



WHINSTONE PRIMARY SCHOOL ATTENDANCE POLICY 2026/27

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Responsible Body: Trust

Responsible School Officer: Mrs Lorraine Batty (Head teacher)

Version Control

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1. Aims

We are committed to meeting our obligation about school attendance through our whole school approach that values good school attendance, including:

- Promoting good attendance
- Ensuring every child has access to full-time education
- Building and maintaining a strong relationship with families to enable targeted support to better school attendance
- Reducing absence, including persistent and severe absence
- Acting early to address patterns of absence
- Promoting the importance of arriving to school and lessons on time to support punctuality

2. Roles and Responsibilities

Improving attendance is everyone's business. Each stakeholder has clearly defined roles and responsibilities to promote good attendance for every child.

2.1 The Governing Board of Trustees

The governing board is responsible for:

- Promoting the importance of school attendance across the school's policies and ethos
- Making sure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties
- Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data
- Monitoring attendance figures for the whole school
- Making sure staff receive adequate training on attendance
- Holding the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy
- The link governor responsible for attendance is Jane Thompson and can be contacted via the school email address

2.2 The headteacher

The headteacher/head of school is responsible for:

- Implementation of this policy at the school
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils
- Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies
- Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary
- The Head Teacher is Lorraine Batty and can be contacted via the school telephone or email address

2.3 The designated senior leader responsible for attendance

The designated senior leader is responsible for:

- Leading attendance across the school
- Offering a clear vision for attendance improvement
- Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes
- Having an oversight of data analysis
- Devising specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data
- Arranging calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues
- Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families

The designated senior leader responsible for attendance is Lorraine Batty and can be contacted via the school phone number or email address.

2.4 The attendance officer

The school attendance officer is responsible for:

- Monitoring and analysing attendance data (see section 6)
- Benchmarking attendance data to identify areas of focus for improvement
- Providing regular attendance reports to school staff and reporting concerns about attendance to the designated senior leader responsible for attendance and the headteacher
- Working with relevant school staff to tackle persistent absence.
- Advising the headteacher (authorised by the headteacher) when to issue fixed-penalty notices.

The attendance officer is Christina Owens and can be contacted via the school telephone or email address

2.5 Class teachers

- Class teachers are responsible for recording attendance daily, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the school office within 15 minutes of register closing.
- Class teachers are responsible for noting children who are absent regularly and making contact with the family to offer support and help identify any barriers to them attending.
- Class teachers should make the school's PSA/attendance officer aware of any attendance concerns to contact and further support to be offered.

2.6 School office staff

School office staff will:

- Take calls from parents about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the school system.
- Make first day of absence calls home for any absences where school has not been notified.
- Make the PSA/attendance officer aware of any attendance concerns so contact with the family and further support can be offered.

2.7 Parents/carers

Parents/carers are expected to:

- Make sure their child attends every day and be on time
- Call the school to report their child's absence before 8:45 on the day of the absence (and each subsequent day of absence) and advise when they are expected to return
- Provide the school with at least two emergency contact numbers for their child
- Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day

2.8 Pupils

Pupils are expected to:

- Attend school every day on time

3. Recording attendance

3.1 Attendance register

We will keep an attendance register and place all pupils onto this register.

We will take our attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session (start of the afternoon). All pupils will be registered at the same time. It will mark whether every pupil is:

- Present
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity
- Absent
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

- The original entry
- The amended entry
- The reason for the amendment

- The date on which the amendment was made
- The name and position of the person who made the amendment

See Appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes.

We will also record:

- Whether the absence is authorised or not
- The nature of the activity if a pupil is attending an approved educational activity
- The nature of circumstances where a pupil is unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

Pupils must arrive at school by 8:45 on each school day.

The register for the first session will be taken at 8:45 and will be kept open until 9:15. The register for the second session will be taken at 13:10 and will be kept open until 13:20.

3.2 Unplanned absence

The pupil's parent/carer must notify the school of the reason for the absence on the first day of an unplanned absence by 8:45 or as soon as practically possible by calling the school office staff, email (admin@whinstone.org.uk) or via the Arbor app (see also section 6).

Where a pupil is absent, and their parent has not contacted the school by the close of the morning register to report the absence, administrative staff will contact the parent by telephone call as soon as is practicable on each day that they do not attend school.

The school will always follow up any absences in order to:

- Ascertain the reason for the absence.
- Ensure the proper safeguarding action is being taken.
- Identify whether the absence is authorised or not.
- Identify the correct code to use to enter the data onto the school census system.
- Where appropriate, offer support to the pupil and/or their parents to improve attendance
- Identify whether the pupil needs support from wider partners, as quickly as possible, and make the necessary referrals

Please note: A home visit may occur.

