WHITGIFT SCHOOL

ATTENDANCE & REGISTRATION POLICY

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1. Introduction

For the purposes of this policy, the term 'parent(s)' refers to parents, carers, and/or guardians.

The School recognises that it has a shared role with parents to remove the often wide-ranging and complex barriers to accessing education. Staff know that good attendance and punctuality begins with the School being somewhere that its students want to be. The foundation of securing good attendance is that the School is a calm, orderly, safe, and supportive environment where all students are keen and ready to learn.

It is the legal duty of every parent to make sure their child attends school regularly - meaning every day that the School is open, except in a small number of allowable circumstances. However, the School recognises its position to work collaboratively with parents to understand the reasons for absence. The School also recognises that some students may find it harder than others to attend school. At all stages of improving attendance, the School and its partners in the Local Authority aim to work in partnership with families to remove any potential barriers to attendance by building strong and trusting relationships and working together to put the right holistic, whole-family support in place. Securing good attendance is not seen in isolation, and effective practices for improvement involve a 'support-first approach' and close interaction with the School's efforts on safeguarding, the curriculum, behaviour, anti-bullying, special educational needs and disability support, pastoral care, mental health and wellbeing.

Although the Assistant Head (Student Welfare), the Director of Middle Years, and the School Office Administrator Responsible for Attendance have significant roles in improving attendance, this cannot be their preserve; it is a shared responsibility and concerted effort across all teaching and support staff, the governors, the Local Authority and other local partners.

Monitoring attendance is central to supporting each student's attempts to fulfil their academic and broader potential, as well as a key aspect of the School's duty to safeguard the welfare of children.

2. Aims

The policy aims to:

- Develop and maintain a whole school culture that promotes and incentivises the benefits of good attendance, punctuality, safety, equality, and protection.
- Ensure, so far as possible, that every student in the School can fully contribute to and benefit from the life of the School.
- Prioritise and where possible improve attendance and punctuality, reduce absence, and outline the School's approach to managing absence/non-attendance.
- Recognise the connection between attendance, absence, and student wellbeing, ensuring a consistent whole school approach to safeguarding.
- Outline the attendance and punctuality expectations of students, and in turn, parents, including start and close times of the day; register closing times; processes for requesting leaves of absence and reporting the reasons for an unexpected absence; and who should be contacted about attendance on a day-to-day basis or for more detailed support.
- Identify and outline the specific members of staff responsible for attendance, including Whitgift's Senior Attendance Champion.
- Outline the School's day-to-day attendance management processes.
- Outline the School's current strategies for reducing persistent and severe absence, including how potential barriers to attendance may be explored, access to wider support services and collaboration with the Local Authority, in support of good attendance and punctuality.

3. Regulatory Framework, Guidance and Associated Policies and Procedures

This policy has been prepared to meet the School's responsibilities under:

- Working together to Improve School Attendance (DfE, August 2024)
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (DfE, September 2025)
- Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations (2014)
- National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools
- Education and Skills Act 2008
- Children Act 2006
- Sponsorship Duties (UKVI, July 2023)
- The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations (2024)
- The Equality Act 2010
- Data Protection Act 2018 and UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR)

It should be read alongside other School policies and procedures, including:

- Behaviour, Discipline and Exclusions Policy
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Missing Student Procedure
- John Whitgift Foundation Parent Contract

- Remote Learning Policy
- School Rules and Regulations

This policy has also regard to the following guidance and advice:

- Toolkit for Schools: Communicating with Families to Support Attendance (DfE, August 2024);
- Guidance for Parents on School Attendance (Office of the Children's Commissioner, August 2024);
- 'Is my child too ill for school?' (NHS, April 2024);
- 'Should I keep my child off school?' (UK Health Security Agency);
- School Behaviour and Attendance: Parental Responsibility Measures (DfE);
- Children Missing Education (DfE, August 2024);
- Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions at School (DfE, August 2017);
- Behaviour in Schools: Advice for Headteachers and School Staff (DfE, February 2024);
- Mental Health and Behaviour in Schools (DfE, November 2018);
- Mental Health Issues affecting a Pupil's Attendance: Guidance for Schools (DfE, February 2023);
- Support for Pupils where a Mental Health Issue is Affecting Attendance (DfE, February 2023);
- Providing Remote Education: Guidance for Schools (DfE, August 2024);
- SEND Code of Practice: 0 to 25 Years (DfE and Department of Health, May 2015).

4. The Importance of Good Attendance

Whitgift School aspires to high standards of attendance from all students and parents. We take steps to maintain a culture where all can, and want to, be in school and ready to learn. This is achieved through several ways, including the prioritising of attendance improvement across the School.

Staff set high expectations for attendance and punctuality of all students, and these are communicated clearly and consistently to students and parents. Addressing attendance is an ongoing process, and as the potential barriers to attendance evolve quickly, the School recognises that its strategies must be continuously reviewed.

Through the culture of safeguarding, staff also know that children missing education can be a crucial indicator of safeguarding issues, including neglect, sexual abuse and child sexual and criminal exploitation. For the most vulnerable students, regular attendance is an important protective factor and provides the best opportunity for their needs to be identified and support provided.

In communicating our expectations, we also consider the needs of students, and their families, who have specific barriers to attendance. In the development and implementation of this policy, and our school attendance strategies, we consider our obligations under the Equality Act (2010) and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Whitgift also acknowledges its context as a school where some of our students are boarders.

