

Attendance policy

Equalities statement

In our Trust we work to ensure that there is equality of opportunity for all members of our community who hold a range of protected characteristics as defined by the Equality Act 2010, as well as having regard to other factors which have the potential to cause inequality, such as socio-economic factors. For further information, please see our Equalities Policy.

Document Management	
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The Whitstable School's aim is that all pupils attend school regularly and where there has been absence, particularly following the Covid-19 pandemic, that they will be supported in returning to school. The messages and language will be positive and supportive in trying to help parents and carers of young people return to a stable and accessible route of education. We, at The Whitstable School, will do all we can to support young people into school and offer guidance, support and signposting of further help if required.

The Whitstable School expects every student to have at least 97% attendance. We want all our young people to achieve their full potential and to progress into their chosen career. Barriers such as poor attendance will hinder, delay or stop their progress.

Your child should be in school by 8.35am every day as lessons start at 8.40am. Any student arriving at school after 8.40am is deemed late and a detention will be issued. If a student arrives after 9.30am when the register closes, this is recorded as an Unauthorised Absence and marked as a U Code, an after school detention will be issued. The school day finishes at 3:00pm.

Studies have shown that frequent absence from school can have a serious negative impact on your child's education. There is a perception from both students and parents that 90% attendance is good, however, 90% attendance is the equivalent of one half-day off every week.

Roles and Responsibilities

The Governors, Headteacher and Staff in partnership with parents have a duty to promote full attendance at The Whitstable School.

Responsibilities of the Local Governing Body

The Local Governing Body is responsible for monitoring attendance figures for the whole school on at least a termly basis. It also holds the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy.

Responsibilities of the school's attendance leader

Mr Donovan-Bayley 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. Ensuring that attendance is both recorded accurately and analysed. They will ensure that attendance issues are identified at an early stage and work with other professionals to support them with any difficulties.

If absence is frequent or continuous, except where a child is clearly unwell, staff will discuss with parents/carers 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 pupil's home does not mean an absence becomes authorised. The decision whether or not to authorise an absence will always rest with the school attendance lead.

Responsibilities of classroom staff / Mentor

- Ensure that all pupils are registered accurately
- Promote and reward good attendance with pupils at all appropriate opportunities
- Liaise with the year group team and attendance leader on matters of attendance
- Communicate any concerns or underlying problems that may account for a child's absence
- Support pupils with absence to engage with their learning once they are back in school

Responsibilities of pupils

- Attend every day unless they are ill or have an authorised absence
- Arrive in school on time
- Go to all their registrations and lessons on time
- Take responsibility for registering at the reception desk if they are late or are leaving the school site during school hours

Responsibilities of parents/carers

Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is a parent/carer's legal responsibility (Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act) and permitting absence from school that is not authorised by the school creates an offence in law.

Parents will:

- Inform the school on the first day of absence
- Discuss with the attendance team any planned absences in advance (5 working days)
- Support the school with their child in aiming for 100% attendance each year
- Make sure that any absence is clearly accounted for by telephone or text on the first and subsequent days of absence
- Avoid taking their child out of school for non-urgent medical or dental appointments
- Only request leave of absence if it is for an exceptional circumstance

Attendance - Information for Parents & Carers

If you wish to contact the Attendance Office, please do so by leaving a message on the Attendance Office number 01227 272362 – option 1 Attendance Line or emailing tws_attendance@swale.at . The attendance Officers are Mrs J Deadman and Mrs D Sherred.

The Senior Assistant Headteacher, Mr Chris Donovan-Bayley is the strategic lead for attendance and can be contacted by emailing TWS_Admin@swale.at. If you wish to discuss pastoral concerns linked to attendance, please contact the year group team in the first instance.

