



# *Conisborough College*

## **Attendance Policy for Parents/Carers**

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Date Agreed by Full Governors: 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2022

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Chair of Governors Signature:

Date final version adopted: October 2022

Date to be reviewed: September 2023

## Introduction

Good Attendance and Punctuality is everyone's responsibility across the school community. At Conisborough we view this as an essential and core life skill which we aim to reinforce and develop good habits and practice in. It is crucial to success in all things both now at school and in the future as an adult contributing positively to society. It is at the heart of our work here and is reflected in our Conisborough Code.

Your child/ren play an essential role in making Conisborough College a successful and vibrant school. A key outward sign of this is high levels of attendance and punctuality to school every day. We aim for an environment which enables and encourages all members of the community to reach out for excellence. For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and your child/ren should be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

It is very important you make sure your child attends regularly and this Policy sets out how we can help and support you to achieve this together.

## Regular attendance is so important

**Learning:** Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. *Research suggests that 2 weeks absence in any school year over 5 years schooling can reduce your GCSE results by one grade.*

Any student's absence from a lesson disrupts teaching routines and may affect the learning of others in the same class as a result.

**Access to education for all children:** Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is your legal responsibility as a parent. Permitting absence from school and learning without a good reason is an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

**Safeguarding children:** Children may be at risk of harm if they do not attend school regularly. Safeguarding the interests, welfare and life opportunities of each child is everyone's responsibility. Within the context of this school this includes, but is not exclusive of us providing:

Access to the Curriculum

A broad and relevant curriculum & education Attendance and punctuality monitoring & support Behaviour Management systems

Health and Safety systems

Anti-bullying systems and procedures Child protection systems and monitoring

Failing to attend school on a regular basis will be considered a safeguarding matter and will be monitored and managed under safeguarding and attendance matters systems and procedures.

### **Attendance**

Students are registered twice a day for legal attendance information (as well as during each lesson). The two attendance registers are the morning (8.30am) and in the afternoon directly after lunch.

Students are expected to maintain a minimum 96% attendance throughout the school year. Students who drop to or below 90% are identified as a 'persistent absentee'. At that point, the school will make a referral to the Local Authority and prosecution may follow.

### **Role of the Parent**

The parent's role is to ensure that the student arrives **on time**, is **fully prepared** and **ready** for school **every day** and that their child is on the playground at **8.20am**.

Absence should be a very unusual event and take place only if a student is significantly unwell, has a hospital appointment or other exceptional circumstances (e.g., funeral). A headache, stomachache or cold is not sufficient sickness to prevent learning and being in school. (Consider how unwell you would be before you consider taking a day off from your own workplace – apply the same criteria to your child).

**Parents must notify the school immediately if a student is absent from school and every further day thereafter.**

**Parents should not book or take holidays with their children during the school term.**

Only in **exceptional circumstances** can the headteacher authorise absence from school. E.g., a funeral. Applications for absence owing to an exceptional circumstance can be made through the school reception – please ask for the application form. Holidays during term time will not be authorized.

Extended absence for holidays has an adverse effect on student progress and achievement. This is particularly significant as time accrues and leads into years 9,10 and 11. If unauthorised time is taken off during term time the school and teachers will **not** set work for students.

### **Role of the School**

Within the partnership spirit it is the responsibility of the school to work with parents in ensuring the maximum attendance possible. The school will work with parents by ensuring constant communication and detailed procedures which will identify and then support parents, with any possible challenges, early on.

The school has a duty to support parents who may be experiencing difficulty in ensuring good attendance for the student. This support will be given in consultation with the Head of Year,

Attendance & Welfare Manager/Officer, Leadership team member responsible for Attendance, and the Education Welfare Service.