The Assistant Head (Student Welfare) and Director of Safeguarding/Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) report to the School governors on absence and attendance at each termly meeting of the Education and Welfare Subcommittee, enabling the governors to fulfil their obligation to oversee attendance.

5. Responsibilities for Attendance

To maintain high aspirations and standards of attendance and punctuality, it is essential to address the root causes of absence and remove barriers to attendance. This requires the School, and local partners when appropriate, to work collaboratively with parents and families.

5.1 School Responsibilities

The School accurately completes admission and attendance registers, and has effective day-to-day processes in place to follow-up absences. Staff understand that everyone has a responsibility to take proactive steps to help manage and improve attendance throughout the School community, ensuring positive outcomes for all students.

The School:

- Consistently promotes the benefits of good attendance, setting high expectations for every student and teaching them about the consequences and risks of absence from education, through its Ideatum (PSHE) Curriculum
- Works effectively and respectfully with students, their families and, where appropriate, the Local Authority to address the challenges to attendance as they arise.
- Responds to non-attendance and/or lateness firmly, consistently and with care, with appropriate reference to this policy, the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and Behaviour, Discipline and Exclusions Policy. Staff act in a proportionate and targeted way in response to data or information received, ensuring that any interventions are regularly reviewed.
- Has a robust system for tracking and recording attendance, reasons for absence and patterns, both at an individual and a cohort level, using the national attendance and absence codes. This enables us to identify students who may be at risk of non-attendance and those who are, or are at risk of becoming, persistently or severely absent so that appropriate interventions can be put in place. This begins with the best placed member of staff meeting with the student, and their parents, to better understand any potential barriers to being in school and agreeing actions or interventions to address them.
- Undertakes regular data analysis to identify and provide additional support to students or cohorts that need it, looking at historic and emerging patterns across the School and developing strategies to address them.
- Shares appropriate information and works collaboratively with the Local Authority, and other appropriate partners, where a student's absence is at risk of becoming persistent or severely absent.
- Is particularly mindful of any students absent from school due to mental or physical ill health or their special education needs and/or disabilities and provides them, and their families, with additional support.

5.2 The Role and Responsibilities of the Senior Attendance Champion

For the purposes of the statutory DfE guidance, 'Working Together to Improve School Attendance', the role of Senior Attendance Champion is fulfilled by the Assistant Head (Student Welfare) working closely with the Director of Middle Years. The specific responsibilities of the Senior Attendance Champion are:

- Keeping this policy up to date and compliant with the law and best practice, through termly interim reviews and full, annual reviews.
- Monitoring the implementation of this policy, through termly reviews.
- Seeking feedback and input on possible improvements to this policy from interested groups (i.e. students, staff and parents), through at least annual reviews.

In addition, they fulfil the following responsibilities:

- Setting a clear vision for improving and maintaining good school attendance.
- Establishing and maintaining effective systems for tackling absence and making sure the systems are followed by all staff.

- Regularly monitoring and evaluating progress, including the efficacy of the School's strategies and processes.
- Having oversight of and analysing attendance and absence data to support the collective efforts of the School.
- Communicating clear messages on the importance of attendance to students and their families.
- Advising relevant staff - at Whitgift, this is likely to be pastoral members of staff such as Directors of Section, Year Group Teams and Tutors - as to the support available for students and their families where attendance, absence and/or punctuality is proving challenging.
- Leading and/or participating, whichever is most appropriate, in more formal conversations with parents in efforts to increase support for individual students and their families to address matters of attendance.
- Liaising, where it is appropriate to do so, with the Local Authority School Attendance Support Team with the aim of continuing to address barriers to good attendance, and particularly in the event of absence intensifying and/or instances where engagement with support is proving challenging.

5.3 Staff Responsibilities

Good attendance is crucial for positive student outcomes, including their safeguarding and welfare. Therefore, promoting good attendance is a shared responsibility within the school. All staff are expected to review, understand, and operate in a way consistent with this policy. Staff are also expected to engage with attendance training that is relevant to their roles, which may help them support students and address common barriers to attendance.

Staff must understand:

- The importance of good attendance and that absence is almost always a symptom of wider circumstances.
- The legal requirements of schools including the keeping of registers.
- The School strategies and procedures for tracking, following up and improving attendance.
- The processes available to provide more intensive support to students and families who may need it.

Staff must consistently model respectful relationships between home and school, as this can be the foundation to good attendance. Staff also play a key role in communicating the expectations and benefits of good attendance to students and parents, ensuring consistent messaging**.**

Tutors and class teachers have specific responsibility for keeping accurate attendance and absence records. This is supported by the School Office Administrator Responsible for Attendance and Year Group Teams, who monitor patterns of absence and lateness.

The Senior Attendance Champion, Director of Middle Years, Director of Safeguarding and the School Office Administrator Responsible meet regularly to discuss attendance, absence and punctuality. This includes the completion of attendance registers as well as any emerging patterns. The Senior Deputy and Director of Middle Years also meet weekly to review the completion of attendance registers and follow up with any members of staff where attendance registers may be a concern.

5.4 Parental Responsibilities

It is the legal responsibility of every parent with a child of compulsory school age to make sure their child receives efficient, full-time education that is suitable to their age, aptitude and any special educational needs they may have. They must ensure that their child attends every day that the School is open, except in a small number of allowable circumstances, such as being too ill to attend or being given permission for an absence in advance. The School help parents to understand what is expected

of them and why attendance is important to their child's attainment, wellbeing, and wider development, and provide clarity on the short and long-term consequences of poor attendance.

