at all times, including building a culture of celebration of improvement</li> <li>• Follow the 'Staged System' and ensure appropriate action is taken</li> <li>• Maintain accurate records and report to SLT and the Headteacher as required</li> <li>• Support the Attendance Team with family contact and completion of paperwork when required</li> <li>• Lead multi-agency approaches in school, to support good attendance</li> <li>• Contact home regarding students who are persistently late to school.</li> </ul>
<b>Family Engagement and Attendance Lead</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lead the school drive to improve attendance</li> <li>• Foster a culture of praise for good and improved attendance</li> <li>• Lead the 'morning call' process</li> <li>• Regular (at least fortnightly) consultations with House Progress Managers</li> <li>• Monitor and implement school systems and procedures (regular 'staged' letters and meetings with families)</li> <li>• Ensure records of intervention are maintained and acted upon</li> <li>• Early intervention with identified families, to include work with partner primary schools</li> <li>• Entrenched cases</li> <li>• Liaison with the Local Authority</li> <li>• Strategic oversight of formal processes, such as FPNs and prosecution</li> <li>• Lead the school's response in line with the EBSN framework.</li> </ul>	<b>The School Attendance Team</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintenance of school systems to monitor attendance</li> <li>• Production of data to monitor attendance</li> <li>• Attend meetings regarding attendance as required</li> <li>• Production of letters and administration to support whole-school work on attendance</li> <li>• Meet regularly with the School Welfare Officer to review systems</li> </ul>

### Appendix 3 - What does my attendance rate mean?

There are **190** school days in a year. The following chart shows how percentages equate to actual days of absence:

<b>95%</b>	<b>9.5 days off</b>
<b>92%</b>	<b>15 days</b>
<b>90%</b>	<b>19 days</b>
<b>88%</b>	<b>23 days</b>
<b>85%</b>	<b>28.5 days</b>
<b>80%</b>	<b>38 days</b>

#### **Appendix 4 – The Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN) Process**

The Education Welfare Service are able to send a Fixed Penalty Notice on behalf of the school to the parents of any student who has more than 10 unauthorised sessions absent from school (1 session = ½ day). Students who arrive after the close of registers will be coded as 'U' – unauthorised absence.

The Fixed Penalty Warning letter gives parents a period of 15 school days of monitoring. If, at the end of this period, there has not been an improvement, or an improvement has been made but not sustained, a Fixed Penalty Notice will be issued. Each parent/carer would have to pay £60.00 per child. If this is not paid within 21 days the payment increases to £120.00 per child per parent. Payments will not be accepted after 28 days. If parents do not pay, the Local Authority will prosecute in the Magistrates' Court. If convicted the parent may receive a fine of up to £1000.

As from the 1st September 2017, any requests made for a holiday to be taken during term time which is not considered by the head teacher to be due to exceptional circumstances, will be recorded as unauthorised and a Fixed Penalty Notice will be issued.