



Attendance  
Policy

April

**2017**



# 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



## 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 '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 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 95%**

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

### **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 regular consultations with the School Welfare Officer and discuss students whose attendance is causing concern. Students may be placed on the staged system (see next page) or be subject to further action, such as support from designated staff (see 'Appendix 2'). **Serious** concerns will be referred to the Local Authority Education Welfare Officer for intervention. This is action beyond the school.
- School data is monitored closely. A major review is held every month, whereby key statistics and trends are analysed and acted upon. Attendance is a major issue in the school's self-review procedures and a standing item at Pastoral Leaders' meetings.
- The school has employed two extra staff to address attendance issues (see 'Appendix 2' of this policy for more details).
- Students are basically monitored on a monthly basis. Those moving onto Stage 2 are placed 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, in all probability, receive a Fixed Penalty Notice. Each case will be assessed on its merits.
- Medical evidence is required for one-off absences of 5 days or more.
- The Attendance Officer will keep a database, recording which letter parents/carers have received. This will avoid duplication.
- When Attendance Panel 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 and parents/carers.
- **Those in receipt of Pupil Premium funding (students whose families have been in receipt of unemployment benefit in the last 6 years) will be monitored closely.**
- **Common sense and judgement must pervade these procedures. The main aim is to provide structure but also allow flexibility within this.**

### **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 Education Welfare Service and the school's attendance team (see 'Appendix 2') 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, school staff and Education Welfare Service 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 two 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

The Department for Education classes any student with an attendance rate of less than 90% 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. You may be asked to attend an early intervention Attendance Panel Meeting.
<b>Stage 2</b>	This means your child's attendance is becoming a concern – it is persistently below 90% or shows no signs of improvement. A high number of <b>broken weeks</b> also triggers Stage 2 intervention. You are invited in to meet with the House staff and/or the School Welfare Officer at an Attendance Panel Meeting. Support is offered. <b>However, further absences will not be authorised without medical evidence</b> (this can include a prescription or medicinal packaging). Attendance targets will be set and if there is no improvement, a <b>Fixed Penalty Notice</b> will be issued in most cases. (Each case will be assessed on its merits). Failure to attend the meetings outlined above may lead to a Fixed Penalty Notice being issued.
<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 Local Authority Education Welfare Service 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.

### 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. Parents/carers will be notified about this and the issue will be addressed through the school's systems.

## 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. Persistent lateness will lead to more serious sanctions (see 'Appendix 3'). Senior staff will also run 'spotlight periods' on late marks at designated times every half-term and students who are late on these days will be detained for up to one-hour on the same day. Parents and carers will be notified of 'spotlight periods'.

**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 absence for that session (half of the day). Ten 'U' marks 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 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 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, they will be marked late rather than absent 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 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 and a Fixed Penalty Notice will be issued. Fixed Penalty Notices have been re-instituted by the local authority following the outcome of the Isle of Wight v Platt Case.**

## Appendix 1 - The Whitby High School Attendance Procedures

Attendance Category	Action Taken	Monitoring Procedures
<b>1) 95 - 100% (Expected level)</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% (Monitoring triggered)</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 and morning call 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 School Attendance Team</li> <li>• If attendance deteriorates, move on to 'Stage 2'</li> </ul>
<b>3) 85 - 90% Persistent Absence (Concern)</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 and morning call when absent</li> <li>• <b>Medical evidence</b> 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>• After 10 unauthorised absences, a Fixed Penalty Notice will be issued</li> </ul>
<b>4) 80 - 85% (Serious concern)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monitor closely – priority cases</li> <li>• Text messaging service and morning call when absent</li> <li>• Medical evidence needed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Further use of Fixed Penalty Notices</li> <li>• If attendance still does not improve, the case is clearly becoming '<b>entrenched</b>' and it moves to 'Stage 3' of proceedings</li> <li>• Constant monitoring, even if attendance improves slightly</li> <li>• The case will be referred to the Education Welfare Service</li> <li>• Possible prosecution</li> </ul>

### **'Professional judgement' underpins the system**

#### Examples of School Interventions to Promote Good Attendance

- First morning telephone calls and absence texts
- Staged letters to express concern
- Attendance Panel Meetings with House staff and/or School Welfare Officer
- Home visits by the School Welfare Officer/Family Support Officer
- Fixed Penalty Notices (each case will be assessed on its merits)
- Local Authority Education Welfare Service involvement and possible court action
- Rewards for good and improved attendance

## Appendix 2 - The role of support staff in Attendance Monitoring

<b>The Family Support Officer</b>	<b>School Welfare Officer</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Home education programme</li> <li>• Designated cases from Houses</li> <li>• Emergency home visits</li> <li>• Improvement of home-school relations by breaking down barriers to communication and liaison over education programmes</li> <li>• TAF initial assessments and oversight</li> <li>• Year 11 focus</li> <li>• Student collection for GCSE exams</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Formal monthly consultations with House Progress Managers</li> <li>• Monitor and implement school systems and procedures (regular 'staged' letters and meetings with families)</li> <li>• Early intervention with identified families (namely Year 7)</li> <li>• Entrenched cases</li> <li>• Liaison with the Education Welfare Service on behalf of House staff</li> </ul>
<b>Assistant Progress Managers</b>	<b>The School Attendance Officer</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Weekly monitoring of attendance</li> <li>• Dedicated time weekly to make priority calls regarding attendance</li> <li>• Highlight students causing concern or those with irregular attendance</li> <li>• Designated APM to focus on Pupil Premium Persistent Absence</li> </ul>	<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 – Procedures for Late Students

<b>Number of late marks</b>	<b>Action taken</b>
<b>Up to 10</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Tutor monitoring</li><li>• Daily 10 minute detention</li><li>• Late twice or more in a week, 30 minute detention on Friday</li></ul>
<b>10-20</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Contact home made by House staff</li><li>• Letter of concern to follow up</li><li>• Meeting with parent/carer</li><li>• Daily 30-minute detentions</li><li>• Close monitoring</li></ul>
<b>20-30</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• School Attendance Team involvement</li><li>• Letter expressing serious concern issued</li><li>• Meeting with parent/carer (SLT involvement)</li><li>• Daily 50-minute detentions</li></ul>
<b>More than 30</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Education Welfare Service involvement</li><li>• Possibility of Fixed Penalty Notice being issued</li><li>• Daily 1-hour detentions</li><li>• Deputy Headteacher involvement</li></ul>

#### Spotlight Periods on Late Marks ('Zero Tolerance' to lateness)

From time-to-time, the school will run daily late detentions of up to one-hour. We reserve the right to do this and make no apology for our firm stance on this issue.

It is important that parents/carers inform the school if there is a legitimate issue leading to poor punctuality. We can then work together to address the issue.

**Appendix 4 - 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>