Parents are bound by the terms relating to conduct and attendance in the parent contract with the John Whitgift Foundation, and failure to ensure a child's attendance or engage with the School about it could amount to a breach of contract or a finding that the parent or carer is treating the School unreasonably.

The School expects all parents to:

- Make any application for an authorised leave of absence at the earliest opportunity.
- Notify the School of any absence or delay as soon as reasonably possible in accordance with this policy and when doing so, give an accurate explanation for this.
- Cooperate with the School when exploring possible barriers to attendance, which may include attending school-parent meetings and/or seeking the support of the Local Authority School Attendance Support Team, in the spirit of supportive and open dialogue, and working to improve attendance where it has been raised as an issue;
- Inform the School about any relevant changes in personal details, whether or not there is an anticipated impact on attendance. This includes the contact and emergency contact details held by the School and any other data the School requires as part of the admission register.

5.5 Student Responsibilities

Students are expected to arrive on time for registration, be present in-person for the duration of each school day, and attend assemblies, house meetings, all timetabled lessons, supervised study periods and other school commitments.

The School also expects all students to:

- Not leave a lesson or the School site without permission or otherwise in accordance with the School rules and regulations.
- Engage with the School's arrangements for recording and managing attendance as set out in this policy.
- Know that unexplained absences are followed up, and that persistent lateness or non-attendance is likely to result in an appropriate sanction, as well as other supportive measures being taken by the School.
- Speak to staff if there are difficulties that may discourage them from attending school or specific lessons or activities, and this information should be handled sensitively.

6. Recognising Additional Needs

The School:

- Is particularly mindful of students absent from school due to mental and/or physical ill health and provide them with appropriate support with the aim of ensuring regular attendance.
- Makes reasonable adjustments where a student has a disability that puts them at a substantial disadvantage, in comparison with students without a disability, in relation to school attendance.
- Works with parents, and where appropriate, the Local Authority, to develop specific support approaches for attendance for students with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). This includes ensuring that the provision outlined in an Education, Health and Care Plan is accessed.
- Considers suitable strategies for students with social, emotional or mental health issues affecting their attendance. (Key staff are aware of Emotional Based School Avoidance and are able to access guidance for this.)

- Works with parents and students to identify alternative sources of support or consider, where appropriate, making a referral for early help, where barriers are outside of the School's control.
- Submits a "sickness return" to the Local Authority if a student is recorded in the attendance register as absent using the national absence code I (unable to attend because of sickness) and there are reasonable grounds to believe that the student may have to miss 15 consecutive school days or more for illness or the student's total number of school days missed during the current school year because of illness (whether consecutive or cumulative) may each or exceed 15 school days.
- Makes use of the medical services and team of school counsellors, where this may be appropriate, to aid school attendance.
- Considers whether additional support from external partners, such as the local authority, mental health services for children and young people, GPs, or other health services, is appropriate. We make referrals as necessary and work collaboratively to deliver any subsequent support.

7. Arrangements for Attendance and Absence

7.1 Managing and Monitoring Attendance

As part of its duty to safeguard and protect students and in accordance with the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations (2024), the School records, monitors and shares data about attendance of all students (both of compulsory and non-compulsory school age) by completing an admission register (Appendix 1) as well as an attendance register.

The School uses the appropriate national attendance and absence codes (Appendix 2) to record and monitor attendance and absence in a consistent way which complies with regulation 10 of the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 and the statutory DfE guidance 'Working Together to Improve School Attendance'.

The attendance register is kept electronically on the School's management information system (iSAMS). An electronic back-up copy of the register is made at least once a month.

The School uses these records to identify patterns of poor attendance (at individual and cohort level) and work with students and parents to resolve any issues before they become entrenched. Such analysis may include:

- Monitoring and analysing weekly attendance patterns and trends.
- Using analysis to provide attendance reports to form tutors to facilitate discussions.
- Benchmarking attendance data at whole school, year group and cohort level to identify areas of improvement.
- Undertaking frequent individual level analysis to identify students who need support and focus staff efforts on developing targeting actions.
- Conducting thorough analysis of half-termly, termly and full year data to identify patterns and trends.
- Monitoring the impact of school-wide attendance efforts, including any specific strategies implemented.

7.2 Registration and Lateness

Our morning registration period (AM REG and Form) opens at 08.25am and students are registered by their tutors at 08.30am. Morning registration remains open for 25 minutes and closes at 08.50am. Should a student arrive to morning registration after 08.30am, but before 08.50am, they are considered as Late, and code L is used. Any student arriving after 08.50AM and before 08.55AM has arrived late after the register has closed and is recorded using code U (Arrived in school after registration closed).

In both instances, the number of minutes that a student is late by is also recorded. Period 1 then commences at 08.55am.

A register is taken as close as is practicable, ideally within 5 minutes, to the start of each lesson or supervised private study period. Staff use the most appropriate codes to record attendance, absence and lateness.

Our afternoon registration period (PM REG and Form) opens at 02.00pm and students are registered by their tutors at 02.05pm. Whilst this Form period ends at 02.10pm, and Period 6 commences at 02.15pm, the afternoon registration period remains open for 25 minutes – in line with the morning registration period – and closes at 02.25pm. Should a student arrive to afternoon registration after 02.05pm, but before 02.25pm, they are considered as Late, and code L is used. Any student arriving after 02.25pm and before 02.30pm is recorded using code U (Arrived in school after registration closed). Again, the number of minutes that a student is late by is also recorded.