Actions on Absence

- Please let the Attendance Office know if your child is going to be absent from school and update them on each day of absence thereafter
- If the school is not contacted, the absence will be deemed unauthorised and a SMS communication will be sent home for clarification
- The Whitstable School will authorise up to 5 days per academic year for absence due to illness. For any further absences, we will require a form of medical documentation
- Unless medical evidence is provided, The Whitstable School will not authorise a whole day of absence for reasons such as headache
- The Whitstable School will not accept the term 'generally unwell' or similar language to describe your child's absence. The use of such vocabulary will result in the period of absence being recorded as unauthorised. Please provide specific ailments of the illness
- Absences, where the attendance officer has not been informed of reason for absence will be recorded as unauthorised absence. On the first day of unauthorised absence, The Whitstable School will send an SMS to parents to prompt them to contact the school
- On the second day of unauthorised absence, a phone call will be made to all contacts to establish the reasons for absence
- On the third day of unauthorised absence staff may conduct a Home visit to establish the reason for absence but to ensure the welfare of the young person. A calling card will be left at the home requesting that parents contact the school
- On the fourth day of unauthorised absence with no contact, The Whitstable School will raise the young person to Social Services through the Digital Front Door

Throughout the year attendance data is kept and analysed with relevant actions taking place as necessary. Pupils may be targeted for attendance intervention and support where attendance is below the expected level. Where a young person's attendance is a concern, the school may discuss this with Kent County Council.

Actions on Lateness

- Please contact the Attendance Office via email or phone if you know your child is going to be late
- Your child should be in school by 8.35am every day ready for lessons to start at 8.40am
- Any student arriving at school after 8.40am, with no valid reason, is deemed late and a detention will be issued
- If a student arrives after the register closes, this is recorded as an unauthorised absence and sanctions will be issued, unless a valid reason can be given

Medical Appointments

- Where possible, medical appointments must be arranged outside of the school day
- Please inform the Attendance Office of any appointments prior to the date. For unavoidable appointments during the school day, we generally do not require letters from GPs, other than in exceptional circumstances, but any appointment letters, cards and/or prescribed medicine labels will be acceptable
- Please ensure your child has either a note from yourself or a copy of the appointment documentation on their person to allow them to be dismissed from lesson

Holidays

- No holidays during term-time will be authorised
- Fixed Penalty Notices may be requested for unauthorised holidays

Attendance Monitoring

There is a perception from both students and parents that 90% attendance is acceptable, however, 90% attendance is the equivalent of one half-day off every week. If a student's attendance is at 90% or below, they will be considered a Persistent Absentee by the Government and if below 50% a Severe Absentee. As a school, we have a duty to ensure that all students attend regularly so they achieve their full potential. The Whitstable School sets a level of 100% attendance for every student, which is endorsed by the Department for Education, Ofsted and the Local Authority, Kent County Council.

- The Whitstable School may discuss attendance with families when attendance drops below 100% for a sustained period of time. This is to support families in improving attendance and working closer with the school and other agencies
- The school may liaise with the local authority, KCC, if improvements do not occur and if penalty notices need to be requested or prosecutions prepared

Fixed Penalty Notices may be requested by The Whitstable School if a pupil's attendance continues to decline, despite support, by the school and other agencies, or shows no sign of improvement over a specific set period of time.

Absence due to illness

When your child is unwell, it is important that you let us know on the morning of each day's absence. We normally authorise up to 5 days of absence per academic year, if parents have informed us of a just reason why their child is off without the need for medical evidence from a trained professional. Further absences may be authorised, providing medical documentation is provided to support the reason for absence.

We do not require letters from GPs, but any appointment letters, cards and/or prescribed medicine labels will be acceptable.

We understand the difficulty of obtaining same-day GP appointments, however there are a number of walk-in clinics available that can provide confirmation of emergency

appointment attendance. If we are not informed of absences, you will be contacted to ascertain the reason why. If you do not inform the school of the reason why, we may complete a home visit or ask for a welfare check from outside agencies.

Unauthorised absence marks will be given for all absences we are not made aware of or for absences for which we do not receive evidence within a set time. Parents informing us of an absence due to illness do not automatically guarantee the absence will be authorised. This will be determined by the school, depending on the pupil's current attendance levels and whether medical evidence has been provided.

