

# Attendance Policy

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## Ownership and Control

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## Statement of intent

Harwich and Dovercourt High School believes that in order to facilitate teaching and learning, good attendance is essential. Pupils cannot achieve their full potential if they do not regularly attend school.

We are committed to:

- Promoting and modelling good attendance.
- Ensuring equality and fairness of treatment for all.
- Intervening early and working with other agencies to ensure the health and safety of our pupils.
- Rewarding regular attendance.
- Ensuring parents follow the framework set in section 7 of the Education Act 1996 which states that:

“The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him/her to receive efficient full-time education suitable:

- a) to age, ability and aptitude and
- b) to any special educational needs he/ she may have

Either by regular attendance at school or otherwise”.

Signed by:



Headteacher

Date: December 2021



Chair of Governors

Date: December 2021

## Attendance Protocol 2021-22

- Your child is registered present or absent during morning and afternoon sessions as required by the law. We therefore ask that you ensure that your child attends school regularly and punctually (if your child is extremely late without reasonable justification, we will mark this as unauthorised absence).
- It is the parent/carer's responsibility to telephone the school in the event of absence. We ask that you telephone daily 01255 245460 by 8.30am. You have the choice to;
  - Leave a message on the absence line
  - Be connected to student services (should you require to speak to a member of staff)
- We operate a 'first day texting system', if a student has not arrived at school and reasons are not known parents are sent a text message asking them to confirm that they are aware their child is not in school and the reasons why. They can reply via message or are given a number to call. Alternatively, a member of staff may complete a home visit, potentially unannounced. If the cause of absence remains unknown the absence will be unauthorised and a letter will be sent to request this information again.
- The school will only authorise a leave of absence in exceptional circumstances as per statutory guidance from the Department of Education. Application forms are available from Student Services. Non-consensual leave of absence may result in the Local Authority or accredited persons issuing a minimum penalty notice of £60 per parent, per child.
- We will continue to monitor individual student's absence closely, alerting parents when attendance levels fall at an early stage.
- We will work with our students and parents to promote the benefits of regular school attendance using a range of initiatives.
- The school will be proactive in supporting the needs of students with medical conditions so that they may access their education.
- The school contracts Attendance Solutions to support attendance concerns. Please see the flowchart below for the procedure and processes.
- Excellent attendance is a prerequisite to attend the Year 11 Prom.
- You may be invited to a School Attendance Meeting to discuss concerns and plan for improvement. This will usually be attended by the Head of Year, Assistant Head of Year, Senior Staff or Attendance Solutions.
- In the event of prolonged absence or recurring illness you may be asked to provide medical evidence.
- The School and Attendance Solutions will progress cases of persistent unauthorised absence in accordance with the law. A fixed penalty notice of £60 (in the first instance) per parent, per child may be issued by Attendance Solutions or the Local Authority. Furthermore, extreme cases could result in prosecution.

If you have any concerns relating to the contents of this document or wish to discuss a school attendance issue, please do not hesitate to contact the school.

## Harwich and Dovercourt High School: Attendance Processes Flowchart 2021-2022

Guidance: The outlined process is intended as guidance only; each level of intervention should aim to actively and where possible, proactively remove any barriers to the effective school attendance of the student. All meetings are to be supportive, with a positive, forward-looking, problem solving approach. All meetings are required to be documented using the correct pages from the Student Attendance Plan (as stated). Only where all positive interventions have failed to affect change on student attendance will legal action be considered.

Letter 1: To be sent to those with less than 95% attendance.

AHoY - Weekly attendance review of all students (using tracking sheet to evaluate last actions):

- Overall attendance percentage (less than 95%).
- Broken weeks (at least 4 in previous 6 weeks).
- Continuous absence without adequate reason given.
- Any concern for concern, e.g. medical.

AHoY/ HoY - Begin Student Attendance Plan (SAP) (an early intervention with the student in the form of an interview during the school day.) Aimed to identify and resolve issues presented by the student. Highlight attendance expectations, the need for improvement and set realistic and achievable targets. Plans can be initiated with or by Attendance Solutions Essex (ASE).

Letter 2: Letter asking for medical evidence for all absences, enabling school to authorise absences. The school reserves the right to seek independent advice to verify evidence provided before authorising absence.

