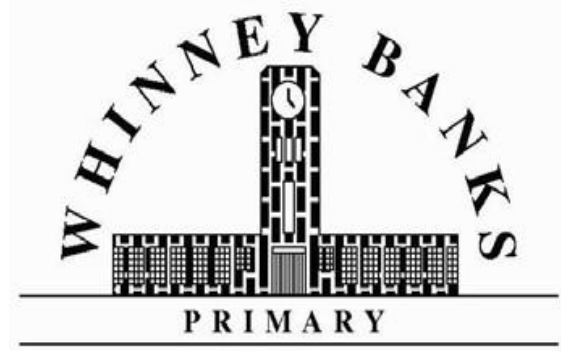


# Attendance Policy and Procedures

## Whinney Banks Primary School



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	Signature	Date
Signed by Chair of Governors:		
Signed by Headteacher		
<b>Reviewed/approved:</b>		<b>Sept 2024</b>
Next review due by:		<b>Sept 2025</b>

## **Statement**

All school attendance is mandatory and parents have a legal responsibility to ensure their children attend school.

At Whinney Banks Primary School attendance is everyone's business. We place a high value on good attendance and punctuality and praise children for good attendance and punctuality throughout the year. The school is committed to providing a full and efficient education for all pupils and this is made difficult if the children arrive late or are often absent. We, therefore, do all we can to ensure that children achieve maximum possible attendance and arrive at school on time each day. We have a good network of support staff both inside and outside the school that support our drive for consistently good attendance. All staff at Whinney Banks are alert to the importance of good attendance and will raise any emerging patterns of absence with parents.

The Head Teacher, Mrs Sandy Thorpe, holds the overview of attendance procedures within the school.

Mrs Rachel Harrison, Senior Leadership Team, leads on attendance issues within the school working closely our Education Welfare Officer Mrs Anne-Marie Cartwright and our Parent Support Advisor Mrs Ann Robson.

Mrs Thorpe, Mrs Harrison, Mrs Cartwright and Mrs Robson can be contacted via the school's main reception or phone line in the first instance.

## **LEGAL REQUIREMENTS**

Parents are required by law to ensure that their children are educated and they can be prosecuted for their children's non-attendance at school, unless education is provided by other means.

Schools are required to keep detailed records of children's attendance at school. As part of this we are required to record all absences as unauthorised unless parents give an adequate reason for them.

The law allows Head Teachers to consider individual requests to authorise a leave of absence in exceptional circumstances. Parents are obligated to inform us if their children will be absent due to holiday or any other reason and must complete a leave of absence form at least 2 school weeks in advance, available from the school office. Parents must include details of the exceptional circumstances for the leave and the Head Teacher may make an appointment with the parent to discuss.

If the request for leave of absence is authorised by the Head Teacher, the expectation is that the child's attendance will be of a satisfactory level both prior to, and after, the date covered by the request.

If the request for leave of absence is refused and the absence is recorded as unauthorised, the Head Teacher may refer the matter to the Local Authority requesting a Penalty Notice to be issued.

### **TERM TIME HOLIDAY AND LEAVE OF ABSENCE**

It is unlikely that a request for a holiday during term time will be authorised. Any subsequent absence will be recorded as unauthorised.

**Unauthorised absence for the purpose of a family holiday can result in a fixed penalty notice being issued by the local authority or prosecution of a parent for failing to ensure the regular attendance of their child at school.**

**From September 2024 a new national threshold for the issuing of penalty notices was introduced which follows a 3 year process of escalating measures taken by the local authority for unauthorised absence in term time. Please see the flow chart in appendix 1 which details this process.**

Where a child has not returned to school for 10 days after a notified absence, or is absent from school without authorisation for 20 consecutive school days, the school will report the child to the local authority as a missing child and may remove the child from the admissions register if the school and the LA have failed to establish the whereabouts of the child after making reasonable enquiries.

### **ATTENDANCE V. ATTAINMENT**

Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Pupil's absence also disrupts teaching routines so may affect the learning of others in the same class. Ensuring regular attendance at school is a legal responsibility and permitting absence from school without good reason creates an offence in law that may result in prosecution.

