

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.

Parents have a legal duty to ensure efficient and full-time attendance at school of registered pupils of statutory school age (Education Act 1996). This is a legal requirement. The School Attendance Service aims to work with schools and families to promote good attendance and avoid legal action. However, in some cases, parents are prosecuted (taken to court) or have to pay a Fixed Penalty (fine).

Regular attendance is classified as attendance to school on each day the school is open for the students.

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:

- 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.
- Notify the school of absence via email, ideally by 8.30AM using the designated absence email of absence@heathland.hounslow.sch.uk. Sixth form absence is to be reported using the designated email of Sixthformabsence@heathland.hounslow.sch.uk.
- Contact the school office each day their son/daughter is absent, giving the reason for the absence. Please give as much detail as possible and where appropriate please forward any relevant medical verification, e.g Appt card/Medical letter/sight of prescription or medication.
- Notify the school if the absence extends past 3 days.

Please note from Sept 2024 any absence exceeding 15 consecutive days will be referred to the Local Authority (DFE guidelines August 2024)*

We expect that pupils:

- 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.
- Inform a teacher or parent if there is a reason which may lead to their absence from school.

We expect school staff to:

- 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 School Attendance Support Officer should there be no improvement from the School's own actions. A SASS referral may lead to a fine and/or prosecution.

REGISTRATION

The School maintains an attendance register and uses this to record each student's attendance at the start of the school day and again in the afternoon.

Morning registration is at 8.40am. You need to aim for your child to be in school by 8.30am at the latest. Morning registers close at 9.05am.

The register is marked using the national attendance and absence codes, which can be found in Appendix 1.

Arrival after the close of registration will be marked as an unauthorised absence using code 'U', in line with the DfE guidance, unless there is an acceptable mitigating reason. The 'U' code is classified as an unauthorised absence.

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-attendeer 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.

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 will 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, home office appointment, compulsory passport/visa appointments, 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 (this list is not exhaustive):

- No explanation offered by the parent/carer or the explanation offered is unsatisfactory (eg shopping, minding the house, accompanying parents to appointments 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).

Please be aware that unauthorised absence could result in a Fixed Penalty Notice or other legal action.

REPORTING ABSENCE

Where a pupil is to be absent from school without prior permission, the parent/carer should inform the school by emailing absence@heathland.hounslow.sch.uk on the first day of absence.

Sixth Form absence should be reported using the designated Sixthformabsence@heathland.hounslow.sch.uk email. Please do inform us of the reason of absence and when your child is expected to return to school.

Only contact the school on 020 8572 4411 to speak to the Attendance team in situations where you are unable to email in.

In cases of prolonged absence due to illness, parents/carers may be asked to provide the school with medical evidence, explaining the absence. This could include a medical note from a professional practitioner. If this evidence is not provided, the absence may be recorded as unauthorised.

PROLONGED ABSENCE

In the event of an unavoidable prolonged absence, the parent/carer must contact the school again on the third day of absence to provide an update on the absence and to provide an expected return date.

A medical letter or certificate will be necessary for absences lasting longer than five days. This will need to be provided on the sixth day of absence.

APPOINTMENTS

Medical, dental and other essential appointments for a student should take place outside of school hours where possible.

On occasions where an appointment must take place during school time, the student should attend school for as much of the day as possible.

PERSISTENT ABSENCE AND SEVERE ABSENCE

Once a child's attendance falls below 90%, he/she is automatically defined as a Persistent Absentee (PA) by the DfE. This is irrespective of the reason/s for absence. Once a child's attendance falls below 50%, they are termed Severely Absent.

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.

RETURN FROM ABSENCE

Pupils should be proactive to see their subject teachers to catch up missed work on the first day of return.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Amendments to the 2006 School Attendance Regulations make it clear that a Headteacher may not grant any leave of absence during term time for holidays. Leave of absence is only granted in exceptional circumstances at the discretion of the Headteacher and in accordance with the school policy as agreed by the governing body. There is no entitlement to time off during term time.

If term time leave is taken without permission from the school, the absence will be unauthorised and you may be liable for a Fixed Penalty Notice. Where a child's whereabouts cannot be established, he/she may be regarded as a 'Child Missing Education'. This could lead to the child's place at school being compromised.

Any request for a leave of absence (Term Time Leave) should be completed using the designated Term Time Leave Request Form. The Term Time Leave Request Form should clearly state the name of the pupil, the reason for request and how long the leave is being requested for. The request should also be completed as early as possible to allow the school to respond appropriately. 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 SCHOOL ATTENDANCE SUPPORT SERVICE (SASS)

The School Attendance Support Officer (SASO) 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. In the first instance following a referral from the school parents will be invited to attend a Local Authority Attendance Meeting (LAAM), phone meeting. A target will then be set and reviewed after 4 school weeks. Persistent poor attendance following a target may lead to a fine being issued and or prosecution.

LEAVERS

If you are changing schools or leaving the area, please complete a Leavers form (available from the school website). It is a legal requirement for schools and the local authority to track pupils from school to school, even if plans are made to move abroad.

If you are changing schools or leaving the areas we would request you to:

- Give the school comprehensive information about your plans.
- If applicable, provide your new address and telephone number/s.
- If applicable, provide details of who your child will be living with.
- Information of your child's new school and the start date when known.

The information above should be submitted in writing.

If a child leaves and we do not have information about where they have gone or where they are due to be educated, then he/she is considered to be a 'Child Missing Education'. This means that the local authority has a legal duty to carry out investigations to try to locate your child. By giving us the relevant and detailed information, these requirements for these investigations may be avoided.

WITHDRAWALS

Parents who reside locally can only withdraw their children from school if they have a confirmed start date at another school or are undertaking a process of educating the child at home (Elective Home Education). If parents decide to pursue Elective Home Education, this must be authorised by the London Borough of Hounslow following the relevant protocols. Students will remain registered at the school until such conditions are satisfied.

REVIEW AND EVALUATION

The Deputy Head [Pupil Support] is responsible for the monitoring of this Policy. The Governors' Pupils' Committee will review the Policy each year.

Reviewed October 2025

Next review July 2026

Appendix 1

Present codes

/ \ present during registration

B any other approved educational activity

J at an interview with prospective employers or another educational establishment

K attending provision arranged by the local authority

L arrived after the register has started but before it has closed

P Sporting activity with prior agreement from school

V educational visit or trip

W work experience

Authorised absences

C exceptional circumstances

C1 participating in a regulated performance/undertaking regulated employment abroad

C2 absent due to part-time timetable

D dual registered

E suspended or permanently excluded

I illness (not medical or dental appointments)

J1 attending a job/school/college interview

M medical or dental appointment

Q unable to attend because of a lack of access arrangements

R religious observance

S studying for a public examination

T parent travelling for occupational purposes

X non-compulsory school age pupil not required to attend school

Y1 unable to attend due to transport provided not being available

Y2 unable to attend due to widespread transport disruption

Y3 unable to attend due to part of the school premises being closed

Y4 unable to attend due to whole school closure

Y5 unable to attend as pupil is in criminal justice detention

Y6 unable to attend in accordance with public health guidance or law

Y7 unable to attend due to other avoidable cause (must affect the pupil NOT the parent)

Unauthorised absence

G holiday (not agreed)

N reason for absence not yet established (must be corrected within 5 days)

O absent in other or unknown circumstances

U arrived in school after registration closed

Z prospective pupil not yet on admission register