Student Attendance Policy

West Lancashire Community High School is a successful school and your child plays their part in making it so. We aim for an environment which enables and encourages all members of the community to reach out for excellence. For our students to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and that students should be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

It is very important therefore that you make sure that students attends regularly and this Policy sets out how together we will achieve this.

1 **Why Regular Attendance is so important:**

Any absence affects the pattern of a student's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their potential. Any absence can potentially disrupt routines and may also affect the learning of others in the same class.

Ensuring regular attendance at school is the legal responsibility of parents and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

2 Promoting Regular Attendance:

Regular 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 can realise their full potential and make a positive contribution to their community.

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility - parents, pupils and all members of school staff.

To help us all to focus on this we will:

- Promote a culture across the school which identifies the importance of regular and punctual attendance
- Report to you annually on how your child is performing in school, what their attendance and punctuality rate is and how this relates to their attainments
- Celebrate good attendance by recognising individual and class achievements and reward good or improving attendance through certificates and rewards.
- Carry out transition work with pupils moving from Primary to high school and before leaving for colleges/further education.
- Ensure positive and consistent communication between home and school
- Make attendance and punctuality a matter and priority for the whole school community (parents, pupils, staff and governors)
- Set targets to improve individual pupil and whole-school attendance.
- For those children who are struggling to attend school full time due to their complex medical needs, school and their parents/carers may discuss flexible hours. When a parent seeks a reduction in hours or days, the school and health professionals will look at the individual child and their needs and work with the parents to provide appropriate education for their child. The child's

needs are the priority, rather than achieving full time attendance figures. Absence from school in these circumstances will be authorised

3 Understanding types of absence:

Every half-day absence from school must be classified by the school as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. Therefore, information about the cause of any absence is always required.

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 Authority using sanctions and/or legal proceedings. This includes:

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily
- truancy before or during the school day
- absences which have never been properly explained
- children who arrive at school after the register has closed
- shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- day trips and holidays in term time which have not been agreed
- days that exceed the amount of leave agreed by the Headteacher

Parents should be aware that the decision whether to authorise an absence or not rests with the school. Hence, if there is any ambiguity relating to an absence, school may request further evidence from parents before an absence may be authorised. This may be in the form of a prescription or appointment card or similar.

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 your child is reluctant to attend school it is better to speak to school to resolve the issue, rather than trying to cover up their absence, or give in to pressure to let them stay at home. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and usually make things worse.

4 Persistent Absenteeism (PA):

A pupil becomes a ‘persistent absentee’ when they miss a consistent and significant portion of their schooling across the school year for whatever reason. Absence at this level can cause considerable damage to any child’s educational, social and emotional prospects and full support and co-operation from families is expected to tackle this.

We monitor all absence thoroughly using SIMS and CPOMS to provide both quantitative and qualitative data. Any pupil whose attendance indicates they are likely to reach the PA threshold we will be given priority consideration, and parents will be informed of this immediately.

All our PA pupils and their parents will be subject to an Action Plan and the plan may include: allocation of additional support, individual incentive programmes, parenting contracts and programs around raising attendance. All PA cases are also automatically made known to the Local Authority School Attendance Team.

5 Absence Procedures

Parents/Carers must:

1 Contact us before **9.30 am** on the first day of absence either by phone or you can call into school and report to reception providing a reason for pupil absence and anticipated number of days your child will be absent.

School will:

1. Telephone you on the first day of absence and remind of procedures, clarify reasons for absence and anticipated length of absence and implications of non-attendance. Telephone calls will be made on further days if contact is not made.
2. Contact you via post or parent mail/email if we have not heard from you within 3 days.
3. Invite you in to discuss the situation with the Headteacher if absences persist
4. Refer the matter to the Local Authority School Attendance Team where appropriate as per Local Authority protocol.

6 Telephone numbers:

Home and school will work together to ensure that contact information is regularly updated. It is the responsibility of the parent to keep school up to date with changes of information. It is the school's responsibility to ensure that the data is stored securely as per GDPR guidance.

7 In-School Strategies to Improve Attendance/Punctuality

Parents are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any problems together. This is nearly always successful. School may consider using the following strategies to help support parents in improving their child's attendance and/or punctuality. This includes:

- Graded letters (colour-coded) that reflect the level of attendance and including recommended actions
- Meetings in school between parents, pupils, Attendance Lead and the Headteacher
- Attendance Actions Plans to support change
- Use of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) and/or referral to outside agencies (including the Local Authority School Attendance Team)
- Potential issuing of penalty notices, legal proceedings or referral to Social Services.

