

WYVERN COLLEGE POLICY NUMBER 41 ATTENDANCE POLICY

Purpose and rationale

Wyvern College is committed to providing an education of the highest quality for all our students and endeavour to provide an environment where all students feel valued and welcome. Parents and students play a part in making our college so successful. Every child has a right to access the education to which he/she is entitled. Parents and teachers share the responsibility for supporting and promoting excellent school attendance and punctuality for all. Therefore, for a student to reach their full educational achievement a high level of attendance is essential.

It is our duty to consistently strive to achieve a goal of 100% attendance for all children. Every opportunity will be used to convey to students and their parents the importance of regular and punctual attendance.

For our students to take full advantage of the educational opportunities offered it is vital they are at college, on time, every day the college is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. The routines children develop around attendance and punctuality at college are the same as the expectations of any future employer in the world of work. High attainment, confidence with peers and staff and future aspirations depend on good attendance.

Good attendance is important because:

- Statistics show a direct link between under-achievement and absence below 95%;
- Regular attenders make better progress, both socially and academically;
- Regular attenders find school routines, school work and friendships easier to cope with;
- Regular attenders find learning more satisfying;
- Regular attenders are more successful in transferring between secondary school and higher education, employment or training.

Principles and content

This policy has been written in consultation with governors and is available on the College website. Governors will ensure the policy is reviewed every three years and this policy will provide staff with the framework to promote excellent attendance for all students at this college. This policy will ensure consistent good practice across the College and also demonstrate our ongoing commitment to safeguarding children.

1. Promoting good attendance

The foundation for good attendance is a strong partnership between the college, parents and the students. The Home/College agreement will contain details of how we will work with parents and our expectations of what parents will need to do to ensure their child achieves good attendance.

To help us all to focus on this we will:

- Provide information on all matters related to attendance in our newsletter;
- Report to you on how your child is performing in college, what their attendance and punctuality rate is and how this relates to their progress and attainment;
- Celebrate good attendance in tutor groups and in assemblies;
- Reward good or improving attendance;
- Celebrate 100% attendance in Success Assemblies.

2. Roles and Responsibilities.

Responsibilities of Wyvern College

Wyvern College has a statutory duty to ensure all parents understand the importance of good attendance and to hold parents accountable for the good attendance of their children.

Responsibilities of the School's Attendance Leader

A member of the Senior Leadership Team (Pastoral Assistant Headteacher) will oversee, direct and co-ordinate the college's work in promoting regular and improved attendance and will ensure the Attendance Policy is consistently applied throughout the college. This person will also ensure that attendance is both recorded accurately and analysed. They will ensure that attendance issues are identified at an early stage and that pastoral and other relevant support is put in place to deal with any difficulties.

If absence is frequent or continuous, except where a child is clearly unwell, staff will discuss with parents 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 becomes authorised. The decision whether or not to authorise an absence **will always rest with Wyvern College.**

Responsibilities of Tutors and Subject Teachers

- Ensure that all students are registered accurately;
- Promote and reward good attendance at all appropriate opportunities;
- Liaise with the Pastoral Leader and Attendance Leader on matters of attendance and punctuality and
- Communicate any concerns or underlying problems that may account for a child's absence.

Responsibilities of Students

Attend every day unless they are ill or have an authorised absence.

- Arrive in college on time;
- Go to all their registrations and lessons on time;
- Take responsibility for registering at the Student Services desk if they are late;
- Sign out at the welfare office if leaving the college site during college hours.

Responsibilities of Parents and Carers

Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is a parent's legal responsibility (The Education Act 1996) and permitting absence from school that is not authorised by the school creates an offence in law.

Parents will:

- Inform the college on the first day of absence;
- Discuss with the Tutor and/or Pastoral Leader any planned absences well in advance;
- Complete a request for leave of absence form, where appropriate;
- Support the college with their child in aiming for 100% attendance each year;
- Make sure that any absence is clearly accounted for by phone or text on the first and subsequent days of absence, or by letter if a phone is unavailable;
- Avoid taking their child out of college for non-urgent medical or dental appointments;
- Only request a leave of absence if it is for an exceptional circumstance.

3. Operating the policy

Recording Attendance

Legally the register must be marked twice daily. This is once at the start of the college day 8.30am and again for the afternoon session at 13.55 pm.

Lateness /Punctuality

It is important to be on time at the start of the morning and afternoon school sessions and to lessons. The start of college and lessons are used to give out important information. If your child is late they can miss work, vital information and cause disruption to the lesson for others.