AHoY/ HoY/ ASE SAP Review: Review initial plan weekly and hold student where: EITHER: Attendance has not improved but continued intervention with the student is believed likely to affect improvement, OR: Recognition that targets have been met and attendance has returned to an acceptable level.

Letter 3: Letter inviting parents to SAM. Sent no more than 7 days prior to meeting date. SAM will be held in absence of the parents where no apology is received if the parent cannot attend or if no request is received to reschedule.

If all interventions fail to ensure adequate attendance and legal action against parents/ carers is sought, ASE (on behalf of HDHS) will refer case to ECC.

AHoY/ HoY/ ASE School Attendance Meeting (SAM): Where intervention has not improved attendance and parental support is necessary. ASE will be present. OR: SAMP (same paperwork as SAM but done via phone).

Letter 4: Home visit by written appointment sent with 7 days notice and/or warning letter. NB: we reserve the right to make home visits unannounced where there is reason to believe a child may be at risk or the matter is more urgent.

ASE: Home Visit Assessment and/ or legal warning letter issued by school or ASE. Where necessary, appropriate and safe to do so, ASE will conduct a home visit where a further assessment and legal advice is offered to parents/carers. This represents the third and final opportunity to resolve the barriers that are preventing regular attendance before a Penalty Notice is issued and the case is logged with ECC for possible legal action.

## **1. Legal framework**

1.1 This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation and statutory guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

- The Education Act 1996
- The Equality Act 2010
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (as amended)
- DfE (2020) 'School attendance'
- DfE (2016) 'Children Missing Education'
- DfE (2020) 'Keeping children safe in education'
- DfE (2020) 'Improving school attendance'

1.2 This policy operates in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Complaints Procedures Policy
- Children Missing Education Policy
- Behaviour for Learning Policy

## **2. Definitions**

2.1 The school defines "absence" as either:

- Arrival at school after the register has closed.
- Not attending school for any reason.

2.2 The school defines an "authorised absence" as:

- An absence for sickness for which the school has granted leave.
- Medical or dental appointments which unavoidably fall during school time for which the school has granted leave.
- Religious or cultural observances for which the school has granted leave.
- An absence due to a family emergency.

2.3 The school defines an "unauthorised absence" as:

- Parents keeping children away from school unnecessarily or without reason.
- Truancy before or during the school day.
- Absences which have not been properly explained.
- Arrival at school after the register has closed.
- Absence due to shopping, looking after other children or birthdays.
- Absence due to day trips and holidays in term time which have not been agreed.
- Leaving school for no reason during the day.

2.4 The school defines "persistent absenteeism (PA)" as:

- Missing 10 percent or more of schooling across the year for any reason.

### **3. Roles and responsibilities**

3.1 The governing body has overall responsibility for:

- Monitoring the implementation of the attendance policy and procedures of the school.
- Ensuring that this policy, as written, does not discriminate on any grounds, including, but not limited to, ethnicity/national origin, culture, religion, gender, disability or sexual orientation.
- Handling complaints regarding this policy as outlined in the school's Complaints Policy.
- Having regard to 'Keeping children safe in education' (2019) when making arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.
- Ensuring there is a Children Missing Education Policy in place and that this is regularly reviewed and updated.

3.2 The headteacher is responsible for:

- The day-to-day implementation and management of the attendance policy and procedures of the school and distributing these to parents.

3.3 Staff, including teachers, support staff and volunteers will be responsible for:

- Following the attendance policy, and for ensuring pupils do so too. They will also be responsible for ensuring the policy is implemented fairly and consistently.
- Modelling good attendance behaviour.
- Using their professional judgement and knowledge of individual pupils to inform decisions as to whether any welfare concerns should be escalated.

3.4 Designated members of staff will take the attendance register at the start of each school day and at the start of each afternoon session.

3.5 The school will ensure that every pupil has access to full-time education and will act as early as possible to address patterns of absence.

3.6 The school will inform the LA of any pupil being deleted from the admission and attendance registers if they:

- Are being educated from home.
- No longer live within a reasonable distance of the registered school.
- Have an authorised medical note.
- Are in custody for a period of more than four months and the proprietor does not reasonably believe they will be returning.
- Have been permanently excluded.

3.6.1 The school will ensure that absence procedures are understood by pupils, parents and carers.

3.7 Parents are responsible for:

- Providing accurate and up-to-date contact details.
- Providing the school with more than one emergency contact number.
- Updating the school if their details change.