### **WHAT THE SCHOOL EXPECTS**

It is, therefore very important that parents do everything possible to ensure that:

1. Their children attend school regularly.
2. Their children arrive on time (i.e. by 8:40 am and 1:05 pm)
3. They contact school whenever their child is unable to attend (including notifying the school of doctors, dental or other medical appointments). This should be done on each day of absence unless the school has said it is unnecessary. Parents can let school know via our 24 hour answerphone, via the school app, email or in person.
4. Their children arrive well prepared for school (i.e. with their reading book, packed lunch, PE kit, swimming gear etc., as required).

5. Parents/Guardians should endeavour to arrange medical appointments outside of school hours. If their child has to leave school during a session to attend dental appointments etc., parents/guardians should notify the school to be granted permission for the child to leave the school. They must sign out at the office before leaving. If reasonable time is permitting, the child should return to school after the appointment.

### **WHAT PARENTS AND CHILDREN CAN EXPECT**

Support and advice will be available and given should any child be experiencing difficulties attending our school. Additionally, the school works with a range of support teams that can provide support appropriate to the presenting issue. The school will help parents and children access appropriate support when required.

All staff at our school receive training on the importance of attendance and are therefore vigilant to emerging patterns of absence. They may discuss with parents informally reasons for absence offering the support of our attendance team in school where appropriate.

The school will record and analyse attendance and lateness regularly using data monitoring software and implement any action necessary as a result of its findings. This is supported by a Data Technician who regularly analyses attendance data for different groups. Teachers are responsible for marking the SIMS register correctly, ensuring that every child has a mark (present (/) or absent (N)).

The school will follow clear procedures if a child fails to attend school regularly or often arrives late.

The school will encourage good attendance through a system of raising awareness of the impact of poor attendance. We will also celebrate the importance of attendance, improved attendance rates and high achievement in attendance.

Where a pupil is absent, and their parent has not contacted the school by the close of the morning register to report the absence, administrative staff will contact the child's parent initially by text to notify them of their child's absence and to request a reason for absence.

The school will always follow up any absences in order to:

- Ascertain the reason for the absence.
- Ensure the proper safeguarding action is being taken.
- Identify whether the absence is authorised or not.
- Identify the correct code to use to enter the data onto the school registration system.

The school will not request medical evidence in most circumstances where a pupil is absent due to illness; however, the school reserves the right to request supporting evidence where there is genuine and reasonable doubt about the authenticity of the illness and where attendance has become a concern.

Any child subject to a child protection plan or who is deemed vulnerable due to other reasons who is absent without reason and where the school has been unable to make contact by phone call will receive a home visit from a member of staff on the first day of absence.

## **UNDERSTANDING ABSENCE**

Every half-day (one session) absence from school is to be classified as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. Information about the cause of any absence is always required and it is expected that the child's parent/ guardian will inform the school of the reason for absence on each day. Reason for absence may be recorded against the child's attendance record.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason like illness, medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable cause.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been given. This type of absence can lead to the Local Authority (EWS) using sanctions and/or legal proceedings. This includes:

- parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily;
- absences which have never been properly explained;
- children who arrive at school too late to get a mark;
- shopping, looking after other children or birthdays;
- holidays in term time; and
- excessive illness without medical evidence.

Whilst any child may be off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents and the child. If a child is reluctant to attend, it is unhelpful for parents or carers to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and will usually result in the problem becoming worse.

If a child records a total of 15 days of absence due to illness then the local authority will be notified.

Parents can support children's attendance by:

- ensuring regular and appropriate bed times;
- helping with homework;
- having uniform and equipment prepared the night before;
- providing a healthy breakfast;
- reporting any academic or social concerns promptly;
- retaining open & honest communication with the school; and
- being positive about school.

## **CHILDREN WITH SEND AND/OR HEALTH CONDITIONS**

The school recognises that children with SEND and/or health conditions, including mental health issues, may face greater barriers to attendance than their peers. We will support children, navigating support from other agencies and teams where agreed necessary.

The school will ensure that reasonable adjustments are made for disabled pupils to reduce barriers to attendance, in line with any EHC plans or IHPs that have been implemented.

Where the school has concerns that a child's non-attendance may be related to mental health issues, parents will be contacted to discuss the issue and whether there are any contributory factors to their child's lack of attendance. Where staff have a mental health concern about a child that is also a safeguarding concern, the Designated Safeguarding Lead will be informed and the school's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy will be followed.