- The school day begins at 8.25am and all **students are expected to be in college at this time**. Morning registration is at 8.30am and it closes at 8.55am;
- All lateness is recorded daily. This information will be required by the courts, should a prosecution for non-attendance or lateness be necessary;
- Arrival after the close of registration at 9.20am will be marked as unauthorised absence code 'U' in line with county and Department for Education (DfE) guidance. This mark shows them to be on site, but is legally recorded as an absence;
- If a pupil is late due to a medical appointment, they will receive an authorised absence coded 'M'. Please be advised that where possible GP and dental appointments are to be made outside of school hours or during school holidays.

Students who are consistently late are disrupting not only their own education but also that of the other pupils. On-going and repeated lateness is considered as **unauthorised absence and may be subject to legal action** (see section 6 for further detail).

Parents of students who have patterns of lateness will be contacted to discuss the importance of good time-keeping and how this might be achieved. If lateness persists, parents will be invited to attend a meeting at the college with the Tutor or Pastoral Leader to discuss the problem and support on offer.

4. What to do if my child is absent?

First day absence

A child not attending school is considered a **safeguarding** matter. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required. If your child is absent you must:

- Contact us as soon as possible on the first day of absence;
- Send a note in on the first day they return with an explanation of the absence – you must do this even if you have already telephoned us.

Or, you can call into college and report to reception.

If your child is absent we will:

- Send you an InTouch message on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you; ***This is because we have a duty to ensure your child's safety as well as their regular school attendance;***
- Invite you in to discuss the situation with our Pastoral Team or Pastoral Assistant Headteacher if absences persist;
- Refer the matter to Hampshire's Attendance Legal Panel if absence is unauthorised and falls below 90%.

Third Day Absence

Please note: If your child is not seen and contact has not been established with you or any of the named contacts after three days of absence, the college is required to start a child missing in education procedure as set down by Hampshire County Council Guidance. We will make all reasonable enquires to establish contact with parents and the child including making enquires to known friends and the wider family.

Day ten absence

We have a legal duty to report the absence of any pupil who is absent without an explanation for 10 consecutive days. If the child is not seen and contact has not been established with the named parent, then the Local Authority is notified that the child is 'at risk of missing'. Children's Services Staff will visit the last known address and alert key services to locate the child. So help us to help you and your child by

making sure we always have an up to date contact number and email address. There will be regular checks on telephone numbers and email addresses throughout the academic year.

Continued or Ongoing Absence

If your child misses 10% or more schooling across the school year, for whatever reason, they are defined as a **persistent absentee**. Absence for whatever reason disadvantages a child by creating gaps in his or her learning. Research shows these gaps affect attainment when attendance falls below 95%. As such, we monitor all absence thoroughly and all attendance data is shared with the Local Authority and the Department for Education. If your child has had absence and their attendance level falling below 94%, we will contact you and depending on the reasons for the absence will invite you in to discuss the matter with the relevant Pastoral Team.

If your child's attendance falls below 94% we will:

Timeline of school action to tackle unsatisfactory attendance:

- 1. The Tutor will meet informally with your child if their attendance has fallen below 95%. This meeting may take place during tutor time in the morning. The aim of this is to identify barriers to good attendance and work together to improve your child's attendance. A Stage 1 attendance letter will be sent home to inform parents of the college's concerns.**
- 2. Attendance will be monitored weekly for a four-week period.**
- 3. If your child's attendance has not improved, the Pastoral Leader will monitor and further intervention support may be provided, where needed. A Stage 2 letter will be sent home if attendance is continuing to decline towards 90%. At this stage parents may be invited to attend a meeting at college.**
- 4. The college will use staged warning letters to keep you informed of the college's concerns regarding your child's attendance. At Stage 2, parents will be notified that the college may no longer authorise absences without supporting medical evidence. If attendance declines further, students may be placed on the college's 'unauthorised absence' list.**
- 5. If attendance does not improve during a ten-week period (100 school sessions), despite support offered, then parents may be subject to a fixed Penalty Notice for Non Attendance (see section 6).**

5. Request for Leave of Absence

Amendments to school attendance regulations were updated and enforced from September 2013: **(Pupil registration) (England) regulations state that Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances.** It is important to note that Headteachers

can determine the length of the authorised absence as well as whether absence is authorised at all. The fundamental principles for defining 'exceptional' are rare, significant, short-term or unavoidable which means the event could not reasonably be scheduled at another time. **There are no rules on this** as circumstances vary from school to school and family to family. There is however, no legal entitlement for time off in school time to go on holiday **and in the majority of cases holiday will not be authorised**. Parents wishing to apply for leave of absence need to fill in an application form available on the college website **in advance and before** making any travel arrangements.

