

WHOLE SCHOOL POLICY FOR ATTENDANCE

INTRODUCTION

Regular and punctual attendance is an essential prerequisite to effective learning. When children are not in school they miss out on the educational opportunities which the school has to offer them. Children with poor attendance tend to achieve less in secondary school.

There are specific strategies to address the needs of those children who experience difficulty in attending regularly. A whole school approach to attendance therefore, focuses primarily on promoting attendance but will also address the issue of absenteeism, especially persistent absenteeism, when it occurs.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

The Governing Body of The Heathland School require parents, pupils and staff to uphold the following principles:

We expect that parents will:

- Encourage regular school attendance and be aware of their legal responsibilities.
- Ensure that the pupil in their care arrive at school punctually, prepared for the school day and have completed any homework they have been given.
- Contact the school office each day their son / daughter is absent, giving the reason for the absence.

We expect that pupils will:

- Arrive on time for their first lesson. If a pupil is late they must ensure that they go to reception to be marked in. If lateness is due to a medical appointment then the medical appointment card must be shown.
- Be expected to inform a teacher or parent if there is a reason which may lead to their absence from school.
- Be expected to bring written notification that explains any absence from school.

We expect that school staff will:

- Keep regular and accurate records of attendance and monitor every pupil's attendance
- Contact parents/carers on the first day of absence
- Make home visits to verify absence for safeguarding purposes
- Encourage good attendance
- Make enquiries to parents/carers of pupils who are attending irregularly, expressing the school's concerns and clarifying the school and the local authority's expectations regarding regular school attendance.
- Meet with the parents/carers of pupils who are attending irregularly, offering assistance and setting targets as and when necessary.
- Refer absence of to the attached Educational Welfare Officer should there be no improvement from the School's own actions.

AUTHORISED ABSENCE

Authorised absence is where the school has either given approval in advance for a pupil to be away, or has accepted an explanation offered afterwards as justification for absence.

Only exceptional circumstances warrant an authorised leave of absence. Schools should consider each application individually taking into account the specific facts and circumstances and relevant background context behind the request.

Parents may not authorise absence; by law only schools can do this. Should school staff have reason to doubt that the explanation offered about a particular absence is genuine, the absence should be treated as unauthorised.

Absence may generally be authorised for the following reasons:

Illness, a day of religious observance, Traveller child travelling, involvement in a public performance or examination off site, study leave*.

‘Schools can only authorise an absence when medical evidence is provided. Schools do not expect a medical certificate from your GP, however the legal burden lies with the parent to provide: a date stamped appointment card / appointment letter, a label from any prescribed medication for the absence to be authorised’.

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Medical, dentist, opticians and similar appointments should always be made outside of school hours. Where this is not possible, the pupil should only be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary for the appointment.

* Year 11 pupils granted study leave should be marked on the attendance register as authorised absence using code S. No other attendance code is suitable for the purpose of study leave. Year 11 pupils who are 16 years old are of compulsory school age (up to the last Friday in June) and must be marked on the attendance register accordingly.

UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE

Unauthorised absence is where no explanation has been given for the pupil’s absence or where the explanation offered is considered by the school to be unacceptable. Absence should not be authorised in the following circumstances:

- No explanation offered by the parent/carer or the explanation offered is unsatisfactory (eg shopping, minding the house, etc).
- Family holidays (which are taken without the school’s prior consent or knowledge and/or are in excess of any time agreed by the school).
- ‘Special’ occasions (when the school does not agree that leave should be given).

PERSISTENT ABSENCE

Persistent absence (or PA) is absence of 9% or more. An individual pupil is deemed to be persistent absentee, therefore if his/her attendance is less than 91% (regardless of whether or not the absences have been authorised).

REGISTERS

The school is required by law to call attendance registers twice daily - once at the start of the morning session and at some stage during the afternoon session. Registers – whether kept in paper form or electronically - are legal documents. Should the parents of a persistent non-attender be prosecuted by the Local Authority under Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act, then the information which the register contains will be the main source of evidence presented to the court.

PROMOTING GOOD SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

The Heathland School has a positive ethos in maintaining and promoting good attendance. Positive acknowledgement and praise for pupils who improve their attendance as well as for those that maintain excellent attendance exists and is regularly reviewed.

A system of rewards and/or incentives shows the whole school community how highly attendance is valued and demonstrates to pupils and their families that the school values and appreciates their efforts. Promoting good school attendance is the responsibility of the whole staff.

Excellent/improved attendance is acknowledged by:

- Letters to parents,
- certificates,
- medals for 100% attendance for the year,
- presentations at assemblies.

RETURN FROM ABSENCE

Pupils should be proactive to see their subject teachers to catch up missed work on the first day of return. Heads of Year lead lunch 'study support' sessions for pupils to complete missed work in the Year Base.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Any request for a leave of absence should be given in writing to the Deputy Head [Pupil Support]. It should state clearly the name of the pupil, the reason for request and how long the leave is for. It should also be provided in plenty of time for a response to be formulated, where possible. All requests for leave of absence are responded to in writing.

The Heathland School follows the London Borough of Hounslow's policy that all leave of Absence will be recorded as unauthorised, except in exceptional circumstances.

The parent/carer of a child of compulsory school age is required by law to ensure that the child regularly attends the school at which he/she is registered. Should a parent fail to ensure that his/her child attends that school regularly then the parent is guilty of an offence. Parents who are convicted of this offence may be fined up to £2,500 and/or sentenced to up to three months in prison. Alternatively parents may be subject to a fixed penalty notice. When a child of compulsory school age is absent from school, the attendance register must indicate whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised. Should the absence be authorised by the school the parent cannot be convicted.

THE EDUCATION WELFARE OFFICER (EWO)

The Education Welfare Officer has a specific role to play in supporting a school to maintain high levels of attendance. His/her essential purposes are to support parents to meet their responsibilities for ensuring that their children regularly attend the school at which they are registered and to support schools to develop effective systems for managing attendance.

REVIEW AND EVALUATION

The Deputy Head [Pupil Support] is responsible for the monitoring of this Policy which will be evaluated at a Heads of Year Meeting. The Governors' Pupils' Committee will review the Policy each year

Reviewed July 2021

Next review June 2022