### Monitoring Attendance

Student attendance is monitored by the:

- Form tutor at registration
- Subject teacher in each lesson
- Head of Year
- School Attendance & Welfare Manager (AWM)
- Leadership Team member in charge of attendance and punctuality
- Lewisham Attendance and Welfare Officer (AWIS)

**Authorised and Unauthorised Absence:** definitions and arrangements

#### **Authorised Absence**

This is when the Attendance and Welfare Manager accepts that there is a genuine reason for absence from school and learning. This absence is supported by a note from the parent and the student's attendance has not dropped to or below 94%. Examples where absence would be authorised are:

- Illness, medical and dental appointments – with supporting notes and medical evidence
- Interviews with prospective employers and schools
- Dual registration
- Approved educational off-site activities
- Representation in sport or other areas
- Public performances (licenses must be obtained from the LEA and sent to the school)
- Special situations and occasions (e.g., funerals, caring)
- Specific religious observation
  - **Note:** Absence for birthdays is not acceptable and will not be authorized.

The Attendance & Welfare Manager discuss concerns regarding the above to the member of the Senior Leadership Team responsible for attendance (e.g., too much time off for performances or a pattern of illness).

#### **Unauthorised Absences**

This is when the Attendance and Welfare Manager does not accept there is a genuine reason for absence and/or a student's attendance has fallen to or below 94% and absence is not supported by documentary, medical proof. If an absence has been supported by a note from the parent and the absence is recorded as unauthorised the parent must be informed immediately. Examples where absence will be classified as unauthorized may include:

- Known truancy
- Absent with no note from parent (regardless of reason)
- Days off prior to or directly after a school holiday
- Working (this must be reported to the Headteacher)
- Time off for birthdays, family celebrations
- Holidays
- Looking after siblings (this must be reported to the Headteacher)
- Errands for parents (e.g., shopping).
- Persistent absenteeism without documentary medical proof.

**Persistent Absenteeism (PA)**

Any student whose attendance falls **to or below 90%** is defined as a **Persistent Absentee**. Students' absences will not be authorised for any child whose attendance is at or below 90%. Every absence must be supported by official documentation proving appointments, on-going illness/ medical conditions. **Without such documentation**, absences are recorded as **unauthorised** and will **continue** to be **unauthorised** until **documentation** has been **received by the School Attendance & Welfare Manager**.

Students whose attendance is below 90% and their parents are met by the School Attendance and Welfare Manager or Head of Year. Home visits are also carried out in situations of unauthorised absence and if a student has not been seen for more than four days.

The Attendance and Welfare Manager will inform the parent/carer of their child's status as a **Persistent Absentee** and inform them of the need for medical documentary proof of sickness or incapacity. The Attendance and Welfare Manager will **monitor the attendance** over a **six-week** period or longer with **letters, home visits** and parental **meetings**. If there is **no improvement** and/or documentary proof is still not forthcoming, the Attendance and Welfare Manager and designated member of the leadership team will **consult the Lewisham Attendance and Welfare officer** on the next step. This is likely to involve a **further meeting** at school and either a **parenting contract** put in place with an **additional six week monitoring** period or a **Fixed Penalty Notice** will be **served by Lewisham Attendance and Welfare office**. If the student's unauthorised **absence continues** over this **12week period**, the Attendance and Welfare Manager and Leadership team member will **involve intervention and support** from Lewisham Attendance and Welfare officer for the stages of **court proceedings**.

**How to report an absence from school**

If medical appointments need to be made in school time, they should be made as early or as late in the day as possible.

**For a planned appointment** (e.g., Dentist, hospital, funeral)

1. **In advance:** Email or send in a copy of the booking for the appointment (e.g., letter or appointment card) as soon as possible, marked 'for the attention of the Attendance & Welfare Manager,' or bring the original to reception (where it can be copied).
2. **On the day:** Write a **letter** and include the **time** you wish the **student to leave** school. Also record it, on the relevant day, in your child's school planner so the form tutor is aware, and the relevant teacher can release a student to sign out at the correct time.
3. **Signing out:** Students should report to Student Services to be signed out with an official slip.

**Note:** if the student did not bring in a copy of the appointment letter/card, we will phone a parent to confirm the appointment, even if there is a note in the planner.

**Except on exceedingly rare occasions there is no need for any student to take an entire day off school for an appointment.**

**For an unexpected illness or exceptional event**

- 1) **Inform** the school of the absence by **9am every day** that your child is absent. Do this by:
  - phoning the absence line on **0208 461 9630** or **020 8461 9600 option 1**
  - emailing the attendance team at: [attendance@conisboroughcollege.co.uk](mailto:attendance@conisboroughcollege.co.uk).