If term time leave is taken without prior permission from the school, the absence will **be unauthorised** and if the number of sessions absent hits the thresholds set down in Hampshire's Code of Conduct, parents will be issued with a fixed Penalty Notice fine, or other legal action in accordance the code (see section 6 for detail).

Taking holidays in term time will affect your child's schooling as much as any other absence and we expect parents to help us by not taking children out of school during school time.

Understanding types of absence:

Students are expected to attend college every day for the entire duration of the academic year, unless there is an **exceptional reason** for the absence. There are two main categories of absences:

- Authorised absence: is when the college has accepted the explanation offered as satisfactory justification for the absence, or given approval in advance for such an absence. If no explanation is received, absences cannot be authorised.
- Unauthorised absence: is when the college has not received a reason for absence or has not approved a child's leave absence from college after a parent's request. This includes:
 - parents giving their children permission to be off college unnecessarily such as for shopping, birthdays or to look after siblings;
 - truancy before or during the college day;
 - absences which have not been explained.

Please note this is not an exhaustive list.

A school can, if needed, change an authorised absence to an unauthorised absence and vice versa if new information is presented. Any changes will be communicated to parents. An example of this would be where a parent states a child is unwell but on return to school there is evidence they have been on holiday.

6. Penalty Notices for non-attendance and other legal measures

In Education law, parents are committing an offence if they fail to ensure the regular attendance of a child of compulsory school age at the school at which the child is registered, unless the absence has been authorised by the school.

Legal Measures for tackling persistent absence or lateness:

Hampshire Schools and Hampshire County Council will use the full range of legal measures to secure good attendance. Legal measures will be considered through a referral to Hampshire's Attendance Legal Panels where:

1. The child or family do not require the support from any agency to improve the attendance;
2. The child has 10 or more sessions of unauthorised absence and parents are complicit in the child's absence.

The following legal measures are for students of compulsory school age who are registered at a school:

- Parenting contracts set at Education Planning Meetings;
- Parenting orders;
- Penalty Notices;
- Education Supervision Orders;
- Prosecution through the Magistrates' Court.

Legal Measures for absence taken when the Headteacher has declined a parental request for leave of absence:

Where a student has unauthorised absence due to either:

1. Non approval of a parent/carer's request for leave of absence or
2. A holiday that has been taken without permission and **the unauthorised absence is for 10 or more sessions (5 days) in any 100 possible school sessions, then a Penalty Notice for non-attendance will be issued. to each parent.**

Where a child has **unauthorised absence** the school must enforce Hampshire's Code of Conduct for issuing Penalty Notices or follow its guidance on other Legal Measures for Non-Attendance. The Code of Conduct is a statutory document that ensures that powers for legal sanctions are applied consistently and fairly across all schools and their families within the authority.

A copy is available from <http://www3.hants.gov.uk/education/hias/learning-behaviour-attendance/attendance-guidance-for-parents/possible-penalties.htm>

The code of conduct states that:

Schools or Hampshire Local Authority will issue a Penalty Notice for any unauthorised absence where the child has been:

- absent for 10 or more half-day sessions (five school days) of unauthorised absence during any 100 possible school sessions – these do not need to be consecutive;
- persistently late (coded *U*) for up to 10 sessions (five days) after the register has closed;
- persistently late before the close of the register (coded *L*), but the school has met with parents and has clearly communicated that they will categorise as unauthorised any further lateness (code *O*), and where the threshold of 10 sessions (five days) has been met.

If a child's unauthorised absence meets any of the above criteria and the family or child do not require any agency support to improve the attendance, then a single Penalty Notice is issued for:

1. 10 sessions of unauthorised absence or lateness in any 10-week school period.

Parents will be warned of the likelihood of a Penalty Notice being issued for unauthorised absence either via a letter, through an email reply to the leave of absence request form or through the school's attendance policy and website. The Penalty Notice is a fine that is issued to each parent who condoned (or was responsible for the child) during the period of unauthorised absence for which the fine has been issued. For each case of unauthorised absence, the school or Hampshire County Council will decide whether a Penalty Notice is issued **to one or more parent** for each child. **N.B** This could mean four penalty notices for a family with two siblings both with unauthorised absence for holiday i.e. one Penalty Notice for each child to each parent.