We will mark absence due to illness as authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

In line with statutory guidance, the school will only request medical evidence where necessary and appropriate, and will consider the sensitivity of health-related barriers to attendance.

If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may ask the pupil's parent/carer to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or another appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

If the school is not satisfied with the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents/carers will be notified of this.

3.3 Planned absence

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the pupil's parent/carer notifies the school in advance of the appointment and shows confirmation of the appointment.

However, we encourage parents/carers to make medical and dental appointments outside of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

The pupil's parent/carer must also apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence. This should be done by completing a Leave of Absence form. This can be collected in person from the school office or requested via email to admin@whinstone.org.uk.

Go to section 4 to find out which term-time absences the school can authorise.

3.4 Lateness and Punctuality

A pupil who arrives late:

- After the register has been taken, but before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code
- After the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code
- The school will use the [U] code for arrivals after 30 minutes from the start of the session

Letters to inform parents of lateness are sent out via Arbor communications or through Attend.

3.5 Following up unexplained absence

Where any pupil we expect to attend school does not attend, or stops attending, without reason, the school will:

- Call the pupil's parent/carer on the morning of the first day of unexplained absence to ascertain the reason. If the school cannot reach any of the pupil's emergency contacts, the school may conduct a home visit or contact other professionals such as allocated social workers, police etc.
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not
- Identify the correct attendance code to use and input it as soon as the reason for absence is ascertained – this will be no later than 5 working days after the session

- Call the parent/carer on each day that the absence continues without explanation to ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary. If absence continues, the school will consider involving an education welfare officer

3.6 Reporting to parents/carers

The school will regularly inform parents about their child's attendance and absence levels. This is updated daily on the Arbor app. In addition, attendance is reported explicitly on two written school reports each year. Further notifications are sent at least half termly via Arbor or Attend.

4. Authorised and unauthorised absence

4.1 Approval for term-time absence

The headteacher will only grant a leave of absence to a pupil during term time if they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'. A leave of absence is granted at the headteacher's discretion using guidance from the Government statutory document 'Working Together to Improve School Attendance' including the length of time the pupil is authorised to be absent.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request. The headteacher's decision is not subject to appeal; however, the school will be sympathetic to requests for absence by parents, and in line with guidance from the local authority and the statutory document 'Working Together to Improve School Attendance', will not deny any request without good reason.

Any request should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated and, where possible, at least two weeks before the absence. A request for any leave of absence is via a form available from the school office (in person or through email). The headteacher may require evidence to support any request for a leave of absence.

Requests for leave will not be granted in the following circumstances:

- Immediately before and during assessment periods
- When a pupil's attendance record shows any unauthorised absence
- Where a pupil's authorised absence record is already above 10 percent for any reason
- Leave of absence will not be granted for a pupil to take part in protest activity during school hours.

If term-time leave is not granted, taking a pupil out of school will be recorded as an unauthorised absence and may result in sanctions, such as a penalty notice. The school cannot grant leaves of absence retrospectively; therefore, any absences that were not approved by the school in advance will be marked as unauthorised.

The headteacher/head of school will only grant a leave of absence to a pupil during term time if the request meets the specific circumstances set out in the school attendance regulations. These circumstances are:

- Taking part in a regulated performance abroad
- Attending an interview
- A temporary, time-limited part-time timetable
- Exceptional circumstances

Other valid reasons for authorised absence include (but are not limited to):

- Illness (including mental-health illness) and medical/dental appointments
- Religious observance– where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart
- Parent(s) travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh gypsies, Irish and Scottish travellers, showmen (fairground people) and circus people, bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and new travellers.
- If the pupil is currently suspended or excluded from school (and no alternative provision has been made)

4.2 Term time absence for holidays

Any request for leave of absence due to holidays in term time will not be authorised.

The DfE does not consider a need or desire for a holiday or other absence for leisure and recreational circumstances, and therefore there is no entitlement in law to time off in term time. Young people who are absent from school fall behind in their learning. They miss out on school events. Many find it difficult to catch up. In addition, school staff have to divert their attention away from other young people to support those who have fallen behind due to a holiday-related absence.

In the case of unauthorised leave of absence, incurring 10 or more unauthorised sessions (5 days) within 10 school weeks, consideration will be given if a referral should be made to the Local Authority for a fixed penalty notice to be issued or prosecution where repeated penalty notices have been issued. Where the threshold has not been met in the case of persistent avoidance, for example, repeated absence for birthdays or other family events, the school will have discretion to refer the case to the Local Authority. If in an individual case, the Local Authority believes a penalty notice would be appropriate, they retain the discretion to issue one before the threshold is met.

