Adopted by Full Governing Body on 5.12.24

Whitley Bay High School

Attendance Policy

November 2024

Introduction

We strive to create an inclusive, calm, safe, supportive environment where all students are motivated to learn and want to attend. We have high expectations for attendance and expect all students to attend every day. However, we do acknowledge and understand that some students may find it more difficult

than others to attend school. Indeed, persistent absence is almost always a symptom of wider issues in a student's life, and barriers to attendance are often specific to a particular context.

Our ethos is built on building trusting relationships with students and their parents/carers and supporting student wellbeing, and so we endeavor to work with families to remove any barriers to attending school to ensure that the right support and provision is in place.

Regular school attendance enables students to get the most from their education as well as develop important personal and social skills. Furthermore, students with excellent attendance (and who are punctual) are attractive to potential employers as they have been able to demonstrate that they are reliable.

Parents or carers of students of compulsory school age have a legal duty to ensure that their children receive efficient, full-time education by attendance at school or otherwise. Under the provisions of the Education Act and the Student Registration Regulations we must keep an attendance register. Every entry in the attendance register is preserved electronically for three years. This policy meets the requirements of the school attendance guidance from the Department for Education (DfE) and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on school attendance responsibility measures.

Although this policy is for students in compulsory education, we apply the same high expectations around attendance to post 16 students in our school.

Aims of this policy

- To set out how we will work with students and parents/carers to ensure that individual student attendance is as high as possible, outlining support where necessary.
- To promote a whole school community approach to striving for high attendance.
- To ensure that students understand the importance of attendance and punctuality.
- To ensure that we regularly monitor and analyse attendance data; identifying trends that may arise and put in place appropriate interventions and support.
- To ensure that staff are trained regularly about the importance of good attendance and how they can offer support and help.
- To have in place support for students and parents/carers where there are barriers to attending school such as, SEND, mental or physical health issues.

The link between attendance and achievement

We know that absence means lost learning, regardless of the reason for the absence. Research from the DfE is summarised below:

- The students with the highest attainment at the end of key stage 4 have higher rates of attendance over the key stage compared to those with the lowest attainment.
- At KS4, students not achieving grade 9 to 4 in English and Maths had an overall absence rate of 8.8%, compared to 5.2% among those achieving grade 4.
- The overall absence rate of students not achieving grade 9 to 4 was over twice as high as those achieving grade 9 to 5 (8.8% compared to 3.7%).

Working together to improve school attendance, DfE 2022

Attendance expectations *(please also see Appendix B for the attendance ladder)*

Students should aim to attend school every day for the academic year, this would equate to 100% attendance.

There are some exceptions to this which are if a student is unwell, has a medical appointment (we do advise that medical appointments are made out of school hours where possible), exceptional circumstances (such as a family bereavement) or an approved educational activity. We strongly advise that term-time holidays are not taken.

Attendance procedures

Absence reporting procedure *(please see Appendix A for contact details)*

- Parents/carers should contact the school office to report their child is absent and continue to do so on each day of absence*. A reason for the absence must be provided. Time off for medical appointments should be also reported on the absence line.
- Receipt of an absence note does not automatically authorise absence. The only legally acceptable reasons for not being in school are illness and medical appointments. We ask that wherever possible medical or other appointments should be made for times outside of the school day.
- Absence is authorised at the discretion of the school. Further explanations may be sought in some circumstances and the school may choose not to authorise absences where they feel insufficient evidence is available to substantiate absence.
- If we do not have a reason provided for an absence, parents/carers will be contacted asking for a reason for the absence.
- In the event that we still do not have a valid reason for absence this will be followed by a phone call/text message from the attendance officer or Head of Year.
- Home visits may be conducted by the school's Attendance Officer for absences if there has not been any communication with home despite repeated attempts to make contact, or where there is a safeguarding concern.
- A letter of concern will be issued to parents/carers where contact has still not been made. This may lead to a safeguarding referral to the Local Authority.
- Because of the maturity of our post-16 students, they can notify the 6th Form office via phone or email if they are absent and the reason why. This is always followed up by a member of the 6th Form team and high priority students are monitored closely.

