

Winterhill School

Whole School Policy

Attendance Policy

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WINTERHILL SCHOOL

ATTENDANCE POLICY

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Winterhill School is committed to providing an education of the highest quality for all our students and recognises this can only be achieved by supporting and promoting excellent school attendance for all. This is based on the belief that 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.
- 1.2 The whole school community – students, parents and carers, teaching and support staff and school governors – have a responsibility for ensuring good school attendance and have important roles to play. The purpose of the policy is to clarify everyone's part in this.

2. School's roles and responsibilities

- 2.1 All staff (teaching and support) at Winterhill School 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. Staff also have a responsibility to set a good example in matters relating to their own attendance and punctuality.
- 2.2 Attendance Manager
A member of the Senior 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, known as the Attendance Manager, will also ensure that up-to-date attendance data and issues are shared with the Senior Leadership Team, are made regularly available to all staff, students and parents (who will regularly be reminded about the importance of good school attendance) and that a report is prepared for the governing body. (S)he will ensure that attendance issues are identified at an early stage and that support is put in place to deal with any difficulties.
- 2.3 Registration
 - i) The school is required to mark the attendance register twice each day; once at the start of the day and once during the afternoon session. Classroom teachers / Group tutors are responsible for completing the attendance registers using the prescribed codes (shown overleaf).

REGISTER CODES

CODE	DESCRIPTION	MEANING
/	Present (AM)	Present
\	Present (PM)	Present
B	Educated off site (NOT Dual registration)	Approved Education Activity
C	Other Authorised Circumstances (not covered by another appropriate code/description)	Authorised absence
D	Dual registration (i.e. pupil attending other establishment)	Approved Education Activity
E	Excluded (no alternative provision made)	Authorised absence
F	Extended family holiday (agreed)	Authorised absence
G	Family holiday (NOT agreed <u>or</u> days in excess of agreement)	Unauthorised absence
H	Family holiday (agreed)	Authorised absence
I	Illness (NOT medical or dental etc. appointments)	Authorised absence
J	Interview	Approved Education Activity
L	Late (before registers closed)	Present
M	Medical/Dental appointments	Authorised absence
N	No reason yet provided for absence	Unauthorised absence
O	Unauthorised absence (not covered by any other code/description)	Unauthorised absence
P	Approved sporting activity	Approved Education Activity
R	Religious observance	Authorised absence
S	Study leave	Authorised absence
T	Traveller absence	Authorised absence
U	Late (after registers closed)	Unauthorised absence
V	Educational visit or trip	Approved Education Activity
W	Work experience	Approved Education Activity
X	Non-compulsory school age absence	Not counted in possible attendances
Y	Enforced closure	Not counted in possible attendances
Z	Pupil not yet on roll	Not counted in possible attendances
#	School closed to pupils	Not counted in possible attendances

- ii) The register will be called promptly at **8.40 am** and **12.15 pm** by each class teacher and a mark will be made during the registration period in respect of each child.
- iii) The registers will close at **8.55 am** and **12.30 pm**. Students who arrive before the register closes will be counted as **present** but will be dealt with under the school's policy on punctuality and lateness (see para 4.4 on page 6).

2.4 Categorising absence

i) A mark will be made in respect of each student during registration. Any student who is not present at this time will be marked 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 in such a way that the original entry and the amendment / correction are distinguishable.

ii) Winterhill School recognises the clear links between attendance and attainment, and attendance and safeguarding children. It recognises that inappropriate authorisation of absence can be as damaging to a child's education as authorised absence, will potentially send a message to parents that any reason for non-school attendance is acceptable and can render children extremely vulnerable to harm. If absence is frequent or continuous, and except where a child is clearly unwell, staff at Winterhill School will therefore challenge parents about the need and reasons for their child's absence and will encourage them to keep absences to a minimum. A note or explanation from a student's home does not mean an absence automatically becomes authorised. The decision whether or not to authorise an absence **will always rest with the school**.

