

Attendance Policy

It is imperative that all students aim for 95%+ attendance. This is fundamental to our young people becoming successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens leading on to positive destinations at 16 plus. **All young people need to feel happy, safe and secure at school.**

Attendance at WHEC

We are committed to the very best outcomes for all our young people. We have been working hard to continue our improved attendance statistics – in June 2016 we were ranked 10th in the city. This improvement had an immensely positive effect on the school's exam results, ethos and positive destinations.

There was a slight dip last year (we ended with an average 90% attendance overall) which has made us even more determined to improve. **We need the full support of the whole school community including parents/carers together with students** to achieve this improvement.

Parental Information:

It is the responsibility of parents/carers to make sure their child is educated.

If a student cannot or will not attend school their parent/carer must call the school absence line on 0131 442 2201 on the day of absence and every subsequent day until the student is fit to return.

When a parent/carer informs the school of a **valid reason** for student absence this is recorded as authorised absence. Examples of valid reasons for absence are detailed below:

- The student is ill;
- The student is attending a doctor or hospital appointment;
- The student is attending a Children's Hearing, care review or court;
- The student is participating in a prearranged extracurricular activity (agreed in advance with Year Head) i.e. – competing in a professional sporting event;
- The student has suffered a bereavement;
- There is a crisis or serious difficulty at home or in your family.

This is **not an exhaustive list** and there will be other extenuating circumstances that warrant an authorised absence. Contact must always be made with the Year Head for advance permission for absence or Guidance for further advice.

Absence will be recorded as unauthorised in the following circumstances:

- Family holidays taken without notice and/or without the permission of the Year Head;
- Truancy with, or without, the knowledge of the parent;
- Longer-term exceptional domestic carer circumstance where support has been provided;
- All other unexplained absence is recorded as unauthorised unless a satisfactory explanation is provided in a timely manner.

Holidays during term-time:

Schools will not normally give a family permission to take pupils out of school for holidays during term-time. This means that if a student is absent due to a holiday the school will record this as an **unauthorised absence**. There are some circumstances where permission may be given for a holiday during term-time.

Including when:

- A family needs time together to recover from trauma.
- A family holiday is restricted to term-time because of the parent's job (for example a parent is in the armed services or emergency services). A letter must be provided from the company to confirm this.

Permission must be sought **in advance** in writing or by telephone from the Year Head ahead of the planned absence (the school will exercise discretion with incidents of trauma).

Truancy

If the young person stays off school without permission from the school this is called **truancy**. Truancy occurs both when a pupil doesn't attend for individual periods or for the whole day. Parents/carers must not condone truancy. Young people who truant from school can experience lower levels of education attainment and employment in later life.

There may be reasons for truancy that are unrelated to school. Difficulties at home or in the community are also a cause of unauthorised school absence. Should this occur Guidance staff will work with parents/carers to access appropriate supports.

Anxious school refusal

Anxious school refusal is not uncommon and **there is support available** for families and students.

Sometimes children and young people can be anxious or very worried about going to school and refuse to attend. Parents/carers may feel they are acting in the best interest of the student by condoning the absence. This will not help find a solution. It is very important to talk to the school if this kind of problem occurs. Guidance staff are very experienced in

working with anxious school refusers and will help support the young person back into education.

Parents/carers should contact the Guidance team, Education Welfare Officer or Year Head to discuss concerns from school or home affecting school attendance.

Further support and advice on school absence can be found at:

ParentLine Scotland

At some time all parents find that parenting can be difficult or stressful. ParentLine Scotland is the free, confidential, telephone helpline for anyone caring for a child in Scotland. You can call about any problem, however big or small. Phone: 0808 800 2222 On line at: <http://www.children1st.org.uk/parentline>

Parentzone

Parentzone provides information for parents and carers about how you can support your child's education.

On line at:

<http://www.parentzonescotland.gov.uk>

Scottish Child Law Centre

The Centre helps children and young people, their families and carers, and professionals working for and with children by providing advice and information through their advice line, email and text services.

Freephone for under 18s: Phone: 0800 328 8970

Phone: 0131 667 6333

Text: text 'SCLC' and your question to 80800

E-mail: enquiries@sccl.org.uk

Guidance Teacher Role in School

Every effort should be made to create a positive relationship with students, parent/ carer and partner agencies with support of GIRFEC procedures and possible Young Person Planning Meeting to introduce support to help the young person and their family.