Students who are present and timely when registers are taken at morning, afternoon and lesson or supervised private study periods are marked as Present using code '/' (Present - am) and code '\' (Present - pm). Students that are not present, and where there is currently no known reason for their absence, are recorded using code N (reason for absence not yet established).

In addition to the above details, for lessons or supervised private study, if a student arrives after the register has been taken but before the end of the lesson and without a satisfactory reason, they are recorded using code L (Late), the number of minutes they are late by are also be recorded. Their previous whereabouts is investigated and appropriate action taken. Refer to Section 7.6 which details unexplained absences.

In instances where a student may be absent from a lesson or supervised private study, and recorded using code N, but in such time have presented at the medical centre, for a music lesson, counselling session or other such in-school initiative/service, the register is updated using code // (an internal code to signify they are present on site but out of lessons for an approved reason). This is done by the relevant member of staff who can account for the student's exact whereabouts or, as practised by the School Counselling Team, the member of staff may contact the School Office Administrator Responsible for Attendance instructing for registers to be updated.

In instances where a student has been registered as present in a previous registration period but failed to attend a subsequent lesson, supervised private study or be accounted for by a relevant member of staff, as outlined above, code N is used. The member of staff informs the Year Group Team as soon as possible and appropriate checks, according to the Missing Student Procedure, are carried out to ascertain the whereabouts of the student.

Under the direction of the Director of Safeguarding, some students who are known to be vulnerable have been highlighted to staff and are identifiable in registers. Should a vulnerable student fail to attend registration, be registered as present in a previous registration period but fail to attend a subsequent lesson or be accounted for by a relevant member of staff, as outlined above, code N is used. The member of staff should contact the Missing Student email address - MissingStudent@whitgift.co.uk - after 5 minutes of their lesson start time, with their register being taken at the beginning of the lesson. In this instance, the absence of the student is flagged to a select group of senior colleagues who undertake appropriate checks, according to the Missing Student Procedure, to ascertain the whereabouts of the student.

Staff are routinely reminded of their responsibilities and the processes in place to monitor and report attendance issues.

Punctuality to morning or afternoon registration:
Students who are repeatedly late for morning or afternoon registration or arrive after the register has closed are sanctioned as follows and in line with the School's Behaviour, Discipline and Exclusions Policy:

Lateness (Frequency)	School response
Twice in a week	Tutor warns student that a third occurrence will be sanctioned
3 times in a week	Year Group detention and an email sent to parents
6 times in a half term	Year Group detention and a call with parents to explore underlying causes
10 times in a half term	Sectional Detention and an email sent to parents
12 times in a half term	Meeting with parents to explore underlying causes
15 times in a half term	Headmaster's Detention and an email sent to parents

Punctuality to P1, P3, and P6 lessons:
Punctuality to lessons is monitored by the Year Group Teams and followed up/sanctioned accordingly. Students who are repeatedly late for P1, P3, and P6, lessons where the timetable provides movement time, are sanctioned as follows and in line with the School's Behaviour, Discipline and Exclusions Policy:

Lateness (Frequency)	School response
3 times in a week	Tutor warns student about their punctuality
5 times in a week	Year Group detention and an email sent to parents
15 times in a half term	Sectional Detention and an email sent to parents

At each stage, the Tutor or Year Group Team complete a pastoral check-in with the student to explore any underlying causes. Outcomes, including sanctions issued, are recorded on CPOMS.

All thresholds are reset at the beginning of each half term to ensure sanctions are applied consistently across cohorts and reviewed for impact.

The Director of Middle Years assumes responsibility for the administration of this system.

Failure to attend a lesson, when a student is known to be in school, is treated very seriously and this is also subject to a sanction, depending on the circumstances, which is usually a Headmaster's Detention. The Deputy Head (Academic), Assistant Head (Pastoral and Boarding), Assistant Head (Student Welfare), and Director of Safeguarding should also be informed. Other agencies such as children's social care may also be informed as appropriate.

Per Whitgift School's Rules and Regulations, with prior permission, Sixth Form students are permitted to leave the School site during the lunch period, between 1.00 and 1.50pm, if not required for a lesson or activity. They may also leave site during Period 5 (between 12.15 and 1.00pm) if they do not have a lesson, and to go home during the final period of the day, Period 7 (between 3.00 and 3.45pm), if they do not have a lesson or after school commitment. Sixth Form students may not leave the School site at any other time during the School day.

They are required to sign out and back in and may only leave and re-enter the School site by the main entrance. Failure to sign out and back in is likely to jeopardise this privilege. For the purpose of this privilege, Sixth Form students must use the Sign In App on departure and return to school. Nominated School Office administrators and the Director of Sixth Form monitor this system.

Please refer to the School's **Missing Student Procedure** for full details of how unexplained or unauthorised absence during the normal school day is addressed.

7.3 Reporting On-The-Day Absence

If a student cannot attend school, parents must report this by 08.30am of the day of absence and via their Involve Education account (either through the Involve Education website or the app downloadable from the Apple App Store or Google Play Store) which is linked to their child.

Parents must outline the reason and expected duration of absence. This includes where a child is known to be arriving to school late as well as for whole day absences. Parents cannot specify absence beyond a single day as absence must be reported every morning by 08.30am (the only exception to this is approved extended absences via the absence request process).

The School cannot accept reports of on-the-day absence via email or phone call.

Should parents encounter technical difficulties with their Involve Education account, they should contact the School Office via office@whitgift.co.uk or 020 8688 9222.