iii) If no explanation about an absence is received by the school **within one week**, the absence will remain unauthorised;

iv) Absence will be authorised in the following circumstances:

(a) where leave has been granted by the school in advance, for example –

- a student is to participate in an approved performance for which a licence has been granted by the Local Authority,
- a student is involved in an **exceptional** special occasion – in authorising such an absence the individual circumstances of the particular case and the student's overall pattern of attendance will be considered,

(b) where the school is satisfied that the child is too ill to attend;

(c) where the student has a medical appointment (although parents should be encouraged to make these out of school hours wherever possible, and to return their child to school immediately afterwards – or send him / her to school beforehand;

(d) where there is an unavoidable cause for the absence which is beyond the family's control, eg extreme weather conditions;

(e) the absence occurs on a day exclusively set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the student's parents belong;

(f) in other **exceptional circumstances** (eg a family bereavement) and **for a very limited period**.

v) Except in the circumstances described above, absences will be unauthorised. Some examples of reasons for **not** authorising absence would be:

- no explanation has been given by the parent;
- the school is not satisfied with the explanation;
- the student is staying at home to mind the house;
- the student is shopping during school hours;
- the student is absent for **unexceptional** reasons, eg a birthday;
- the student is absent from school on a family holiday without prior permission;

2.5 Approved educational activity

Where a student is engaged in off-site approved educational activities, the school will check his/her attendance on a daily basis before entering the appropriate code in the register.

2.6 Staff Training

The School Attendance Manager 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 accurately.

3. **Collection and analysis of data**

3.1 The Attendance Manager will ensure that attendance data is complete, accurate, analysed and reported to the senior leadership team, parents and the governing body (see para. above). The report should include commentary on the trajectory and the school target. The data will inform the school's future practice to improve attendance and prevent disaffection.

3.2 Attendance is monitored by class and by reasons for absence. It is also analysed by gender, ethnicity, students with special educational needs and those who are vulnerable to poor attendance.

3.3 Accurate attendance returns are made to the DfE within the stipulated time frame.

4. **Systems and strategies for managing and improving attendance**

4.1 Attendance has a very high profile at Winterhill School and is regularly discussed at assemblies and in tutor groups. Parents are regularly reminded in newsletters and school meetings about the importance of good attendance and its links to attainment, and weekly attendance figures are displayed prominently in school.

4.2 First-day calling

Winterhill School has in place a system of first-day calling. This means that parents will receive a text message on each day a student is absent without explanation to establish a reason for the absence. This helps to identify at an early stage students who do not have a good reason for absence or who may be absent without their parents' knowledge. When no response is forthcoming the school will phone home and / or send a letter to the home address.

4.3 Meetings with parents

Where there is an emerging pattern to a student's absence, with or without explanation, the school will contact parents and they will be invited to a Schools Attendance Panel meeting to discuss the reasons for the absences. Plans should be put in place with the parents and student to resolve any difficulties and improve the attendance within a specified time limit. It will be explained to parents that any future absences will be unauthorised unless there is clear evidence of a good reason for them.

4.4 Referral to the Education Welfare Service

If there continue to be unauthorised absences by the end of the specific time (or sooner if the student is failing to attend school at all), the matter will be referred to the Education Attendance Service.

4.5 Lateness and punctuality

Students are expected to arrive at school, and be in the correct room for registration, on time every day. It is very disruptive to their own education and that of others in their class, if they are late. Students who arrive after the register closes (see para. 2.3 (iii) on page 4) will be marked absent for the whole session (a session being a morning or an afternoon). This absence will be unauthorised unless the school is satisfied that there is a legitimate reason for the student to be late. Such a reason will not include things such as missing the bus, clothes in the washing machine or lost shoes. A student who is persistently absent by reason of lateness will be dealt with in the same way as other students with an emerging pattern of absence (see para. 4.3). If the matter is not resolved quickly, it will be referred to the Education Welfare Service.