3.7.1 Parents will be expected to take responsibility for the attendance of their children during term-time.

3.8 Parents will be expected to promote good attendance and ensure their children attend school every day.

3.9 Pupils are responsible for their own attendance at school and any agreed activities throughout the school year.

3.10 All pupils are responsible for their punctuality to lessons.

#### **4. Training of staff**

4.1 We recognise that early intervention can prevent bad behaviour. As such, members of staff will receive training in identifying potentially at-risk pupils as part of their inductions and annual refresher training.

4.2 Teachers and support staff will receive training on the Attendance, Child Protection and Behaviour for Learning Policy as part of their new starter induction.

4.3 Teachers and support staff will receive regular and ongoing training as part of their development.

#### **5. Pupil expectations**

5.1 Pupils will be expected to attend school every day and will sign an agreement at the beginning of each school year.

5.2 The school expects all pupils to attend lessons punctually.

5.3 Pupils will be expected to report any absence immediately to the relevant member of staff.

#### **6. Pupils at risk of persistent absence:**

6.1 The Lead Professional: Attendance will:

- Oversee the establishment of a range of evidence-based interventions to address barriers to attendance.
- In collaboration with the Deputy Headteacher: Behaviour, Welfare and Achievement, monitor the implementation and quality of escalation procedures and seek robust evidence of the escalation procedures that work before attendance becomes a problem by:

- Attending or leading attendance reviews in line with escalation procedures.
- Establishing robust escalation procedures which will be initiated before absence becomes a problem by:
- Ensuring year team and attendance support partners send letters to parents.
- Having a weekly attendance strategy review meeting with year teams and attendance support partners.
- Engaging with LA attendance teams.
- Using fixed penalty notices.
- Creating attendance clinics.

6.2 The local governing committee will engage in attendance panels to reinforce messages and outline relevance in terms of training and employment.

- Teaching staff will:
  - Welcome pupils back following any absence and provide catch-up support to build confidence and bridge gaps in learning.
  - Meet with pupils to discuss absence, patterns, barriers and problems.
  - Establish plans to remove barriers and provide additional support.
  - Lead daily or weekly check-ins to review progress and assess the impact of support.
  - Make regular contact with families to discuss progress.
  - Consider what support for re-engagement might be needed, including for vulnerable groups.

6.3 Pupils potentially at greater risk of harm who require a social worker will be supported with pastoral and academic support, alongside action by statutory services in response to any unauthorised absences.

6.4 The school attendance system will be used to give an accurate view of attendance, reasons for absence and patterns within groups such as:

- Children in need
- LAC
- Pupils who are eligible for FSM
- Pupils who speak English as a second language
- Pupils with SEND

## **7. Absence procedures**

7.1 Parents are required to contact the school as soon as possible on the first day of any absence. Parents are required to contact the school for every day of absence.

- 7.2 A text message will be sent to the parent of any child who has not reported their absence on the first day that they do not attend school.
- 7.3 The school will always follow up any absences in order to:
- Ascertain the reason for the absence.
  - Ensure that proper safeguarding action is being taken.
  - Identify whether the absence is authorised or not.
  - Identify the correct code to use to enter the data onto the school census system.
- 7.4 In the case of persistent absence, arrangements will be made for parents to speak to the Assistant Head of Year or Attendance Solutions.
- 7.5 The school will inform the LA, on a termly basis, of the details of pupils who fail to attend regularly, or who have missed 10 school days or more without permission.
- 7.6 If a pupil's attendance drops below 90 percent, the attendance officer will be informed, and a formal meeting will be arranged with the parents.
- 7.7 Where a pupil has not returned to school for 10 days after an authorised absence, or is absent from the school without authorisation for 20 consecutive school days, the school will remove the pupil from the admission register if the school and the LA have failed to establish the whereabouts of the child after making reasonable enquiries.

## **8. Contact information**

- 8.1 Parents must provide accurate and up-to-date contact details.
- 8.2 Parents are responsible for updating the school if the details change. Changes of address and primary contact numbers are a priority.
- 8.3 Parents must provide the school with more than one emergency contact number.

