



whinfell school see things differently

Attendance and Punctuality. Policy

By Head of Education

1. Purpose of policy and guiding principles

- 1.1. Whinfell School strives to ensure that all students receive a full time education that maximises the opportunities for all students to fulfil their potential.
- 1.2. Excellent student attendance is expected and Whinfell School has in place a range of procedures and strategies that actively promotes good attendance, recognises good attendance and punctuality and seeks to address unjustified absences.
- 1.3. Whinfell School recognises the link between high levels of attendance and academic progress. To this end, Whinfell School has a responsibility to provide a welcoming, productive and safe learning environment, which supports high levels of attendance.
- 1.4. All staff have a responsibility to promote good attendance and key staff will work with students and their families to ensure that each student attends regularly and punctually.
- 1.5. Whinfell School has effective and efficient communication systems (which include email and phone calls) between students, their families and appropriate agencies.
- 1.6. Whinfell School works with multi-agency partners, or other agencies to provide information, advice and support to promote high levels of student attendance.

2. Attendance and punctuality aims

2.1. The aims of this policy and school procedures are:

- To continually improve the overall percentage of students attending education.
- To make attendance and punctuality a priority for all those associated with the Whinfell School, including students, parents, teachers and Governors.
- To have in place a staffing structure, with roles and responsibilities that promotes consistency in carrying out attendance related activities.
- To provide guidance, support and advice to parents and care workers.
- To develop systems to record, report and analyse attendance and punctuality data.
- To develop positive and consistent communication between parents/carers and school.
- To have in place systems for rewards and sanctions.
- To work in partnership with the LA's Education Welfare team and other agencies to improve attendance and punctuality and ensure that children are safe.
- To recognise, and put in place, individualised plans for students with specific needs (this includes students with Special Educational Needs, students with a disability or students with a medical condition).

3. Links to with other policies or legislation

3.1. This policy links to Whinfell School's legislative duties, as defined by the Education Act 1996 and 2002, The Children's Act 1989 and 2004 and the Equalities Act 2010.

3.2. Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 makes clear that parents are responsible to ensure their child receives a suitable education. Under section 444 of the same Act, a parent who fails to ensure their child attends the school at which they are registered, is guilty of an offence.

3.3. This policy links and refers to advice and guidance issued by the Department of Education. This includes:

- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2020.
- Working Together to Safeguard Children (July 2018).
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (and subsequent amendments).
- This policy links to the local authorities Education Welfare policy and procedures.

4. Promoting good attendance and punctuality

4.1. Whinfell School has in place systems to recognise and reward students who have sustained high levels of attendance and who consistently arrive to lessons, on time. See also Behaviour Support Policy and Curriculum Policy.

4.2. We also recognise where students have succeeded in improving their attendance and/or punctuality.

4.3. At key times during the academic year good attendance and punctuality will be celebrated. This will be conducted through tutor sessions, assemblies or other reward systems.

4.4. Whinfell School recognises that in order to promote good attendance students need to experience an engaging curriculum, feel safe at the School and feel they achieve during their time in education. For these reasons the curriculum is reviewed annually and attendance levels monitored and intervention strategies put in at the at the earliest possible time.

4.5. Whinfell School will inform students and their parents/carers of their attendance levels at regular (often weekly) intervals.

4.6. Parents/carers will be reminded regularly about the importance of good attendance and punctuality.

4.7. Parents/carers should contact Whinfell School at the earliest opportunity, to discuss occasions where their child may need additional support or other reasonable adjustments, to accommodate exceptional circumstances. This may include a change in family circumstances or a change to their child's health/wellbeing.

4.8. All actions and sanctions used by Whinfell School are used to improve attendance and punctuality and aim to provide a good education to all students.

5. Responsibilities of Whinfell School

5.1. At Whinfell School you can expect:

- All staff to have a responsibility towards improving attendance and punctuality.
- That we will have in place accurate attendance recording systems that will provide accurate information and inform tracking and monitoring systems. This data will be used to monitor individual patterns of attendance, patterns of attendance across the year, and implement strategies to improve attendance at any point during the academic year.
- All staff to implement this policy consistently.
- Leaders to have due regard towards the Equalities Act and, where appropriate or required, make reasonable adjustments for students with specific needs.
- We will investigate any unexplained and/or unjustified absences.
- We will work closely with parents/carers where we believe a student's attendance is a cause for concern.
- We will support students to improve their attendance and punctuality.
- We will promote the importance of good attendance and punctuality to students and their parent/carers throughout the year.
- We will support students in returning to Whinfell School, following a period of extended absence.
- When we decline absences and communicate our decision promptly to parents/carers. See Section 9 for further information.

6. Responsibilities of students

6.1. We will make clear our expectations to students with regard to attendance and punctuality. These expectations are:

- To arrive on time and ready to learn.
- To attend 100% of the time.
- To be punctual to all lessons.

7. Responsibilities of parents/carers

Parents have legal obligations to ensure their child attends the school regularly. The majority of our students have good attendance and arrive on time.

The expectations of parents/carers are:

- To ensure your child attends education on each school day and are ready to learn.
- To ensure that your child attends on time. This includes ensuring that any transport/drop off arrangements ensure they arrive on time.
- To be aware of term dates and avoid booking holidays during term time.
- To avoid keeping your child away from school for any reason other than illness, or other authorised reason. See Section 9 for further information.
- To inform Whinfell School (by the start of the school day) that your child is unable to attend, providing the reason for absence and when you expect them to return. Parents/carers are expected to contact the school every day with an update.
- To provide information, when requested by the School, about periods of extended or frequent absences.
- To meet with the Head of Education to discuss concerns about your child's attendance or punctuality.
- An understanding that, for educational reasons, only in exceptional cases will absences be agreed.
- An understanding that where your child's attendance or punctuality gives the school cause for concern then we will discuss this with the local authority to explore ways in which we can improve these attendance/punctuality levels.