4.6 Students who arrive late for school but before the register closes are monitored for frequency of lateness and internal sanctions applied. If the lateness is persistent, the parents will be requested to give adequate reason. If this is not sufficient to resolve the problem, the EWO is informed.

4.7 For health and safety reasons it is important that the school knows who is in the building. Students arriving late should therefore report to the main school office. **It is important that all students arriving late following this procedure.**

4.8 For the same reason it is important that students leaving the premises legitimately (eg for a medical appointment), or returning to school later in the day report to the main school office.

4.9 Post-registration truancy

Post-registration truancy occurs when a student goes missing from school having previously registered for the session. This behaviour not only means the student will not be receiving a full-time education, it also potentially renders him/her vulnerable to harm. Winterhill School takes this very seriously and will endeavour to ensure it does not happen. If, however, a student appears to have left the premises without authorisation, the school will try to make contact with his/her parents immediately.

5. Term-time Holidays

- 5.1 The Headteacher cannot and will not authorise school absence purely for the reason of a family holiday.
- 5.2 Amendments to the 2006 The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) regulations remove references to family holiday and extended leave as well as the statutory threshold of ten school days. The amendments make clear that Head teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time.
- 5.3 However, the new law states that requests for leave can be granted in exceptional circumstances, and family holidays do not fall into this category. Any requests for leave must be made to the school in advance, as the Department for Education (DfE) has told schools that they cannot authorise any absences after they have been taken.
- 5.4 Winterhill School will respond to all requests for a leave of absence in writing giving the reasons for the decision.

6. Parents' / carers' responsibilities

- 6.1 The prime responsibility for ensuring children receive an appropriate and full-time education rests with parents / carers (defined by the Education Act 1996 as those with parental responsibility and those who have the care of a child), who will be supported and encouraged by Winterhill School.
- 6.2 Winterhill School expects parents / carers will:
 - ensure their children attend the school regularly;
 - support their children's attendance by keeping requests for absence to a minimum;
 - not expect the school to automatically agree any requests for absence, and not condone unjustified absence from school.
- 6.3 Parents will also be expected to:
 - notify Winterhill School on each day of absence, by telephoning the school before 9.00am, or by speaking to the school secretary whilst dropping off siblings.
 - ensure their children arrive at school on time, properly dressed and with the right equipment for the day;
 - work in partnership with the school, for example by attending parents' meetings and consultations, signing homework diaries when asked to do so, taking an interest in their children's work and activities;
 - contact the school without delay if they are concerned about any aspects of their children's school lives. Winterhill School will endeavour to support parents to address their concerns.

7. Students' responsibilities

7.1 All students should be aware of the importance of regular school attendance. If they are having difficulties that may prevent them from attending school regularly, they should speak to their class teacher or form tutor.

7.2 Students should attend all their lessons on time, ready to learn. If they have been absent from school they should give their Group tutor a note in their planner or a letter from their parents to explain the absence. Students also have a responsibility for following school procedures if they arrive late.

8. Governors' responsibilities

8.1 The governing body of a maintained school shall make arrangements for ensuring that their functions relating to the conduct of the school are exercised with a view to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children who are students at the school.

9. Conclusion

9.1 Regular school attendance is a necessary contributor to ensuring the outcomes of *Every Child Matters*:

Be healthy –

- attendance at school supports children's emotional and social health and development
- the school curriculum teaches children to be healthy

Stay safe –

- schools and the LA have a statutory duty to promote the safety and welfare of children
- the best way to safeguard children is to ensure they attend school regularly

Enjoy and achieve –

- good school attendance supports children in reaching their maximum potential and enjoying the fulfilment this brings

Make a positive contribution –

- membership of a school community builds confidence, gives children a sense of belonging and teaches them to contribute to and be responsible for the well-being of others

Achieve economic well-being –

- good school attendance supports engagement in further education, employment or training in the future, which in turn helps to support a prosperous and fulfilling life-style

Reviewing the policy

The school will review this policy each year.