## **9. Attendance register**

- 9.1 The designated staff members will take the attendance register at the start of each school day and at the start of the afternoon session. This register will record whether pupils are:
- Present.
  - Absent.
  - Attending an approved educational visit.
  - Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.
- 9.2 The school will use the national attendance codes to enable the school to record and monitor attendance and absence in a consistent way. The following codes will be used:
- / = Present in the morning

- \ = Present in the afternoon
- L = Late arrival before the register has closed
- C = Authorised absence
- E = Excluded but no alternative provision made
- H = Authorised holiday
- I = Illness (including positive Covid19 results)
- M = Medical or dental appointments
- R = Religious observance
- B = Off-site educational activity
- G = Unauthorised holiday
- O = Unauthorised absence
- U = Arrived after registration closed
- N = Reason not yet provided
- X = Not required to be in school (including Covid19 symptoms and/or awaiting a PCR result)
- S = Study leave
- T = Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence
- W = Work experience
- V = Educational visit or trip
- P = Participating in a supervised sporting activity
- J = At an interview with prospective employers, or another educational establishment
- D – Dual registered – at another educational establishment
- Y = Exceptional circumstances
- Z – Pupil not on admission register

9.3 When the school has planned in advance to be fully or partially closed, the code ‘#’ will be used for the relevant pupils who are absent. This code will also be used to record year groups who are not due to attend because the school has set different term dates for different years, for example: induction days.

9.4 All amendments made to the attendance register will include the original entry, the amended entry, the reason for the amendment, the date of amendment, and the name and role of the person who made the amendment.

9.5 Every entry into the attendance register will be preserved for three years.

## 10. Attendance officer

10.1 If they are persistently absent, pupils will be referred to Attendance Solutions who will attempt to resolve the situation through a parent agreement.

10.2 If the situation cannot be resolved and attendance does not improve, Attendance Solutions have the power to advise the issue of sanctions such as prosecutions or penalty notices.

## **11. Lateness**

11.1 Punctuality is of the utmost importance, and lateness will not be tolerated.

11.2 The school day starts at 8:35am; pupils should be in their form time classroom at this time.

11.3 Registers are marked by 8:40am; pupils will receive a late mark if they are not in their classroom by the 8.35am bell.

11.4 The register closes at 8.55am; pupils will receive a mark of absence if they do not attend school before this time.

11.5 Attendance after the register closes will receive a late mark to show that they are on site, but may count as an absent mark depending on their time of arrival.

## **12. Truancy**

12.1 Truancy means any absence of part, or of all, of one or more days from school, during which the school has not been notified of the cause behind such absence.

12.2 All staff will be concerned about the regular attendance of pupils, and the importance of continuity in each child's learning.

12.3 All pupils are expected to be in their classes by 8:35am, 11:50am and 1:45pm, where the teacher will record the attendance electronically.

12.4 Any pupil with permission to leave the school during the day must have permission to sign out from Student Services and sign out and exit at Business Reception and sign back in on their return via Business Reception.

12.5 Immediate action will be taken when there are any concerns that a pupil might be truanting.

12.6 If truancy is suspected, the relevant Year Team will be notified and they will contact the child's parents, in order to assess the reasons behind the child not attending school.

12.7 The following procedures will be taken in the event of a truancy:

- In the first instance, a phone call will be made to the parents of the pupil, informing them of the truancy and stating the sanctions that have been issued.

- A penalty notice will be issued where there is overt truancy, inappropriate parentally-condoned absence, excessive holidays in term time and persistent late arrival at school.

### **13. Missing children**

13.1 Pupils are not permitted to leave the school premises during the school day unless they have permission from the relevant Year Team or a member of the Senior Leadership Team.

13.2 The following procedures will be taken in the event of a pupil going missing during the school day:

- The member of staff who has noticed the missing pupil will inform the relevant Year Team and the Attendance Team immediately.
- The office staff will also be informed as they will act as a point of contact for receiving information regarding the search.
- A member of staff will stay with the rest of the class, and all other available members of staff will conduct a thorough search of the school premises.
- The following areas will be systematically searched:
  - All classrooms
  - All toilets
  - Changing rooms
  - The library
  - Any outbuildings
  - The school grounds
- Available staff will begin a search of the area immediately outside of the school premises, and will take a school radio and/or mobile phone with them so they can be contacted.
- If the pupil has not been found after 10 minutes, then the parents of the pupil will be notified.
- The school will attempt to contact parents using the emergency contacts provided.
- If the parents have had no contact from the pupil, and the list has been exhausted, then the police will be contacted.
- The missing pupil's teacher will fill in a Safeguarding Form, describing all circumstances leading up to the pupil going missing.