If the School receives no information about a student's absence, the School Office Administrator Responsible for Attendance contacts the parents on the first day of absence to ascertain the student's whereabouts and welfare.

The School does not routinely request medical evidence to support illness absence. However, to accurately record absence in the attendance register, the School can request reasonable medical evidence in cases where we need clarification, or there is genuine and reasonable doubt about the authenticity of the illness.

Where a student is recorded as absent due to illness for 15 days, either consecutively or cumulatively, the School submits a "sickness return" to the Local Authority. Please refer to page 21 of 'Working Together to Improve School Attendance'.

Please also refer to the NHS guidance 'Is my child too ill for school?' and/or guidance from the UK Health Security Agency 'Should I keep my child off school?' (UK Health Security Agency).

7.4 Absence for Medical and Dental Appointments

Medical and dental appointments should, wherever it is possible, be made for after the end of the school day at 3.45pm, at weekends, or during School holidays to avoid disruption to learning and participation in activities. **On occasion, a student may need to attend a medical or dental appointment which requires them to miss part of the school day. Under these circumstances, parents must contact their child's Tutor and Head of Year in advance, explaining the reason for absence and stating the dates and times of each period of absence.** This enables accurate attendance records to be maintained and avoids unnecessary phone calls by the School Office Administrator Responsible for Attendance. Prior notification also enables the Tutor to support the student to catch up with missed work or notices, when they return. It is expected that the student is only out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary for the appointment and returns to school as soon as practically possible.

In the event of an emergency medical appointment causing an on-the-day absence, parents should follow the guidance in 7.3 Reporting On-The-Day Absence. If there are long-term medical issues, these should be raised with the School's Medical Centre as a matter of urgency and supported with a doctor's note or equivalent notification from a medical professional.

When a student has complex or long-term health needs that require reasonable adjustments or support, the School may request medical evidence or clarification from families. This helps us better understand the student's needs and identify the most suitable provision, in line with the DfE's statutory guidance on 'supporting pupils with medical conditions' or 'arranging education for children who cannot attend school because to health needs.'

7.5 Requesting Absence in Advance

According to Working Together to Improve School Attendance, *"The law entitles every child of compulsory school age to an efficient, full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude, and any special educational need they may have. It is the legal responsibility of every parent to make sure their child receives that education either by attendance at a school or by education otherwise than at a school."* Therefore, absence from school is granted only in exceptional circumstances and only by designated members of staff. Parents should be aware that any days of school missed, other than due to illness or where there are additional needs, which have not been authorised by prior arrangement, constitute unauthorised absence.

Requests for a student to be absent for exceptional circumstances or an activity not organised by the School, **must be made by email or in writing to the student's Head of Year with the Tutor copied.** Parents should make it clear in their application what the relevant background context of the requested absence is, including any proposed dates and timeframes.

- Requests for a student to be absent for **up to a single school day** are reviewed by the Head of Year.
- Requests for a student to be absent for **up to 1 school week** are raised, by the student's Head of Year, to the relevant Director of Section.
- Requests for a student to be absent for **more than 1 school week** are raised, by the student's Head of Year, to the Senior Deputy.

In all instances, the member of staff reflects upon the request, in conjunction with the Headmaster as appropriate, considering the specific facts and circumstances. A decision is made and communicated via email from the student's Head of Year. If a reply is not forthcoming, parents should contact the Head of Year again.

In line with statutory guidance, The School is unable to grant permission for term time holidays or non-essential family events taken during term time due to the adverse impact on a student's education. The School does acknowledge that requests for absence due to exceptional circumstances such as acts of religious observance, attending a funeral of a close relative, involvement in professional music or drama performances or in a regional or national sports competition are extremely important and endeavours to work with parents who apply for their children to be absent at such times.

It is important that this procedure is followed, and that permission is granted before absence is taken. Parents should make absence requests well in advance, ideally one month before the proposed date, to ensure permission can be considered and the full procedure followed. We understand that emergencies may sometimes prevent this advance notice. **To assist planning, school term dates are published well in advance, and last-minute non-emergency absence requests are unlikely to be approved.**

If an absence request is granted, it is for the School to determine the length of the time the student is permitted to be away.

7.6 Unexplained Absence

The welfare of our students is our paramount responsibility and in instances where an unexplained absence occurs, the School investigates this seriously. Assuming a student has not been registered using code '/' (Present) during the morning registration period (AM REG and Form), and no information has been received by the School through Involve, the School Office Administrator Responsible for Attendance makes every effort to contact the parents on the first day of absence. Every effort is made to do this in a timely manner to ascertain the student's whereabouts and welfare and to establish the reason for the student's absence. When the reason for absence has not yet been established, the absence is recorded using code N.

Where absence is recorded as code N (reason for absence not yet established) in the attendance register, the correct absence code should be entered as soon as the reason is ascertained, but no more than 5 school days after the session. Code N must not therefore be left on the pupil's attendance record indefinitely. If a reason for absence cannot be established within 5 school days, the School amends the pupil's record to code O (absent in other or unknown circumstances), per DfE guidance.

Where a student and family is supported by a foster carer, social worker and/or a youth offending team worker, the School informs these support agencies if there are unexplained absences from school and where needed attempt to ascertain the child's whereabouts, welfare, reason for absence and details as to when the child may return. This is to support the student, their family, and the effective working across the local authority area.

For details of students who may go missing without authorisation or explanation during the normal school day, please refer to the School's **Missing Student Procedure.** For Boarders who go missing outside the hours of the normal school day, there is a separate **Missing Student Procedure (Boarder outside School hours)** to refer to.

