



# Wetherby High School

## Attendance Policy

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## **Introduction:**

1.1 School attendance is essential if children are to achieve their full potential.

1.2 Wetherby High School believe that school attendance is the key to enabling children to maximise the educational opportunities available to them and become emotionally resilient, confident and competent adults who are able to realise their full potential and make a positive contribution to their community.

1.3 Wetherby High School values all pupils. As set out in this policy, we will work with families to identify the reasons for poor attendance and try to resolve any difficulties.

1.4 Wetherby High School recognise that attendance is a matter for the whole school community. Our Attendance Policy should not be viewed in isolation; it is a strand that runs through all aspects of school improvement, supported by our policies on safeguarding, relationships and inclusive learning. This policy also considers the Human Rights Act 1998, the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, the Education Act 2011 and the Race Relations Act 2000.

## **Legal Framework:**

2.1 Section 7 of the 1996 Education Act states that parents must ensure that children of compulsory school age receive efficient full-time education suitable to their age, ability and aptitude to any special educational needs they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

2.2 A child is of Compulsory School Age at the beginning of the term following their 5<sup>th</sup> birthday. A child ceases to be of compulsory school age on the last Friday in June of the school year in which they reach the age of 16.

2.3 Under the Education Act 1996, the Local Authority has a statutory responsibility to ensure that parents secure education for children of compulsory school age and where necessary, use legal enforcement.

2.4 The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2013, require schools to take an attendance register twice a day, once at the start of the morning session and then again during the afternoon session.

2.5 The register must record whether the pupil was:

present;

absent;

present at approved educational activity; or

unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

## **Categorising Absence:**

3.1 Where pupils of compulsory school age are recorded as absent, the register must show whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised.

3.2 Absence can only be authorised by the headteacher and cannot be authorised by parents. All absences will be treated as unauthorised unless a satisfactory explanation for the pupil's absence has been received.

3.3 Parents must advise the school by telephone on the first day of absence and any subsequent days of absence. This should be followed up in the form of a written note from the parent/carer, though verbal explanations may be acceptable where this is considered appropriate.

3.4 Absence will be categorised as follows:

3.5 Illness Parents will be asked to provide medical evidence to allow the head teacher to authorise absence where attendance falls below 95%. Absence notes can be in the form of prescriptions, medication boxes and/or appointment cards. Medical evidence must contain the pupil's full name and date prescribed. Medical evidence will also be requested if an absence exceeds three days.

3.5.1 For prolonged absences exceeding five days Wetherby High School may request additional medical evidence in the form of a Doctor's Note explaining the exact reason for absence and recommended period of absence from school. In some cases, the School may refer to the School Health Service for additional advice and support.

3.6 Medical/Dental Appointments Parents are advised where possible to make medical and dental appointments outside of the school day. Where this is not possible, pupils must attend school for part of the day. Parents must show the appointment card to school. If a pupil is absent for a full day to attend a medical appointment then the pupil will incur half a day unauthorised absence.

3.7 Other Authorised Circumstances This relates to where there is cause for absence due to exceptional circumstances. If a pupil is persistently absent due to unauthorised circumstances then the School may seek to obtain further evidence of this.

3.8 Excluded (No alternative provision made) Exclusion from attending school is counted as an authorised absence. The child's class teacher/Coach/Year Manager will make arrangements for work to be sent home.

3.9 Leave of Absence During Term Time Parents who need to take their child out of school during term time must apply using the School's 'Leave of Absence Application.' Retrospective requests will not be considered and therefore will result in the absence being categorised as unauthorised. In line with government guidance, Wetherby High School do not authorise leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances

3.9.1 All requests for leave of absence will be responded to in writing.

3.9.2 If a pupil fails to return and contact with the parents has not been made or received, school may take the pupil off the school's roll in compliance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2013. This means that the child will lose their school place.

