

WHITWORTH COMMUNITY HIGH SCHOOL

WHOLE SCHOOL ATTENDANCE POLICY

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Prepared by:	P Donoghue using LCC Model policy
Approved by:	Governing Body
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Please note that where policy is LCC model policy, then the version details will be provided by LCC in the document.

Version numbers ending in a letter relate to documents under review and awaiting approval. Once a document has been approved then the version number will increase e.g. version 1a = approved version 1 being reviewed. Once version 1a has been approved it will then move to version 2.

Version Number	Date of change	Reviewed by	Brief reason for changes
2.0	Jan 2016	P Donoghue	Changes to PA thresholds and sanctions
3.0	Jan 2017	P Donoghue	Changes in light of LA issues re FPN and session start times for students with adjusted timetables.
4.0	March 2017	P Donoghue	Clear thresholds for Educational Visits and extra-curricular participation following assemblies in January / February 2017.
5.0	November 2017	P Donoghue / C Wright	Amendment to register closing time AM Recommended by LA

Whole-School Attendance Policy

Aims:

The school recognises the clear link between the attendance and attainment of students. The aim of this policy is therefore to encourage the highest possible levels of attendance for individuals, groups and the student body as a whole.

In order to achieve this, all members of the school community have an important contribution to make. The Policy should be read in conjunction with the accompanying Attendance Guidelines which identify the ways in which we can all contribute to improving attendance at Whitworth.

Expectations:

As a school we aim to have all of our students in school every day. As we recognise that students may have unavoidable absences at times due to illness and other unavoidable cause, we aim to reduce unauthorised absence and to work with parents and students to minimise absence where possible. Our minimum expected level of attendance is 97%. We know that good attendance is the key to successful schooling and we believe our students can be amongst the best in the area.

The Policy and accompanying Guidelines aim to:

- Improve the overall percentage attendance of students at Whitworth.
- Raise the profile of attendance and make it a priority for staff, students, parents and governors.
- Ensure the provision of appropriate guidance and support for parents, students and staff.
- Develop and monitor clear procedure for maintaining accurate registers and for registering students during each lesson.
- Develop a systematic approach to gathering, analysing and acting upon attendance data in order to target attendance related issues.
- Develop a framework within which all staff can work to provide a consistent approach to raising levels of attendance throughout the school.
- Ensure that the school has an effective partnership with the Local Authority's Attendance Improvement Workers and other relevant agencies.
- Reduce Persistent Absence figures overall to under national averages

Links to Other Policies:

This Policy is linked to the Learning and Teaching Policy, the school's Anti-bullying strategies and the Behaviour Management Policy.

Policy Outline:

Encouraging Good Attendance For All:

- The accompanying Guidelines provide detail of strategies for raising levels of attendance. All staff should ensure that these are followed.
- Roles and responsibilities for each member of staff are clearly indicated in the Guidelines.
- An appropriate curriculum, including the use of alternative provision for some students, is essential and will be kept under constant review.
- The need for high quality learning and teaching throughout the school if we are to encourage good attendance is recognised.
- Students are provided with appropriate support so that problems do not drive them away from school. The school's approach to bullying is of particular significance here. Where problems outside school are identified as having an impact on a student's attendance, an appropriate level of multi-agency support will be developed.
- Students with Special Educational Needs are identified and given appropriate support.
- Effective partnership with parents through regular contact and support is provided. Parents are kept informed of their child's attendance through first day contact, through letters of praise and concern and through individual interviews when appropriate.
- Parents are actively discouraged from taking students away from school during term-time for holiday or other purposes.
- Attendance is given a high profile within the school including through assemblies, PSHCE. Appropriate displays during Parents' Evenings and other events further help to raise the profile of attendance.
- Governors are encouraged to play an active role in raising levels of attendance, and are kept informed of attendance issues through the Governors Curriculum Committee.
- Punctuality is highlighted as an important issue through the use of appropriate sanctions.

Identifying and Tackling Poor Attendance:

- Attendance levels for individuals, form groups, year groups and the whole school are carefully monitored and action taken to address poor attendance at each of these levels.
- Attendance levels of other groups of students, such as boys and girls, high or low attaining students and those with Special Educational Needs are carefully monitored and action is taken to address significant differences.
- The school seeks to address patterns of non-attendance, for example at particular times in the week or from particular subjects.
- Long-term absentees are provided with appropriate support to enable them to make a positive return to school.
- Early identification of potential poor attendees is part of the school's primary liaison work during transition.
- Attendance Improvement at Whitworth provides targeted strategies for students with poor attendance, students with deteriorating attendance and potential poor attendees. Details are provided in the accompanying Guidelines.
- Attendance panels, involving Progress Leaders, Attendance Co-ordinator, members of the school's Senior Leadership Team, Governors and the Attendance Improvement Manager (AIM), are used to encourage and support parents.
- Other support strategies for parents, including advice clinics on attendance issues, are provided.

