



HIGHFIELDS SCHOOL

ATTENDANCE AND PUNCTUALITY POLICY

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RATIONALE

Highfields School recognises the importance of regular attendance and good punctuality for all students to realise their true potential. The school will work with students and their families to ensure each student attends school regularly and punctually.

AIMS

- To raise awareness of the importance of good attendance and punctuality
- To improve the overall attendance of students at school
- To reduce the number of students who are persistently absent from school
- To recognise that the reasons for poor attendance are varied and individual
- To provide support for students whose attendance or punctuality is a cause for concern and their families
- To further develop positive and consistent communication between home and school
- To develop a systematic approach to gathering and analysing attendance related data
- To develop a framework which defines agreed roles and responsibilities and promotes consistency in carrying out tasks
- To promote effective partnerships with the Education Welfare Officer and with other services and agencies

LEGAL FRAMEWORK

Under Section 7 of the Education Act 1996, parents must ensure that their children are educated; for most this means registering their child at school and ensuring their regular attendance.

Children should be at school, on time, every day the school is open, unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. Permitting absence from school without a good reason is an offence by the parent.

The school is obliged by law to differentiate between **authorised and unauthorised** absence. A letter or telephone message from a parent/carer does not in itself necessarily authorise an absence. Only if the school is satisfied as to the validity of the explanation offered by letter/message will the absence be authorised.

Authorised absences are time away from school that the school considers to be for a good or unavoidable reason. Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been given. This includes:

- Parents keeping children off school unnecessarily
- Truancy before or during the school day
- Absences which have never been properly explained
- Children who arrive at school too late to get a mark

PROMOTING GOOD ATTENDANCE AND PUNCTUALITY

In order for this policy to be successful, every member of the school community must make attendance a high priority and communicate to students the importance of being in school to learn.

- Students are aware that we use electronic registration in every session of the school day
- Individual student attendance is included on the half termly Progress Review and end of year report. A challenging colour coded RAG rating is a key part of these reports.
- The value of good attendance is stressed in the Student Planner used by Lower School and school prospectus.
- This is further reinforced through the annual Welcome Evening, at careers events throughout the year and in assemblies.
- Attendance is discussed in the context of students' learning in meetings with members of the Year Teams and wider Inclusion Team.
- We use a system of incentives and rewards which acknowledges the efforts of students to improve their attendance and timekeeping. These include:
 - Attendance certificates
 - Recognition in assemblies

MONITORING ATTENDANCE

Contact with home

Parents/carers are responsible for ensuring that their child attends school regularly, punctually and ready to learn. If a child is unable, for any reason, to attend, or is late, parents/carers are requested to notify the school as soon as possible, either in writing, or by telephone call on the first and each subsequent day of absence. School provides a dedicated 24 hour absence line number for parents. This is given to all parents on admission, is printed in the Student Planner and is displayed on the school website.

On the first day a student is absent from school a text message will be sent home if no message has been received. If there is no response from home, we will then telephone to establish the reason for the absence. If contact cannot be made that day further phone calls will be made or a home visit may be made if there has been no response and the unauthorised absence has exceeded three school days.

Certain students who we consider to be vulnerable will be telephoned immediately when an absence has been identified and visited at home that day if no response is received.

Year Managers, the Student Welfare Manager and the Attendance Officer monitor student absence on a daily basis. There are weekly meetings between the Year Manager, the Student Welfare Manager and the Educational Welfare Officer to identify any attendance concerns and implement any support strategies required.

SUPPORTING STUDENTS AND FAMILIES WITH ATTENDANCE ISSUES

We strive to provide a welcoming, caring environment, whereby each member of the school community feels valued and secure. Children are, however, sometimes reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents/carers and the child. If a child is reluctant to attend, it is never better for parents to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and may make things worse.

