

	WHISTON WILLIS PRIMARY ACADEMY		
	ATTENDANCE POLICY Used in conjunction with the Safeguarding Suite of Policies		
Lead Responsibility	Principal-I. Cooper Vice Principal/DSL-J. Watkins	Approved By Governors	Date: June 2023
Review date	September 2024 or if necessary, sooner		

Respectful – Responsible – Safe

Introduction

The Governors and staff at Whiston Willis Primary Academy are united in their belief that regular school attendance is the key to enabling children to maximise the educational opportunities available to them. Helping them to become emotionally resilient, confident, and competent adults who are able to realise their full potential and make a positive contribution to their community.

Whiston Willis Primary Academy values all children. As set out in this policy we will work with families to identify the barriers to achieving and maintaining excellent attendance and offer the right service at the right time to try to resolve any difficulties.

The Attendance Lead will monitor attendance and use attendance data to identify any patterns of concern, whilst also celebrating success. Attendance concerns will be raised with parents if reasons are not known by the school, e.g. a long period of illness. This information may be shared with the Local Authority following concerns. Where we have concerns, or lack of engagement from families to improve attendance, we will follow the schools escalated approach to improving attendance. The schools escalated approach is child-centred and prioritises support and developing strong working relationships with families. We will use the Early Help process to provide support prior to escalation and consider how we can work with families to enable your child to access their right to education.

Our aim is to always to work in partnership with parents and any referral for consideration of a penalty notice is deemed to be a last resort at Whiston Willis. Attendance figures for each child will be reported to parents as part of the annual report, we will also share a child's attendance profile if we have concerns regarding a child's attendance.

To support good attendance/safeguarding at Whiston Willis we:

- Ensure the school is welcoming and every child feels a sense of belonging.
- Ensure the school site is open at the stated times.

- Ensure the regular, efficient, and accurate recording of attendance is complete by every class teacher each day. This further supports our approach to safeguarding within the school.
- Take safeguarding seriously and we will always contact you on the first day that your child is absent from school. If your child arrives late after the close of registration, we will record their arrival at reception and transition the child to class.
- Consider any requests for leave in term time individually. This will be aligned to the Local Authority code of conduct.
- Notify the Local Authority within 5 days if a new child is joining the school roll.
- Inform the Local Authority of children whose parents have notified the school in writing and have opted for Elective Home Education.
- Work closely with the School Attendance Support Team.
- Notify the Local Authority of Children Missing in Education – aligned to the DfE 2022 Attendance paper.

A whole school approach to supporting attendance.

Securing good attendance at Whiston Willis cannot be achieved in isolation, and effective practices for improvement will involve working closely with other Leaders within the school. The Attendance Lead will work alongside others to facilitate a whole school approach.

The Strategic Approach

Whiston Willis Primary Academy adopts the 5 Foundations of Effective Attendance Practice framework, this is modelled on the work of Professor Katherine Weare. The emphasis is on developing a school culture and climate which builds a sense of connectedness and belonging to ensure all children can attend school and thrive. The approach ensures we prioritise building solid working relationships with children, and parents, prior to escalation. The staged approach we follow ensures we identify triggers early that can lead to poor attendance issues such as mental health issues, lack of trust, communication and relationship breakdowns and the possible lack of networking opportunities both internal (in-school) and external (external agencies).

Aims of the 5 Foundations strategy

- Increase school attendance and reduce Persistent Absence to meet set targets.
- Ensure attendance is well managed within the school, with the appropriate level of resources allocated.
- Enable the school to make informed use of attendance data to target interventions appropriately, focusing on the key demographic groups highlighted in the 2022 DfE attendance paper.