- Effective partnership with the Attendance Improvement Officer is central to improving attendance and close communication between the AIM and the school is carefully maintained.
- Attendance is closely monitored as are reasons for authorising absences. Abuses in authorising absences may result in further intervention by the AIM, including no further authorising of absences.
- In cases such as 5 school days unauthorised absences in one term (i.e. 10 sessions) or 7 school days unauthorised absences over two consecutive terms (i.e. 14 sessions), a student will be referred to the court officer who may issue a Penalty Notice.
- The school will use Attendance Contracts signed by school, parent and student to establish agreed strategies to improve attendance for those who it has become an issue and clear consequences will be outlined should there not be a sustained improvement unless due to acceptable medical evidence.
- Participation in Educational Visits will be subject to students maintaining satisfactory attendance throughout the year. Any PA student (90% or below) will not normally be considered for inclusion on a trip or Educational Visit unless exceptional circumstances apply in order to maintain the link between regular attendance and enrichment activity provision. Preference will be given to students with over 95% attendance, which is the national average figure for secondary schools in England. Any student with any unauthorised absence could jeopardise their place on any Educational Visit or extracurricular activity.
- Any student who takes an unauthorised holiday during term time will automatically not be eligible to participate on any residential Educational Visit. Should a student already have been accepted on such a visit and then takes an unauthorised holiday or leave of absence, then the school has the right to remove the student from the educational visit and any monies already paid could be forfeited.
- Students with an attendance problem, other than due to legitimate medical or authorised circumstances, will not be allowed to represent the school at official events unless there are bona fide and acceptable reasons to explain such absences. This also includes attendance at the school Prom in Year 11.
- Students punctuality will also influence decisions about participation in extracurricular activities and Educational Visits. Students with numerous lates (5 in a term, 10 in an academic year) will normally not be allowed to participate in these activities.

Detailed Information:

Types of Absence:

- Absences are categorised as AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. The responsibility for categorising each absence rests with the school alone. School attendance staff will make a decision based on the evidence provided whether an absence will be authorised or not.
- Authorised absences can include:
 - Pre-arranged or emergency medical/dental appointments
 - Legitimate illnesses
 - Other appointments/events with prior approval from the school
- Unauthorised absences can include:
 - Truancy before or during the school day
 - Unexplained absences where no reason has been given

- Birthdays or family anniversaries/events
- Parents keeping a child from attending school without a legitimate reason
- Day trips or holidays in term-time not agreed with the school
- Exceeding the duration of an authorised absence without approval from the school
- A child refusing to attend school
- Unauthorised absences can result in sanctions being made against parents e.g Fixed Penalty Fine Notices issued.
- In each case the school will endeavor to resolve any issues with parents before any legal action is taken.
- Legal action, e.g.FPN (Fixed Penalty Notices) will be issued after written warnings are given and attendance fails to improve. The school will be mindful of exceptional circumstances and/or any pertinent medical issues before any Fixed Penalty Notice is issued.

Penalty Notices and Court Procedures:

- Penalty Notice (FPN) fines will be issued where a student has accrued 10 sessions (5 days) of unauthorised absences within a term or 14 sessions (7 days) unauthorised absences over two consecutive terms. This is applicable to any unauthorised absence and does include unauthorised term time holidays.
- Currently, a FPN being issued will result in a £120 fine per parent per child if paid within 28 days. If paid within 21 days the fine can be reduced to £60 per parent per child. Should a fine not be paid within 28 days the case will then usually be sent to court.
- Instances of continued persistent absence will be sent directly for court proceedings where penalties can increase up to £2500 fine per parent or 3 months imprisonment.

Persistent Lateness:

- Persistent lateness can be as damaging to a child's education as persistent absence and can also result in sanctions ranging from PN fines to court proceedings.
- Lateness is split in to two categories:
 - Late before registers are closed.
 - Late after registers are closed.
- Registers are opened and closed during the morning session and again at the start of the afternoon session.
- Registers are closed in the morning at 9.30am and in the afternoon at 2.15pm

- Students are to arrive in their respective form rooms prior to registration commencing. A student who arrives in form once registration has begun will be marked as being late.
- A student who arrives in school after the registers have closed will be marked as being absent.