There will be times when students will need additional support in improving their attendance or punctuality to school. This will particularly be the case for students involved in truancy, parent- condoned absences and school refusal. All interventions will be sensitive to the individual needs and circumstances of the student. They may involve the Form Tutor, Year Manager, Head of School, Student Welfare Manager or other members of the Inclusion Team. Initial strategies may be to:

- Meet with the student and their family to discuss the issues
- Identify any barriers that may be getting in the way of the student attending school
- Implement an Attendance Action Plan to address these issues
- Inform, involve or negotiate with teaching staff where there are particular issues or concerns
- Consider timetable modifications or supplementary provision
- Provide individual and group opportunities for counselling
- Consider peer support and mentoring
- Involve the student and parents/carers as far as possible at each stage of the process
- Consider referral to or involvement with external agencies including the Orchard Centre, where home tuition or off-site education may be more appropriate.

LENGTHY PERIODS OF ABSENCE

In the case where a student is absent from school for three days and no contact can be made, a home visit will be arranged. The EWO will also be involved and The Local Neighbourhood Police Team may need to conduct a Police Safe and Well check.

We have a legal duty to report the absence of any student who is absent without an explanation for 10 consecutive days. If the child is not seen and contact has not been established with the named parent/carer then the Local Authority is notified that the child is at risk of 'being missing'. Children's Services staff will visit the last known address and alert key services to locate the child.

Continued or ongoing absence

If a student misses, or is in danger of missing, 10% or more schooling across the school year and falling into Persistent Absence, parents will be invited into school to discuss the causes of the absence and set targets for improvement. A Parenting Contract may, at this point, be required.

The return to school and the reintegration of a student who returns to the school after a lengthy absence requires special planning. The Student Welfare Manager, with the support of the LINC Manager and the Academic or Guidance Manager, will be responsible for deciding upon the programme for return and for the management of the programme. All staff need to be aware that this is a difficult process which requires extreme sensitivity and that any problems should be referred to the Key Worker for that child as soon as possible.

In collaboration with the parent and the EWO, programmes will be tailored to individual needs and may involve phased, part-time re-integration through the LINC and even support in lessons, as appropriate. This may involve the Special Educational Needs Coordinator. Staff will be notified of the return of a long-term

absentee and a meeting of subject staff who teach the student may be arranged if appropriate.

Those students who are in Alternative Provision and are Dual Registered with the school and another educational establishment will be monitored by the Attendance Officer who receives at least weekly attendance updates from the relevant centre.

EXPECTATIONS OF PARENTS

Requests for Leave of Absence in 'Exceptional Circumstances'

We expect parents to avoid arranging family holidays during term time. We also expect our parents/ carers, where possible, to avoid making medical/dental appointments for their child during school hours. From September 2013 **schools are only able to grant leave of absence during term time in exceptional circumstances.**

On application in advance by the parent/carer, a student may be granted a period of absence but this will only be in exceptional circumstances. Requests for absence will go to the Heads of School for consideration. This is not an automatic entitlement and is entirely at the discretion of the school. When the school is considering whether to authorise any leave of absence we will consider a range of factors including the student's previous attendance record, previous requests for leave of absence, academic progress and any other mitigating family, religious or cultural circumstances.

The school will contact the family to discuss the reasons for the application for leave of absence. If the request is to be denied, we will write to the parent/carer explaining the reasons why and inform our EWO.

Penalty notices

In exceptional cases where parents take their child out of school without the absence being authorised, we will notify the Local Authority who will issue a Penalty Notice for the period of unauthorised absence.

Each Penalty Notice carries a fine of £60 per parent and per child if paid within 21 days of issue. If this fine is not paid within 21 days the penalty is automatically increased to £120 if paid within 28 days. If the Penalty Notice remains unpaid the Local Authority will initiate procedures in the Magistrates Court against the parent/carer for failing to ensure regular attendance under Section 444(1) or 444(1a) of the Education Act 1996. If a parent/carer is convicted of the offence it is recorded as a criminal conviction. If convicted under Section 444(1) of the Act parents can be fined up to £1000 for each offence. If convicted under Section 444(1a) which is a more serious offence, when the parent knowingly allows a child to be absent from school without authorisation, this can lead to a fine of up to £2500 and/or 3 months in prison.

LEAVERS

If, for whatever reason, parents are considering moving their child to another school they must inform the school at their earliest convenience. We would expect parents to provide comprehensive information about their plans, including any date of the planned move, new address details and telephone numbers, the child's new school and start date. These should be submitted in writing.