**Always** provide the following **information** clearly in the phone call or email:

- Child's full name
- Form group
- **Specific** illness and reason for absence (not just unwell/sick)
- Expected day of return to school
- Your relationship to the student

**Note:** If you receive a text from the school asking about your child's absence ensure you **reply** to the message **on the same day** it was sent.

2) For an **absence** of **5** or more **days** Parents/carers must supply the school with a **doctor's note**.

### **How to request Exceptional Leave of Absence**

**Note:** *There is no automatic entitlement to time off during school term to go on holiday*

If you wish to request exceptional leave (e.g., a funeral abroad) collect the '*Exceptional Circumstance Request for Absence During Term Time*' form from reception. Complete the form and return it directly to the Headteacher at reception.

#### **Please note:**

The Education regulations (2013 update) state that "***Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances.***"

Conisborough College will adhere to the 2013 amendments. Therefore, if a parent's **application** for exceptional leave of absence is **refused** and the parents persist in taking the child out of school, a **Fixed Penalty Notice** can be **issued**. If this takes place a **Fixed Penalty Notice** is served to **each/both parent(s)**.

### **Monitoring Long Term Absence**

1. In the event of an authorised long term absence (e.g. hospitalisation) the Head of Year will arrange the sending of school work to the student. Authorisation may be provided by hospital consultant / CAMHS. The School will liaise with the LA Attendance, Inclusion and Participation Service.
2. In the event of unauthorised long term absence the Head of Year and Attendance & Welfare Manager should maintain contact with the parents at all times and in consultation with the LA Attendance, Inclusion and Participation Service Team to discuss other strategies to support the student back into school. This may involve consulting with other agencies and personnel such as CAMHS, the behavior support service, Mentors, Youth offending team, Hospital Outreach Programme.
3. The school is committed to supporting parents and students who have difficulty in maintaining good attendance due to medical needs.

### **Punctuality - persistent lateness counts towards a student's attendance record Guidelines for Lateness**

All students are expected to **arrive at school**, through the back-gate entrance, by **8.20am**. The **back gates** are shut and **locked at 8.30am**

- Students register in their Tutor rooms up to **8.30 am**. Registers are taken and students will receive a late mark if they are not in tutor group by **8:35am**.
- After **8.35am** students are late. They must **sign in late** at **main reception**. They must provide a **reason** for their **lateness**, they will be given a **late slip** and directed immediately to their tutor group or lesson. If the lateness is **unauthorized**, the student will receive a **lateness sanction**.
- Students arriving late will only be allowed into their lesson with the late slip. They will be marked as 'L' (late) in the register and/or class register.

Lateness caused by an accepted reason (supported by the Parent / Carer), will be marked as authorised. Examples of late authorisation may include: known disruptive transport problems, illness, prearranged medical appointments.

**Unauthorised Lateness processes**

Absence	Text home on day of non-attendance
Lateness to school	A 15 minute that day issued and overseen by the child's Head of Year
Persistent lateness patterns – before and after registration	Longer detention, e.g., Friday 2 hour detention/Internal Exclusion Room / parental meeting / HOY lateness report  Parents will be notified by phone call home a letter

**The U code will affect a student's attendance record** – it is the same as an unauthorised absence mark. This may mean that you could face the possibility of a Fixed Penalty Notice if the problem persists.

- Punctuality is monitored by the form tutor, Head of Year, Attendance and Welfare Manager and Leadership Team Member for attendance.
- The Attendance and Welfare Manager and Head of Year will monitor lateness and should a pattern emerge for a student, or lateness continues, parents will be informed may be asked to attend a meeting at school to discuss this further.

**Punctuality to lessons and learning**

- All students should arrive at class on time.
- Once the class teacher has decided to begin the lesson, students arriving after that time are 'late' unless there is a note in the planner from another teacher giving a reason for the lateness.
- The subject teacher must impose a sanction and record the lateness.
- If a pattern emerges the subject teacher should notify the Head of Year.
- At key points, SLT may place students in isolation if they are persistently late to lessons and disrupting the learning of others.