Objectives

- Create an ethos within the school in which good attendance is recognised as the norm and every child aims for excellent attendance.
- Make attendance and punctuality a priority.
- Set focused targets to improve individual attendance and whole school attendance levels.
- Embed the 5 Foundations of Effective Attendance Practice framework which defines agreed roles and responsibilities and promotes consistency in carrying out designated tasks with respect to promoting attendance and punctuality.
- Record and monitor attendance and absenteeism and apply appropriate strategies to minimise absenteeism.
- Develop a systematic approach to gathering and analysing relevant attendance data.
- Provide support, advice, and guidance to parents/children and develop mutual cooperation between home and school in encouraging good attendance and in addressing identified attendance issues.
- Demonstrate, using rewards, that the school recognises good attendance and punctuality as achievements in themselves.



5 Foundations Of Effective Attendance Practice

The main aim of the framework is to ensure the school promotes a culture of good attendance and celebrates success. Ultimately, the framework will ensure there is a culture of feeling safe and school being a place where children want to be.

Positive health and emotional well-being are key factors in improving social development, school attendance and educational achievement. The 5 Foundations of Effective Attendance Practice model promotes, and supports, a whole school approach to mental health and emotional well-being; ensuring SEMH support remains a key driver in improving attendance for all children.

Each Foundation is supported by 5 Key Performance Indicators, these are used to ensure the school can embed the Foundations framework and understand the strategic direction regarding attendance improvement. Each year the school will use the 5 Foundations self-assessment tool to understand what works well and identify what we need to do even better. We then follow the 5 Foundations school improvement process to implement the attendance plan and ultimately improve the lives of children and families we work with.

Foundation 1: Whole School Thinking Culture & Climate

The school has a fully embedded ethos in which excellent school attendance is expected, developed, and nurtured. The escalated approach to supporting attendance is built on foundations of belonging and connectedness.

Foundation 2: Supportive Policies, Systems and Processes

The approach to improving attendance is built on clear policies, systems, and processes. This ensures continuous and sustainable improvement drives attendance practice. The attendance policy is understood by all stakeholders and allows the school to set, and maintain, high expectations to improve the culture of attendance.

Foundation 3: Professional Learning and Staff Development

The school prioritises developing a team of attendance experts, with a shared vision and core purpose. The Attendance Lead delivers bespoke training to support all staff to fully understand their role in improving attendance. External partnerships support attendance improvements through a multi-disciplinary approach for identified children and families.

Foundation 4: Implement Targeted Programmes and Interventions

Data information and analysis direct resources proactively towards key demographic groups and identified individuals. The expert use of data analysis informs decision making at all levels. The attendance process ensures the Attendance Lead understands the reason for attendance concerns, these barriers can then be successfully supported and removed.

Foundation 5: Connect Appropriately with Approaches to Behaviour Management

Connecting and belonging drives the school approach to supporting attendance. All staff are supported to understand 'deeper roots' regarding poor attendance concerns. The school has developed, and embedded, an effective rewards system to further drive attendance improvements and celebrate success.

DFE: Working Together to Improve Attendance 2022

From September 2022 the DFE: Working Together to Improve Attendance paper will replace all previous guidance on school attendance except for statutory guidance for parental responsibility measures. The Secretary of State has committed to it becoming statutory when parliamentary time allows (this will be no sooner than September 2023).

The table below identifies how the 5 Foundations of Effective Attendance Practice will underpin the DFE 2022 paper.

DFE Summary of Expectations	 Foundation 1 Whole School Thinking Culture & Climate	 Foundation 2 Supportive Policies, Systems and Processes	 Foundation 3 Professional Learning Staff Development	 Foundation 4 Implement Targeted Programmes and Intervention	 Foundation 5 Connect Appropriately With Approaches To Behaviour Management
Develop a whole-school culture that promotes the benefits of high attendance.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Have a school attendance policy		✓			
Have day-to-day processes to follow up absence	✓	✓	✓		
Monitor and analyse data to identify those that need support		✓	✓	✓	
Engage with families, understand barriers to attendance and work together to remove them	✓			✓	✓
Provide additional support for pupils with medical conditions or SEND			✓	✓	✓
Share information and work collaboratively with others	✓	✓	✓	✓	
A new focus on persistent and severe absence		✓	✓	✓	✓
Find out what the DFE expects from other stakeholders		✓	✓	✓	