If a pupil is unable to attend school for long periods of time due to their health, the school will:

- Inform the LA if a child is likely to be away from the school for more than 15 school days.
- Provide the LA with information about the child's needs, capabilities and programme of work.
- Help the child reintegrate at school when they return.
- Make sure the child is kept informed about school events and clubs.
- Encourage the child to stay in contact with other pupils during their absence.

### **PERSISTENT ABSENTEEISM (PA):**

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we require parent's fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

A pupil becomes 'severely absent' when they are present for less than 50% of their schooling. These pupils and their families will often require a multi-agency response in order to reengage them with their education.

We monitor all absence thoroughly with a half-termly review identifying targets for improvement. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority and parents will be informed of this immediately. PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully.

### **Procedures for persistent absenteeism:**

1. Persistently absent children assessed individually and causes of absence identified. Those without sufficient reason will have contact from school or the Education Welfare Officer (Education Five).
2. A referral may also be made to Education Five, the school's Educational Welfare Officer (EWO) if child is considered to be at risk of becoming a persistent absentee or where a clear pattern of absence is emerging.

3. EWO may contact parents via telephone, conduct a home visit and where concerns continue will commence legal intervention.

Parents of children whose attendance has been identified as a concern may be asked to attend an Attendance Case Conference (ACC) to explain and discuss their child's attendance. The ACC will also include a 4 week plan for attendance improvement.

*These procedures are flexible and may change depending on the needs of the individual case.*

**In all cases initial contact will be made by the school in the form of a letter, phone call or face to face conversation – the attendance team at school will determine which is most appropriate.**

### **WHAT WILL THE SCHOOL DO IF CHILDREN REGULARLY ARRIVE LATE OR MISS SCHOOL?**

School begins at 8:40am. Pupils arriving late to school but within half an hour of the school session commencing will receive a 'L' mark on the register for being late. Receiving a 'L' code does not affect a child's attendance percentage.

Children arriving more than half an hour late to school are recorded as arriving after the register is closed and will receive a 'U' code in their register. This represents an unauthorised absence for this session and will affect a child's attendance percentage.

### **PERSISTENT LATENESS:**

We recognise the detrimental effect that persistent lateness can have on learning and self-esteem. Lateness disorientates the learner, disrupts the lesson, places high demands on teacher time where additional instructions and repetition of instructions are needed and results in other children missing out on teaching due to additional time needed for the person who was late.

For these reasons we will monitor the lateness recorded by pupils on a regular basis. For those that record a significant amount of lateness marks the following procedures will apply:

- School letter or phone call stating the amount of lateness, its effects on learning and to discuss ways in which the school may support an improvement in punctuality.
- Request for a formal meeting with attendance lead to discuss the lateness.
- Referral to the Educational Welfare Officer.
- Continued lateness marks may result in a fixed penalty notice being issued.

## APPENDIX 1.

### New national framework for Penalty Notices issued by Department for Education (DfE) September 2024

#### National Threshold

There will be a single consistent threshold for when a penalty notice must be considered by all school in England of 10 sessions (usually equivalent to 5 school days) of unauthorised absence within a rolling 10 school week period.

These sessions do not have to be consecutive and can be made up of a combination of any type of unauthorised absence.

The 10 school week period can span different terms or school years.

#### First Offence

The first time a penalty notice is issued for unauthorised absence the amount will be:

£160 per parent, per child paid within 28 days.

Reduced to £80 per parent, per child if paid within 21 days.

#### Per parent\*, Per child

Penalty Notice Fines are issued to each parent\*, for each child that was absent.

For example: 3 siblings absent for term time leave would result in each parent receiving 3 separate fines.

#### Second Offence

(Within 3 years)

The second time a penalty notice is issued for the same child for unauthorised absence the amount will be:

£160 per parent, per child paid within 28 days.

#### \*Parent

- all natural or biological parents, whether married or not
- Any person who has parental responsibility for a child
- Any person who, although not a natural parent, has care of a child.

#### Third Offence and Any Further Offences (within 3 years)

The third time an offence is committed a Penalty Notice will not be issued and the case could be presented straight to the Magistrate's Court. Prosecution can result in Criminal Records and fines of up to £2500.

Cases found guilty in Magistrates' Court may show on a parents' future DBS certificate due to "failure to safeguard a child's education".