7.7 Absence due to non-payment of fees:

As a Foundation School, Whitgift School works in tandem with the John Whitgift Foundation's Fees Department on matters related to the payment of school fees and any related debt. The John Whitgift Foundation's Fees Department leads this process, and families are asked to be proactive in their communications with them. Specific details of fee payment are shared with parents upon their child's admission to Whitgift School. It is also outlined in the contracts held between parent and the School.

In event of non-payment of school fees, the John Whitgift Foundation's Fees Department takes a lead in engaging with the relevant parent. Should this not result in the parent making a payment towards the fees or related debt, or the parent agreeing to the payment schedule proposed by the Fees Department, the School may be put in a position where it requires the student to remain at home until the matter is resolved. The Fees Department and the School work with the parent and, where it is possible, limit the time the student spends out of school. Should it become clear that an alternative school is required, the School looks to support the family in this process. In this instance, the student's absence is recorded using code 'C' (leave of absence for exceptional circumstance). Parents must still provide a daily update via their Involve Education account as to the student's whereabouts to ensure their absence is recorded accurately. In these instances, teaching staff may publish schoolwork via our online system, Firefly, in efforts to help mitigate lost learning time.

7.8 Absence due to Exam Preparation Periods:

As aligned with DfE guidance, Whitgift School may choose to offer appropriate periods of 'Study Leave': we call this 'Exam Preparation Periods'. These periods are carefully planned and used sparingly. It is not the case that these periods are issued by default once tuition of the exam syllabus

is complete. Any periods of exam preparation leave are shared and agreed with parents in advance. Arrangements are also put in place to allow students who may prefer to come to the School site, to revise or meet with teaching staff, to do so during these periods. For some students, we may supportively insist this be the case. The School makes arrangements for two forms of leave:

> **Public Exam Preparation Period:** This is used exclusively in preparation for Fifth and Upper Sixth Form students studying for and sitting public examinations. This is recorded using code 'S' (leave of absence for the purpose of studying for a public examination).
>
> **Mock Exam Preparation Period:** This is used exclusively for Fifth, Lower Sixth and Upper Sixth Form students studying for and sitting internal examinations. This is recorded using code 'C' (leave of absence for exceptional circumstance).

7.9 Attendance and Absence Specific to Boarding Students:

Whitgift offers several boarding options for families. Typically, once a boarding student returns to school, they remain in school for as long as the School is in session for that half term or term period. Therefore absence, and the need to check the reason for it, only takes place if:

- A student has not returned to school after a break or weekend period that has been spent away.
- A student has gone home (including a guardian's home) due to illness or another reason and has not returned as expected.
- A student is missing.

If a student fails to return to school from an official break, parents are contacted as soon as possible to determine the reason. If parents and/or guardians cannot be reached by phone or email, or if they believe their child is in school, then the Missing Student Procedure (for boarders outside of school hours) is followed and the local authority informed as appropriate.

Registration in the Boarding House ('Founder's House'), including signing in/out for activities, is managed on REACH. This electronic platform allows staff to track and monitor student status (e.g. in school and expected in lessons; in school but unwell and in Founder's House etc.), all sign in/out activity, expected locations of students, and approve any requests for absence. Depending upon the type of absence requested, these can be submitted by the student or their parents. All submitted requests are subject to checks and approval. REACH also tracks the IP address of requests to ensure authenticity. Students can access this platform via their phones, laptops and the IPAD in the foyer of Founder's House. Weekend excursions arranged by the School are also logged on EVOLVE, the school's trip management platform with registers kept as part of this process.

During the school week, but outside of school hours, registers are taken at the following 3 times: 7-7.30am, 5-7.30pm and 9.30-10.30pm.

During the weekend, registers are taken at the following 4 times: 8-8.30am; 10-11am; 6-7pm; and 9.30-10.30pm. On Sundays, the 6-7 pm roll call is replaced with an 8pm roll call to track the return of weekly boarding students. This is in addition to the data available on REACH.

All registers are taken by the Housemaster and/or their Deputies, who also monitor attendance and address any inaccuracies in the signing in/out procedure. Students who fail to follow the correct procedure are spoken to and receive a 15-minute detention with the Housemaster and/or their Deputies.

Students who board on a flexible basis are registered in the same way as full-time or weekly boarders, but this is done via a physical register, with the details then being stored electronically.

As Founder's House includes international students who may have lengthy journeys to get home, parents can request for the student to leave school within 24 hours of the official end of term. These requests, as with others, are managed via REACH. In these instances, approval is given by the Assistant Head (Pastoral & Boarding) and the Deputy Head (Academic), in conjunction with the Headmaster. Should a request be made that requires a student to miss more than the final 24 hours of the official end of term, the request is managed in line with other exceptional requests for absence.

Due to travel, it is acknowledged that some boarding students may be in a situation where they must sign in/out either before or after the official start or end of term. In these instances, the Housemaster, their Deputies, and the Assistant Head (Pastoral & Boarding) communicate with the student and their families to ensure safe arrival and departure.

During school hours, the attendance, absence, and punctuality of boarding students is monitored in the same way as for day students. It is acknowledged that boarders may be 'in school' but still be missing from lessons for various reasons. In such cases, this is logged on REACH and a Founder's House staff member reports the student's absence from the school day/lessons, similar to how a parent would report their own child's absence. This may also include staff members accompanying students to medical or visa appointments in place of parents or guardians.