Partnership with Parents

Whiston Willis Primary Academy recognises that poor attendance is often an indication of difficulties in a child's life and their lived experience. This may be related to problems at home or in school. Parents should inform the school of any difficulties or changes in circumstance that may affect their child's attendance and or behaviour in school. Examples of this include bereavement, divorce/separation, incidents of domestic abuse. This will help the school to identify any additional early help that may be required. Safeguarding is a priority, concerns for any child at any time will be reported to the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

Some children are more likely to require additional support to attain good attendance, for example, children who are vulnerable, have a medical need or EHCP plan. At Whiston Willis we will proactively identify and follow up on a child's non-attendance and gather information about the child. This will result in taking early action to prevent non-attendance developing and monitoring the impact of targeted support.

Children whose attendance falls below 90% are Persistently Absent from school. Where a child falls under 50% attendance, the child will be classified as a Severely Absent child. Ultimately this will indicate that all intervention, and support, offered by Whiston Willis has not made the expected impact to improve overall attendance. Where attendance remains a concern and all other interventions and support have not made a significant impact, we will escalate with external partners.

Attendance Support Map

We will always support children during each stage of our Attendance Support Map. If there is lack of engagement, or concerns regarding the reason for absence, we will follow the Attendance Map to ensure we prioritise a child's learning and right to education. Attendance Support Map can be found below:

Everyone	4 Days Absence	7 Days Absence	10 Days Absence	13 Days Absence	16 Days Absence	19+ Days Absence
Whiston Willis is a place where every child belongs. We create a welcoming environment to allow all children to gain a sense of belonging and achieve academically through regular school attendance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> +Concerning levels of child absence. +Internal monitoring. +Stage 1 letter sent to parents. +Early intervention considered as a preventative measure. +Possible early help support offered. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> +Serious concerns regarding attendance. +Stage 2 letter sent to parents. +Meeting with Attendance Leader. +Explore barriers and implement a programme to remove barriers. +Early help support reviewed or offered. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> +The child is a high risk of Persistent Absence. +Stage 3 letter sent to parents. +Attendance Leader meeting with parents. +Review of early help and intervention programmes. +Consider the support of external services. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> +The child is at serious risk of Persistent Absence. +Formal warning notice sent to parents. +Continued internal and external programmes of support. +Parenting contract or supervision order considered at this stage. +A multi-disciplinary approach to be considered and offered. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> +The school will work closely with the LEA. +All avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or not being engaged with. The school will now enforce attendance through statutory intervention or prosecution to protect the pupil's right to an education. +All support, and offer of support, to be reviewed. +Continued support of the child and family. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> +The child is now a Persistently Absent child. +Persistent Absence is when a pupil enrolment's overall absence equates to 10% or more of their possible sessions. +Over an academic year this equates to 19 days. +At this stage the child will be PA for the remainder of the school year. +Safeguarding referrals at this stage can be made. +The child and family will continue to be supported.

First Day Contact

At Whiston Willis Primary Academy, we expect our parents to make contact at the earliest opportunity on the first day of any absence. We will always contact you via by call, text, or email. Where we have ongoing concerns regarding your child's attendance, we will visit your home address and, if no contact can be made, we will post a letter at home address asking for contact to be made with school. We may even invite you to meet with a member of staff to discuss any ongoing concerns regarding attendance. It is important that you talk to us first; you are legally responsible under Education Act 1996 for ensuring that your child is in school every day and on time. If we cannot make contact with you, we will continue to make announced and unannounced home visits, regarding any concerns we may have surrounding attendance at Whiston Willis.

Parental Responsibility

Parents are responsible for ensuring their children receive a full-time education. Each situation will be dealt with on an individual basis, fairly and equitably. The welfare and safety of our pupils will always be our paramount concern.

The term 'parent' includes those who are not a natural parent but have parental responsibility for the child as defined by the Children's Act 1989 or have care of the child as defined by the Education Act 1996.

