

Whitstable Junior School Attendance Strategy to reduce Persistent and severe absence 2024-2026

Intent

The purpose of this strategy is to ensure that the school's culture of high attendance, which is underpinned by clear expectations, procedures, and responsibilities, is effective in reducing both persistent absence and severe absence.

- Persistent absence is when a pupil's overall absence equates to 10 per cent or more of their possible sessions (i.e., attendance falls below 90%).
- Severe absence is when a pupil's overall absence equates to 50 per cent or more of their possible sessions (i.e., attendance falls below 50%).

It also outlines the school's strategy for using data to target attendance improvement efforts to the pupils or pupil cohorts who need it most.

Rationale

- This strategy is intended to support the overall implementation of the School Improvement Plan 2024-25. It is essential that all leaders, staff, pupils and parents understand and support the school's expectations around the need for pupils to attend school regularly so that they get the most out of their school experience, including their attainment, wellbeing, and wider life chances. Data and research show that the pupils with the highest attainment at the end of key stage 2 (age 11) and key stage 4 (age 16) have higher rates of attendance over the key stage compared to those with the lowest attainment.
- Nationally at KS2 in 2018/19, pupils not meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and maths had an overall absence rate of 4.7%, compared to 3.5% among those meeting the expected standard. Moreover, the overall absence rate of pupils not meeting the expected standard was higher than among those meeting the higher standard (4.7% compared to 2.7%).
- Nationally at KS4 in 2018/19, pupils 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 pupils not achieving grade 9 to 4 was over twice as high as those achieving grade 9 to 5 (8.8% compared to 3.7%).
- For the most vulnerable pupils, regular attendance is also an important protective factor and the best opportunity for needs to be identified and support provided. Research has shown associations between regular absence from school and a number of extrafamilial harms. This includes crime (90% of young offenders had been persistently absent) and serious violence (83% of knife possession offenders had been persistently absent in at least 1 of the 5 years of study). In addition, children missing in education can act as a vital warning sign to a range of safeguarding issues.

Target 1: To reduce overall persistent absence at Whitstable Junior schools so that it is no greater than the national average percentage, including for disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND.

Target 2: To reduce overall severe absence at Whitstable Junior School so that it is no greater than the national average percentage, including for disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND.

Target 3: To engage with all parents to encourage a culture of excellent attendance by frequently restating the importance of regular school attendance

- The monitoring of impact will be measured through school leaders' own self-evaluation including analysis of schools' attendance data, benchmarking against other schools locally and regionally and national data, and school-based visits by the School Improvement Team. The outcome of any Ofsted inspections will also be taken into consideration.

| Target 1: To reduce overall persistent absence at Whitstable Junior schools so that it is no greater than the national average percentage, including for disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND. | Implementation | Milestones | Expected Impact |
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| Analysis of all attendance data on a weekly basis | <p>Weekly checks of attendance data to be carried out by admin staff and reported to senior school leadership for all children including SEN. PP children and any children who are regarded as vulnerable and receiving support from external agencies.</p> <p>Ensuring that there are mechanisms in place for children to access home learning so minimise learning loss making it clear that this is just an interim measure and is no substitute for attending school</p> | This data will be compared week by week and explanations for any patterns investigated | Reasons for patterns of absence are clarified and any additional action implemented to minimise further risk |

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| <p>Drilling down to individual absenteeism if data is indicating a downward trend towards 90% and allocating a mentor.</p> | <p>Identified families have an initial meeting with mentor where issues around attendance are explored and support offered.</p> <p>Forms of support include: breakfast club, collect from home, after school clubs to encourage engagement, Target setting, date for review meeting.</p> <p>Attendance officer informs mentor via email if the child is absent. Mentor calls home and reminds target. Uncovers reason for absence. This could be escalated with letters home to formalise concerns, asking for medical evidence of absence etc</p> | <p>As above with individual child absence being monitored specifically on a daily basis</p> | <p>Individual child absence is deterred before the child reaches below 90% and is regarded as persistently absence.</p> |
| | <p>If the attendance data is still now moving to 90% and below, asking from support from the Kent attendance service (or Early Help) might be attained.</p> | <p>Parent can see that an external agency and support has been sought from the school with more formal letters and advice sent</p> | <p>The Rate of persistent absenteeism is reduced</p> |
| <p>Having a system of rewards for all children especially those with persistent absenteeism.</p> | <p>100% attendance stickers for whole school every Friday. (class teachers) 100% attendance certificates for all at the end of every term. (Attendance officer)</p> <p>Attendance officer informs mentors every Friday if child has 100% attendance. This is followed up with positive call home or positive text home.</p> <p>Most improved attendance from mentor</p> | <p>➤ Numbers of children with improved attendance is increases thus bringing figures of persistent absenteeism down</p> | <p>Improved whole school attendance data</p> |

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| | group receives prize at the end of term. | | |
| | <p>Use of PPG funding to support and encourage PPG children who may be in danger of becoming persistent absentees to attend school by coming to breakfast club, paying for these children to attend an after school club so that children have an added incentive to come to school.</p> <p>100% attendance Friday reward time for PPG children as an incentive to attend school.</p> | As above | As above |

| Target 2: To reduce overall severe absence, including ESBA, at Whitstable Junior School so that it is no greater than the national average percentage, including for disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND. | Implementation | Milestones | Expected Impact |
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| These actions would be following on from the above actions to reduce persistent absenteeism. Clearly if the above actions and support was still not reducing absence then more focussed work and assistance would need to be sought | Individual very focussed work with families of severe absentees e.g., member of staff calling the family at 8.15 am each morning to offer support to enable the child to come to school Having special arrangements in place to facilitate the child coming to school e.g. one to one adult to meet at the gate to | Targets for weekly attendance are met on a day-by-day basis until such time as the child is attending for the majority and then all of a school week. | Reduction of severe absence and improved attendance |

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| | <p>personally bring the child to school. Morning Hot Chocolate Club or sensory circuits offered. Child having daily, allocated check ins with well-being team. Child being fast tracked to place in Nurture. Having an arrangement where the child comes in may be a little later to allow for a more bespoke morning entry with the goal of attending school at punctually over time. Calling upon and accessing the support of outside agencies e.g. Early Help or Social Services as unauthorised and unexplained absence is regarded and neglectful and is now a safeguarding issue Use of KCC EBSA resources – parents signposted to webinar and given parental resources. Support sought from EBSA care line or from Send Inclusion advisors In extreme cases a referral may be made to The Rosewood School for short term intervention</p> | | |
| <p>Target 3: To engage with all parents to encourage a culture of excellent attendance by frequently restating the</p> | <p>Implementation</p> | <p>Milestones</p> | <p>Expected Impact</p> |

| importance of regular school attendance | | | |
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| <p>These actions would be part of the induction of new parents and the regular reminder of the importance of attendance as part of the normal pattern of school life</p> | <p>New parents' handbook: include table which explains the attendance percentages in terms of days and weeks lost to learning. Include information on the risk factor according to a child's achievement. Include Attendance Matters leaflet in parent pack. Weekly attendance figures published in the school newsletter. Stickers for 100% attendance given out weekly. Certificates for children with 100% attendance at the end of each term and annually. Parents requesting holiday will be sent Attendance Matters leaflet and invited to meet and discuss with Headteacher. A culture of attendance is promoted in school.</p> | <p>A culture of attendance is promoted in school. Parents do not consider term time holiday requests to be acceptable.</p> | <p>Children start at WJS school with parents and children having clear expectations of the need to be at school every day and the need to be resilient.</p> <p>Improved whole school attendance.</p> <p>Reduction in holiday requests.</p> |