

Attendance and Absence From School Policy

Key Document details:

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Key Information for (insert name of school)

Senior Leadership Member responsible for Attendance	Sharon Kirwan
School telephone number	01225 792700
School email address	admin@melkshamoak.wilts.sch.uk
School absence email address	absence@melkshamoak.wilts.sch.uk
Contact number for Pastoral/Inclusion/FSW	01225 792700
Time registers open in the morning	0830
Time registers close in the morning	0900

Introduction

At the White Horse Federation we are committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children. Our schools fulfil their responsibilities as laid out in 'Working Together to Safeguard Children', and 'Keeping Children Safe in Education'. Links to these documents can be found at the end of this policy.

The White Horse Federation is committed to providing an education of the highest quality for all its students, and recognises this can only be achieved by supporting and promoting excellent school attendance for all. Only by attending school regularly and punctually will children and young people be able to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them. High attainment depends on good attendance.

The whole school community – students, parents & carers, teaching & support staff and school governors, have a responsibility for ensuring good school attendance and all have important roles to play.

The White Horse Federation recognises the important role that school attendance plays in safeguarding students, realising that unexplained absences can put a child at risk, as can significant absences over a longer period of time.

The Legal Framework

The policy is set out within the framework of the Education Act 1996, the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, including amendments and other non-statutory guidance. As a parent you have a duty to ensure that your child attends school regularly and on time. Parents are liable to a Penalty Notice Fine or prosecution under Section 444 (1(A)).

The law entitles every child of compulsory school age to an efficient, full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude, and any special educational need they may have. It is the legal responsibility of



every parent to make sure their child receives that education either by attendance at a school or by education otherwise than at a school.

Where parents decide to have their child registered at school, they have an additional legal duty to ensure their child attends that school regularly. This means their child must attend every day that the school is open, except in a small number of allowable circumstances such as being too ill to attend or being given permission for an absence in advance from the school.

School's roles and responsibilities

All staff (teaching and support) have a key role to play in supporting and promoting excellent school attendance, and will work to provide an environment in which all our students are eager to learn, feel valued members of the school community and look forward to coming to school every day.

A member of the Leadership Team, will oversee, direct and co-ordinate the school's work in promoting regular and improved attendance and will ensure the Attendance Policy is consistently applied throughout the school. This person will also ensure that up-to-date attendance data is available and relevant issues are shared with the Senior Leadership Team. They will ensure that attendance issues are identified at an early stage and that support is put in place to deal with any difficulties. Parents will regularly be reminded about the legal requirement for, and the importance of good school attendance.

By law schools are required to take an attendance register twice a day; at the start of the morning session and once during the afternoon. Any child who is not present at this time will be marked as an unauthorised absence unless leave has been granted by the school in advance, or the reason for absence is already known and accepted by the school as legitimate. Where a reason for absence is given and accepted by the school at a later stage, the register will be amended. The decision about whether any absence should be authorised or unauthorised rests with the school and not with parents.

The White Horse Federation recognises the clear links between attendance and attainment, and attendance and safeguarding children. It recognises that inappropriate authorisation of absence can be damaging to a young person's education.

Our secondary schools use individual lesson registers, in addition to the statutory morning and afternoon registers to track students' whereabouts throughout the day, deal with any truancy that occurs after morning or afternoon registration and to ensure the safety of all students.

The Attendance Senior Leader will ensure that all staff responsible for taking registers, including any temporary or supply staff, receive sufficient training to enable them to perform the task correctly. The school will ensure the attendance register is marked accurately. Classroom teachers and tutors



are responsible for completing the attendance registers, and the Attendance Officer or administrator will ensure the correct codes are in place.

Expectations of Trustees and Governors

All White Horse Federation trustees and governing bodies will;

- Recognise the importance of school attendance and promote it across the school.
- Ensure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties.
- Regularly review attendance data, discuss, and challenge trends, and help school leaders focus improvement efforts on the individual pupils or cohorts who need it most.
- Ensure school staff receive adequate training on attendance.

Daily Absence Procedure

At all White Horse Federation schools, parents are expected to inform the school at the earliest opportunity of their child's absence. This should be done by telephoning or emailing the contacts provided at the start of this policy. If parents have not contacted the school, the school will contact parents, and will continue to do so until contact is made. If school is unable to contact the parent, they will try all other contacts they hold on record, in order of priority until contact is established.