8 Lateness:

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If your child misses the start of the day, they can miss work and do not spend time with their class teacher getting vital information and news for the day. Late arrival at school also significant disrupts routines for both the late student and for the class. Being 10 minutes late every day throughout the academic year is the same as missing two weeks of school.

9 Managing lateness:

The morning sessions start at 8.45am and the afternoon sessions start at 1.15 pm

The class teacher will mark register using SIMS app. They will show as the following codes on the SIMS system: Registers are marked before 9.30 am.

/ or \	Pupil is present
N	Pupil is not Present

At 9.45 am the morning registers will be closed and at 1.30pm the afternoon registers will be closed.

In accordance with the Regulations, if your child arrives after registers close, they will receive a mark that shows them to be on site, but this will not count as a present mark and it will mean they have an unauthorised absence. This may mean that you could face the possibility of a Penalty Notice if the problem persists.

If your child has a persistent late record you will be asked to meet with the Headteacher and/or a member of the Senior Leadership team to resolve the problem, but you can approach us at any time if you are having problems getting your child to school on time.

10 Leave in Term Time:

Taking a child out of school in term time will affect their schooling as much as any other absence and we expect parents to help us by not taking children away in school time.

Remember that any savings you think you may make by taking a holiday in school time are offset by the cost to your child's education.

There is no automatic entitlement in law to take leave during school time.

All applications for leave must be made, in advance, by the parent of residence using the 'Request for leave of absence' form from the school office. Requests will only be authorised if the circumstances surrounding the request are exceptional. It is important that you understand that leave in term time will not be agreed by us at any time unless circumstances surrounding the request can be evidenced, by parents, to be exceptional.

In considering the request we will also look at various factors such as:

- The timing of the request:

When a pupil is just starting the school, absences should be avoided as this is a very important transition period as your child needs to settle into their new environment as quickly as possible.

Pupils should not be absent where possible both immediately before and during assessment periods e.g., during external examinations

- When a pupil's attendance record already includes any level of unauthorised absence.
- other periods of leave which the pupil may have had, either during the current or previous academic year

Any period of leave taken without the agreement of the school, or more than that agreed, will be classed as unauthorised and may attract sanctions such as a Penalty Notice.

In certain circumstances, parents risk losing their child's place on the school roll if the pupil does not return to school on the agreed return date. Readmission cannot be guaranteed.

The specific circumstances which outline when a pupil can be removed from roll are laid out in Regulation 8 (1) (f) (i-iii) of The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (Amended 2010 and 2013)

11 Religious Absence:

The school will authorise one day 'leave' (i.e., the day set aside by the Religious Body of which the parent is a member) per religious festival, e.g., Eid, but no more than 3 days in any one academic year. Parents must request this leave in advance.

12 Roles and responsibilities for attendance matters in this school:

Parents:

- Ensure children attend regularly and punctually
- Contact school on 1st day of absence
- Avoid holidays in term time wherever possible and apply in advance using Request for Leave Form
- Attendance at meetings in school
- Participation in Attendance Action Plans (AAP's), Common Assessment Framework (CAF) processes and subsequent meetings (TAF), and cooperate in support and interventions offered by school or other agencies

Pupils:

- Acknowledge behaviour needed out of school, e.g., early bedtime
- Attend school/registration punctually
- Speak to parents/teacher if issues arise that may influence school attendance
- Cooperate and participate in interventions and support offered by school or other agencies

Headteacher / SLT:

- Take the lead in ensuring attendance has a high profile within the school
- Implement and adopt national and local guidance for attendance that may reflect national or emergency situations
- Ensure there are designated staff with day-to-day responsibility for attendance matters
- Ensure adequate, protected time is allocated to discharge these responsibilities
- Take overall responsibility for ensuring the school confirms to all statutory requirements in respect of attendance
- Consider each request for leave against the school's criteria, decide whether some or all the leave will be authorised and notify parents of this decision
- Where there may be ambiguity regarding an absence, make the decision whether to authorise an absence or to request further evidence to support the decision-making process

Designated Staff:

- First day response: Contact parents if a reason for absence has not been provided
- Third Day Response: Contact parents by post/email/parent mail if a reason for absence has still not been provided.
- Input and update the attendance registers
- Input attendance contact into CPOMS.
- Regularly identify and monitor pupil, class and whole school attendance and punctuality levels, particularly that of vulnerable groups
- Regularly communicate pupil attendance and punctuality levels to parents
- Work with children and parents to remove barriers to regular and punctual attendance, using Parenting Contracts and Review meetings where appropriate.