3.9.3 If the permission to take leave is not granted and the parent takes their child out of school the absence will be unauthorised. In such cases, the school may request the local authority issue a Penalty Notice or consider other legal sanctions including prosecution in the Magistrates Court.

3.9.4 A parent may make an application for their child to undertake juvenile employment. Each absence will be considered. We will not authorise juvenile employment during term time for any pupil if their attendance is below 95%.

We will not authorise juvenile employment during term time for Year 10 and 11 students regardless of their overall attendance.

3.10 Religious Observance Wetherby High School recognises we have students from all ethnic backgrounds and cultures and we embrace the cultural diversity they bring here. Applications for absence for this type must be made in writing to the Headteacher in advance. Failure to do so may lead to the absence being recorded as unauthorised.

3.11 Study Leave Study leave may be granted for Year 11 pupils approaching GCSE examinations. School will offer in school study programmes during this period to support their academic studies.

3.12 Traveller Absence The aim for the attendance of children within travelling families, in common with all other children, is to attend School as regularly and as frequently as possible. To protect traveller parents from unreasonable prosecution for non-attendance, the Education Act 1944, section 86, states that a traveller parent is safe from prosecution if their child accrues 200 attendances (i.e. 200 half days) in a year. This is only when the family are engaged in a trade or business that requires them to travel and when the child is attending school as regularly as that trade permits.

3.13 Late Arrival Registration begins at 9:00am on a Monday and 08:40am Tuesday to Friday; pupils are expected to be on site at Wetherby High School 10 minutes before registration. Pupils arriving after registration will be marked as present but arriving late (L). The register will close at 9:30am on a

Monday and 9:10am Tuesday to Friday. Pupils arriving after the close of register will be recorded as late (U), this will not be authorised and will count as an absence for that school session and statutory action may be taken where appropriate.

3.13.1 On arrival after the close of register, pupils must immediately report to Student Reception to ensure that we can be responsible for their health and safety whilst they are in school. They will be required to sign in at Student Reception. Behavioural sanctions will be implemented if a pupil fails to follow the signing in procedures.

3.13.2 The absence will only be authorised if a satisfactory explanation for the late arrival can be provided, for example, attendance at a medical appointment. Medical evidence will be requested to support the claim.

3.13.3 The absence will be recorded as unauthorised if the pupil has arrived late without justifiable cause.

3.13.4 If a pupil arrives late to School on 2 or more occasions within a five-day period they will be given an afterschool detention lasting one hour. Persistent lateness will result in appropriate school sanctions such as punctuality report and punctuality panels in conjunction with the Local Authority.

3.13.5 If a pupil arrives late after the close of registration they may be issued with an afterschool detention. If a pupil arrives late after the close of registration on 2 or more occasions within a five-day period they receive further sanctions

3.14 Unauthorised absence Absence will not be authorised unless parents have provided a satisfactory explanation and that it has been accepted as such by the head teacher. If a pupil's attendance falls below 95% the absence will remain unauthorised unless medical evidence is provided to School.

3.14.1 Examples of unsatisfactory explanations include:

- A pupil's/family member's birthday
- Shopping for uniforms
- Visiting the hair dressers or rectifying hair cut/colours at home.
- Closure of a sibling's school for INSET (or other) purposes
- "Couldn't get up"
- Pupil's refusal to attend school
- Illness where the child is considered well enough to attend school
- Family holidays
- Staying at home to care for siblings/parents
- Appointments which are not for the pupil

3.15 The Headteacher may unauthorise a pupil's absence if:

- a parent/carer has not provided any or enough information
- The reason(s) that are given do not fall within those categories defined by the Education Act 1996 as legally permissible
- The reason(s) given would not normally involve an absence of that length.
- There is doubt that the information has come from a parent/carer or from someone authorised to act on their behalf.
- The veracity of the information provided is being questioned
- Your child's attendance is below 95%

3.16 Members of staff from Wetherby High School may visit your home if your child is absent regardless of whether a reason for absence has been received.