** Daily communication may not be necessary in certain circumstances (e.g. long-term illness) but parents/carers must still maintain regular contact with school.*

Attendance and punctuality timings

- AM - Students must arrive at school and be in their tutor rooms by 8:55am, arrival after this time would be classed as late.
- Students who arrive after 8.55am will be marked as present but arriving late (L).

- The register officially closes at 9.30am and students arriving after the close of register will be marked as 'late after registration has closed' (U). This will count as an unauthorised absence for the student for the whole morning.

- If a student has a medical appointment and arrives late to school (any time after 9.30am, when the register has formally closed), the school will authorise this absence and they will be marked with the absence code M, however in line with Government guidance this will still impact negatively on their overall attendance.
- The processes outlined above for recording absences and lateness follow statutory requirements placed on schools by the Government. Furthermore, they help collate evidence should this be needed for possible legal action.

- PM – Students must be at school and in classrooms ready to start their period 4 lessons for 1:15pm, arrival after this time would be classed as late.
- Parent/carer permission must be obtained should their child need to leave school at any point during the day. Students must report to the school office on such occasions to 'sign out'.
- We encourage all medical appointments to be made outside of the school day or ask that students come in for registration and then leave so they can receive their morning mark.

Key responsibilities for our school

The Governing Body

- Take an active role in attendance improvement, support the school to prioritise attendance, and work together with leaders to keep attendance high on the school's agenda.
- Ensure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties in relation to attendance.
- Annually review the school's Attendance Policy and ensure the required resources are available to fully implement the policy.
- Review the school's attendance data through regular reporting via the Headteacher's report or at Governing Body Meetings.

The school

- Have a clear school attendance policy on the school website which all staff, students and parents/carers understand.
- Develop and maintain a whole school ethos that promotes the benefits of good attendance.
- Accurately complete admission and attendance registers. Ensure that students are registered for am and pm sessions and that staff take a prompt register during tutor time and each lesson. Have robust daily processes to follow up any absences.
- Have a dedicated senior leader 'attendance champion' with overall responsibility for championing and improving attendance.
- Proactively use data to identify cohorts with, or at risk of, low attendance and develop strategies to support them. Closely monitor vulnerable groups including students with a social worker, students with a medical condition or SEND, disadvantaged students including those eligible for Free School Meals and those classed as 'severely absent' (with less than 50% attendance).

- Where out of school barriers are identified, signpost and support access to any required services in the first instance. If the issue persists, take an active part in the multi-agency effort with the local authority and other partners. Act as the lead practitioner where all partners agree that the school is the best placed lead service. Where the lead practitioner is outside of the school, continue to work with the local authority and partners.
- For students where their mental health is preventing them coming to school, work closely with the family to ensure that appropriate support is in place and lines of communication are open. In exceptional circumstances, where it is in a student's best interests, set up a plan to help them to engage in school such as the use of a temporary part-time timetable to meet their individual needs (Short Term Support Plan).
- Work with feeder middle schools to identify students with poor attendance early and offer support where appropriate.
- For students with medical conditions or SEND with poor attendance ensure there is pastoral support and where required, put in place additional support and adjustments, such as an individual healthcare plan and if applicable, ensuring the provision outlined in the student's EHCP is accessed. Consider additional support from wider services and external partners, making timely referrals.
- Set up and regularly review a 'high priority' safeguarding list of students that staff should be extra vigilant with in regards to attendance and ensure that each lesson they are accounted for. Regularly update staff about this list. Include this on the safety plan for these students.
- Where absence becomes persistent, put additional targeted support in place to try and remove any barriers. Where there is a lack of engagement, hold more formal conversations with parents/carers and be clear about the potential need for legal intervention in future. Where support is not working, being engaged with or appropriate, work with the local authority on legal intervention.
- When there are safeguarding concerns, intensify support through the safeguarding protocols working with the Designated Safeguarding Lead.
- Inform the local authority or appropriate external agencies if we think a child could transfer to another authority or become a child missing in education.
- Inform the Local Authority regularly about students who have missed 15 consecutive or cumulative days of school due to illness, as well as 10 unauthorised sessions of absence (the equivalent of 5 days).
- Monitor the attendance of students who have been referred to the Local Authority.
- Inform the Local Authority of any students where we have tried intervention and there has been no success. The Local Authority may then choose to send a 'notice to improve' which could result in legal proceedings.
- Regularly train school staff about the importance of good attendance and ways they can support students (in particular form tutors) with Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance. Regularly share attendance data with form tutors during year team meetings so they are aware of issues surrounding students and can support appropriately.
- Deliver Personal Development sessions promoting the importance and value of good attendance. Tutors should offer additional support to students who may need it.