- Absence can only be authorised by the school; parents do not have this authority. All absences will be treated as unauthorised unless satisfactory evidence for the child's absence has been received. In the first instance contact from the parent will be accepted as evidence. However, if a child's attendance continues to cause concern, parents may be asked to provide medical evidence for reported illness. This will usually be in the form of an appointment card, prescriptions etc. Absence may be noted as unauthorised without evidence.
- Unless parents have provided a satisfactory explanation and it has been accepted by the school absence will not be authorised.
- Parents should wherever possible make all medical and dental appointments outside of the school day. Where this is not possible, children should attend school for part of the day. Appointment cards should always be provided as evidence of this.

Examples of unsatisfactory explanations for absence include:

- A child's/family member's birthday.
- Shopping for uniform.
- Having a haircut.
- Closure of a sibling's school for INSET or other purposes.
- If a child 'wouldn't get up'.

- Illness where the child is considered well enough to attend school without medical authority and in the absence of a communicable disease.
- Leave during term time taken without authorisation of the school.

Punctuality

Doors open for children at 08:40 and the class register will close at 08:50. Children arriving after the close of registration will be recorded as late.

Transition following long term absence/illness.

Absence can significantly interrupt the continuity of children's learning.

During any long-term absence, Whiston Willis will:

- Maintain contact with the child.
- Carefully plan the transition back to school, ensuring your child feels welcome and gains a sense of belonging.
- Ensure the child once again feels safe in school and if they experience any concerns, they will have an appointed member of staff to work with.
- The Class Teacher and Teaching Assistant will support child when returning to class and help them with any work they may have missed.

Leave During Term Time

Parents wishing to apply for leave during term time must send a written request for the attention of the Headteacher before making any arrangements. Retrospective requests will not be considered and therefore will result in the absence being categorised as unauthorised. Each leave during term time request will be considered on an individual basis.

If a child fails to return and contact with the parent has not been made or received, school may take the child off the school's roll in compliance with the Education (Pupil registration, England) Regulations 2006. This means that the child may lose their school place.

If the permission to take leave is not granted and the child is still absent from school, the absence will be **unauthorised**. In such cases the school may consider legal action.

Only in **exceptional circumstances** will absence be agreed. In such cases, consideration will be given to the cultural needs and the family circumstances. In these cases, granting leave for longer periods than normal may be considered justified. In all cases though, parents will be required to justify why the leave needs to be taken during term time.

Persistent Absence

At Whiston Willis, we aim to communicate the importance of attendance with parents and children. We have a particular focus on reducing Persistent Absenteeism

at the school. The Persistent Absence threshold for children is currently 10% and Ofsted will use this threshold in its inspection of schools.

The threshold means that any child will be classed as Persistently Absent when they have missed 38 or more sessions. This equates to 19, or more, missed days during the academic year - which is as little as 6 days over each of the three Terms.

Statutory Duty

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

A child is of compulsory school age at the beginning of the term following their 5th birthday.

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.

In accordance with the regulations regarding pupils' attendance at school, Whiston Willis Primary Academy keeps an attendance register at the beginning of each morning and afternoon session - children are marked present or absent. The marks are electronically processed and stored on the school's central administrative system SIMS. This information is shared with the Department for Education.

Legal Sanctions

There are several sanctions that school can take to address the issue of non-attendance. To try and identify the reason for absence we will always talk to you first to identify the reason for absence. We will always ensure the escalated process map is followed, focusing on the support a child needs at each stage. However, for lack of engagement in attendance support there are sanctions that will be followed. Penalty notices will be considered when:

- A child is absent from school for the purpose of a Leave of Absence in term time and the absence has not been authorised by the school.
- A child has accumulated at least ten sessions of unauthorised absence and further absence has occurred following written warning to improve.

Prosecution

Where intervention through the school's process fails to bring about an improvement in attendance, the local authority will be notified and legal proceedings in the Magistrates Court may be taken. The school will provide the Local Authority with evidence required for a prosecution under section 444/4441 (a) 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 their child's attendance at school.