Leave of Absence during Term-Time:

- Taking students out of school for holidays and other events during term-time can have an adverse effect on a child's educational wellbeing and can lead to sanctions being taken against parents where a holiday or other event has not been authorised by the school prior to its commencement.
- Legislation makes it clear that Headteachers' cannot authorise any holiday or other event during term-time unless under **exceptional** circumstances. Holidays and other events not authorised under these guidelines will be classed as unauthorised absences and will result in a Penalty Notice (FPN) fine being issued to parents by the Court Officer when absences meet the thresholds stated in this policy.
- Where a parent feels that they have extenuating and exceptional circumstances for taking their child on holiday for any period during term-time they should seek authority from the Headteacher in writing giving more than 10 school days (2 full weeks) notice where possible and also to arrange a meeting with a member of the schools Senior Leadership Team (SLT).
- For any request for Leave of absence during term time, a meeting between parents/carers and a member of the schools Senior Leadership Team needs to be made to discuss the request.
- **There is no automatic right in law to take a child out of school for family holidays or other events.**

Illness:

- Where a student is continually absent from school due to illnesses that have not been previously registered with the school, parents will be requested to provide the school with medical evidence. Any absences after such a request has been made that are not backed up with medical evidence will be marked as unauthorised and will be treated in the same way as persistent absence.
- Should a student have three or more consecutive days of absence school will require medical evidence to authorise the absence
- Examples of medical evidence can include a doctor's note, a dated appointment card, a dated prescription or dated medication providing the dates on such medical evidence correspond with the period of absence. In addition, from time to time certain pharmacies are authorised under the Pharmacy First scheme to diagnose low-level illnesses and prescribe medication accordingly. This can also be used as medical evidence.

Absence Procedures for Parents:

- If your child is absent from school parents must inform the school as soon as possible on the first day of absence either by phone or by visiting the school reception.
- Parents should continue to keep the school informed during prolonged periods of absence.

Schools Responsibilities:

- The school will contact you if your child is absent and if we haven't heard from you.
- You may be invited in to the school for meetings to discuss your child's absence if the absences persist.
- The school may refer the case to the Attendance Improvement Manager (AIM) for intervention and in turn to the local authority for legal proceedings if that should become necessary.

Conclusion:

A range of strategies designed to tackle poor attendance is only a part of the school's approach to this issue. Whole-school issues such as providing effective pastoral support and effective learning and teaching are recognised as having a direct impact upon attendance.

Guidelines for Implementation of the Whole-School Attendance Policy

- Ensure that all students within lessons are able to access the learning through a range of learning and teaching strategies in line with the school's Learning and Teaching Policy.
- Ensure that underachieving students within each class are identified and inform Progress Managers. This will enable Progress Managers to identify those with the potential to become poor attendees.
- Ensure that the registration of all students is completed accurately in each lesson using the Lesson Monitor system on SIMS.
- Identify, within each lesson, any students who clearly should be present in the lesson but are not. Inform the Attendance Co-ordinator.
- Monitor carefully the attendance of individuals within a class and alert the Director of Learning and appropriate Progress Leader where patterns of non-attendance are detected.

- When a student is known to have truanted from your lesson, follow this up by making sure they have caught up the missed work in detention time.
- Ensure that appropriate work is set and marked for long-term absentees and those on long-term exclusions, so that return to school is made as easy as possible.
- Ensure that those who return from long-term absence are provided with appropriate support to enable them to access the learning within the lesson.
- Welcome back students from long-term absence in a warm and professional manner, avoiding reference to reasons for absence. Actively discourage any adverse comments about the absence from other students within the class.

1.2 The Form Tutor

- Ensure that registers for morning sessions are accurately completed and maintained.
- Use professional judgement to request first day calls from the Attendance Co-ordinator when truancy is suspected.
- Collect and scrutinise absence notes and alert the Attendance Co-ordinator if professional judgement suggests that these are forged. Tackle any instances of inappropriate absence with the student and alert the Attendance Co-ordinator so that parental contact can be made.
- Keep registers up to date with reasons for absence.
- Encourage good attendance through constant reinforcement of individual and class targets and through encouraging students to want to be the best attending form in the year group.
- Use the Lesson Monitor Attendance Reports in SIMS to track individual, class, year group and whole school trends. Encourage individuals and whole classes to maintain high attendance and re-inforce reward structure linked to attendance.
- Monitor attendance within the form and use short-term attendance reports and targets where you feel there is deterioration.