7.10 Visa-Sponsored Boarding Students:
For the purpose of section 7.10, the term 'student(s)' refers specifically to visa-sponsored student(s).

As a licensed Student Sponsor under UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) regulations, Whitgift School is committed to meeting its legal responsibilities in monitoring the attendance and academic engagement of all students sponsored under the Student Visa route.

In line with UKVI guidance, students are expected to actively engage in their studies and attend all required academic activities. Regular attendance is essential not only for academic success but also to comply with visa conditions. Therefore, the school must be notified immediately, and in line with this policy, of any absence.

Both students and their parents share responsibility for meeting the attendance and engagement requirements. Parents are also expected to keep their contact details up to date and respond promptly to any communication from the School regarding their child's attendance or visa status. The School is required to maintain accurate and up-to-date attendance records and to monitor patterns of absence. These records are available for inspection by UKVI or other relevant authorities.

According to UKVI sponsor guidance, a student's attendance must not fall below 80% (inclusive of both authorised and unauthorised absences), nor should they miss 10 consecutive contact points without authorisation. At Whitgift School, a UKVI contact point is defined as a single school day. Therefore, 10 consecutive days of unauthorised absence would constitute a breach of UKVI attendance expectations.

It is important to note that an 'absence' in this context refers to a situation where the student, their guardian, or relevant staff members in charge of attendance in Founder's House are in contact with the School. If there is no contact and the student remains absent, the student is treated as missing and the School's Missing Student procedures is triggered.

If any of the above thresholds are breached, the School assesses the circumstances and, if necessary, reports the case via the UK Visa Sponsorship Management System (SMS). This may result in the withdrawal of sponsorship and curtailment of the student's visa.

Early identification of issues affecting a student's attendance is essential. The School takes the following steps:

- At 92% attendance: The School's UKVI SMS Key Contact/Authorising Officer are informed. Investigations may begin, although no further action may be taken at this stage.
- At 80% attendance: The School contacts parents, reviews the situation, and considers whether reporting to UKVI is necessary.

Reporting only occurs after all reasonable efforts have been made to identify and address the issues and to support the student and their family.

When assessing the context of absences, the School follows this policy. Common reasons for absence may include:

- Medical leave and illness
- Family emergencies
- Approved academic trips or other approve offsite activities
- Approved travel to/from the student's home country

International students often face long journeys home. In line with other international boarders residing in Founder's House, parents may request that their child leave within 24 hours of the official end of term or apply for exceptional absence if more time is needed. In these cases, the Assistant Head (Pastoral & Boarding), the Senior Housemaster, and the School's UKVI SMS Key Contact/Authorising Officer must be consulted. Any such approved absences of this type must not breach the attendance thresholds outlined above.

8. Absence and School work

Any student who has been absent for any reason should make every effort to ensure that the work missed is caught up as quickly as possible. Teaching staff do their best to provide the information and materials missed. This may include catching up on missed work with the help of other students, the completion of alternative exercises or extending homework deadlines. Students should speak to their tutors if they need help in managing this process.

If a student is going to have a significant period of absence (usually more than five school days) **and only if they are well enough to work independently**, either the Tutor or a member of the Year Group Team discusses any arrangements with parents for work to be set, usually on Firefly. This is decided on a case-by-case basis. Given the number of different teachers each student has, this may take time, but every effort is made to do this promptly.

Students who have been granted permission to be absent from school to take part in another activity or to attend an important external event should request the missed work from their subject teachers in advance.

Students who are suspended from school are expected to catch up with the missed work when they return. Teachers are not routinely asked to set work to be done at home.

If parents have any queries regarding this policy, they should contact their child's Tutor, Head of Year, or the relevant Director of Section, in the first instance. The School's Senior Attendance Champion and Director of Safeguarding/Designated Safeguarding Lead are also available for support and advice.

9. Reporting Duties

The School has statutory reporting obligations if a student fails to attend school regularly. In addition to "sickness returns", the School must report, to the Local Authority, the details of students who fail to attend school regularly or have unauthorised absences that span a continuous period of 10 days or more. This is known as an "attendance return".

In the event that a student holding a Student or Child Student visa sponsored by the School under the Points Based System goes missing, the School reports to UKVI if the student misses 10 consecutive expected contact points. Each time the School's attendance register is completed, it is treated as a contact point for these purposes. The report is made by the School's Level 1 user via the Sponsor Management and in accordance with prevailing UKVI guidance.

Actions may also be taken in accordance with the School's **Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy** and **Missing Student Procedures**, if any absence from the School gives rise to a concern about a student's welfare.

10. Information Sharing

Personal information on attendance is shared in line with legal obligations and having regard to government guidance on attendance, safeguarding and children missing education.

The School, local authorities and other local partners work jointly and share data on individual cases where it is of the benefit to a student (e.g. health services where there are medical conditions or the police where there are extra-familiar harms).

Where appropriate, the School attends regular Targeting Support Meetings to discuss attendance data.

The School is legally required to share information from the registers with the Local Authority. As a minimum this includes:

- new pupil and deletion returns.
- attendance returns.
- sickness returns.

The law allows Local Authority officers to access attendance and admission registers. The Local Authority may also request, and the School is expected to provide, more frequent or comprehensive data sharing when necessary to fulfil their obligations under the Education Acts and to support joint working between schools and the Local Authority. These officers are permitted to take digital or physical extracts of the School's registers.

Where appropriate, the School is expected to inform a student's social worker and/or youth offending team worker if there are any unexplained absences.