Section 4441(a) of the Education Act 1996 states that if a parent fails to ensure the regular school attendance of their child if he/she is a registered pupil at a school and is of compulsory school age, then they are guilty of an offence.

Schools, trusts and local authorities are expected to work together and make use of the full range of legal interventions rather than relying solely on fixed penalty notices or prosecution. It is for individual schools and local authorities to decide whether to use them in an individual case after considering the individual circumstances of a family.

These are:

- Parenting contracts
- Education supervision orders
- Attendance prosecution
- Parenting orders
- Fixed penalty notices

Please refer to section 6 of the DFE Working together to improve school attendance 2022 for more information.

Children at risk of Missing in Education (CME)

Children Missing Education (CME) are a vulnerable group of children. All agencies who work with children have a duty to support the Local Authority in ensuring all children are safe and looked after appropriately.

CME includes those children who are missing (family whereabouts unknown) and are children who are registered on a school roll/alternative provision. This might be a child who is not at their last known address and either:

- has not taken up an allocated school place as expected, or
- has 5 or more days of continuous absence from school without explanation, or
- left school suddenly and the destination is unknown.

It is our responsibility as a school to work with the LA Education and Inclusion team, by making referrals.

Roles and Responsibilities

Parent Expectations:

- i Parents are legally responsible for ensuring their children attend school regularly and may risk prosecution if they fail in this responsibility.
- ii Parents should ensure that their children arrive at school on time, with the correct equipment and in full school uniform.
- iii Parents should support the school by avoiding, if possible, non-emergency medical/dental appointments for their child during school time.
- iv Parents should be aware that they do not have the automatic right to take their child out of the school for a holiday during term time.

- v It is the parents' responsibility to inform the school of the reason for a child's absence on the first day of absence and in line with the school's procedures for informing of absence.
- vi All unexplained attendances will be monitored, and parents will be kept informed about any attendance concerns relating to their own child. Parents are expected to attend meetings when requested and support the school in responding to ongoing attendance concerns.

Children Expectations:

- i. All children should aim to have an excellent attendance and punctuality record for which there will be appropriate rewards.
- ii. All children are expected to be on the school site on time and ready to learn.
- iii. Children who arrive at school late must follow the correct procedures for recording their lateness and entering their lesson.
- iv. Children who need to leave school for a medical appointment must follow the correct procedures for recording that they have permission to leave and have left the building.
- v. Children must not leave the school without permission; this will be seen by the school as a Safeguarding concern as well as a Health and Safety concern.

Class Teacher Expectations:

- i. provide a good example by always being punctual to class and providing a welcoming environment.
- ii. keep an accurate and up-to-date register of attendance.
- iii. follow the Attendance Policy procedures when dealing with absences and punctuality.
- iv. maintain swift action and effective communication with Phase Leaders and School Attendance Leads on all attendance matters concerning their class group.
- v. ensure that children and young people are aware of the importance of the school attendance target and their own individual attendance targets - where appropriate assist them in monitoring their own attendance rates.
- vi. ensure children receive rewards in relation to attendance and punctuality success – aligned to the Attendance Policy.
- vii. build a welcoming atmosphere in the classroom and provide support as necessary when children return after an absence.

Attendance Lead Expectations:

- i. ensure adherence to the attendance policy and procedures.
- ii. monitor and track the attendance of vulnerable groups.
- iii. monitor the attendance of individual class groups, following up with irregular patterns of absenteeism that are not being effectively addressed.

- iv. liaise effectively with Pastoral Team/School Attendance Service and work together on ensuring that appropriate action is taken in the management of absenteeism and poor punctuality.
- v. have attendance as a regular item during pastoral meetings.
- vi. ensure contact is made with parents of poor attendees – always placing support before sanction.
- vii. ensure that parents of absent children are contacted where notification of absence has not been received.
- viii. respond to any parent seeking support on attendance concerns.
- ix. provide regular attendance and punctuality data for relevant staff and external agencies in line with the agreed procedures and timescales.
- x. implement the 5 Foundations of Effective Attendance Practice framework.