13.3 If the missing pupil has an allocated social worker, is a LAC, or has SEND, then the appropriate personnel will be informed.

13.4 When the pupil has been located, a designated member of staff will care for and talk to the pupil to ensure they are safe and well.

- 13.5 The relevant Year Team or Senior Leadership Team member will take the appropriate action to ensure the pupil understands they must not leave the premises, and sanctions will be issued if deemed necessary.
- 13.6 Parents and any other agencies will be informed immediately when the pupil has been located.
- 13.7 The headteacher will carry out a full investigation, and will draw a conclusion as to how the incident occurred.
- 13.8 Appropriate disciplinary procedures are followed in accordance with the Behaviour for Learning Policy.
- 13.9 Prolonged periods of unauthorised absence without contact will be handled in accordance with clauses 6.7 - 6.9 of this policy.
- 13.10 A written report will be produced and policies and procedures will be reviewed in accordance with the outcome.

#### **14. Term-time leave**

- 14.1 Our aim is to prepare pupils for their future lives and careers. With this in mind, we require parents to observe the school holidays as prescribed.
- 14.2 Leave during term time will only be authorised in exceptional circumstances, for example bereavement or serious illness. Headteachers are unable to approve authorised leave of absence.
- 14.3 Any requests for leave during term time will be considered on an individual basis and the pupil's previous attendance record will be taken into account.
- 14.4 Requests for leave will **not** be granted in the following circumstances:
- During the first term (Autumn Term) when a pupil is settling into the school, unless exceptional circumstances apply, e.g. the death of a family member
  - Immediately before and during assessment periods
  - When a pupil's attendance record shows any unauthorised absence
  - Where a pupil's authorised absence record is already above 5 percent for any reason
- 14.5 If term time leave is not granted, taking a pupil out of school will be recorded as an unauthorised absence and will result in sanctions such as a penalty notice.

#### **15. Religious observances**

- 15.1 The school will take advice from local religious leaders of all faiths to establish the appropriate number of days required for religious festivals.
- 15.2 Parents must inform the school in at least 7 days advance if absences are required for days of religious observance.

15.3 The day(s) of absence must be exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong.

## **16. Appointments**

16.1 As far as possible, parents should attempt to book medical and dental appointments outside of school hours.

16.2 Where this is not possible, a note and appointment card should be sent to the school.

16.3 If the appointment requires the pupil to leave during the school day, the pupil must be signed out by a parent.

16.4 Pupils must attend school before and after the appointment wherever possible.

## **17. Young carers**

17.1 The school understands the difficulties young carers face, and will endeavour to identify young carers at the earliest opportunity from enrolment at the school, as well as throughout their time at the school.

17.2 The school takes a caring and flexible approach to the needs of young carers and each situation will be examined on a case-by-case basis, involving other agencies if appropriate.

## **18. Exceptional circumstances**

18.1 When absence is due to exceptional circumstances, the 'Y' code will be used on the attendance register.

18.2 Exceptional circumstances include when a pupil is unable to attend because:

- The school is fully or partially closed - this could be due to non-pupil days or adverse weather conditions.
- Transport provided by the school or LA is not available and the pupil's home is not within walking distance.
- There has been widespread disruption to travel services which has prevented the pupil from attending.
- The pupil is in custody and will be detained for less than four months.

18.3 The use of the 'Y' code is collected in the school census for statistical purposes.

## **19. Rewarding good attendance**

19.1 Good attendance and punctuality will be acknowledged and rewarded in the following ways:

- Celebration assembly certificates
- Phone calls and postcards home
- Achievement Points
- Year Group Attendance Cups and Prizes

19.2 School trips and events are a privilege. Where attendance drops below 90 percent, these privileges may be taken away.

19.3 Attendance at the Year 11 prom requires excellent attendance across all five years.

**20. Monitoring and review**

20.1 The school monitors attendance and punctuality throughout the year.

20.2 The school's attendance target is 95 percent each year.

20.3 This policy will be reviewed annually by the headteacher and the local governance committee.

20.4 Any changes made to the policy will be communicated to all members of staff.