If an illness is prolonged, parents are asked to keep the school informed of progress and provide medical evidence. Parents are also requested to contact the school, in advance to request any arranged absences, such as a hospital appointment or dentist. However, we request that as many routine appointments as possible are arranged out of school hours.

After the morning registers are complete, school will run a report to show all missing pupils/students for whom no explanation of absence has been received from parent/carer. A continuous absence report will also be run to highlight any pupils/students who have 3 consecutive session absences or more.



<p>1st day of absence</p>	<p>Student recorded as absent from Registers</p> <p>Attendance staff send absence notification to parents/carers (telephone call or automated notification)</p> <p>If no response from parent, Pastoral Team/DSL/Principal, to make decisions that may result in either direct telephone/email contact from school, or home visit (depending on level of risk).</p>
<p>2nd day of absence</p>	<p>Student recorded as absent from Register.</p> <p>Attendance staff send Absence notification to parents/carers.</p> <p>Pastoral Team/DSL/Principal alerted to those students who have had a 2nd day of absence with no notification from parent/carer.</p> <p>Any student who is deemed vulnerable will automatically be visited by school staff on day 2 without contact, unless specifically advised not to do so by DSL.</p>
<p>3rd day of absence</p>	<p>Student recorded as absent from Register</p> <p>Attendance Team send Absence notification to parents/carers</p> <p>Pastoral Team/DSL/Principal alerted to those students who have had a 3rd day of absence with no notification.</p> <p>Home visit is completed for all students on 3rd day of absence without contact from parent/carer. TWHF Home visit form is completed & CPOM submitted on return. Discussion held with DSL/Principal to agree further action. (This may include repeated home visits, request for welfare checks from Police, DSL/Principal contacting Police/MASH etc).</p>
<p>10th day of absence</p>	<p>CME form completed</p> <p>Emailed securely to the Local Authority</p>

Welfare checks are undertaken on students who have had 5 continuous days of absence (excluding those with hospital admissions), including those where the school has been informed of the absence by parent/carer. This is to ensure all children are regularly sighted. Any home visits must be undertaken by two staff members and must be logged on an appropriate system.



Punctuality

Any student who arrives after the closing of the register will need to sign in. Those who arrive after the register has closed will be recorded on the register as code U (late after registers have closed) which will give them an unauthorised session absence. Any student who is late for school signs in with the attendance officer and will receive a demerit for lateness and an after-school detention issued for that day.

Leave of Absence During Term Time

The Trustees, Governors and Principal do not support parents taking their children out of school for holidays.

Parents do not have a legal right to take children out of school, and Principals may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. Examples of exceptional circumstances include service personnel who are prevented from taking leave of absence outside term time at any point in the school year, or the terminal illness or bereavement of a parent or sibling if the absence is concurrent. A letter from an employer may be required to support restricted work annual leave.

If parents do wish to request leave of absence or Holidays in Term Time for such exceptional circumstances, they should use the White Horse Formal leave of absence form (which is accessible on the school website).

Requests for leave of absence will be looked at on a case-by-case basis and it is up to the discretion of the Principal to make a decision about whether a request may be considered an exceptional circumstance or not. The Principal will inform the parent in writing as to the decision made regarding the request.

If parents decide to take their children on holiday where the absence is unauthorised, the school will follow the Local Authority's Guidance for Schools on leave of absence during term time, and inform the Education Welfare Service who may, on behalf of the Local Authority, issue a fixed penalty notice. Information about fixed penalty notices is available below.

The Principal is advised to treat each application individually, and will consider the following factors when making a decision;

- The child's overall attendance record
- Whether the absence falls during a year when public examinations are due or government tests.
- The effect on the child's continuity of learning
- The family circumstances
- Sibling attendance at other WHF school (Principals will make a joint decision if there is a sibling attending another WHF school)



When an absence is approved then it is an authorised absence. Should parents/carers keep their child away in excess of the agreed period, then the extra time will be treated as an unauthorised absence. An absence request for a holiday can only be made by the parent/carer with whom the child lives.

Leaving School before the end of the day

It is not expected that children should need to leave early. However, in some exceptional circumstances, children may have to be collected early from school.

Parents/carers who wish to collect their children early must inform the school by telephone or in writing, stating clearly the reason why the child is leaving school.

