

Attendance Policy

Policy reviewed and updated	May 2024
Date of next review	May 2025
This policy will be subject to ongoing review and may be amended prior to the scheduled date of the next review in order to reflect changes in legislation where appropriate	

1. Aims

We are committed to meeting our obligation with regards to school attendance through our whole-school culture and ethos, including:

- Promoting good attendance
- Reducing absence, including persistent and severe absence
- Ensuring every students has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled
- Acting early to address patterns of absence
- Building strong relationships with families to ensure students have the support in place to attend school

We will also promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

2. Legislation and Guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the working together to improve school attendance from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on school attendance parental responsibility measures. These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- Part 6 of The Education Act 1996
- Part 3 of The Education Act 2002
- Part 7 of The Education and Inspections Act 2006
- The Education (students Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (and 2010, 2011, 2013, 2016 amendments)
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013

It also refers to:

- School census guidance
- Keeping Children Safe in Education
- Mental health issues affecting a student's attendance: guidance for schools

3. Roles and Responsibilities

3.1 The governing board

The governing board is responsible for:

- Promoting the importance of school attendance across the school's policies and ethos

- Making sure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties
- Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data
- Monitoring attendance figures for the whole school
- Making sure staff receive adequate training on attendance
- Holding the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy

3.2 The headteacher

The headteacher is responsible for:

- Implementation of this policy at the school
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual students
- Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies
- Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary

3.3 The designated senior leader responsible for attendance

The designated senior leader is responsible for:

- Leading attendance across the school
- Offering a clear vision for attendance improvement
- Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes
- Having an oversight of data analysis
- Devising specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data
- Building relationships with parents/carers to discuss and tackle attendance issues
- Creating intervention reintegration plans in partnership with students and their parents/carers
- Delivering targeted intervention and support to students and families

3.4 The attendance officer

The school attendance officer is responsible for:

- Monitoring and analysing attendance data
- Benchmarking attendance data to identify areas of focus for improvement
- Providing regular attendance reports to school staff and reporting concerns about attendance to the designated senior leader responsible for attendance and the headteacher
- Working with Hillingdon Attendance Support Team to tackle persistent absence
- Advising the Deputy Headteacher (authorised by the Headteacher) when to issue fixed-penalty notices

3.5 Class teachers/form tutors

Class teachers/form tutors are responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the school office via the SIMs management system for all timetabled lessons and form time. Tutors will contact parents/carers when a child's attendance falls below the expected 97% attendance.

3.6 School Admin staff

School admin staff will:

- Take calls, emails and messages from parents/carers about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the school system
- Call home for students who are absent without notification from parents

3.7 Parents/carers

Parents/carers are expected to:

- Make sure their child attends every day, on time
- Call the school to report their child's absence before 8:30am on the day of the absence (and each subsequent day of absence), and advise when they are expected to return

- Provide the school with more than 1 emergency contact number for their child
- Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day
- Provide medical evidence for appointments during school hours

3.8 Students

Students are expected to:

- Attend school every day, on time

4. Recording Attendance

4.1 Attendance register

We will keep an attendance register, and place all students onto this register.

We will take our attendance register at the start of every timetabled lesson, including form time. It will mark whether every student is:

- Present
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity
- Absent
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

- The original entry
- The amended entry
- The reason for the amendment
- The date on which the amendment was made
- The name and position of the person who made the amendment

We will also record:

- Whether the absence is authorised or not
- The nature of the activity if a student is attending an approved educational activity
- The nature of circumstances where a student is unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 6 years after the date on which the entry was made.

Students must arrive in school by 8:30am on each school day. The register for the first session will be taken at 8:30am and will be kept open until 9am. The register for the second session will be taken at 12:30.

4.2 Unplanned absence

The student's parent/carer must notify the school of the reason for the absence on the first day of an unplanned absence by 8:30am by calling the school reception (01895 822 108) or logging the absence on the school website under 'Report a short term absence'.

We will mark absence due to physical or mental illness as authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

Where the absence is longer than 5 days or there are doubts about the authenticity of the illness, the school will ask for medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or

other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily. If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents/carers will be notified of this in advance.

4.3 Planned absence

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the student's parent/carer notifies the school in advance of the appointment.

Parents can inform the school of their child's medical appointments by emailing attendance@hfschool.org.uk or by logging on Harefield School Website under 'Reporting a medical appointment'.

However, we encourage parents/carers to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the students should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

The student's parent/carer must also apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence. Go to section 5 to find out which term-time absences the school can authorise.

4.4 Lateness and punctuality

A student who arrives late:

- Before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code 'L'
- After the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code 'U'

Students who arrive late to school will receive a detention the same day. Students whose punctuality is a concern may be placed on a punctuality report and parents/carers will be invited in for a meeting.