In regard to symptoms such as headaches, where possible we would advise that your child take suitable medication in the morning and then come into school to see how they get on through the day. Pupils can take medication when symptoms arise and wait for symptoms to subside and then come into school once they are feeling better. This may be slightly after the start of the school day and the school will need to be made aware this. The Whitstable School will not authorise a whole day's absence for reasons such as a 'headache' unless supported by medical evidence. The Whitstable School will not accept the term 'generally unwell' or similar language to describe your child's absence. The use of such vocabulary will result in the period of absence being recorded unauthorised.

Authorising Absence

Only the Headteacher can authorise absence. The Headteacher is not obliged to accept a parent's explanation. A letter or telephone message from a parent does not in itself authorise an absence. If absences are not authorised, parents will be notified.

If no explanation is received, absences will not be authorised.

The following reasons are examples of absence that will not be authorised:

- Persistent nonspecific illness e.g. poorly/unwell
- Absence of siblings if one child is ill
- Oversleeping
- Inadequate clothing/uniform
- Confusion over school dates
- Medical/dental appointments of more than half a day without very good reasons
- Child's/family birthday
- Shopping trip

A Penalty Notice can only be issued in cases of absence for 10 or more half day sessions (5 school days) without authorisation during any 100 possible school sessions or period of 50 days of schooling – these do not need to be consecutive.

A Penalty Notice can also be issued where an excluded child is found in a public place during school hours. After the appropriate request for a Penalty Notice is received, the KCC Inclusion and Attendance Service will issue a warning letter setting out 15 school days during which no unauthorised absence is to be recorded.

If unauthorised absence is recorded for 5 days or more a Penalty Notice will be issued (one per parent per child).

It is acceptable to take a pupil's previous record of attendance into account when the

school is making decisions. It is important to note that Mr Holmes can agree the absence of a child in exceptional circumstances and this discretion can be used to determine the length of the authorised absence.

Where Penalty Notices are imposed, the regulations state that the penalty will be £120 to be paid within 28 days, reduced to £60 if paid within 21 days. Penalty Notices are issued to each parent of each child. Failure to pay the penalty in full by the end of the 28 day period will result in prosecution by the Local Authority.

Persistent unauthorised absence (10% or more of the school year) may result in a pathway 7 referral to the Local Authority School Liaison Officer for consideration for prosecution. The school will follow procedures prior to referral and parents will be notified in writing.

When a referral is made, the child's Registration Certificate, copies of all letters sent to parents and minutes of any meetings **need to** be attached to the completed pathway 7 referral form with any other relevant information.

Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 states that parents are **guilty** of an offence of failing to secure regular attendance at school unless they can prove that the child was absent:

- Authorised leave (the school has given permission)
- Due to sickness or any unavoidable cause (the sickness or unavoidable cause must relate to the child, not the parent); frequency of sickness is monitored and absences totalling above 5 days for the year will require medical evidence
- Religious observance
- Failure by the Local Authority to provide transport

The law states, these are the only acceptable reasons for a child being absent from school.

The Headteacher may authorise absence in "exceptional circumstances" but this must be requested in advance and agreement to each request is at the discretion of the Headteacher, acting on behalf of the Governing Body (Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006). Each case will be judged on its merits and the Headteacher's decision is final. Once the decision not to authorise leave is taken, it cannot be authorised retrospectively.

If the absence is not authorised and the holiday is taken anyway, the case may be referred to the Inclusion and Attendance Service who may issue a Penalty Notice to each parent for each child taken out of school.

Failure to pay the penalty in full by the end of the 28 day period will result in prosecution by the Local Authority.

Appointments

Appointments during school time can be very disruptive to your child's learning. Appointments, wherever possible, must be arranged outside of the school day. If this is

not possible, we request that students do not take the whole day off.

For **unavoidable appointments** during the school day to be authorised, we will require proof of the appointment in the form of an appointment card/letter/text. Please contact the Attendance Office using the communication methods outlined in this policy to notify us of the appointment prior to it taking place. Please provide the medical documentation required promptly.

In order for your child to be released we need to be contacted 5 days prior (emergencies exempt) to allow your child authorised leave (depending on approval). They will then need to sign out at the Attendance Office to receive an exit pass, they will be directed to Front Reception, ready for collection. Your child will not be allowed to walk home for the appointment alone. When returning to school, your child will need to sign in at the Attendance Office so that we know that they are on the school site. If you do not return after your appointment this may be recorded as unauthorised absence.