8. Registration

8.1. There is a statutory requirement to take a register twice a day; once for a morning session and once for the afternoon session. The times for these registers are contained in Appendix 1.

8.2. If students fail to register by these times, they will be considered as having an unauthorised absence, unless a satisfactory explanation is received.

8.3. Students are registered during each period of the school day.

8.4. Whinfell School follows the Government guidance on attendance and absence codes. These can be viewed via: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school/attendance>.

9. Authorised/unauthorised absence

9.1. This area of the policy explains what is considered to be authorised or unauthorised absence.

9.2. Any absence that interrupts the continuity of student's learning, and only in exceptional circumstances will Whinfell School agree a period of authorised leave. The Government publish the latest guidance and parental advice on school attendance on its website.

9.3. Authorised absence

9.3.1. Authorised absence is where the school has agreed the reason for the absence, and approved this. This approval can be in advance, or agreed after the absence, where a satisfactory reason has been given for the absence.

9.3.2. Any requests should be made to the Principal and only a representative of the Principal can authorise absences.

9.3.3. Absences may be authorised for reasons such as:

- Illness (1 or 2 days) – medical evidence in the form of a doctor's appointment card or packaging from prescribed medication needs to be provided for any absence of 3 days or longer – only then will an illness absence be authorised
- Unavoidable medical/dental appointments
- Exceptional family circumstances (e.g. bereavement)
- Days of religious observance. (See Appendix 2)
- Study leave (for recognised qualifications)
- Exclusion
- Involvement in a public performance or significant sporting activity (e.g. Olympics) or significant public event.

9.3.4. Parents/carers should contact school as early as possible and before the start of the education day, on the morning of the absence to explain the reason for absence and continue to follow the same procedure on each subsequent day of absence.

9.3.5. It is the discretion of the school and LA to authorise absences, based on information provided.

9.3.6. Parents should be aware that during an extended period of absence or an extended period of frequent absences, the school has the right to change the status of the absence to unauthorised. In these cases a representative of the school will communicate the change to parents/carers and look for ways in which the school can continue to support an improvement in attendance.

9.3.7. Even when circumstances are considered exceptional, please note the considerations outlined in Appendix 2.

9.4. Unauthorised absence

9.4.1. Unauthorised absence is where the school has not agreed the reason for the absence. Absence will not be authorised for reasons such as:

- Looking after unwell family members
- Days out, including exhibitions, sporting events etc.
- Birthdays
- Shopping trips
- Family holidays. Parents/carers are advised not to take students out of Whinfell School for holidays during term time.

9.4.2. Absences which haven't been explained, or where school does not accept the explanation, will be treated as unauthorised. For persistent or frequent unauthorised absences, Whinfell School will work with the local authority team to improve attendance.

9.5. Medical/dental appointments

9.5.1. Medical and dental appointments should be made outside of education hours, wherever possible. Where this is not possible, students are expected to attend school before and after the appointment.

9.5.2. Parents/carers will be asked to provide confirmation of the appointment (time/date/reason) in order for the absence to be authorised.

9.5.3. Authorisation will only be given for reasonable travel time to and from the appointment. Where it is considered practical for the student to attend school before and/or after the appointment and they do not attend, this will be considered as an unauthorised absence.

9.5.4. If emergency appointments are made at the start of the day, causing the student to arrive late, confirmation of the appointment must be provided, otherwise the absence will be treated as 'late'.

10. Attendance management procedures

10.1. If a student is absent at morning registration without any contact from their parent/carer, we will contact the parent/carer to establish the reason for absence.

10.2. Whinfell School has a safeguarding responsibility to identify any students who are missing from education

10.3. In all cases we will continue to contact and work with parents/carers to support them in improving their child's attendance and/or punctuality.

10.4. We will seek advice from the SENCo and other professionals to work with parents/carers to support them in improving their child's attendance and/or punctuality.

11. Persistent absence

11.1. A student is a Persistent Absentee when they miss more than 10% of their possible sessions in an academic year.

11.2. Whinfell School will prioritise any student who has reached this threshold or at risk of reaching this threshold and will implement strategies to improve the student's attendance. Any strategies will involve communication and requests for meetings with parents/carers.

11.3. Where appropriate, or required by law, Whinfell School will engage with other agencies to support improvements in attendance and/or punctuality.

12. Re-integration following a period of extended absence

12.1. When a student returns to their schooling following a period of absence, a personalised plan will be developed as to how school will support an improvement in attendance.

12.2. This plan will be discussed with parents/carers to gain their commitment to the actions and improvements required.

12.3. At Whinfell School this may involve updating the Education Healthcare Plan, and in these circumstances relevant professionals will be involved in the planning of the student's successful return. (e.g. SENCo, Health Professionals, etc.).

12.4. In these cases a nominated member of staff will be the key contact to monitor and review the student's return.

Appendix 1

The school day begins at 8:50 and register will be taken by 9am. In line with government guidelines, the register will 'close' at 9:30.

Any student who arrives after 8:50 will receive a late mark, indicating that they were late before the register closed. Minutes late will be recorded on the register.

Any student arriving after register closing, will receive a U mark, indicating that they were not present for registration that morning. The time off arrival and reason for absence will be recorded on the register.