Each penalty notice carries a fine of £60 if paid within 21 days of the Penalty Notice being posted. If the fine is not paid within 21 days, the Penalty is automatically increased to £120 if paid within 28 days. If the fine remains unpaid, Hampshire County Council will consider prosecution for the non-attendance. Payment methods are detailed on the Penalty Notices themselves. Penalties are to be paid to Hampshire County Council and revenue resulting from payment of Penalties is used by the County Council to help cover the costs of issuing Penalty Notices and/or the cost of prosecuting recipients who do not pay.

For further information parents/carers can request a leaflet from their school and should visit Hampshire County Councils website at:

<http://www3.hants.gov.uk/education/hias/learning-behaviour-attendance/attendance-guidance-for-parents/possible-penalties.htm>

7. My child is trying to avoid coming to school. What should I do?

Children are sometimes reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the college, the parents and the child. If a child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or to give in to

pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and may make things worse.

Contact your child's Tutor or Pastoral Team immediately and openly discuss your worries. Your child could be avoiding college 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 college 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 another professional.

In addition to the Pastoral Teams we also have the following members of staff who can be of assistance:

- Pupil Premium & Family Support Worker;
- Welfare Officer;
- Wellbeing Assistant;
- Student Services Administrator;
- Learning Support department;

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 their log book each evening. Please ensure you look at it with your child and sign it weekly.

Be interested in what your child is doing in college, chat to them about the things they have learnt, what friends they have made and even what they had for lunch!

If your child is leaving Wyvern College (other than when leaving at the end of Year 11) parents are asked to:

1. Give the relevant Pastoral Team comprehensive information about their plans including any date of a move and your new address and telephone numbers, your child's new school and the start date when known. This should be submitted to the college formally in writing.

If students leave and we do not have the above information, then your child is considered to be a 'Child Missing in Education'. This requires schools and Local Authorities to then carry out investigations to try and locate your child, which includes liaising with Children's Services, the Police and other agencies. By giving us the above information, these investigations can be avoided.

Absence through child participation in Public Performances, including theatre, film or TV work & Modelling

Parents of a child performer can seek leave of absence from college for their child to take part in a performance. They must contact the Headteacher to discuss the nature and frequency of the work, whether the child has a valid performance licence and whether education will be provided by the employer during any future leave of absence. Any absence recorded as part of a child's participation in a public performance is recorded as C an authorised absence.

Absence through competing at regional, county or national level for Sport

Parents of able sportswomen and men can seek leave of absence from college for their child to take part in a regional, county, national and international events and competitions. It is however, down to the Headteacher's discretion whether to authorise this and they will wish to discuss with you the nature and frequency of the absence and how learning will continue if absence occurs. Permission for your child to leave early or arrive late to attend coaching and training sessions are also at the discretion of the Headteacher and are not likely to be approved if it is a regular event, unless the sports club or association are providing an education tutor as part of their coaching.

Gypsy Roma Traveller Showman and Showman families

Absence of a child from a traveller family that has left the area may be authorised if the absence is for **work purposes only** and it is believed that the family intends to return. To ensure the continuity of learning for Traveller children, dual registration is allowed. That means that a school cannot remove a Traveller child from the school roll while they are travelling. When the Traveller is away the home school holds the place open and records the absence as authorised through the T code. Distance Learning packs for traveller children are not an alternative to attendance at school.

8. Record preservation

School registers are legal documents. We will ensure compliance with attendance regulations by keeping attendance records for at least 3 years. Computer registers will be preserved as electronic back-ups.

Responsibility for implementation

Securing excellent attendance and punctuality, alongside the safety and welfare of Wyvern students is everyone's responsibility.

Accountability

This policy is written by the Pastoral Assistant Headteacher and reviewed by the governing body. It is the responsibility of the Headteacher and the Pastoral Assistant Headteacher to ensure that the policy is available on the College website for parents and other stakeholders.

Supporting documents and appropriate links

Related documents

This document should be read in conjunction with the College's Safeguarding Policy, Supporting Students with Medical Conditions Policy and the Inclusion and Exclusion Policy.

REVIEW SCHEDULE

As a College, we review this policy **every three years** in line with DfE and HCC guidance.

Reviewed by: J Firth / CG&S committee

Last reviewed on: August 2015

Revised and adopted by Governing Body: March 2019

Next review date: July 2021