Education Welfare Officer Role

To liaise closely with school/ partner agencies to help tackle the barriers that may prevent young people coming to school which involves working with families who have been referred and need extra support.

References:

Scottish Government Guidelines – A guide for parents about school attendance

J Walker – Depute Head

A Ferguson – EWO

Attendance Procedures

Aim

- To clarify the procedures used by Guidance staff and group Mentors to monitor and track attendance of pupils
- Ultimately, to improve attendance and punctuality figures for all year groups

Procedures for Notes/Changes in SEEMIS

- If a pupil is absent from school, a SEEMIS text is sent home. Responses come to clerical assistant and they change SEEMIS. A written record is passed to the Guidance.
- All absence notes should be handed in to Mentors at Mentor Group. Guidance should date and sign the notes and place them in the wallet provided. The Pupil Support Clerical Assistant will make changes on SEEMIS and then pass notes to the Mentors for filing.
- Guidance staff should do some spot checking and speak to Mentors who are not keeping them informed of pupils who are not bringing notes and who still have TBC
- If a pupil returns to school and the absence is still recorded as TBC the Mentor should issue *Gold* Proforma 1. If Proforma 1 is not returned, Mentors should complete *Green* Proforma 2 and return to Guidance via the Mentor Group wallet
- When Guidance staff receive *Green* Proforma 2 from the Mentor, an Absence Enquiry 1 letter should be triggered
- In addition to SEEMIS recording, guidance staff should keep a note of all Absence Enquiry letters which been sent.
- If no response is received to Absence Enquiry 1, guidance staff should interview student
- If, within one week, no explanation for absences has been received, Absence Enquiry 2 is sent out, along with updated printout. Pupils in post compulsory education should receive Absence Enquiry 2A

Early intervention

- Seemis reports generated for weekly attendance by stage by DHT Pupil Support – this is brought to the Operational Guidance Team Meeting weekly to monitor overall attendance by years
- Guidance Teacher checks their own house group, looking for any patterns, broken weeks, Friday absences, attendance between 85-90% etc eg pupil could have 90% attendance but have 4 broken weeks.

- These triggers will initiate specific letters to be sent home with the concern. Part of this strategy is about challenging some parents to have higher expectations for their children.
 - Clerical Assistant to print letters and pass to Guidance staff for signature.
 - If no improvement shown over the next few weeks, where appropriate, invite parent in to discuss. Refer to EWO, documenting the intervention which has already taken place.
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- Certainly by the time attendance is at 85% (unless it is covered by a block of explained absence eg sickness, unauthorised holidays) some sort of intervention should have taken place.
 - Seemis reports generated for TBCs and Lates by DHT Pupil Support – this is brought to the Operational Guidance Team Meeting monthly.
 - Lists given out to Guidance staff for them to speak to pupils, contact home and record any concerns raised and what strategies are being used then passed back to DHT for filing.

SEEMIS tips – GUIDANCE STAFF

In most cases, there should be no TBC entries going back further than 4 weeks from the present date. Consult with EWO to decide on codes. Guidance staff should periodically check SEEMIS for TBCs which are outstanding. An easy way to do this is to use the following route in SEEMIS

Attendance

Attendance Stats

Attendance by Register Mark

Then put in 'To be confirmed' and 'greater than 0'. Also tick 'include absences and lates' Select your year group and you have a list of all the pupils who still have TBC at today's date – this also makes it really easy to generate absence enquiry letters. You can choose a cut-off date a couple of weeks after printouts have gone to Mentors and send out letters.