If a student leaves and we do not have the above information, then the child is considered to be a child missing in education. This requires schools and Local Authorities to then carry out investigations to try and locate the child, which includes liaising with Children's Services, the Police and other agencies. By parents providing the above information, these investigations can be avoided.

ABSENCE THROUGH CHILD PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC PERFORMANCES, INCLUDING THEATRE, FILM OR TELEVISION WORK AND MODELLING

Parents of a child performer can seek leave of absence from school for their child to take part in a performance. They must contact their child's Head of School to discuss the nature and frequency of the work, whether the child has a valid performance licence and whether education will be provided by the employer during any future leave of absence. It is, however, down to the school's discretion as to whether to authorise this and they will wish to discuss the nature and frequency of the absence and how learning will continue if absence occurs. Any absence recorded as part of a child's participation in a public performance is recorded as C, an authorised absence.

ABSENCE THROUGH COMPETING AT REGIONAL, COUNTY OR NATIONAL LEVEL FOR SPORT

Parents of able sportsmen and women can seek leave of absence from the relevant Head of School for their child to take part in regional, county, national and international events and competitions. It is, however, down to the school's discretion as to whether to authorise this and we will wish to discuss the nature and frequency of the absence and how learning will continue if absence occurs. Permission for a child to leave early or arrive late to attend coaching and training sessions is also at the discretion of the school and is not likely to be approved if it is a regular event, unless the sports club or association is providing an education tutor as part of their coaching

GYPSY, ROMA, TRAVELLER AND SHOWMAN FAMILIES

Absence of a child from a Traveller family that has left the area may be authorised if the absence is for work purposes only and it is believed that the family intends to return. To ensure the continuity of learning for Traveller children, dual registration is allowed. That means that a school cannot remove a Traveller child from the school roll while they are travelling. When the Traveller is away, the home school holds the place open and records the absence as authorised through the T code. Distance learning packs for Traveller children are not an alternative to attendance at school.

LATENESS TO SCHOOL

Morning registration takes place at the start of school from 8:45 am. Students are recorded as being late from 8:45 am at the entrance to school or by form tutors. Lateness is monitored via SIMS and form tutors and subject teachers are required to record lateness in their electronic register.

Detentions are issued each time a student is late. Year Teams will always try to inform parents on the day of each recorded late mark either by text or telephone. If a student is persistently late parents/carers will be informed and invited into school. A Parenting Contract or Attendance Action Plan may also be used.

Where there is a trend of declining punctuality we will liaise with the Local Authority to organise Intensive Support Days in which all students who are late that day are interviewed by an EWO who will also contact parents to discuss the reasons for the lateness and the possible consequences if this continues.

Students who are persistently late and who are not positively responding to available support will be invited with their parents to meet with the Deputy Headteacher (Achievement) to discuss the reasons for and possible consequences of their late arrival and may be referred to the Local Authority for prosecution.

LEGAL MEASURES FOR TACKLING PERSISTENT ABSENCE OR LATENESS

Parents are required by Law to ensure that their child attends school punctually and regularly. Failure to ensure a child's regular attendance at the school which he/she is a registered student is a criminal offence under the Education Act 1996. Legal measures will be considered when the child has 10 or more sessions of unauthorised absence and parents are complicit in the child's absence.

Wolverhampton City Council will use a full range of legal measures to secure good attendance:

- Parenting Orders
- Penalty Notices
- Education Supervision Orders
- Prosecution.

INTERNAL ABSENCE

An electronic register is completed for each lesson. We use this information on SIMS to monitor and track possible truancy from sessions or lessons.

At the end of each day, Year Managers run a report via SIMS that identifies any students in their year group that have both a present mark and absent mark in the same day; this report is used to identify patterns of possible truancy from registration or lessons. Spot checks throughout the day will also be carried out using the same report. Class teachers are encouraged to contact the Year Team or Pupil Services when a student who shows as being present in the previous lesson does not arrive to their lesson.