- Liaise with your Progress Leader as early as possible where there are issues of attendance with individual students, groups within the form or the whole form.
- Set individual student and form targets for each half-term and monitor these targets on a weekly basis by checking whether students are on track to achieve them. If they are not, use short term targets to get them back on track

1.3 Progress Leaders

- Monitor carefully the attendance of students within the year group, taking note of any patterns amongst students from particular groups, particular times of the week or particular subject areas. Inform SLT and the Attendance Co-ordinator of any identified patterns.
- Liaise with the school's Attendance Co-ordinator to decide upon referrals to the Attendance Improvement Worker.
- Liaise with the Attendance Co-ordinator to ensure that students with poor attendance are receiving appropriate levels of support.
- Monitor the attendance rates of forms within the year group, taking action alongside form tutors where particular forms are identified as having poor attendance. Use the reports under SIMS Lesson Monitor to generate these reports.
- Monitor particularly closely the attendance of those with deteriorating levels of attendance, those with attendance between 80% and 90% and those at risk of disaffection, using short-term targets and attendance reports as necessary.
- Foster a positive attitude to school attendance within the year group through assemblies, notice boards and constant reinforcement with students. Encourage a spirit of healthy competition between forms and individuals.
- Liaise with subject teachers to ensure that appropriate work is set for long-term absentees and those excluded from school.

- Work with the Attendance Co-ordinator to identify ways in which long-term absentees can be reintegrated effectively.
- Liaise with parents on matters related to their child's attendance. Input should include calling Progress Review Panels for students at risk of being poor attendees and joining the Attendance Coordinator, as appropriate, in attendance reviews for those with attendance below 90% (ie. Persistent Absences – PA students).
- Implement sanctions where there have been instances of truancy, whether from individual lessons or whole days.
- Keep form tutors informed of action taken in relation to particular students.
- Following liaison with the AIM or Attendance Co-ordinator/Deputy Head, decide upon students to remove from roll.
- Ensure that parents who wish to take students out of school during term-time are contacted and the potential consequences explained.

1.4 Deputy Head i/c Attendance

- Take overall responsibility for developing Attendance Policy within the school.
- Liaise with Progress Leaders and the Attendance Co-ordinator to identify students for the Governors' Attendance Panels.
- Organise and take part in Governors' Attendance Panels and LA Attendance Panels as required.
- Provide line management for the Attendance Co-ordinator and ensure that there is good communication with Progress Leader.
- Oversee, monitor and evaluate the Attendance Policy.
- Using attendance data, analyse this for patterns of poor attendance amongst particular year groups or other groups of students and take action to address any anomalies.

- Oversee the efficient completion of registers and take action where registers are not being completed accurately.
- Arrange for parent support re: attendance.
- Take a lead in promoting the need for good attendance through assemblies with staff and students.
- Decide upon new admissions and decide upon any initial action to be taken to encourage good attendance.
- With the rest of SLT, actively discourage parents from taking students out of school during term-time.
- With the Year 7 Progress Leader /Transition Manager and the Attendance Co-ordinator, identify Year 6 students for targeted support on attendance at transition from primary school.

1.5 Attendance Co-ordinator

- Operate personal first day calls using 'RS Connect' with parents of students with unsatisfactory attendance or where truancy is suspected.
- Investigate instances of suspected whole-day or lesson truancy and take appropriate action, including making initial contact with parents and informing the Progress Leader.
- Work closely with parents of targeted students to provide support and pressure to get students to return to school.
- Keep in contact with long-term absentees and liaise with Progress Leader to ensure that effective reintegration strategies are used, identifying "catch up" needs.
- Contact parents where absences have remained unexplained
- Liaise with Progress Managers and use attendance data to identify students for referral to the AIM.

- Meet with the AIM at least on a weekly basis and ensure that details of action are provided for the relevant Progress Leader.
- Work with targeted students to improve attendance through parental contact, attendance reports, short-term targets and rewards. Particular attention will be paid to students with attendance below 90%.
- Identify and prepare cases for referral to the Governors' Attendance Panel, for referral to the AIM and for cases where court action is required.
- Work with Progress Leaders to involve outside agencies with individuals and groups of students.
- Investigate reports of illegal juvenile employment of students and liaise with Progress Leaders on action to be taken in response.
- Ensure that the school's official registers are in line with legal requirements and that any anomalies are reported to SLT.
- Provide weekly data on Attendance for Headteacher and Progress Leaders and as required at other times.
- Keep the student roll up to date, adding or removing students from roll as required

1.6 Subject teachers

- Ensure class registers are taken accurately on SIMS at the start of each lesson and uploaded or using a paper copy in other circumstances and forwarding to the Attendance Coordinator.

1.7 Parents/Carers

- Ensure children attend school regularly
- Ensure children are punctual and prepared for the school day
- Avoid taking children out of school for holidays or other events
- Contact school as soon as possible on the first day of any period of absence
- Keep the school up to date during any prolonged absences

- Provide evidence for absences when requested

1.8 Pupils/Students

- Attend school regularly
- Arrive in school on time for registration and for each lesson
- Inform staff and parents should any issues arise that may subsequently affect school attendance
- Cooperate with school staff and outside agencies when required
- Ensure that out of school routines do not adversely impact on school attendance and punctuality
- Accept and undertake any sanction given by the school in respect of Attendance and Punctuality issues.