3.17 Members of staff from Wetherby High School will contact West Yorkshire Police and use their Safer Schools Officer if they are concerned for Pupils welfare.

## **Deletions from the Register:**

4.1 In accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2013, pupils will only be deleted from the register when one of the following circumstances applies:

- The school is replaced by another school on a School Attendance Order
- The School Attendance Order is revoked by the local authority
- The pupil has ceased to be of compulsory school age
- Permanent exclusion has occurred and procedures have been completed
- Death of a pupil
- Transfer between schools
- Pupil withdrawn to be educated outside the school system
- Failure to return from an extended holiday after both the school and the local authority have tried to locate the pupil
- A medical condition prevents their attendance and return to the school before ending compulsory school-age
- In custody for more than four months (in discussion with The Youth Offending Team)
- 20 days continuous unauthorised absence and both the local authority and school have tried to locate the pupil
- Left the school but not known where he/she has gone after both the school and the local authority have tried to locate the pupil

Wetherby High School will follow Leeds City Council's Children Missing Education Protocol when a pupil's whereabouts is unknown.

## **Roles and Responsibilities:**

5.1 Wetherby High School believe that improved school attendance can only be achieved if it is viewed as a shared responsibility of the school staff, governors, parents, pupils and the wider school community.

The Governing Body will:

- Ensure attendance is promoted to pupils and their parents
- Annually review the school's Attendance Policy and ensure the required resources are available to fully implement the policy
- Ensure that the Registration Regulations, England, 2013 and other attendance related legislation is complied with
- Monitor the school's attendance and related issues through termly reporting at Governing Body Meetings
- Ensure that attendance data is reported to the Local Authority or Department for Education as required and on time
- Ensure that there is a named senior manager to lead on attendance
- Ensure that the school has clear systems to report, record and monitor the attendance of all pupils, including those who are educated off-site
- Ensure that there are procedures for collecting and analysing attendance data frequently to identify causes and patterns of absence
- Ensure that data is understood and used to devise solutions and to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions

5.2 The Leadership Team will:

- Agree school attendance targets and submit these to the Local Authority within the agreed timescale each year and where appropriate link these to the Performance Management of Senior Leadership within the school
- Actively promote the importance of attendance.
- Form positive relationships with pupils and parents.
- Ensure that there is a whole school approach which reinforces good school attendance; with good teaching and learning experiences that encourage all pupils to attend and to achieve
- Monitor the implementation of the Attendance Policy and ensure that the policy is reviewed annually
- Ensure that all staff are aware of the Attendance Policy and adequately trained to address attendance issues

- Ensure that the Registration Regulations, England, 2013 and other attendance related legislation is complied with
- Ensure that there is a named senior manager to lead on attendance and allocate sufficient time and resource
- Return school attendance data to the Local Authority and the Department for Education as required and on time
- Report the school's attendance and related issues through termly reporting to the Governing Body and on a half termly basis to the lead governor for attendance
- Ensure that systems to report, record and monitor the attendance of all pupils, including those who are educated off-site are implemented
- Ensure that attendance data is collected and analysed frequently to identify causes and patterns of absence
- Interpret the data to devise solutions and to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions
- Develop a multi-agency response to improve attendance and support pupils and their families
- Document interventions used to a standard required by the local authority should legal proceedings be instigated

#### 5.3 Department Heads/Pastoral Staff/Form Tutors will:

- Actively promote the importance and value of good attendance to pupils and their parents
- Form positive relationships with pupils and parents
- Contribute to a whole school approach, which reinforces good school attendance; with good teaching and learning experiences that encourage all pupils to attend and to achieve
- Comply with the Registration Regulations, England, 2013 and other attendance related legislation
- Implement systems to report, record and monitor the attendance of all pupils, including those who are educated off-site
- Analyse attendance data to identify causes and patterns of absence
- Contribute to the evaluation of school strategies and interventions
- Work with other agencies to improve attendance and support pupils and their families
- Document interventions used to a standard required by the local authority should legal proceedings be instigated