4.3 Extended Leave

When a child is absent from school for an extended period (i.e 15 school days or more) parent/carers should advise the school of the temporary address.

4.4 Legal sanctions

The Local Authority may issue Notices to Improve and penalty notices or refer to court for prosecution in line with the National Framework where absences were unauthorised and support has been provided but not worked or engaged with or would not have been appropriate in the circumstances of the offence (e.g., an unauthorised holiday in term time).

A penalty notice is an out-of-court settlement intended to change behaviour without the need for criminal prosecution. The threshold is 10 sessions of unauthorised absence. This can be a combination of any type of unauthorised absence, all taken within any 10-school-week period that may span different terms or school years (e.g., 2 sessions of unauthorised absence in the Summer Term and a further 8 within the Autumn Term).

From Autumn Term 2024, the Local Authority will only issue 2 penalty notices to the same parent in respect of the same child within a 3-year rolling period and any second notice within that period is charged at a higher rate:

- The first penalty notice issued to a parent in respect of a particular pupil will be charged £160 if paid within 28 days. This will be reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days.
- A second penalty notice issued to the same parent in respect of the same pupil is charged at a flat rate of £160 if paid within 28 days.
- A third penalty notice cannot be issued to the same parent in respect of the same child within 3 years of the date of issue of the first. In a case where the national threshold is met for a third time (or subsequent times) within those 3 years, alternative action will be taken instead. This will often include considering prosecution.

Further information about Stockton on Tees Borough Council's attendance procedures can be found [here](#).

5. Strategies for promoting attendance

In order to ensure the school has effective procedures for promoting attendance and managing absence, the attendance officer, supported by Pastoral Leads, the school's Attendance Champion and Senior Leadership team will:

- Celebrate high attendance through social media, newsletters and other parent/carers communications
- Establish a range of specific, evidence-based interventions to address barriers to attendance when patterns of absence emerge. These may include communication with home, letters to parents/carers, parent/carers meetings, devising an attendance plan with parents/carers, engaging with Local Authority attendance teams.

- The school will use attendance data in line with the 'Attendance Monitoring' section of this policy to develop specific strategies to improve attendance where patterns of absence are emerging. These strategies will be developed on a case-by-case basis, and will consider the particular needs of the child.
- Attendance will be celebrated in school through assemblies and on school displays.

6. Attendance monitoring

6.1 Monitoring attendance

The school will:

- Monitor attendance and absence data half-termly, termly and yearly across the school and at an individual pupil level
- Identify whether or not there are particular groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern

Pupil-level absence data will be collected each term and published at national and local authority levels through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. The school will compare attendance data to the national average, and share this with the governing board. The school will identify and monitor attendance patterns for key cohorts including pupils with SEND, pupils with a social worker, disadvantaged pupils, and young carers.

6.2 Analysing attendance

The school will:

- Analyse attendance and absence data regularly to identify pupils or cohorts that need additional support with their attendance, and use this analysis to provide targeted support to these pupils and their families
- Look at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence, and then develop strategies to address these patterns

6.3 Using data to improve attendance

The school will:

- Provide regular attendance reports to class teachers, the school's PSA and other school leaders, to facilitate discussions with pupils and families
- Use data to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place to modify them and inform future strategies

6.4 Reducing persistent and severe absence

Persistent absence is where a pupil misses 10% or more of school, and severe absence is where a pupil misses 50% or more of school.

The school will:

- Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence
- Hold regular meetings with the parents of pupils whom the school (and/or local authority) considers to be vulnerable, or are persistently or severely absent, to discuss attendance and engagement at school
- Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance

7. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the local authority or DfE is updated, and as a minimum annually by Lorraine Batty (Headteacher). At every review, the policy will be approved by the full governing board.

8. Support

The school will:

- Build relationships with students and families to encourage regular school attendance.
- Analyse and use data and relationship knowledge to prevent regular absence.
- Using resources (School-based and external services) to intervene early with support.
- Use targeted support for persistent/severe absences.

9. Truancy

Truancy will be considered as any absence of part, or all, of one or more days from school, during which the school has not been notified of the cause behind such absence.

All staff will be actively engaged in supporting the regular attendance of pupils, and understand the importance of continuity in each pupil's learning. Any pupil with permission to leave the school during the day must sign out at Visitors' reception and sign back in again on their return. Immediate action will be taken when there are any concerns that a pupil might be truanting. If truancy is suspected, school will contact the parent in order to assess the reasons behind the pupil not attending school.

