Attendance & Punctuality Policy

2025-2027

Whitehill Community Academy

Policy	**Attendance & Punctuality Policy**
Date of review	**January 2025**
Date of next review	**April 2027**
Lead professional	**Principal**
Status	**Non-Statutory**

1. Purpose of policy and guiding principles

1.1. **Across the trust, Directors, Governors and Principals strive to ensure that all students receive a full-time education that maximises the opportunities for all students to fulfil their potential.**

1.2. **In all trust academies 100% student attendance is expected and each academy has in place a range of procedures and strategies that actively promotes good attendance, recognises good attendance and punctuality and seeks to address unjustified absences.**

1.3. **Trinity MAT recognises the link between high levels of attendance and academic progress. To this end, each academy has a responsibility to provide a welcoming, productive and safe learning environment, which supports high levels of attendance.**

1.4. **All academy staff have a responsibility to promote good attendance and key staff in each academy will work with students and their families to ensure that each student attends the academy regularly and punctually.**

1.5. **In each academy there will be effective and efficient communication systems (which include email and text communication) between students, their families and appropriate agencies.**

1.6. Each academy will work with multi-agency partners, or other agencies to provide information, advice and support to promote high levels of student attendance.

1.7. The details of our attendance team, and who to contact regarding attendance and punctuality, are contained in Appendix A of this policy.

2. Attendance and punctuality aims

2.1. The aims of this policy and academy procedures are:

- To continually improve the overall percentage of students attending the academy.
- To make attendance and punctuality a priority for all those associated with the academy, including students, parents, teachers and Governors.
- To have in place a staffing structure, with roles and responsibilities that promotes consistency in carrying out attendance related activities.
- To provide guidance, support and advice to parents.
- To develop systems to record, report and analyse attendance and punctuality data.
- To develop positive and consistent communication between parents/carers and the academy.
- To have in place systems for rewards and sanctions.
- To work in partnership with the LA's Education Welfare Team and other agencies to improve attendance and punctuality and ensure that children are safe.
- To recognise, and put in place, individualised plans for students with specific needs (this includes students with Special Educational Needs, students with a disability or students with a medical condition).

3. Links to other policies or legislation

3.1. This policy links to the academy's legislative duties, as defined by the Education Act 1996 and 2002, The Children's Act 1989 and 2004, and the Equalities Act 2010.

3.2. Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 makes clear that parents are responsible to ensure their child receives a suitable education. Under Section 444 of the same Act, a parent who fails to ensure their child attends the school at which they are registered, is guilty of an offence.

3.3. This policy links and refers to advice and guidance issued by the Department for Education. This includes:

- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2023.
- Working Together to Safeguard Children (July 2018).
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (and subsequent amendments).
- This policy links to the local authority's Education Welfare policy and procedures.

3.4. This policy links to the Behaviour for Learning Policy.

4. Promoting good attendance and punctuality

4.1. The academy has in place systems to recognise and reward students who have sustained high levels of attendance and who consistently arrive at the academy, and lessons, on time. Our reward systems are detailed in our Behaviour for Learning Policy.

4.2. We also recognise where students have succeeded in improving their attendance and/or punctuality.

4.3. At key times during the academic year, good attendance and punctuality will be celebrated. This will be conducted through tutor sessions, assemblies or other reward systems.

4.4. The academy recognises that in order to promote good attendance, students need to experience an engaging curriculum, feel safe at the academy and feel they achieve during their time in the academy. For these reasons the curriculum is reviewed annually and each academy has in place a pastoral team who will monitor attendance levels and put in place intervention strategies at the earliest possible time.

4.5. Each academy will inform students and their parents/carers of their attendance levels at regular (often weekly) intervals. Parents are able to view attendance information through our online communication systems, or request information directly from the relevant academy.

4.6. Parents/carers will be reminded regularly about the importance of good attendance and punctuality.

4.7. Parents/carers should contact the relevant academy at the earliest opportunity to discuss occasions where their child may need additional support or other reasonable adjustments to accommodate exceptional circumstances. This may include a change in family circumstances or a change to their child's health/wellbeing.

4.8. All actions and sanctions used by an academy are used to improve attendance and punctuality and aim to provide a good education to all students.

5. Responsibilities of each academy

5.1. In this academy you can expect:

- All staff to have a responsibility towards improving attendance and punctuality.
- That we will have in place accurate attendance recording systems that will provide accurate information and inform tracking and monitoring systems. This data will be used to monitor individual patterns of attendance, patterns of attendance across the year, and implement strategies to improve attendance at any point during the academic year.
- All staff to implement this policy consistently.
- Leaders to have due regard towards the Equalities Act and, where appropriate or required, make reasonable adjustments for students with specific needs.
- We will investigate any unexplained and/or unjustified absences.
- We will work closely with parents/carers where we believe a student's attendance is a cause for concern.
- We will support students to improve their attendance and punctuality.
- We will promote the importance of good attendance and punctuality to students and their parents/carers throughout the year.
- We will support students in returning to the academy, following a period of extended absence.
- When we decline absences and communicate our decision promptly to parents/carers. See Section 10 for further information.