- Support students who have missed several days of school to catch up where appropriate. For students who have been absent for longer periods of time, put in place support plans so that they can successfully transition back to school.
- Be vigilant for students who may be living with a mental health condition or where their wellbeing is affecting their attendance. Discuss concerns with parents/carers and if appropriate support with additional help in school or with external services.
- Inform a student's social worker and/or youth offending team worker if there are unexplained absences from school.
- Alert parents/carers to attendance concerns and work with them offering support where necessary. Notify parents/carers each term via the reporting system of their child's attendance %. Write to parents/carers (if appropriate) termly when their child's attendance is close to or below 90%.
- Congratulate students with excellent attendance and 100% attendance via celebration assemblies, certificates and letters home.
- Send termly attendance postcards from The Headteacher to students with excellent attendance.
- Set up reward schemes and initiatives targeting key groups of students with the aim of improving their attendance.

Responsibilities of parents/carers

- To understand it is their legal responsibility to ensure that their child attends school regularly.
- Provide the school with an up-to-date home address, email and telephone number to enable us to make contact. Advise us as soon as possible if any contact details change.
- Contact the school on the first day of absence for their child before the start of the school day to let us know the reason for the absence and the expected date of return.
- Ensure their child arrives punctually and if they are going to be late, notify the main office.
- Talk to their child regularly about school and take a positive interest in their child's learning and school life.
- Help the school to promote the importance of attending school each day.
- Talk to the school for help if they feel their child is having a difficult time or needs further support.
- Work with the school to notify us of any circumstances that may affect their child's attendance.
- Support the school and proactively engage in formal support offered.
- Avoid, wherever possible, making medical appointment within school hours.
- Avoid booking holidays during term-time.

Responsibilities of students

- Attend regularly (and punctually) unless they are ill or have an authorised absence.
- Talk to school staff about how they are feeling or any concerns that may be impacting on their attendance.
- Catch up any missed work so they don't fall too far behind.
- Participate in the attendance reflection activities during Personal Development sessions led by their tutor.

Ways we communicate with parents/carers about the importance of attendance and punctuality

- Through the parent/carer handbook.
- The Home/School agreement
- Via parent/carer Information Evenings or Tutor evening.
- Termly updates through a student's Progress Check or Report.
- Letters or postcards of congratulations for excellent attendance from the Headteacher during and at the end of the academic year.
- Via phone call, text, letter/email or home visit if we have concerns about a student's attendance or if we feel that further support/intervention is needed.

Persistent absence

A student becomes 'persistently absent' if their attendance drops below **90%**, regardless of the reason. A student would become 'severely absent' if their attendance drops below **50%**. We are expected to advise parents/carers of their child's attendance and work with them to help improve it. Should a child's attendance become a concern, we will send a letter to make parents/carers aware. We may ask for medical evidence to be supplied to our Attendance Officer in order to authorise any more absences. We may also invite parents/carers into school to discuss ways of offering support which may include an attendance improvement plan of action and a monitoring period. At times it may be necessary to set up a Student Support Plan, refer to wider support services or offer an Early Help Assessment.

As a school we have to regularly update the Local Authority of students who are frequently absent and to investigate any unexplained absences. We work closely with the Local Authority and are obliged to communicate any students for whom attendance is below 90%. It may be that if, as a school, if we have offered support and agreed a plan of action and there is still no improvement, that the Local Authority issues an Attendance Warning Notice. If there is still no further improvement, the Local Authority will invite parents/carers in for a formal meeting and to issue a parenting contract. Legal intervention may then be pursued if there is still no further improvement.