When there is no obvious reason to explain the absence the Year Manager will investigate the matter further by contacting the form tutor or subject teacher as well as interviewing the student. If truancy is proven to have occurred the Year Manager, in consultation with the Head of School, will apply appropriate sanctions and contact the child's parents/carers. If absences from lessons persist the Student Welfare Manager may meet with the student and parents. In some cases, the Education Welfare Officer will be involved.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Ensuring good attendance is the responsibility of everyone in the school community:

STUDENTS

- To attend school and individual lessons punctually every day, ready to learn

PARENTS / CARERS

- To ensure their child attends school punctually and every day, unless too ill to attend
- To notify the school by telephone or text if their child cannot attend for any reason, on the first and subsequent days of absence — this is for the child's safety as well as for administrative reasons
- To ensure they obtain 'leave of absence' for their child if required in exceptional circumstances during term time
- To avoid where possible making medical/dental appointments for their child during school hours
- To avoid arranging family holidays during term time.

FORM TUTOR

- To complete the electronic register and monitor students' attendance in an attempt to identify irregular patterns of attendance such as falling attendance levels, regular patterns of absence or regular lateness to registration
- To discuss with students any unexplained incidence of absence or lateness
- To issue to individual students any reward earned as part of the school's attendance policy
- To support the Year Team in applying appropriate sanctions for poor punctuality or truancy
- To inform the Year Manager of concerns, so that parents/carers are contacted

CLASS TEACHER

- To complete an electronic register every lesson, with particular regard to period 5 as our formal afternoon registration period
- To inform the Head of Department if poor attendance or punctuality are becoming a concern
- To inform the Year Manager if poor attendance or punctuality are becoming a concern
- To be positive with students on their return to school and to support students in catching up on work missed by absence
- To update the electronic register with students who arrive late to the lesson so lateness can be monitored and appropriate action taken
- To issue a detention if a student is late to a particular lesson so the student makes up the missed time
- If a situation occurs that prevents the form tutor/subject teacher from taking an electronic register a paper register **MUST** be taken and returned to Student Reception at the earliest opportunity.

YEAR MANAGER

- To provide Form Tutors with support in relation to monitoring student attendance and punctuality
- To complete the Weekly Absence attendance tracker for the weekly meeting with the EWO
- Where a regular pattern of poor attendance has been identified or if students are at risk of becoming persistent absentees:
 - To monitor, along with the Form Tutor, the student's attendance and contact the student's parents/carers and, where appropriate, issue an attendance report
 - To discuss with students any increasing incidence of absence, truancy or regular lateness
 - To follow up any reported truancy or pattern of regular lateness by contacting the student's parents/carers
 - To take such remedial action as is necessary to correct the identified attendance problem
 - To organise support for students where long-term absence is authorised
 - To meet with parents/carers to agree and sign an Attendance Contract
- Where no improvement occurs in the identified attendance problem:
 - To inform the parent/carer of the possible future involvement of the school's Student Welfare & Support Manager, with a view to involvement of the school's EWO
 - To discuss next steps with the Student Welfare & Support Manager
- To liaise with the Head of School in organising rewards and sanctions relating to attendance and punctuality

HEAD OF SCHOOL

- To have of an overview of attendance issues in their year groups
- To decide whether requests for 'holiday' leaves of absence are to be authorised
- To liaise with the Year Manager in organising rewards and sanctions relating to attendance and punctuality

ATTENDANCE OFFICER

- To complete the attendance register with the appropriate attendance codes
- To report to the Deputy Headteacher (Achievement) any inconsistency of register-taking by staff
- To follow procedures for First-day Absence
- To inform Form Tutors of reasons for absence
- To amend registers on receipt of authorisation of absence
- To alert the Year Manager or Student Welfare & Support Manager of any case of suspected truancy, internal or external

STUDENT WELFARE & SUPPORT MANAGER

The Student Welfare & Support Manager makes a contribution to school life far beyond establishing and maintaining full attendance. She is involved in working with families and students who are experiencing a wide range of difficulties, either directly or indirectly linked to school attendance. These may be issues that affect a student's overall welfare or puts them at risk of social exclusion.

In some cases the involvement of the Student Welfare & Support Manager may prevent a difficulty from becoming an attendance problem. The Student Welfare & Support Manager is seen as an integral part of the support for parents/carers, students and staff.