6. Responsibilities of students

6.1. We will make clear our expectations to students with regard to attendance and punctuality. These expectations are:

- To arrive on time and ready to learn.
- To attend 100% of the time.
- To be punctual to all lessons.
- To clearly register for lessons and advise a member of staff (such as College/House Manager, Attendance Officer/Tutor) if not able to register.

- To ensure that any messages from parents, or notes in planners are passed to a member of staff.
- To follow the Behaviour for Learning Policy.

7. Responsibilities of parents/carers

7.1. Parents have legal obligations to ensure their child attends the relevant academy regularly. The majority of our students have good attendance and arrive at their academy on time.

7.2. When your child begins their education with an academy in Trinity Multi-Academy Trust, we make clear our expectations to parents. These expectations are:

- To ensure your child attends the academy on each academy day, dressed in full uniform and ready to learn.
- To ensure that your child attends the academy on time. This includes ensuring that any transport/drop off arrangements ensure they arrive on time.
- To be aware of term dates and avoid booking holidays during term time.
- To avoid keeping your child away from the academy for any reason other than illness, or other authorised reason. See Section 10 for further information.
- To inform the academy (by the start of the academy day) that your child is unable to attend, providing the reason for absence and when you expect them to return. Parents/carers are expected to contact the academy every day with an update.
- To provide information, when requested by the academy, about periods of extended or frequent absences.
- To understand there must be a degree of challenge administered by EWO and attendance staff through telephone communication to keep academy attendance high. As a result, a parent/carer must be aware that abuse directed towards staff will not be tolerated.
- To meet with pastoral staff at the academy to discuss concerns about your child's attendance or punctuality.
- An understanding that, for educational reasons, only in exceptional cases will absences be agreed.
- An understanding that where your child's attendance or punctuality gives the academy cause for concern then we will discuss this with the local authority Education Welfare Team to explore ways in which we can improve these attendance/punctuality levels.
- We ask for parental support in applying sanctions for non-attendance or lateness. The Behaviour for Learning Policy provides further detail.

- Parents/carers should advise the academy of any changes to their contact details or those individuals they have nominated as alternative contacts.

8. Registration

8.1. There is a statutory requirement to take a register twice a day; once for a morning session and once for the afternoon session. The times for these registers are contained in Appendix A.

8.2. If students fail to register by these times, they will be considered as having an unauthorised absence, unless a satisfactory explanation is received.

8.3. Students are registered during each period of the academy day.

8.4. Each academy follows the Government guidance on attendance and absence codes. These can be viewed via: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-attendance.

9. Punctuality

9.1. Students that arrive to their academy after the times shown in Appendix A are considered as 'Late'.

9.2. Students will be required to sign in, (or parents confirm their arrival to Reception in primary settings).

9.3. The Behaviour for Learning Policy provides details on the sanctions for late arrival to an academy. Parents can expect contact from the relevant academy to inform of any late detentions, or other sanctions.

9.4. Repeated lateness will be dealt with the same way as absences. For persistent or frequent lateness, an academy will work with the local authority Education Welfare Team to improve punctuality. This may result in legal proceedings against parents.

10. Authorised/unauthorised absence

10.1. This area of the policy explains what is considered to be authorised or unauthorised absence.

10.2. Any absence that interrupts the continuity of student's learning, and only in exceptional circumstances will the academy agree a period of authorised leave. The Government publish the latest guidance and parental advice on school attendance on its website.

10.3. Authorised absence

- Authorised absence is where the academy has agreed the reason for the absence, and approved this. This approval can be in advance, or agreed after the absence, where a satisfactory reason has been given for the absence.
- Any requests should be made to the Principal and only a representative of the Principal can authorise absences.
- Absences may be authorised for reasons such as:
  - Illness (1 or 2 days) - In some circumstances, medical evidence in the form of a doctor's appointment card or packaging from prescribed medication will be required to authorise any absence of 3 days or longer. The academy will determine when it is appropriate to request this information
  - Unavoidable medical/dental appointments
  - Exceptional family circumstances (e.g. bereavement)
  - Days of religious observance. (See Appendix B)

- Study leave (for recognised qualifications)

- Exclusion
- Involvement in a public performance or significant sporting activity (e.g. Olympics) or significant public event.

- Parents/carers should contact the appropriate academy as early as possible and before the start of the academy day, on the morning of the absence to explain the reason for absence and continue to follow the same procedure on each subsequent day of absence.
- It is the discretion of the academy to authorise absences, based on information provided.
- Parents should be aware that during an extended period of absence or an extended period of frequent absences, the relevant academy has the right to change the status of the absence to unauthorised. In these cases, a representative of the academy must communicate the change to parents and look for ways in which the academy can continue to support an improvement in attendance.
- Even when circumstances are considered exceptional, please note the considerations outlined in Appendix B.