National framework for penalty notices

Penalty notices are issued to parents/carers as an alternative to prosecution where they have failed to ensure that their child of compulsory school age regularly attends the school where they are registered.

As a school we have a supportive approach working in partnership with families and look at each student as an individual taking into account needs, the wider context and whether a penalty notice will have any impact. We always liaise with the Local Authority School Attendance Support Team about students causing concern and appropriate next steps.

"All state funded schools must consider whether a penalty notice is appropriate in each individual case where one of their students reaches the national threshold for considering a penalty notice. Schools should not have a blanket position of issuing or not issuing penalty notices and should make judgements on each individual case to ensure fairness and consistency."

DfE Working together to improve school attendance, 2024

Term-time holidays

We are obligated to consider issuing a penalty notice (a fine) to parents/carers for taking their child out of school for the equivalent of 5 days over a rolling period of 10 school weeks. Therefore, a term-time holiday of one week meets this threshold. We aim to work with parents/carers on attendance matters we will continue to look at term-time holidays on an individual basis before making the decision to ask the Local Authority to fine a family. We will always look closely at a student's overall attendance and if we have concerns about this (for example it is below 90% with no improvements) we may regretfully ask the Local Authority to issue a penalty notice to a family. Also, if a student is taking more than one term-time holiday a year, we may again ask the Local Authority to issue a penalty notice. This will be a case-by-case decision.

Parents/carers should be aware that fines have increased to £160 if paid within 28 days. This will be reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days. Where there is more than one child, each parent/carer may be issued with a penalty notice in respect of each child.

Holidays will only ever be authorised in exceptional circumstances.

Further support for students

We will always work with students and their parents/carers where there is a need or concern preventing a student attending school which often requires a multi-disciplinary approach such a medical condition. In developing a plan to implement reasonable adjustments to support attendance, we will always seek to involve parents/carers of students who are anxious about attending school. Government guidance exists which specifically addresses attendance when it is affected by mental health issues. Where mental health issues are affecting a student's ability to come to school, plans will include pastoral support and reasonable adjustments, but with a clear aim of maximising face to face attendance as much as possible. Plans will be reviewed regularly and may require sensitive discussions with students and parents/carers. Referrals to external professional support may be necessary.

Our approach to persistent or severely absenteeism is a graduated response that may include the following steps:

1. The implementation of an Attendance Improvement Plan or Short-Term Support Plan; a document that is created and agreed with school and the family around reducing the timetable to make it more manageable to attend school. This is reviewed on a fortnightly basis and sent to the Local Authority Attendance and Placement Service.

2. The implementation of an Early Help Assessment to improve attendance and support wider concerns surrounding the student and their family. This is a 6-week cyclical meeting and produces a document that is submitted to the Early Help Team in the Local Authority.

3. The allocation of a school-based outreach support tutor to support the student via a team video call, in the family home or community centre, up to two sessions per week (English and Maths), to bridge the gap between home and school. The outreach tutor will use evident-based approaches to engage students, such as graduated exposure, and aim to re-connect students back to school which may include moving the tutor sessions on to school site.

4. Should attendance not improve in a timely manner, school may refer to the Local Authority School Support Team who can attend meetings and suggest next steps, which may include a referral through the Fair Access system to a more bespoke provision.

Part-time timetables (Short Term Support Plans)

In very exceptional circumstances, where it is in a student's best interests, there may be a need to provide a student with less than full-time education through a temporary part-time timetable to meet their individual needs. For example, where a medical condition prevents a student from attending school or another setting full-time and a part-time timetable is used to help the student access as much education as possible.

A part-time timetable should:

- Have the agreement of both the school and the parent/carer the student normally lives with.
- Have a clear ambition and be part of the student's wider support, health care or reintegration plan.
- Have regular review dates which include the student and their parents/carers to ensure it is only in place for the shortest time necessary.
- Have a proposed end date that takes into account the circumstances of the student, after which the student is expected to attend full-time, either at school or alternative provision. It can, however, be extended as part of the regular review process. In some limited cases, a student with a long-term health condition may require a part time timetable for a prolonged period.

