



# Attendance Policy

Review Date	Reviewer	Adopted	Implementation
	J Gorlach	September 2020	September 2020
September 2022			



Issue No.	Date	Description
1	Sept 2020	New Policy

## Introduction

Issue No:	1	Quality Document Type:	Policy
Date:	04/09/2019	Ref:	TRUST/SAFEGUARDING/ATTENDANCE
		Originator of this document is:	J Barker

As part of the North East Learning Trust, Hermitage Academy seeks to ensure that all students receive an education which maximises opportunities and enables them to realise their true potential. The school will strive to provide a welcoming, caring environment, whereby each member of the school community feels wanted and secure.

We believe that all students benefit from the education we provide, and therefore from regular attendance. The aim of our attendance policy is to provide a consistent practice that encourages and facilitates the regular attendance of all students.

All staff will work with students and their families to support parents/carers in helping them to meet their legal duty; to ensure that their child/children attends school regularly and on time. A whole school attendance target of 97% has been set for the academic year 2020/2021 and various measures will be put in place to help work towards this.

The school has established an effective system of incentives and rewards which acknowledges the efforts of students to improve their attendance and timekeeping and will challenge the behaviour of those students and parents/carers who give low priority to attendance and punctuality.

This policy has been written in line with the DFE 'School attendance Departmental advice for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities' (November 2016) and 'School attendance parental responsibility measures' (January 2015).

## **Aims**

- To maintain high standards of attendance of students registered at school.
- To make attendance and punctuality a priority for all those associated with both the Trust and school including students, parents/carers, staff, Governors, and Trustees.
- To provide support, advice and guidance to parents/carers and students.
- To develop a systematic approach to gathering and analysing attendance related data.
- To further develop positive and consistent communication between home and school.
- To promote effective partnerships with the Local Authority's (LA) Attendance Team and with other services and agencies.
- To recognise the needs of the individual student when planning reintegration following significant periods of absence.
- To reduce the number of students who have more than 4% overall absence.
- To reduce the number of persistent absentees, that is those whose attendance falls below 90%.

## **Attendance and Attainment**

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We recognise that the relationship between attendance and achievement of our students is inextricably linked.

Regular school attendance is crucial to maximise student progress and enjoyment of learning, and for this reason the school is dedicated to ensuring its attendance policy is adhered to.

### **Promoting Regular Attendance**

To ensure that parents/carers are aware of school attendance procedures and their parental responsibility for their child's attendance and punctuality the school will:

- Give information on attendance and punctuality on the school's website and the Parental Guides 'Fixed Penalty Notices' and 'Holidays in School Time'.
- Involve parents/carers from the earliest stage of poor attendance.
- Ensure the Attendance Officer contacts parents on the first day of absence if contact has not been made by parents/carers.

To ensure that students are aware of the importance of good attendance and punctuality the school will:

- Establish and maintain a high profile for attendance and punctuality.
- Relate attendance issues directly to the school's values, ethos, and curriculum.
- Reward good attendance.

### **The Law**

In law, it is the responsibility of parents/carers to ensure that their child attends school regularly. You will be breaking the law if your child does not attend school without good reason.

The school will offer help and support if there is a problem with attendance. If attendance does not get better or you do not accept help and support offered, the LA may issue you with a warning notice, Penalty Notice or ask you to attend an interview to ask you questions about whether you have broken the law.

If you go to court and are found guilty of an offence, you could be fined up to £1,000 for a less serious offence or up to £2,500 if the law breaking is more serious. In very serious cases, the court may involve the probation service or consider up to 3 months in prison.

### **Types of Absence**

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Every half-day absence from the school must be classified as either authorised or unauthorised by the Executive Headteacher/Head of School or staff acting on behalf of the Executive Headteacher/Head of School. It is not the responsibility of parents/carers to classify an absence.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason such as illness or medical appointments which unavoidably fall in school time.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no 'leave' has been given. This type of absence can lead to the Local Authority (LA) using sanctions and/or legal proceedings. Absence codes are entered in line with statutory guidance.

### **Absence Procedures**

If a child is ill or is absent for any reason, parents/carers should on the first day of and further absence phone the Attendance Officer giving a reason for the child's absence. Should a parent/carer not contact the school, the Attendance Officer will contact parents/carers to confirm that the child is not in school and to confirm the reason for the absence.