WINTERHILL SCHOOL ATTENDANCE POLICY

A GUIDE FOR PARENTS

1. When does my child need to be in School?

Your child should be at school in good time for registration. The morning register will be called promptly at **8.40am**.

2. What happens if my child is late?

Registration finishes at **8.55am** in the morning and **12.30pm** in the afternoon.

If your child arrives between **8.45am** and **8.55am** he/she will be marked **late**.

3. Does the School need letters explaining my child's absence or will a phone call do?

We would expect a parent to telephone the school on each day of absence, before 9.00am preferably. If you do not phone us, we will phone you. However, we need a written explanation on your child's return to school. If we do not receive an explanation, or if the explanation is unsatisfactory, we will not authorise the absence, and this will be shown on your child's end of Year report.

4. What reasons will the school accept for absences?

- Illness
- Emergency dental / medical appointment (please make routine appointments after school or during the holidays)
- Day of religious observance
- Family bereavement

Except in the case of illness, you should ask for permission for your child to miss school well in advance, giving full details. In cases of recurring absences through illness you may be asked to produce a medical certificate.

5. What is unacceptable?

The school will not authorise absence for day trips, visiting relatives, shopping, birthdays or looking after brothers or sisters, etc.

6. Will the School contact me if my child is absent?

The school operates an everyday response to absences: we will text / phone you if we have not heard from you. This is because we believe it is our responsibility to ensure your child's safety as well as their regular school attendance. On returning to school we will require a letter explaining the reason for the absence.

If we are concerned about aspects of your child's attendance or punctuality we will contact you to discuss the best way forward.

7. What can I do to encourage my child to attend School?

Make sure your child gets enough sleep and gets up in plenty of time each morning. Ensure that he / she leaves home in the correct clothes and properly equipped. Show your child, by your interest, that you value his / her education. Your child will bring home a school diary each evening. Please ensure you look at it with your child and sign it ready for the next day.

8. My child is trying to avoid coming to School. What should I do?

Contact your child's Group tutor / Behaviour for Learning Leader immediately and openly discuss your worries. Your child could be avoiding school for a number of reasons – difficulties with school work, bullying, friendship problems, family difficulties. It is important that we identify the reason for your child's reluctance to attend school and work together to tackle the problem.

In some cases you may find it helpful to discuss the circumstances of your child's difficulties with an Education Welfare Officer. The school may also refer you to an Education Welfare Officer who works with staff and families if difficulties with attendance arise.

ATTENDING SCHOOL REGULARLY

A GUIDE FOR STUDENTS

1. Attending regularly and on time

Regular attendance will help you make the most of the opportunities here at Winterhill School. It will help you:

- keep up with your school work and get the best results you can;
- get a job – employers like people who are reliable.

Remember, your attendance at school is shown in your School Report.

2. Absences

Acceptable reasons for absences include:

- illness
- emergency dental / medical appointments (please make routine appointments after school or during the holidays)
- day of religious observance
- family bereavement
- attending an interview for a job, college, university, etc.

Looking after your brothers and sisters, birthdays, general trips such as shopping and helping at those are NOT reasons to be absent from school.

You will also need a note from your parents to explain ALL absences from school. You will also need a note if you arrive at school after 8.55 am in the morning. If you do not bring a note, or the explanation on the note is unsatisfactory, the absence will count as unauthorised and will be shown on your end of year report.

3. Need help?

Problems with your school work? Are you being bullied? Are your friends giving you a hard time? Are things difficult at school? Are things difficult at home?

You may feel that missing school is the answer. It is not – it may even make things worse. **TALK TO SOMEONE** – your Behaviour for Learning Leader, Group tutor, class teacher, another member of staff, your parents. We will do everything we can to help you get over the problem.