Holidays

No holidays during term time will be authorised. We expect parents to notify us if they have booked a holiday. If there are exceptional circumstances the Headteacher may agree to authorise the absence, but this is very rare. Penalty Notices may be requested for unauthorised holidays. Each Penalty Notice states that £60 is payable within 21 days of the notice being issued, rising to £120 if paid between the 21st and 28th day. If neither of these sums are paid within this period, prosecution may arise.

Attendance Facts

There are 190 school days a year - that leaves 175 days for:

- Family holidays
- Shopping trips
- Medical appointments
- Household jobs
- Visiting family and friends

The Role of the School Staff

At The Whitstable School there is a whole school responsibility and approach for improving school attendance, with specific staff taking individual responsibility.

Mr Donovan-Bayley has overall responsibility for monitoring attendance issues. Class teachers or mentors complete a register at the beginning of each morning and once during the afternoon session. Marking the attendance registers twice daily is a legal requirement. (The Education Pupil Registration England Regulations 2006). Teachers mark pupils present, absent or late. The class teacher or mentor notifies the attendance team of children whose attendance is causing concern.

It is the responsibility of the attendance officers to ensure:

- Attendance and lateness records are up to date

- If no reason for absence has been provided, parents are contacted on the first day of absence by phone call
- Where there has been no communication, letters are sent to parents requesting reasons for absence
- The appropriate attendance code is entered into the register (see National Attendance Codes)
- Parents are informed termly of the child's attendance figure via either a percentage or days missed with the year to date

Attendance Rewards

Pupils with 100% attendance will receive reward points and a certificate per term. Points are visible to parents through My Child At School app. Reward assemblies will recognise pupils with excellent attendance and celebrate their achievements.

Academic Research shows that:

- Pupils with **99-100% attendance** are 1.3 times more likely to achieve level 4 or above, and 3.1 times more likely to achieve level 5 or above in their GCSEs, than students that missed 10-15% of all sessions
- Pupils with **99-100% attendance** are 2.2 times more likely to achieve 5+ GCSEs 9 to 4 or equivalent including English and mathematics compared to students that missed 15-20% of Key Stage 4 lessons
- A 90% attendance for a student from Year 7 to Year 11 is the equivalent of missing 100 school days, or 20 weeks, or 3 terms, or half a year

Educational Studies have shown that frequent absence from school can have a serious negative impact on your child's education. For every 8% loss of education, there is a risk that your child's achievement may fall by a whole grade. Low attendance is the biggest factor in underachievement and something that The Whitstable School takes seriously. At all times the school looks at supporting and monitoring children with low attendance. The Whitstable School will always try to build strong relationships with parents, listen to and understand barriers to attendance and work with families to remove them.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/absence-and-attainment-at-key-stages-2-and-4-2013-to2014>

Guidance:

The following government guidance and The Whitstable School policies can be used for further information on this matter:

The Whitstable School Safeguarding and Child protection Policy (please see School Website).

Swale Academies Trust - Health and Safety Policy (please see School Website).