Doctor and dentist appointments should be made outside of school time. If this is not possible, your child should miss the minimum amount of school time necessary. If they are well enough to come back to school following the appointment they need to. Parents must provide an explanatory note for all absences.

If a child's absence continues then parents/carers are requested to notify the school daily. If a phone call is not received, then the Attendance Officer will contact parents/carers to verify the absence.

If the school receives no reason for any absence, then an unauthorised absence will be recorded. Continued absenteeism and unauthorised absences could result in further action such as referral to the Attendance Improvement Team to consider enforcement action and possibly a fixed penalty notice (this includes unauthorised absences accrued through leave of absence (holiday) taken during term time).

### **Attendance Below 97%**

When a student's attendance falls below 97% the school will:

- Enter the student's name on the SIMS database and monitor their attendance on a weekly basis.
- The school attendance team will consider a range of strategies to address the poor attendance of students in this category, including; school attendance meetings with both parents/carers and the student, to agree strategies to improve attendance. Attendance Officer visits, telephone calls and letters are

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other strategies that will be used. When necessary referrals will be made to the LA Attendance Improvement Team. The school may also request that a parent/carer provides the school with supporting medical evidence to verify prolonged or frequent absences and will refuse to authorise absences unless this proof is provided.

- Attendance figures will be reported to parents/carers in annual reports.

If parents/carers and/or students need help with attendance, you can contact the Attendance Officer. You may be asked to attend a meeting in school to talk about the problems and to put a plan in place. Sometimes, the school may need to involve other services to help; referrals will be made to outside agencies if the school feels such action is warranted.

The school will always try to communicate with you regarding your child's attendance if it declines. This communication may involve explaining that attendance is a cause for concerns by letter, making telephone calls to you, and inviting you to attend a meeting in school depending on the circumstances. The school will work with you to discuss ways that we can offer support in finding a way to improve the situation.

### **Enforcement Action**

If, following the school's attempts to intervene there is no significant improvement and no good reasons for absences (i.e. absences are not supported by relevant evidence), or parents/carers have not co-operated with attempts to improve the situation the school are required to consider referring the matter to the LA for enforcement action.

The High Court has confirmed that the Executive Headteacher/Head of School authorises absences. If your child misses school a lot because of illness, or if school do not know of any serious health issue that would mean your child could miss school a lot, the school may ask you to provide medical evidence to authorise absences.

We are committed to supporting your child effectively, to ensure that they get the very best education possible and therefore have the best life chances. All challenges made concerning persistent absences, will be handled sensitively and in confidence.

### **Rewarding Good Attendance**

The school will look for every opportunity to reward and recognise good attendance.

### **Punctuality**

All students arriving late for both registration and lessons, will be asked the reason for their lateness and this will be recorded on the school's attendance database (SIMs).

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## **Failure to Attend Registration/Lateness to School**

Where a student is repeatedly late for registration, or fails to attend registration on a regular basis, action will be taken by the attendance team. Parents/carers will be contacted, and appropriate sanctions applied.

## **Truancy from lessons and/or school**

Students who truant from lessons will receive a detention. Parents/carers will be informed in all cases.

## **Leave of Absence in Term Time**

The law states that parents/carers do not have the right to take their child out of school for holidays during term time other than in exceptional circumstances.

Executive Headteacher/Head of School are no longer able to grant leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. The school will consider each request individually; taking into account circumstances, such as; the nature of the event for which leave is sought, the student's prior attendance and any important events taking place in school at that time e.g. termly tests.

An application for leave of absence should be made well in advance and submitted to the school office. The appropriate form may be obtained from the Attendance officer. Where a leave of absence is granted, the Executive Headteacher/Head of School will determine the number of days a pupil may be away from school. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the Executive Headteacher/Head of School's discretion. As stated in the most recent DFE guidance on attendance, if an application for leave of absence is not made prior to the time of the required absence, then the absence must be recorded as unauthorised, regardless of circumstances.

**Please note that absence will not be authorised under any circumstances during any period of public examinations or internal assessments.**

## **Student Missing from Education**

If you move from the area and your whereabouts are unknown, the school can legally remove your child from the roll after 20 school days of unauthorised absence. It is vital that if you keep school informed of any change of details and regularly update them if details change. Your child may be at risk of losing their school place if your whereabouts are not known.

It is also important that emergency contact information is kept up to date and that if you are leaving the area, you provide details of where and how you can be contacted. If you do not do this and the school is unable to trace your child, this would be treated as a safeguarding matter.

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