All School Staff:

- Provide a welcoming atmosphere for children and provide a safe learning environment
- Ensure an appropriate and engaging curriculum is accessible to all students
- Provide a sympathetic response to any pupils' concerns
- To be aware of factors that can contribute to non-attendance
- To see pupils' attendance as the responsibility of all school staff
- Participate in training regarding school systems and procedures

Governors

- Adopt the whole-school policy and review regularly
- Monitor the consistent implementation of the attendance policy
- Set aspirational targets for improving the school's attendance figures
- Work with the Headteacher in establishing criteria against which leave requests will be considered. This is important to ensure the process is equitable and consistent

13 School targets, projects and special initiatives:

The school has targets to improve attendance and your child has an important part to play in meeting these targets.

The minimum level of attendance for this school is 92% attendance and we will keep you updated regularly about progress to this level and how your child's attendance compares.

Our target is to achieve better than this however because we know that good attendance is the key to successful schooling, and we believe our pupils can be amongst the best in the area.

Through the school year we monitor absences and punctuality to show us where improvements need to be made.

Information on any projects or initiatives that will focus on these areas will be provided in newsletter and we ask for your full support.

14 Use of legal intervention:

Regular and punctual attendance at school is both a legal requirement and essential for pupils to maximise their educational opportunities.

In law, an offence occurs if a parent/carer fails to secure a student's attendance at the school at which they are registered without justification. Legal sanctions are available under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996, Section 36 of the Children's Act 1989 or Section 23 of the Anti-Social Behaviour act 2003, to enforce attendance at school where appropriate.

Section 444(1)

In circumstances where there is chronic poor attendance the school may request a prosecution through Section 444 (1) of the 1996 Education Act. This will result in prosecution through the courts if there is no improvement in attendance.

For students whose pattern of attendance is not regular the school may also request a Penalty Notice to be served by the local authority under section 23 of the anti-social behaviour act 2003. This is a fine of £120 per parent. Penalty notices can be requested when:

- There is a pattern of regular lateness to school
- Regular unauthorised absence from school
- An unauthorised holiday/ leave is taken

15 Summary:

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents and to promote attendance. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend.

All school staff are committed to working with parents and pupils, as this is the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible.

Reviewed by D Mullen 11.2.2021

Approved by Governors 1.3.2021

Appendix 1 for use of absence/attendance codes in SMS and their application at West Lancashire Community High School

Appendix 1	
Code use in SIMS App	
/ or \	Present AM or PM
N	Not Present
Code use in SIMS.Net- Office and SLT	
/ or \	Present AM or PM
L	Late if after the mark on Sims App but before registers close- 9.45am /1.30pm Exceptions are personalised timetables agreed as part of plan with parents where the pupil is later than expected
Attendance Codes when pupils at approved off site educational activity- All Authorised in Advance	
B	Educated off site
D	Pupil is registered at another school when educated off site- regular attendance
J	Interview with employer or transition placement
P	Approved sporting activity
V	Educational Visit or Trip
W	Work experience- Monitoring of attendance required
Absence Codes when pupils are not present at school- Authorised	
I	Illness
M	Medical or dental- planned and unplanned
H	This is a request for a holiday made in advance and is agreed by the Headteacher for the dates specified on the Leave request form.
C	This is to be used for an **agreed** personalised attendance timetable where the pupil does not attend on a full time basis. This is also used for other authorised circumstance- i.e Funeral, family wedding.
E	Exclusion- fixed term and permanent- See further advice on Exclusions
R	Religious Observance
S	Study Leave
T	Traveller absence
Unauthorised absence from school- when Headteacher not satisfied with reasons for absence	
G	Holiday not authorised by Headteacher in advance or pupil is away longer than agreed in advance.
N	Not Present where the reason for absence is not known. Is an unauthorised absence This should be a temporary code until the absence is investigated. Maximum of 2 weeks in using this code- *Office to Investigate reasons for absence* *If No reason is established the the N Code needs to be replaced with an O Code*
U	Attended after close of register (9.45/1.30)
O	Headteacher is not satisfied with the reason for absence
Admin Codes	
X	Non Compulsory school age absence
Y	Enforced close- this is in exceptional circumstance
#	School closed to pupils- Whole/Partial closure planned in adavance
Z	Pupils not yet on roll