The following procedures will be taken in the event of a truancy:

- In the first instance, a letter of warning will be sent to the parents of the pupil, informing them of the truancy and stating that any future occurrences could result in further action being taken.
- If any further truancy occurs, then the school will consider a penalty notice.
- A penalty notice will be issued where there is overt truancy, inappropriate parentally-condoned absence, excessive holidays in term-time and persistent late arrival at school.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead will be involved where an instance of truancy may be linked to a safeguarding concern. Any safeguarding concerns will be dealt with in line with the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

10. Children reported missing in school

Pupils will not be permitted to leave the school premises during the school day unless they have permission from the school. The following procedures will be taken in the event of a pupil going missing whilst at school:

- The member of staff who has noticed the missing pupil will inform a member of the Senior Leadership Team immediately.
- The office staff will also be informed as they will act as a point of contact for receiving information regarding the search and to monitor the main exit from the school.
- Wider staff will be alerted via use of the school walkie talkie system.
- Any available members of staff will conduct a thorough search of the school premises, updating others using the school walkie talkies.
- The following areas will be systematically searched:
 - Classrooms
 - Toilets
 - Any outbuildings
 - The school grounds
- If the pupil has not been located within the school grounds, available staff will begin a search of the area immediately outside of the school premises, and will take a mobile phone with them so they can be contacted.
- If the pupil has not been found after 10 minutes, then the parents of the pupil will be notified.
- The school will attempt to contact parents using the emergency contact numbers provided.
- If the parents have had no contact from the pupil, and the emergency contacts list has been exhausted, the police will be contacted.
- Relevant information relating to the pupil's absence would be recorded by the most appropriate member of staff to the situation. For example, using CPOMS.
- If the missing pupil has an allocated social worker, is a looked-after child, or SEND, then the appropriate personnel will be informed.
- When the pupil has been located, members of staff will care for and talk to the pupil to ensure they are safe and well.

- Parents and any other agencies will be informed immediately when the pupil has been located.

The headteacher or assistant headteachers will take the appropriate action to ensure that pupils understand they must not leave the premises, and sanctions will be issued if deemed necessary. Appropriate disciplinary procedures will be followed in accordance with the Behaviour Policy.

11. Links with other policies

This policy links to the following policies:

- Child protection and safeguarding policy
- Behaviour policy

12. Legislation and guidance

This policy meets the requirements of [working together to improve school attendance](#) from the Department for Education (DfE) and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on [school attendance parental responsibility measures](#). These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- Part 6 of [The Education Act 1996](#)
- Part 3 of [The Education Act 2002](#)
- Part 7 of [The Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)
- [The School Attendance \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2024](#)
- [The Education \(Penalty Notices\)\(England\)\(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)
- [The Education \(Penalty Notices\)\(England\)\(Amendment\) Regulations 2024](#)

This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the [school census](#), which explains the persistent absence threshold.

- [Summary of responsibilities where a mental health issue is affecting attendance](#)
- [Support for pupils where mental health issues are affecting attendance \(Effective practice examples\)](#)
- [Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026](#)

Appendix 1: attendance codes

The following registration is effective from the July 2026 – 'Working Together To Improve School Attendance 2026'

Present Codes	
/\	present during registration
B	educated off site and for taster days and do not fit K, V, P or W codes
K	attending provision arranged by the local authority under Section 19 of the EA 1996
L	arrived after the register has started but before it has closed
P	participation in a sporting activity with prior agreement from school
V	educational visit or trip supervised by a member of the school staff
W	attending work experience under arrangements by the school or local authority
Absent Codes	
Authorised Absences	
C	absence due to exceptional circumstances, agreed by the headteacher
C1	in a regulated performance/undertaking regulated employment abroad
C2	absent due to part-time timetable, agreed by the headteacher and parent(s)/carer(s)
D	dual registered
E	suspended or permanently excluded, and no alternative provision made
I	illness (both physical and mental health related; not medical or dental appointments)
J1	job/school/college interview
M	medical or dental appointment
Q	unable to attend because of a lack of access arrangements
R	religious observance (only 1 day allowed; any more coded as C if agreed)
S	study leave
T	parent travelling for occupational purposes
X	non-compulsory school age pupil not required to attend school
Y1	unable to attend due to transport provided not being available
Y2	unable to attend due to widespread transport disruption
Y3	unable to attend due to part of the school premises being unexpectedly closed
Y4	unable to attend due to unexpected whole school closure
Y5	unable to attend as pupil is in criminal justice detention
Y6	unable to attend in accordance with public health guidance or law
Y7	unable to attend due to other avoidable cause (must affect the pupil NOT the parent)
Unauthorised Absences	
G	holiday or absence for leisure-related purposes (not agreed by the headteacher)
N	reason for absence not yet established (must be corrected within 5 days)
O	absent in other or unknown circumstances
U	late after register has closed
Administrative Codes	
Z	prospective pupil not yet on register
#	planned whole school closure (e.g., holidays, Insets and polling station days)