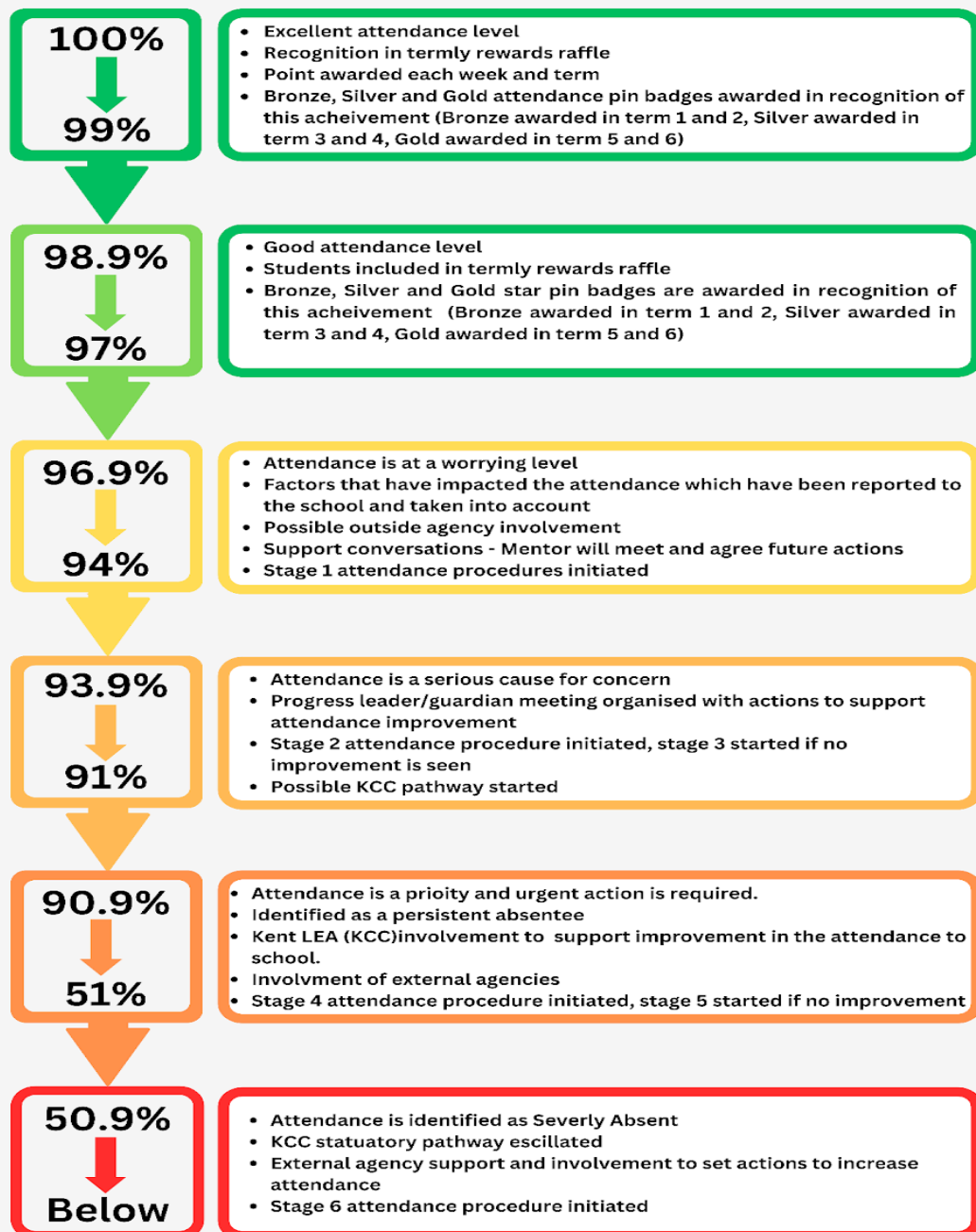
[Working together to improve school attendance - GOV.UK](#)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/improving-attendance-at-school>

<https://www.kent.gov.uk/education-and-children/schools/school-attendance/school-absences>

[KENT COUNTY COUNCIL EDUCATION PENALTY NOTICES CODE OF CONDUCT](#)

Timeline of the Staged Approach for Managing Poor Attendance



Be here, to get there: Attend, Achieve, Succeed

This is the Attendance policy of The Whitstable School Sixth Form

Sixth Form Attendance Policy

The Whitstable School takes attendance in the Sixth Form very seriously and we acknowledge that good school attendance plays an essential part in academic development for post 16 students.

All post 16 courses are intensive and students cannot afford to miss valuable teaching and study time.

Sixth form students should strive to achieve consistently good attendance as poor attendance will affect academic attainment. Students should therefore aim for at least **97%** attendance for the year. An exemplary record of attendance says a huge amount about the student as a person: that they are dedicated, well-motivated, organised and someone who takes their responsibilities seriously. Good attendance also plays an important part when applying to higher education establishments or employment.