#### 5.4 The Student Support Team will:

- Release the 'Banding Report' on a termly basis.
- Contact the parents/carers of pupils who are absent. This will include both telephone calls and home visits. As part of our safeguarding procedures, home visits may be carried out even if we have received a call to say a student will not be attending School. This is to fulfil our duty of care obligation.
- Request to see your child if a home visit is carried out. If the child is not seen at the property this information may be passed to the Safeguarding Officer and/or the onsite Safer Schools Officer
- Hold Attendance and Punctuality Panel's for Pupils who are causing concern



- Implement 'Fast Track to Raising Attendance Initiative' whereby parents/carers will be invited into School and visited at home to discuss attendance concern. This will result in prosecution if no significant improvement in attendance is evident.
- Send letters each half term to those parents/carers whose child's attendance has fallen below 95%
- Keep accurate records of contact and interventions used.
- Weekly meetings with the Senior Management Team whereby data, students with an attendance concern and vulnerable students will be discussed.
- Half-termly meetings whereby every student's attendance and punctuality will be assessed.
- Transition work including contact with feeder schools and the collection of the new intake year 7 attendance certificates for early identification of students with poor attendance records or who are vulnerable. Transition visits will also be carried out in some cases.
- A full analysis of the school's attendance will also take place whereby vulnerable groups will be analysed and action plans will be put together to identify ways to improve attendance.

The Student Support Team has strategies in place for recording, monitoring and responding to students with attendance concerns.

#### 5.5 Request that Parents will:

- Talk to their child about school and what goes on there. Take a positive interest in their child's work and educational progress
- Instil the value of education and regular school attendance within the home environment
- Encourage their child to look to the future and aspire
- Contact the school if their child is absent. Contact is required on each day of absence. Parents should let the School know the reason why their child is absent and the expected date of return. Follow this up with a note where possible.
- Try to avoid unnecessary absences. Wherever possible make appointments for the Doctors, Dentists etc. outside of school hours
- Ask the school for help early if their child is experiencing difficulties
- Inform the school of any change in circumstances that may impact on their child's attendance
- Support the school; take every opportunity to get involved in their child's education, form a positive relationship with school and acknowledge the importance of children receiving the same messages from both school and home
- Encourage routine at home, for example, bed times, homework, preparing school bag and uniform the evening before
- Not keep their child off school to go shopping, to help at home or to look after other members of the family
- Avoid taking their child out of school during term-time, where this is unavoidable, and only in exceptional circumstances send a written leave request to the Head Teacher.
- Provide evidence of their child's illness if attendance is below 95%

## **Using Attendance Data:**

6.1 Pupil's attendance will be monitored and may be shared with the Local Authority and other agencies if a pupil's attendance is a cause for concern.

6.2 Each term the Inclusion Manager (Student Support Team) will provide all Coaches, academic team and pastoral team with attendance data for the pupil's in their year group and or coaching group. The list will be presented in numerical descending order with the highest attenders at the top; every pupil will be colour coded as indicated below:

- GREEN pupils with attendance between 100% and 96%
- AMBER pupils with attendance between 95% and 91%
- RED pupils with attendance below 90%

6.3 An arrow next to the pupil's name will indicate if their attendance has improved, stayed the same or deteriorated.

6.4 The Senior Leadership Team and Subject Managers will receive a complete set of data.

6.5 Year Managers will receive a complete set of data for their year groups.

6.6 This pupil level data will be used to trigger school action as set out in the escalation of intervention

6.7 Attendance data will also be used to identify emerging patterns and trends to inform whole school strategies to improve attendance and attainment.

6.8 Wetherby High School will share attendance data with the Department for Education and the local authority as required.