The Year Manager is generally responsible for much of the day-to-day implementation of this policy and specifically:

Whole school attendance

- To have general oversight of attendance and monitoring attendance on a regular basis, including comparing them to any locally-agreed and national attendance targets
- To set attendance targets and producing attendance data for reports to the Heads of School/Deputy Headteacher (Achievement) and wider stakeholders.
- To monitor the school's registration system and bring about any necessary changes to ensure its smooth and efficient operation
- To organise remedial action to correct any identified problems of general school attendance
- To monitor attendance in relation to persistent absence, with a view to identifying students whose attendance is a concern, and take remedial action
- To liaise with the above and Heads of School and the Deputy Headteacher (Achievement) on approving applications for holidays, attendance at public performances and other periods of absence during term time

Individual student support

- To meet with students whose attendance is a concern and discuss the causes of their poor attendance
- To work with individual students or groups of 'at risk' students within school in order to improve self-esteem, coping strategies or ability to attend more regularly
- To monitor the attendance of individual students who are vulnerable or 'at risk' on a daily basis

Working with parents

- To contact parents/carers of students to:
 - Discuss any concerns regarding their child's attendance or punctuality
 - Agree any support necessary to secure an improvement in their child's attendance
 - To organise and agree Parenting Contracts where appropriate.
 - Arrange a meeting with the school's EWO to discuss attendance or to secure support where attendance is falling due to family illness
- Make home visits where appropriate and act as a liaison between home and the school
- To attend parental consultation evenings

Working with other professionals in school

- To record and share outcomes with the wider Inclusion Team and other professionals involved
- To liaise with the Form Tutor regarding student attendance
- To meet weekly with the EWO and wider Inclusion Support Team to discuss attendance issues and consider action and follow up
- To attend the weekly Inclusion Team meeting to agree appropriate support for students
- To participate where appropriate, in school-based INSET

Working with other professionals

- To liaise with any outside agencies such as the Home Tuition Service, Children's Services, Student Referral Units, MAST and the Educational Psychologist to help and support individual children and/or their parents/carers
- To attend where appropriate Case Conferences, Reviews or Child Protection Conferences
- To call Family Panel meetings, in conjunction with Social Services, on 'high risk' family situations
- To request medical examinations by the School Medical Services, where attendance is being unduly affected
- To meet regularly with the EWO to discuss the school's general attendance statistics and individual student's attendance when:
 - a student's attendance is slipping (towards 90%) and so giving concern which might warrant EWO involvement
 - a student has been referred to the EWO
 - a student is officially on the school role but transfer to the school has not taken place
- To issue formal written warnings about lack of attendance and, in extreme cases, request legal proceedings and prosecution. The Student Welfare & Support Manager can involve the Local Authority and the Educational Welfare Officer to implement court proceedings
- To inform the LA of unexplained absences and of any other children in irregular attendance
- To liaise with the LA and local police regarding any local or national truancy initiatives

Educational Welfare Officer

- To assist the school in reviewing and revising its policy and procedures in line with most recent guidance
- To meet regularly with staff having responsibility for attendance, namely the Student Welfare & Support Manager and Year Managers as required
- To attend the weekly Inclusion Team meeting to discuss students whose attendance is a cause for concern and to agree appropriate interventions, making visits and working with individual families in order to improve attendance
- To support the school in its reduction of Persistent Absenteeism
- To initiate legal proceedings against parents/carers who fail to ensure the regular attendance of their children: where absence is unauthorised and no improvement in attendance has been effected.
- If a child goes missing from education it is reported to the Local Authority who makes efforts to locate the child. After 4 weeks the school off registers and the form will indicate that the child is missing and placed on the DfE lost school database.

The Governing Body

- To require termly reports from the Headteacher on overall attendance figures, Persistent Absenteeism and progress towards targets
- To convene a Governor Panel to meet with parents/carers and students, in a further attempt to secure improved attendance.

RELATED POLICIES

- Safeguarding
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Behaviour for Learning
- SEND
- Supporting Students with Medical Conditions

Review 2019/20