Requests may only be made by the parent/carer with day-to-day care. This safeguards against an estranged parent/carer making a request without the knowledge of the parent who has care and control. If there are other arrangements in place for the child to leave the school premises, such as another adult will collect the child, the school must be informed in writing.

It is the responsibility of parents/carers to keep the school fully aware of contact details of named and responsible adults.

Collection at the end of the School day (Not applicable to our Secondary School Students)

We do recognise that some of our students do have permission to either leave school independently at the end of the school day, or are transported home via pre-arranged taxi or bus. However, in the instance where arrangements are in place for a child to be collected, the following will apply;

- Children should be collected promptly at the end of the school day.
- If someone other than the usual parent/carer is collecting the child, we ask that the school office be notified in writing, in advance.
- Any child who is not collected at the end of the school day will be directed to the school office and contacts will be telephoned in order of priority to find out the reason for this. After 15 minutes' children will then be put into after school care, where this is available, whereby parents/carers will be charged for this service. If parents/carers fail to collect their children by 5pm with no contact from the parents/carers, then the local authority children's safeguarding team, along with the police may be contacted.



Attendance Monitoring

Whole school attendance is monitored on a weekly basis and clear procedures are followed should there be any concerns. The White Horse Federation uses a staged approach to effectively manage student absence where attendance falls below 96% (where no medical/other evidence to support authorising absence has been provided):

Attendance Stage 1

- A Stage 1 letter is sent home raising concerns that attendance has fallen below DfE expectations and is being monitored
- A Stage 1 letter should be considered at minimum below 93% and maximum below 96%.
- If there is little or no improvement at next week's monitoring progress to Stage 2.

Attendance Stage 2

- Stage 2 letter sent home
- If the next week there is little or no improvement in attendance school will arrange a School Attendance Meeting (SAM) with parents to agree an action plan. Parents will be sent a written record of this meeting within 5 working days.
- If the parent does not attend the meeting, an opportunity will be given for a new date. On the second date the SAM will be held with or without the parent present.
- Attendance will be reviewed by school in 3 weeks. During this period no absence will be authorised without supporting medical evidence. Following the meeting it is normal practice to expect 100% attendance.
- If there is little or no improvement at the review, parents will be invited into school for a Review SAM where a revised plan is agreed. At this stage parents can be sent a Penalty Notice Warning Letter warning against future unauthorised absences within a set timeframe. See below for more information.

Attendance Stage 3

- Referral to Education Welfare Officer (EWO)
- You may refer to the White Horse EWO earlier if a students have been at Stage 3 in a previous academic year
- If following the Review SAM there is still no improvement in attendance, school may refer to their named Education Welfare Officer who will then arrange to meet with parents/carers.
- EWO will consider instigating legal proceedings by consulting/referring to the relevant Local Authority.



Penalty Notices

Section 444A and section 444B of the Education Act 1996 give powers to the Local Authority to issue Penalty Notices where a parent or carer is considered capable of, but unwilling to secure an improvement in their child's school attendance.

Penalty Notices are issued for absence taken during term time where the leave of absence has not been authorised by the school, or an absence has not been requested in advance and the pupils has had a minimum of 10 sessions (5 school days) lost to unauthorised leave of absence during the previous six months up to and including the day the Educational Welfare Service is notified.

A Penalty Notice is an alternative to prosecution and is used to try and secure an improvement in a pupil's school attendance without the need to appear in Court. As long as the penalty is paid the Penalty Notice enables parents or carers to discharge their potential liability for prosecution for the period covered by the Penalty Notice.

Payment of £120 is required within 28 days of receipt of the Penalty Notice; this sum is reduced to £60 if paid within 21 days. If the penalty is not paid in full within 28 days the Local Authority is required to commence proceedings in the Magistrates' Court for the original offence of your child's poor school attendance.

Removal From School Roll

A pupil will be removed from the school roll in accordance with the regulations in The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations of 2006. These regulations include when:

- Parents make a written request to the school to home school their child. (EHE White Horse process must be followed)
- Parents make a written request for a change of school, and the receiving school confirms that they have started.
- They have been on a managed move and the school they are attending has agreed to take them on roll.
- They have left at the end of Year 11.
- They have been continually absent from school for a period of not less than 4 weeks and both the school and the Local Education Authority have failed, after reasonable enquiry, to locate the pupil. This follows the Child Missing Education procedures.
- They are from the Traveller community and have been continually absent for a period of not less than 4 weeks.
- The family have moved out of commutable distance.