Where the student has a social worker, the school is expected to keep them informed and involved in the process. If the student has an education health and care plan, the school should discuss the part-time timetable with the local authority so that any support package that is in place can be reviewed as swiftly as possible. In agreeing to a part-time timetable, a school has agreed to a student being absent from school for part of the week or day and therefore must record the absence accordingly (normally using code X or C2)

Students Educated other than at school (EOTAS)

We report, record and monitor the attendance of all students, including those who are educated off-site.

Using the framework listed above to respond to need, student attendance is closely monitored by outreach tutors or by an alternative educational provider. For example, those students who access MAEPS (Moorbridge Alternative Education Partnership School) provision follow the same robust safeguarding procedures around attendance and use CPOMS to record these. This can be accessed by the school at any time by a shared CPOMS account. However, a weekly summary is provided by MAEPS that is reported to the SEMH SENCo. The responsibility for safeguarding and attendance falls to the provision that the student is in according to their plan, including follow up reporting to parents/carers.

The role of the Local Authority

The local authority has an Attendance and Placement Team that works with our school. We have a named point of contact within the team who can support with queries and advice, and with whom Targeting Support Meetings will be held. The local authority will work with us and parents/carers to improve attendance, more formal support including setting up attendance contracts, Education Supervision orders, and, in some instances, refer to Social Services and/or prosecution through the Magistrates Court.

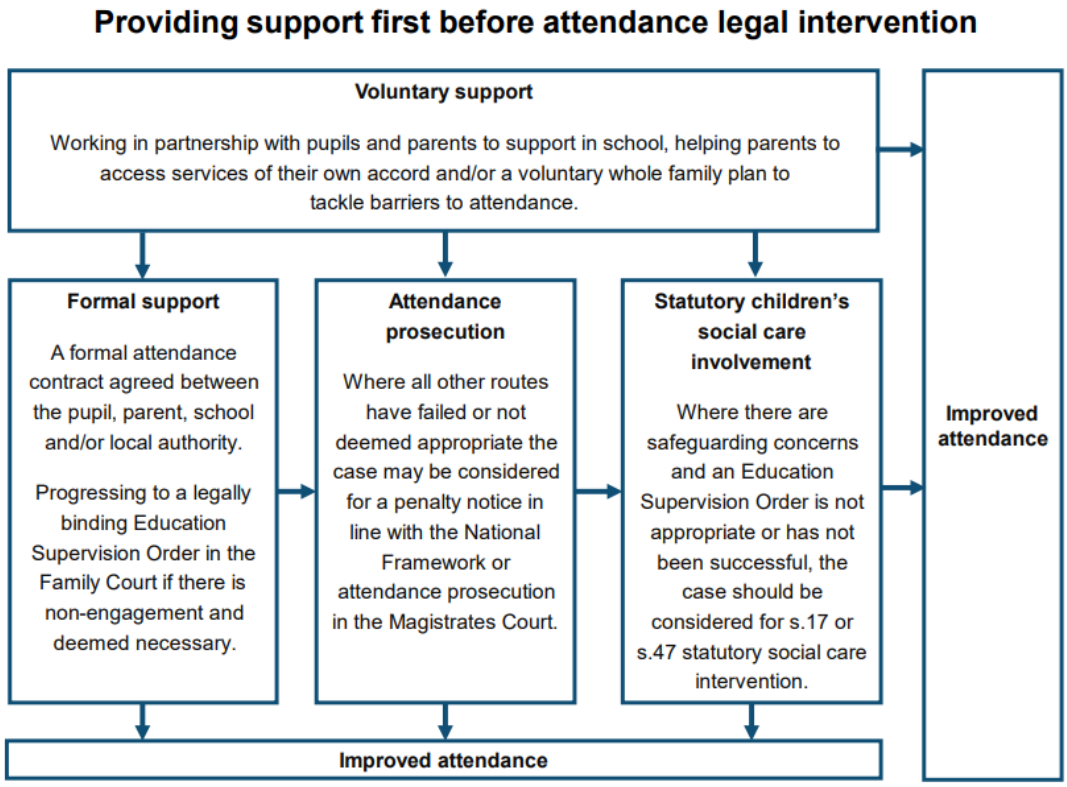


Figure 1 - The role of the Local Authority in improving school attendance

Punctuality

Students should be punctual to school every day. We understand there may be some instances where a student may arrive late due to circumstances outside their control. Should this be the case, parents/carers are asked to contact the school.