Another pathway on SEEMIS which is useful for tracking patterns is

Attendance

Attendance Check

Attendance Patterns

Year Group

New List

This gives number of times pupils have been off on any given day. If you click on the top of the column it will put that column in order so you can quickly see pupils who have a lot of Fridays off (you need to stretch the top of each column – 4th last one is Friday morning)

Other strategies to improve attendance and punctuality

Work with Mentors to raise profile of attendance/punctuality

Pages in pupil mentor folders for recording attendance

Attendance rewards system twice a year

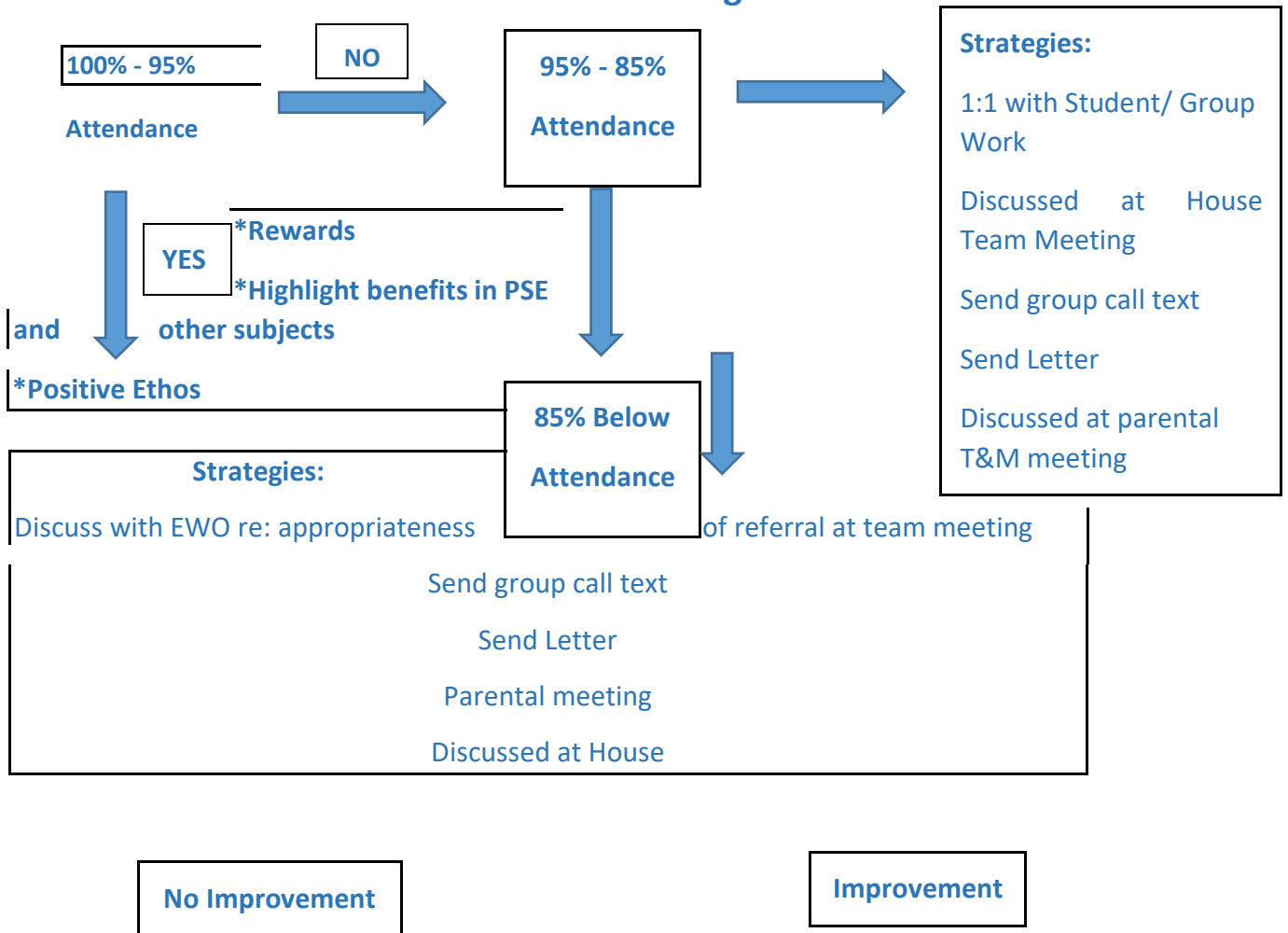
EMA for pupils over 16



Monitoring and Evaluation of Impact

Will be on Operational Guidance Team Meeting Agenda weekly raised by the ASL Leader/DHT. DHTs will also check individual year groups with Guidance Staff at House Team Meetings.

Attendance Flow Chart - Wester Hailes High School





Team Meeting