Strategies for Promoting Attendance

- Mark the registers in accordance with the law twice a day
- Inform any parents/carers who have not contacted the school, of the absence of their child on a particular day.
- Maintain records and monitor attendance of pupils on a regular basis.
- Authorise absences in accordance with the government guidelines. Please note that only the Principal can authorise absence.
- Contact parents/carers when the attendance falls below acceptable levels and/or when particular patterns of absence are causing concerns.
- Provide reintegration support for pupils returning from long-term absence.
- Maintain a range of strategies to encourage good attendance by means of rewards.
- Work with relevant external agencies if a pupils' attendance becomes a concern, i.e. Social Care, CAMHS, Education Welfare Service and The Police.

Support Systems

The White Horse Federation 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/carers 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. School will work with pupils and parent/carers to remove any barriers to attendance by building strong and trusting relationships, and working together to put the right support in place.

The White Horse Federation also recognises 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, and looked after children. School will implement a range of strategies to support improved attendance. Strategies used may include;

- Discussion with parents and pupils
- Counselling
- Attendance report cards
- Referrals to support agencies
- Learning mentors
- Pupil Voice activities
- PSHE
- Reward systems
- Time limited part time time-tables
- Additional learning support
- Reintegration support packages



Particular focus will be given by all partners to pupils who are absent from school more than they are present (those missing 50% or more of school). These severely absent pupils may find it more difficult to be in school or face bigger barriers to their regular attendance and as such are likely to need more intensive support across a range of partner agencies.

Where absence means pupils have missed 10% or more of school (equivalent to 1 day or more a fortnight across a full school year), the school will work together with pupils and parents/carers to put additional targeted support in place to remove any barriers to attendance and reengage these pupils. In doing so, school will sensitively consider some of the reasons for absence and understand the importance of school as a place of safety and support for children who might be facing difficulties, rather than reaching immediately for punitive approaches.

Support offered to families will be child centered, and planned in discussion and agreement with both parents/carers and pupils. Where parents/carers fail or refuse to engage with the support offered and further unauthorised absence occurs, School will consider the use of legal sanctions.

Part-time Timetables

All pupils of compulsory school age are entitled to a full-time education. In very exceptional circumstances, where it is in a pupil's best interests, there may be a need for a temporary part-time timetable to meet their individual needs. For example, where a medical condition prevents a pupil from attending full-time education and a part-time timetable is considered as part of a re-integration package. A part-time timetable **should not** be used to manage a pupil's behaviour.

A part-time timetable must only be in place for the shortest time necessary and not be treated as a long-term solution. Any pastoral support programme or other agreement should have a time limit by which point the pupil is expected to attend fulltime, either at school or alternative provision. There should also be formal arrangements in place for regularly reviewing it with the pupil and their parents (minimum fortnightly). In agreeing to a part-time timetable, a school has agreed to a pupil being absent from school for part of the week or day and therefore must treat absence as authorised. If the part – time timetable goes beyond six weeks it should be re-agreed and new paperwork signed.

How Data is used

Pupil-level absence data is collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside national statistics. We compare our attendance data to the national average and share this with Governors and Trustees.



Children Missing in Education

A child going missing from education is a potential indicator of abuse or neglect. Staff in education provision should follow the provision's procedures for dealing with children that go missing from education, particularly on repeat occasions, to help identify the risk of abuse and neglect, including sexual exploitation, and to help prevent the risks of their going missing in the future.

All children, regardless of their circumstances, are entitled to a full-time education which is suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs they may have. Central to raising standards in education and ensuring all pupils can fulfil their potential, pupils need to attend regularly. Missing out on lessons leaves children vulnerable to falling behind. Children with poor attendance tend to achieve less in both primary and secondary school.

The Trust will ensure schools maintain admissions and attendance registers. All pupils will be placed on both registers. The schools will use the national absence and attendance codes to record and monitor attendance and absence in a consistent way which complies with regulations.

The Trust will promote good school attendance and put in place appropriate safeguarding policies, procedures and responses for children who go missing in education.

All schools will inform the Local Authority of any pupil who fails to attend school regularly or who has been absent, without the school's permission for a continuous period of 10 school days or more.

The schools will follow agreed safeguarding and child protection procedures where it is suspected that children missing from education are suffering from abuse or neglect. If there is reason to suspect that a crime has been committed or the child's safety is at risk, the police will be involved.