The Whitstable School will strive to provide a welcoming, caring environment, whereby each member of the community feels wanted and secure. All staff will work with students and their families to ensure each student attends school regularly and punctually.

The school will establish an effective system of incentives and rewards which acknowledges the efforts of students to improve their attendance and timekeeping and will challenge the behaviour of those pupils and parents who give low priority to attendance and punctuality. To meet these objectives, we will establish an effective and efficient system of communication with students, parents and appropriate agencies to provide mutual information, advice and support.

Sixth Form policy for attendance

Aims to:

- Ensure the overall attendance percentage of students is above 97%
- Make attendance and punctuality a priority for all those associated with the school including students, parents, teachers and Governors
- Develop a framework which defines agreed roles and responsibilities and promotes consistency in carrying out designated tasks
- Provide support, advice and guidance to parents and students
- Develop a systematic approach to gathering and analysing attendance-related data
- Further develop positive and consistent communication between home and school
- Implement a system of rewards and sanctions
- Promote effective partnerships with external services and agencies
- Recognise the needs and support of the individual student when planning reintegration following significant periods of absence

Partnership

What the school expects of students

- Attend regularly, on time and ready to learn
- Attend all lessons
- To sign in and out when visiting each site

- To tell a member of staff if there is any problem which may prevent them from attending school
- Make every effort to make dental/medical appointments outside of school hours
- Complete an absence request form or email the Head of Sixth Form for permission if they need to leave early or will be absent from school for a full/half day (this is typically for hospital appointment, driving tests and university interviews etc.)
- To ensure you inform your subject teachers if you will be absent from your lessons

What the school expects of parents/carers

- To fulfil their legal responsibility to ensure that their child attends school regularly, on time and prepared for the day
- To contact school on the **first day** their child is absent for any reason and then on **all** subsequent days
- To **avoid** taking holidays in term time
- To speak to relevant members of staff if they know of any problem which may prevent their child from attending school
- To provide evidence to support absence such as an appointment card/letter, a copy of a prescription slip with name and date visible or medication packaging with name and date visible. Alternatively if none of the above are available a note, signed by the parent/carer, school explaining the reason for absence

What parents/carers and pupils can expect from school

- A Sixth form education that is dependent upon regular attendance at school
- Promotion of good attendance and punctuality at school, and regular encouragement and rewards
- Efficient and accurate recording and monitoring of absence
- Prompt action when a problem has been identified
- Regular communication with students and parents/carers

Absences

Acceptable reasons for being absent from school, set by the Department for Education:

- The student is too ill to leave the house
- The student has a hospital appointment
- The student has toothache and has an emergency appointment
- A day of religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parent/carer belongs
- The student is prevented from attending by an unavoidable cause
- There is a close family bereavement
- Interviews for courses/employment that will begin after the end of their time in Sixth Form. Students should not miss lessons to attend interviews, shifts and inductions for part-time work
- University and Employer Open Days – students may attend no more than two of these events in an academic year
- Work experience – requests for term-time leave for essential work experience (e.g. medicine, law) will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis. These requests should be submitted at least a month in advance

Unacceptable reasons for keeping a child away from school are:

- To mind the house
- To look after siblings
- To go shopping
- To celebrate a birthday
- Sleeping in
- One child is ill, so all are kept off school
- Minor ailments such as a tummy ache or headache
- Because it is the end of the week or term
- Driving lessons
- Adverse weather conditions

If a student is absent from school longer than a period of 5 days due to illness, parents/carers will be asked to provide medical evidence to support the student's absence.

Leave of absence may not be given to enable a pupil to undertake employment during school hours unless it is to engage in work experience arranged through school.

Signing In and Out

It is a legal requirement that we know who is in the school building at all times.

Students must make sure that they sign in and out each time they leave the school throughout the day with their id via the Inventory systems.

Procedures for cancelled lessons

Sixth Form lessons will not be covered by staff should a lesson need to be cancelled due to staff absence. In this instance the teacher will post work in the Google classroom or a teacher will be assigned to complete the lesson. It is then their responsibility to complete the set work as instructed. Students will be able to access the supervised study room in order to work quietly.