**Truancy Procedures**

All students found truanting from school/lessons will be subject to the school's behavior policy structure. In most cases this will result in placement in the IER for 1 day.

### **Prosecutions by Lewisham Local Authority**

If a child of compulsory school age fails to attend regularly at a school at which they are registered, or at a place where alternative provision is provided for them, the parents may be guilty of an offence and can be prosecuted by the local authority.

Only local authorities can prosecute parents and they must fund all associated costs. Local authorities should consider the Attorney General's Guidelines for Crown Prosecutors in all prosecution cases.

Local Authorities must conduct all investigations in accordance with the Police and Criminal Evidence (PACE) Act 1984.

**Local Authorities have the power to prosecute parents who fail to comply with a school attendance order (section 443 of the Education Act 1996) or fail to ensure their child's regular attendance at a school (section 444 of the Education Act 1996).**

**A Fixed Penalty Notice** is served to **each/both parent(s)**.

Section 444 has two separate but linked offences: Section 444(1): where a parent fails to secure the child's regular attendance; and section 444(1A) where a parent knows that the child is failing to attend school regularly and fails to ensure the child does so. Section 444ZA applies the offence to where parents fail to secure the regular attendance of their child at a place where the local authority or governing body has arranged alternative provisions.

There are statutory defenses for parents to use under the 1996 Act.

The fines available to the courts if parents are found guilty of the section 444 are as follows: -

- a. **Fine** – up to £2,500
- b. **Conditional Discharge:** This disposal lasts for a fixed period up-to 36 months. If you are found guilty of another offence (including returning to court if attendance difficulties persist) during the period of the conditional discharge you could be sentenced for the original offence.
- c. **Community Orders:** These could include unpaid work, a specified activity for the purpose of reparation, an accredited programme aimed at changing the offender's behavior, prohibited activity, curfew and exclusion from entering a specified place for a period of time. There are several more options available to the court.
- d. **Custodial Sentence:** Parents prosecuted under Section 444(1a) could face a custodial sentence of up-to three (3) months imprisonment  
*Please note you could be left with a **Criminal Record** which could affect any current and future employment.*

**Penalty notices supplement the existing sanctions currently available under Section 444, Education Act 1996 or Section 36, the Children's Act 1989 to enforce attendance at school where appropriate.**

Under Sec 105(1) Education and Inspections Act 2006, a Fixed Penalty Notice can be issued for an offence under Section 103(3) in the case of an excluded student being present in a public place during school hours on a school day. The Attendance, Inclusion and Participation Service delivers this responsibility.

**A Fixed Penalty Notice** is served to **each/both parent(s)**.



Penalty Notices may be issued as a result of a student being stopped on Truancy Patrol or as the result of the Attendance, Inclusion and Participation Service's fast track procedures when the attendance remains poor. Penalty Notices may also be issued for unauthorised leave (holidays) taken during term time. The Penalty fine is: **£60** if paid within 21 days **£120** if paid between 21 and 28 days

**Children Missing in Education.**

If a student is absent from school for more than 10 school days they may be referred to the Local Authority by the school as being 'Missing in Education'.

Every possible method of setting out to find the student should be carried out prior to this taking place:

- Contacting parents – both resident and separated and all additional contacts provided
- Home visits – by school and welfare from the police.
- Contacting other Local Authorities (to validate possible school applications elsewhere)
- Requesting evidence of assertions regarding child's whereabouts (e.g., flight tickets / bookings in child's name)
- Making enquiries of Children's Social Care / referrals to MASH (Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub)

This list is not exhaustive nor exclusive and is a guide to the level of investigation the school will carry out prior to referring or designating a young person as a 'Child Missing in Education'

**Roles and responsibilities****Role of the Head of Years**

1. Only the Head of Year, Attendance & Welfare Manager/Officer or a Senior Member of Staff can record an absence as unauthorised. If an absence is recorded as unauthorised after a note has been received the parents must be informed immediately of the reason.
2. When a pattern of non-attendance is brought to the attention of the Head of Year the parent/s must be notified and will be invited to discuss the situation at a meeting.
3. The Head of Year may decide that if a student is unwell s/he may need to go home. Students will only be allowed home if parents give permission.
4. Students will only be sent home following an assessment by the School's medical officer or a Head of year.