4.5 Following up unexplained absence

Where any student we expect to attend school does not attend, or stops attending, without reason, the school will:

- Call the student's parent/carer on the morning of the first day of unexplained absence to ascertain the reason. If the school cannot reach any of the student's emergency contacts, the school may conduct a home visit and request support from the safer schools police officer.
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not
- Identify the correct attendance code to use and input it as soon as the reason for absence is ascertained – this will be no later than 5 working days after the session
- Call the parent/carer on each day that the absence continues without explanation to ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary. If absence continues, the school will consider involving the Participation Team and make a referral to Hillingdon Child Missing in Education Team.

4.6 Reporting to parents/carers

Half-termly letters will be sent to parents/carers to inform them about their child's attendance and absence levels.

5. Authorised and Unauthorised Absence

5.1 Approval for term-time absence

The headteacher will only grant a leave of absence to a students during term time if they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'. A leave of absence is granted at the headteacher's discretion, including the length of time the student is authorised to be absent for. There is no automatic entitlement in law to time off in school to go on holiday.

Examples of 'exceptional circumstances' may be religious observance, illness of an immediate family member. The Headteacher will make decisions on a case by case basis.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request.

Any request should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated and, where possible, at least four weeks notice before the absence, and in accordance with any leave of absence request, please email attendance@hfschool.org.uk. The headteacher may require evidence to support any request for leave of absence.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

- Illness (including mental illness) and medical/dental appointments (see sections 4.2 and 4.3 for more detail)
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the student's parents/carers belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents'/carers' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart
- Traveller students travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh gypsies, Irish and Scottish travellers, showmen (fairground people) and circus people, bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and new travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school, but it is not known whether the students is attending educational provision
- Sporting competitions - Where the student is representing their sport to a very high standard.
- Performance and filming requests - A performance is where a child takes part in a theatre production, commercial or TV/film production, the Headteacher will consider each request on an individual basis.

5.2 Legal Sanctions

The school or local authority can fine parents/carers for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age.

If issued with a fine, or penalty notice, each parent/carer must pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the local authority.

Penalty notices can be issued by a headteacher, local authority officer or the police.

The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice may take into account:

- The number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year
- One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission
- Where an excluded students is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason

If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute or withdraw the notice.

6. Attendance Monitoring

Students attendance is monitored daily and reviewed fortnightly. Where students' attendance is a concern, parents/carers will be contacted by their child's tutor in the first instance. If their attendance continues to decline parents/carers will be invited in for a meeting with their Student Manager and Head of Key stage to discuss the barriers to their child attending school regularly.

Furthermore, if continues to decline your child will be placed on an Individual Attendance Plan (IAP) which will be monitored for four weeks, you will be invited in to attend a meeting with the Attendance Officer to agree on targets to help improve your child's attendance.

If there has not been a satisfactory improvement in your child's attendance you will be invited to attend a formal Attendance Panel with a member of the Senior Leadership Team and the Attendance Officer. The Attendance Panel will be reviewed after four weeks. If there are unauthorised absences within the review period your child will be referred to the Participation Attendance Support Team at Hillingdon council. The Attendance Support Team at Hillingdon Council may issue a Penalty Notice against you or instruct the Legal Department to initiate legal proceedings against you .

6.1 Monitoring Attendance

The school will:

- Monitor attendance and absence data half-termly, termly and yearly across the school and at an individual students level
- Identify whether or not there are particular groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern

Student-level absence data will be collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. The school will compare attendance data to the national average, and share this with the governing board.

6.2 Analysing Attendance

The school will:

- Analyse attendance and absence data regularly to identify students or cohorts that need additional support with their attendance, and use this analysis to provide targeted support to these students and their families
- Look at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence, and then develop strategies to address these patterns

6.3 Using data to improve attendance

The school will:

- Provide regular attendance reports to your child's tutor, and other school leaders, to facilitate discussions with students and families
- Use data to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place in order to modify them and inform future strategies
- Reward students whose attendance is 97% and for students whose attendance is continuing to improve

6.4 Reducing Persistent and Severe Absence

Persistent absence is where a student misses 10% or more of school, and severe absence is where a student misses 50% or more of school.

The school will:

- Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence
- Hold regular meetings with the parents/carers of students who the school (and/or local authority) considers to be vulnerable, or are persistently or severely absent, to discuss attendance and engagement at school
- Place the student on an Individual Attendance Plan and/or a form Attendance Panel and monitor their attendance closely over a four week period
- Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance

7. Monitoring Arrangements

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the local authority or DfE is updated, and as a minimum annually by the senior teacher responsible for attendance.