In-school procedures

We are keen to identify attendance concerns at the earliest opportunity to give parents/carers, students and the school the ability to intervene early and prevent further decline. We will do this by following the procedures outlined below;

Unexplained absence process

If a student is absent from school and we have received no communication from either the student or a parent/carers we will contact home via phone call or text message to request a reason.

A letter/email detailing any unexplained absences will be sent to the parent/carers if no communication has been received. A reply is requested stating the reason for the students' absence to enable attendance records to be updated; if no reply is received, this will be recorded as an unauthorised absence.

ATTENDANCE SHOULD BE 97% or higher

Cause for concern process

STAGE 1 - Progress Leader and Head of Sixth Form to monitor

Attendance below 97%

- Should attendance decline between 96% - 90% students will be monitored through mentoring meetings by their progress leader and Head of Sixth Form.
- PL or Head of Sixth Form completes an attendance conversation on this [form](#).

STAGE 2 – Meeting with Head of Sixth Form and student signed attendance contract

Attendance below 90%

- Should attendance decline to 90% or below students will be invited to attend a meeting with the Head of Sixth Form or Progress leader.
- This meeting is an opportunity to discuss in detail the issues/barriers that are impacting attendance to school.
- Head of Sixth form or PL completing the parental meeting will agree actions and review these over the next two weeks to adjust if necessary (Plan, Do, Review cycle).
- Parental meetings are to be recorded upon this [form](#) so that actions can be tracked.
- Actions are written upon the parental contract which is signed by parents.
- Parental Contract is in Appendix 1.
- A letter will be sent to parents/carers informing them that this meeting has taken place. *Attendance will be monitored closely for 5 weeks or termly.*

STAGE 3 – Parental meeting and student and parent signed attendance contract

Attendance below 85%

- A letter will be sent to the parents/carers of the student informing them of the situation and inviting them into school for a meeting with the Head of Sixth Form where we will address the main issues and agree targets and support actions to help improve your child's attendance.
- An Attendance Agreement will be issued and action points put into place that are agreed by the Head of Sixth Form or Progress leader and the student.
- The students will be placed in supervised study to support their progress and improve their attendance. This will be monitored by the Head of Sixth Form.

We will monitor and review your child's attendance over the following 2 terms to identify any significant improvement in their attendance. If this has been achieved then no further intervention/action will be taken at this stage. Should attendance not improve, or decline further we will implement the next step, as agreed at the previous Attendance meeting.

STAGE 4

Continued failure to meet requirements of attendance agreement

- Possible request to leave Sixth Form if the student is persistently absent from school and refuses to engage in intervention procedures.
- Appropriate disciplinary proceedings will be decided by the Head of Sixth form in consultation with the SLT in charge of attendance and/or Headteacher.
- The parents/carers of the student will be involved in the process.

NB: Dependent on the situation and stages may be triggered at different times.

Holidays

Government legislation does not permit parents/carers to take their child/ren out of school during term time as this can have a detrimental effect on their academic progress.

Holidays **will not be authorised** in school time parents/carers wishing to apply for exceptional circumstances need to request this via letter or email with the reasons why it is an exception, no later than 20 school days prior to the absence.

Upon receipt of the request a decision will be made (the Head teacher's decision is final), and parents/carers will be notified either in writing by letter or email of our decision, course of action and how the absence will be recorded on our system. If this request is not agreed the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and you may receive a Holiday Penalty Notice (fine) from the Local Authority.

Attendance Contract

NAME OF STUDENT:		
Year Group:	D.O.B:	Current attendance % =
ADDRESS		SEN:
NAME OF PARENT / Guardian:		
ADDRESS (if different to above):		

Agreed action: I agree to address the following target areas for improvement and to cooperate fully within these aims.	
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	

<p>Multi-agency involvement:</p> <p>Are there any agencies currently involved with parent:</p> <p>If yes, please give details:</p>
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Timescale:

Date and time of review:

Location: The Whitstable School

Stage 1 & 2: Students signature:

Date:

Stage 2: Parents signature:

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Date:

Member of staff signature:

.....

Name:

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Date:

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