6.9 All information shared will be done so in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998

## **Support Systems:**

7.1 School recognise that poor attendance can be an indication of difficulties in a child's life. This may be related to problems at home and or in school. Parents should make school aware of any difficulties or changes in circumstances that may affect their child's attendance and or behaviour in school, for example, bereavement, divorce/separation, incidents of domestic abuse. This will help the school identify any additional support that may be required.

7.2 Wetherby High School also recognise that some pupils are more likely to require additional support to attain good attendance, for example, those pupils with special educational needs, those with physical or mental health needs, migrant and refugee pupils and looked after children.

7.3 The school will implement a range of strategies to support improved attendance. Strategies used will include:

- Discussion with parents and pupils
- Attendance panels
- Parenting contracts
- Attendance/Punctuality report cards
- Referrals to support agencies
- Learning mentors
- Friendship groups
- PSHE
- Reward systems
- Supportive Timetables
- Additional learning support
- Behaviour support
- Reintegration support packages

7.4 Support offered to families will be child centred and planned in discussion and agreement with both parents and pupils.

7.5 Where parents fail or refuse to engage with the support offered and further unauthorised absence occurs, Wetherby High School will consider the use of legal sanctions.

## **Legal Sanctions:**

### **8.1 Prosecution**

Where intervention fails to bring about an improvement in attendance, the Local Authority will be notified and legal action in the Magistrates' Court may be taken. The school will provide the Local Authority with evidence required for a prosecution under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 and will appear as a prosecution witness if required by the court. This is to ensure that parents realise their own responsibilities in ensuring attendance at school and most importantly about returning children to education. The school is following the new framework set out in Working together to improve school attendance 2024

8.1.1 Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 states that if a parent fails to ensure the regular school attendance of their child if they are a registered pupil at a school and is of compulsory school age, then they are guilty of an offence.

8.1.2 A parent found guilty of this offence can be fined up to £2500 and or be imprisoned for a period of three months. Cases found guilty in Magistrates Court can show on parent's future DBS certificate due to failure to safeguard a child's education.

8.1.3 Alternatives to Section 444 prosecution are Parenting Contracts, Penalty Notices or an Education Supervision Order.

## **8.2 Parenting Contracts (Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003)**

A Parenting contract is a voluntary agreement between school and the parent, it can also be extended to include the child and any other agencies offering support to resolve any difficulties leading to improved attendance.

8.2.1 The contract will outline attendance targets and will detail agreed actions that will help to achieve the target. The contract will be reviewed regularly.

8.2.2 The contract can be used as evidence in a prosecution should parents fail to carry out agreed actions.

8.2.3 Parenting Contracts will be used in accordance with Leeds City Council's Parenting Contract Protocol.

8.3 Penalty Notices (Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003) Penalty Notices will be considered when:

- A pupil is absent from school and the absence has not been authorised by the school
- A pupil has accrued unauthorised absence following written warning to improve.
- Penalty Notices will be issued for term time leave of 5 or more consecutive days. Penalty Notices will be considered when there have been 5 days of absence in a 10 – week period.

8.3.1 **First offence:** The first time a Penalty Notice is issued for term time leave or irregular attendance, the amount will be £160 per parent, per child (if paid within 28 days). This amount will be reduced to £80 per parent, per child if paid within 21 days.

8.3.2 **Second offence (within 3 years):** The second time a penalty notice is issued for term time leave or irregular attendance, the amount will be £160 per parent, per child (if paid within 28 days).

8.3.3 **Third offence and any further offences (within 3 years):** This will not result in a penalty notice and will instead be presented straight to Magistrates Court. Magistrates Court fines can be up to £2500 per parent, per child. Cases found guilty in Magistrates Court can show on the parent's future DBS certificate due to failure to safeguard a child's education.

Failure to pay the Penalty Notice may result in a prosecution under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996.

8.3.4 Penalty Notices will be used in accordance with Leeds City Council's Penalty Notice Protocol.

8.3.5 Prosecution may occur if parents/carers regularly remove their child from school for the purpose of unauthorised leave of absence.