11. Record Keeping and Confidentiality

All records created in accordance with this policy are managed in accordance with the School's policies that apply to the retention and destruction of records.

The information created in connection with this policy may contain personal data. The School's use of this personal data is in accordance with data protection legislation. Please refer to the School's privacy notice which has been published on the School's website.

Appendix 1 - Admission Register ('School Roll')

In accordance with the requirements of the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024, the School:

- Maintains an admission register of all students (of both compulsory and non-compulsory school age) admitted to the School (also known as the school roll); and
- Informs the Local Authority of any student who is going to be added to or deleted from the School's admission register at non-standard transition points. This needs to be within 5 days of adding a student's name to the admission register. (Additions to the school roll are communicated by the School's Admissions Department, and deletions are the responsibility of the School Office.)

The admission register is kept electronically. A back-up electronic copy of the register is made at least once a month. The School ensures that every entry in the School's admission register is preserved for six years, beginning with the day on which the entry was made. Every back-up copy of the register is preserved for six years after the end of the school year that it relates to. The admissions register contains specific personal details of every student in the School. The admissions register, per DfE guidance, must include the following information for every student:

- the full name of the student;
- the name the student uses at school;
- the sex of the student;
- the address that the students lives at when outside of school;
- the full name and address of the student's parents;
- which of the student's parents, if any, the student normally lives with and at least one telephone number by which each such parent can be contacted in an emergency. The DfE's advice is that where reasonably practicable, schools should hold an emergency contact number for more than one person for each student;
- the date of birth of the student;
- the date the student starts the school;
- the name and address of the last school the student attended, if any; and
- where the school has boarding students, the admission register must state whether each student of compulsory school age is a boarder or a day pupil.

A student's name is only deleted from the admission register for a reason set out in regulation 9 of the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024. When any of the situations set out in regulation 9 occur, the student's name is deleted.

Where the School notifies the Local Authority that the student's name is to be deleted from the admission register, the School provides the following information:

- the full name of the student;
- the address of the student;
- the full name and address of any parent with whom the student normally lives;
- at least one telephone number of any parent with whom the student lives or can be contacted in an emergency;
- the student's future address,
- the full name and address of the parent with whom the student is going to live;
- the date the student is expected to start living there, if applicable;
- name of the student's other or future school and their start date or expected start date there, if applicable; and
- the grounds (prescribed in regulation 9) under which the student's name is to be deleted from the admission register.

Appendix 2 – Attendance and Absence Codes

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	Pupil is present at morning registration
\	Present (pm)	Pupil is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Pupil arrives late before the register has closed
Attending a place other than the school		
K	Attending education provision arranged by the local authority	Pupil is attending a place other than a school at which they are registered, for educational provision arranged by the local authority
V	Attending an educational visit or trip	Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised or approved by the school
P	Participating in a sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
W	Attending work experience	Pupil is on an approved work experience placement
B	Attending any other approved educational activity	Pupil is attending a place for an approved educational activity that is not a sporting activity or work experience
Absent – leave of absence		
C1	Participating in a regulated performance or undertaking regulated employment abroad	Pupil is undertaking employment (paid or unpaid) during school hours, approved by the school
M	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment
J1	Interview for employment or for admission to another institution	Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
S	Study Leave	Pupil has been granted leave of absence to study for a public examination
X	Not required to attend school	Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
C2	Part-time timetable	Pupil of compulsory school age not in school due to having a part-time timetable
D	Dual registered	Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
C	Exceptional circumstances	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
Absent – other authorised reasons		
T	Parent travelling for occupational purposes	Pupil is a 'mobile child' who is travelling with their parent(s) who are travelling for occupational purposes
R	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance
I	Illness (not medical or dental appointment)	Pupil is unable to attend due to illness (either related to physical or mental health)
E	Suspended or excluded	Pupil has been suspended or excluded from school and no alternative provision has been made
Absent – unable to attend school because of unavoidable cause		
Q	Lack of access arrangements	Pupil is unable to attend school because the local authority has failed to make access arrangements to enable attendance at school
Y1	Transport not available	Pupil is unable to attend because school is not within walking distance of their home and the transport normally provided is not available

Y2	Widespread disruption to travel	Pupil is unable to attend because of widespread disruption to travel caused by a local, national or international emergency
Y3	Part of school premises closed	Pupil is unable to attend because they cannot practicably be accommodated in the part of the premises that remains open
Y4	Whole school site unexpectedly closed	Every pupil absent as the school is closed unexpectedly (e.g. due to adverse weather)
Y5	Criminal justice detention	Pupil is unable to attend as they are: · In police detention · Remanded to youth detention, awaiting trial or sentencing, or · Detained under a sentence of detention
Y6	Public health guidance or law	Pupil's travel to or attendance at the school would be prohibited under public health guidance or law
Y7	Any other unavoidable cause	To be used where an unavoidable cause is not covered by the other codes
Absent – unauthorised absence		
G	Holiday not granted by the school	Pupil is absent for the purpose of a holiday, not approved by the school
N	Reason for absence not yet established	Reason for absence has not been established before the register closes
O	Absent in other or unknown circumstances	No reason for absence has been established, or the school isn't satisfied that the reason given would be recorded using 1 of the codes for authorised absence
U	Arrived in school after registration closed	Pupil has arrived late, after the register has closed but before the end of session
Administrative codes		
Z	Prospective pupil not on admission register	Pupil has not joined school yet but has been registered
#	Planned whole-school closure	Whole-school closures that are known and planned in advance, including school holidays