Students who arrive late to school (after 8.55am), lessons or after lunch will be marked with an L. Tutors and pastoral teams monitor this weekly and students who are regularly late will be spoken to and issued with a lunchtime report card or detention if appropriate. Punctuality to lessons is just as important. Pastoral teams monitor the minutes late that students accumulate, and appropriate action is taken when this becomes a concern. We also write to notify parents/carers about any concerns in relation to punctuality and minutes late data is also highlighted on termly progress checks/reports.

Students who are late regularly over a period of time will meet with the Head of Year and parents/carers will be informed (via a text message in the first instance, then a more formal letter). In some circumstances students may be kept in at break time or on Tuesday period 5 with The Headteacher.

Working with cross-border students

In cases where a student lives in one local authority area and attends school in another, the overarching principle is that both the local authority in whose area the student attends school (the 'School LA') and the local authority in whose area the student lives (the 'Home LA') work together to support the student and family. This feeds into each local authority's responsibility for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of students. Each local authority also has specific expectations for delivering certain actions. These can be found in the guidance '*DfE Working together to improve school attendance, February 2024'.*

Children Missing In Education (CMIE)

If a student has an unexplained absence from school for a prolonged period, or fails to return from a holiday, we will follow our normal procedures for investigating the absence. However, should the student still not return to school after **two weeks**, we may refer to the Local Authority's Attendance and Placement Service, who have responsibility for investigating children missing in education.

There will be exceptions to CMIE procedures if there is contextual information that we are aware of.

Please see our school CMIE policy for further information.

Please see the Local Authority and DfE websites for any further information:-

School attendance | North Tyneside Council

School attendance: guidance for schools - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

Working together to improve school attendance (applies from 19 August 2024) (publishing.service.gov.uk)

Summary of responsibilities where a mental health issue is affecting attendance

Support for students where a mental health issue is affecting attendance: effective practice examples

Appendix A

Key people and contacts

Senior leader in charge of school attendance (Attendance Champion) – **Sarah Lackenby**

Outreach support tutors -

Emma Rogerson **Leanna Hearn**

Other key staff:

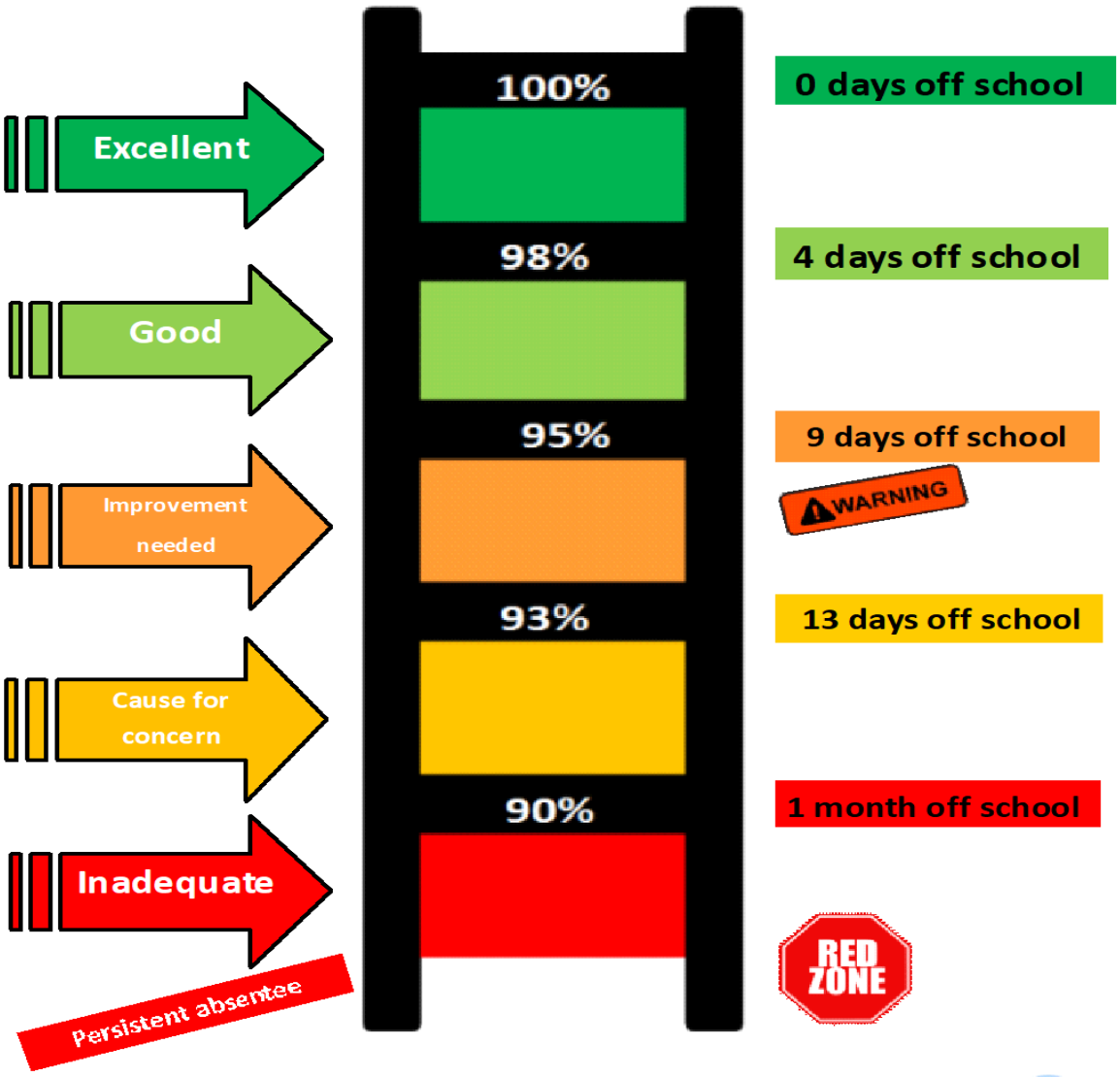
Report absence (including medical appointments)	**Discuss attendance concerns or would like help/support**
Rachel Slee (Pastoral Administration Assistant) **Main office telephone:** **0191 731 70 70 – option 1**	**Nina Livings-Prior (Attendance Officer)** **Telephone: 0191 731 70 70**
Email: rachel.slee@whitleybayhighschool.org	**Email: nina.livings@whitleybayhighschool.org**

It may be in some instances, for example where there is a wellbeing or sensitive reason for an absence, that parents/carers initially make contact with a student's form tutor, Head of Year, SEND link worker or Pastoral Key Worker. To do this parents/carers are advised to call the main office on 0191 731 70 70 and ask to speak to the relevant person.

Appendix B

Attendance Ladder

Your Attendance



We understand and support students who need to be absent for legitimate reasons.

Appendix C

Attendance Codes

Code	Meaning	Statistical Purpose
Present		
/ \	Present in school / morning \ afternoon	Attending
L	Late arrival before the register is closed	Attending
K	Attending alternative provision arranged by the Local Authority	Attending
V	Attending an education visit or trip	Attending
P	Participating in a sporting activity	Attending
W	Attending work experience	Attending
B	Attending any other approved educational activity	Attending
D	Dual registered at another school	(Not a possible attendance)
%	In an authorised session elsewhere on school site; e.g. Support	Attending
Absent		
C	Absent for exceptional circumstances	Authorised absence
C2	Absent as the student is on a short-term support plan	Authorised absence
M	Medical or dental appointment	Authorised absence
I	Illness	Authorised absence
E	Suspended or permanently excluded	Authorised absence
G	Holiday not granted by school	Unauthorised absence
N	Reason for absence not yet established	Unauthorised absence
O	Reason for absence not satisfactory	Unauthorised absence

U	Arrived in school after register closed	Unauthorised absence