10.4. Unauthorised absence

- Unauthorised absence is where the academy has not agreed the reason for the absence. Absence will not be authorised for reasons such as:
  - Looking after unwell family members
  - Days out, including exhibitions, sporting events etc.
  - Birthdays
  - Shopping trips
  - Family holidays. Parents/carers are advised not to take students out of the child's academy for holidays during term time.
- Absences which have not been explained, or where the academy does not accept the explanation, will be treated as unauthorised.
- For persistent or frequent unauthorised absences, the relevant academy will work with the local authority Education Welfare Team to improve attendance. This may result in legal proceedings against parents.
- Where a student has 20 days or more of continuous unauthorised absence, the student will be taken off the academy's role.

10.5. Medical/dental appointments

- Medical and dental appointments should be made outside of academy hours, wherever possible. Where this is not possible, students are expected to attend the academy before and after the appointment.
- Parents will be asked to provide confirmation of the appointment (time/date/reason) in order for the absence to be authorised.
- Authorisation will only be given for reasonable travel time to and from the appointment. Where it is considered practical for the student to attend the academy before and/or after the appointment and they do not attend, this will be considered as an unauthorised absence.
- If emergency appointments are made at the start of the day, causing the student to arrive late, confirmation of the appointment must be provided, otherwise the absence will be treated as 'late'.

11. Attendance management procedures

11.1. If a student is absent at morning registration without any contact from their parent/carer, we will contact the parent/carer to establish the reason for absence.

11.2. Each academy has a safeguarding responsibility to identify any students who are missing from education and we will contact those individuals named as contacts on a student's record to establish the whereabouts of the child.

11.3. We will make contact by telephone call, email or text.

11.4. Where we cannot make contact representatives of the particular academy will make a home visit. We will also make a home visit where there are continuous concerns about a student's attendance or punctuality. Where possible, we will advise parents/carers that we intend to make a home visit, although this may not always be possible. Appendix A details the pastoral team from this academy who will undertake home visits.

11.5. We will follow up any visits with a letter or email.

11.6. In all cases we will continue to contact and work with parents/carers to support them in improving their child's attendance and/or punctuality.

11.7. In cases where the student has SEN, disabilities or other medical needs, we will seek advice from the SENDCo and other professionals to work with parents/carers to support them in improving their child's attendance and/or punctuality.

11.8. Where no sustained improvements in attendance or punctuality are demonstrated the relevant academy will work in partnership with the local authority Education Welfare Team to improve attendance/punctuality. This may result in formal or legal proceedings against parents, including Penalty Notices and Pre-Court meetings.

12. Persistent absence

12.1. A student is a Persistent Absentee when they miss more than 10% of their possible sessions in an academic year.

12.2. An academy will prioritise any student who has reached this threshold or at risk of reaching this threshold and will implement strategies to improve the student's attendance. Any strategies will involve communication and requests for meetings with parents/carers.

12.3. Where appropriate, or required by law, the particular academy will engage with other agencies to support improvements in attendance and/or punctuality.

13. Reintegration following a period of extended absence

13.1. When a student returns to their schooling following a period of absence, a personalised plan will be developed as to how their academy will support an improvement in attendance.

13.2. This plan will be discussed with parents/carers to gain their commitment to the actions and improvements required.

13.3. In the case of students with SEN/D this may require an Education Healthcare Plan and, in these circumstances, relevant professionals will be involved in the planning of the student's successful return (e.g. SENDCo, Health Professionals, etc.).

13.4. In these cases, a nominated member of staff will be the key contact to monitor and review the student's return.

Whitehill Community Academy

Students must be in the academy building no later than: 8:30am

Students must be registered in their first lesson by: 8:40am

After this time students are considered late.

Compulsory/legal registration times in this academy are: 9.15am

You must notify the academy of an absence by: 8.30am by telephoning the school office on 01422 244471 or by email to (attendance@whitehillacademy.org).

The attendance team are:

Senior Leader	Chris Kimberley Principal
Education Welfare Officer	Geraldine Sharratt
Attendance Officer	Jane Ackroyd
Deputy Pastoral Lead	Sheridan Goodridge
Admin Team	Shelli Walker Heather Bleese

Any members of the attendance or safeguarding team above are able to conduct home visits.

Please be aware that when requesting leave an academy will not authorise leave requests in the following circumstances:

- Requests for students in Years 2 and 6 will not generally be authorised, even for exceptional reasons.
- Any requests made for leave during exam periods.
- Any requests made for leave during SATs preparation or during the period of time when students sit SATs.
- Any requests made for absence in September - October.
- Requests made for students who have attendance below 95%.
- Requests made for students who have had previously unauthorised absences, including where family holidays have been taken during term time.

Religious observance

The Department for Education advises:

'Schools must treat absence as authorised when it is due to religious observance. The day must be exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the parents belong. Where necessary, schools should seek advice from the parents' religious body about whether it has set the day apart for religious observance.'

If the religious body has not set the day apart there is no requirement for an academy to agree to authorise the absence.

Parents are advised to contact their child's academy to discuss any requests for leave made for religious observance.