**Role of the Subject Teacher**

1. Registers must be called at the beginning of each lesson.
2. If a student is absent from the class but is known to be in school, the school office should be informed immediately, and the student marked as absent. The Attendance and Welfare Manager and Head of Year will be informed. When and if the student arrives, they should be marked as 'L' (late).
3. Patterns of absence should be recorded, and the information passed to the Attendance and Welfare Manager and Head of Year.

**Role of the Attendance & Welfare Manager/ Officer**

1. Telephone calls from parents on the day of absence should be recorded and the information is recorded into the student's profile/events.
2. Monitors all student's attendance and punctuality and daily absence/late texts are sent and followed up by telephone calls or letters.
3. The school offices will maintain an "off-site" log in which students who leave site during the school day will have the reason recorded.
4. Students may only leave site during the school day if:
  - there is a formal letter from the parent, or a medical appointment letter has been provided
  - the letter is accepted by the Head of Year/Deputy Head of Year or Senior Member of staff and signed
  - the student signs out at Student Services or Attendance and is given a slip authorising him/her to be off site
  - This slip is then stamped by the main Reception and the student is then permitted to leave the school site
5. Home visits may be made if a student has a low attendance or there are absences without reasons given.

### **Initiatives to Improve Attendance**

The School is committed to supporting students to achieve high attendance and punctuality standards.

- A well-planned induction programme for students transferring from Year 6.
- Rewarding good attendance rates for individuals and classes.
- Taking part in LEA initiated projects.
- Showing parents that unjustified absence will have a detrimental effect on students' learning.
- Regular telephone attendance checks from the School's Attendance office.
- Contacting and meeting with parents when patterns begin to emerge.
- Sending termly letters home informing Parents/Carers of their child's attendance record to date.
- Monitoring and support by the Head of Year, Attendance and Welfare Manager and Leadership Team through home visits and possible legal/court proceedings in serious cases.

### **Celebrating Good Attendance**

It is important that good attendance is acknowledged, celebrated and rewarded. Achievement in attendance is as important as achievement in subjects and this should be embedded within the ethos of the School.

Each term, letters are sent home to all students' Parents and Carers informing them of their child's attendance and offering congratulations or advice, as necessary.

For the policy and procedures to be effective, it is important that all concerned play an active role and contribute to the partnership, i.e., parents, students and teachers. Therefore, there must be consistency with the teacher's approach and Heads of Years must take the responsibility for making enquiries and initiating action on attendance. In addition, attendance matters must be included in the induction programme for all new staff and in particular for newly qualified teachers.

### **Conisborough College aims to create a community in which ...**

- there is an equality of opportunity for all whatever their gender, ethnicity or ability

- learning is stimulating, enjoyable and valued by all students as they strive to reach their full potential.
- The Pastoral and Spiritual care of students is given high priority

**The People responsible for Attendance Matters in this school are:**

Mr J Cavadino – Deputy Headteacher Heads of Year for their year group  
 Ms S Jones: AHT Inclusion  
 Ms S. Thomas - Safeguarding Officer  
 Ms J King - Attendance and Welfare Manager

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**The Department for Education clearly states;**

Central to raising standards in education and ensuring all students can fulfil their potential is an assumption so widely understood that it is insufficiently stated – students need to attend school regularly to benefit from their education. Missing out on lessons leaves children vulnerable to falling behind. Children with poor attendance tend to achieve less in both primary and secondary school.

The Department

The government expects:

- Schools and local authorities to:
- Promote good attendance and reduce absence, including persistent absence;
- Ensure every student has access to full-time education to which they are entitled; and,
- act early to address patterns of absence.
- Parents to perform their legal duty by ensuring their children of compulsory school age who are registered at school attend regularly.
- All students to be punctual to their lessons.

**Legal background**

- The Education Act 1996 - sections 434(1)(3)(4)&(6) and 458(4)&(5)
- The Education (Student Registration) (England) Regulations 2006
- The Education (Student Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2010
- The Education (Student Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2011
- The Education (Student Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013