

# THE WHITSTABLE SCHOOL

## ATTENDANCE POLICY

### 1. Regular Attendance

- i) The Whitstable School recognises the importance and value of the regular attendance of all its students as a significant element in their education. It is accepted that a proportion of the student population will be absent on any one day, for legitimate reasons, but unauthorised absence is unacceptable.
- ii) The Whitstable School is committed to encouraging all its students to attend school regularly: absence from school affects not only the individual student but can also adversely influence the pace and scope of teaching and learning in a class. An individual attendance of above 95% is expected from all students not experiencing a major medical condition.
- iii) The Whitstable School is therefore committed to restricting absence to unavoidable, legitimate causes according to the statutes regarding attendance. Figures for each tutor group are calculated. Percentage figures for the whole school are presented at Governor's meetings.
- iv) Full attendance is a school-wide goal and is recognised and rewarded publicly through inter-tutor group and inter-community competition and the award to individual certificates for full attendance.
- v) Lateness is dealt with through school detentions as a sanction.

### 2. The Completion of Registers

- i) Registers are completed twice daily by tutors (or a substitute member of staff), as required by law. These are completed according to instructions issued by the school's management. The instructions correspond with DfE requirements.
- ii) Subject teachers are expected to maintain a regular register of their classes' attendance as a point of reference and to suppress internal truancy.

### 3. Absence

#### Guidance to Students

- Students will be advised to monitor their own attendance and ensure that this is as good as possible.
- Students will be advised that their achievement will be affected by poor attendance.
- Students will be advised that they must catch up with any work missed as soon as possible.

## Guidance to Parents

- Parents must inform the school every day a student is absent, by note or by telephone. It is an obligation on the part of the parent or carer to explain absence from one or more school sessions. It is desirable for the tutor to also receive a note on the students' return, especially if the illness is for more than one day.
- If no reason for an absence has been received on the day of absence, a text message will be sent or contact by telephone will be made. If the school still receives no response, the absence will be marked as unauthorised. In some circumstances a home visit will be carried out.
- Students must not be taken out of school during term time as this seriously affects their learning.
- In cases of predictable and allowable absence, a note should be received in advance.
- In the event of a protracted absence through illness, the school will endeavour to provide work for home study, on request.
- Occasional, random checks on attendance are organised: these, too, are a restraint on internal truancy.

## Holidays in Term Time

Holidays during the school term are subject to the relevant school policy in this area and will only be authorised by the Headteacher in exceptional circumstances. Holidays will not be authorised for students studying in Key Stage 4.

Parents are reminded that they cannot expect the school to agree to a holiday during term time. In fact, the Governors of the school actively discourage this practice. Any such request must be submitted in writing prior to any holiday being planned and will be replied to. If the holiday is taken, a penalty notice may be issued.

The Department for Education allows a headteacher the discretion to consider authorising leave in term time only in 'exceptional circumstances'

Under normal circumstances, absence will not be granted for a holiday. If a child is taken on holiday without permission, this will count as an unauthorised absence and will be reported as such on all reports and references and a penalty notice may be issued.

**A Penalty notice is issued to each parent for each child taken out of school. A Penalty Notice is a fine of £60 which increases to £120 if not paid within the first 28 days. Thereafter, if the Penalty remains unpaid this may result in legal action.**

## 4. When Absence Gives Cause for Concern

- i) It is the responsibility of the tutor to monitor his/her tutees' attendance in the first instance, in liaison with the Attendance Officer.
- ii) If the Attendance Officer is unable to make telephone contact using the home or mobile telephone number regarding an absence, s/he will contact the work place(s) of the parent(s). If unsuccessful on these numbers further contact numbers held will be used.
- iii) In the event of four, or more, consecutive day's absence, confirmation is required that a doctor has been seen. Evidences such as an appointment card, a copy of a prescription, label from medication etc. will be acceptable. In the event that medical confirmation is not received, absences may be recorded as unauthorised.

- iv) The Attendance Office should refer students/pupils to the Local Authority, or apply for a Penalty Notice Fine should be applied for (if appropriate) through the relevant Vice Principal/AHT if a student's attendance continues to be a matter of concern.
- v) Where reason for absence is not received from parent or carer and the Attendance Office is unable to make contact with parent or carer, a letter will be sent and the absence recorded as unauthorised until a reason for absence is received.
- vi) In exceptional circumstances, the Attendance Officer, or other senior member of staff may exercise his/her judgement and make a home visit to discuss the absence.

## **5. Penalty Notices for Unauthorised Absences**

The school is required to comply with the Kent County Council Code of Conduct on the provision of penalty notices to address poor attendance at school, the statutes for which are contained in its introduction.

### **The following circumstances will be considered as appropriate reasons for the issuing of Penalty Notices:**

- A Penalty Notice can only be issued in cases of unauthorised absence.
- Use of Penalty Notices will be restricted to one per pupil per academic year. As with prosecutions under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996, a Penalty Notice may be issued to EACH parent liable for the offence/offences.
- In cases where families contain more than one poor-attending student/pupil, multiple issues may occur but this will be the subject of careful consideration and coordination.
- There will be no restriction on the number of times a parent/carers may receive a formal warning of a possible issue of a Penalty Notice.

### **The issuing of a Penalty Notice is considered appropriate in the following circumstances:**

- Exclusion: being seen in a public place during normal school hours.
- Overt truancy (including students caught on truancy sweeps).
- Parentally-condoned absences.
- Unauthorised leave of absence for holiday.
- Delayed return from leave of absence without prior school agreement.
- Persistent late arrival at school (after the Register has closed).

### **To ensure consistent delivery of Penalty Notices the following criteria will apply:**

- At least 10 sessions (5 school days) lost to unauthorised absence by the student within the last 100 sessions.
- Other than in specific circumstances\* the liable parent/carers will receive a formal warning of the possibility of a Penalty Notice being issued and given a maximum of 15 school days to effect an improvement.

*\* the deliberate taking of a holiday in term time without/against school permission (where it can be clearly demonstrated that the parent/carers understood that permission had not*

*been/would not be given) and where this has created a period of unauthorised absence within the last 100 sessions of at least 10 sessions.*

Schools must consider every aspect of a student's case before considering whether a Penalty Notice would be appropriate. This must include strategic discussions with the assigned SLO and any other attendance support staff who have involvement with or knowledge of the student/family.