



# Attendance Policy

Review Date	Reviewer	Approved by	Date approved	Implementation
	Head of School	Executive Head	August 2023	September 2023
September 2025				

**Revision History**

<b>Issue No.</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Description</b>
1	Sept 2023	New Policy

## Introduction

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.

Mr R Hutchinson, Deputy Headteacher has overall responsibility for championing and improving attendance and can be contacted via telephone on 0191 3887161 or email at [enquiries@hermitageacademy.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@hermitageacademy.co.uk). Mr Hutchinson will ensure the accurate completion of registers at the start of each morning and afternoon session, and at the beginning of each teaching class. Attendance figures will be reported to parents in annual reports. 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 this academic year and various measures will be put in place to help work towards this.

The Academy has incentives and rewards to acknowledge those students with outstanding and improved attendance and will support those students and parents/carers who are finding school attendance and punctuality difficult.

To identify patterns of absence the Academy will analyse weekly attendance data and inform parents/carers where attendance falls below the Academy target. If there are further absences the Academy will work with students and parents/carers to identify and remove barriers to attending school.

## Aims

- To maintain high standards of attendance of students registered at the Academy.
- To make attendance and punctuality a priority for all those associated with the Trust and the Academy including students, parents/carers, staff, Governors, and Trustees.
- To develop a framework which defines agreed roles and responsibilities and promotes consistency in carrying out designated tasks.
- 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 the Academy.

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- To promote effective partnerships with the Local Authority’s (LA) Attendance Team and local partners working together to re-engage students.
- To recognise the needs of the individual student when planning reintegration following periods of absence.
- To target support for persistent absence (those whose attendance falls below 90% 19 days of absence) and severe absence (those whose absence falls below 50% 95 days of absence) to remove any barriers to attendance by working with students, parent/carers and across a range of local partners.
- To ensure that all stakeholders understand the importance and also value outstanding attendance.
- To recognise and reward outstanding attendance.

### **Links with Other Policies**

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following Trust and Academy policies:

- Behaviour Management
- Children Missing in Education
- Exclusion Policy
- Home Visit Policy
- Safeguarding Policy
- Supporting Pupils/Students with Medical Conditions

### **Attendance and Attainment**

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

Regular attendance at the Academy is crucial to maximise pupil progress and enjoyment of learning, and for this reason the Academy is dedicated to ensuring the attendance policy is adhered to.

### **Types of Absence**

Every half-day (1 session) absence from the Academy must be classified as either authorised or unauthorised. It is not the responsibility of parents to classify an absence, only the Headteacher is able to authorise an absence from school.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from the Academy for a good reason such as illness or medical appointments which unavoidably fall in school time. Other exceptional circumstances that warrant an authorised leave of absence will be considered on an individual basis considering the specific facts and circumstances.

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Unauthorised absence are mornings or afternoons away from the Academy for reasons which the Academy does not consider reasonable and for which no 'leave' has been given. This type of absence can lead to the 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 absence and subsequent days, phone the school and speak with the Attendance Officer, giving a reason for the child's absence. Should a parent/carer not contact the Academy, the appropriate Year Manager or Attendance Officer will contact parents/carers to confirm that the child is not in the Academy and to obtain 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 the Academy following the appointment, they should return.

If a child's absence continues, then parents/carers are requested to notify the Academy daily. If a phone call is not received, then the Attendance Officer or Year Manager will contact parents/carers to verify the absence. It is the responsibility of parents/carers to provide school with up-to-date contact details. If the Academy receives no reason for any absence, or the reason provided is not deemed to be a valid reason for absence, then an unauthorised absence will be recorded. If absence continues without satisfactory explanation, a safeguarding home visit will be made. See Children Missing in Education and Safeguarding Policy

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

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

Attendance data is used to identify patterns of poor attendance as soon as possible so all parties can work together to resolve them before they become entrenched. Where absence persists and voluntary support is not working or not being engaged with, the Attendance Officer will explain the consequences. Depending on the circumstances this may include formalising support through a parenting contract established at an Attendance Planning Meeting

### **Academy Procedures**

#### **Attendance Below 97%**

All students' attendance is monitored on a weekly basis.

When a student's attendance falls below 97% the Academy will ensure that:

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- Year Manager and Attendance Officer will act as key workers for students where attendance is a cause for concern.
- Year Manager and Attendance Officer will meet weekly to discuss students whose attendance falls below 97% and report this to Mr Hutchinson.
- Mr Hutchinson, Deputy Headteacher, and Attendance Officer will consider a range of strategies to address the poor attendance of students in this category, including; letters to parents/carers to make them aware of their child's attendance and that the Academy have concerns; talk to the student to **understand** and overcome any barriers the student may have, hold an Attendance Support Meeting and an Attendance Planning Meeting with parents/carers, student, the Attendance Officer, other key support staff and local partners to establish what support is required and how we can work together to resolve any issues and agree strategies to improve attendance. Home visits, and telephone calls are also strategies that will be used.
- A student return to school meeting with their Year Manager may also be used to support students returning to school following a period of absence.

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

The Academy 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 concern by letter, making telephone calls to you, and inviting you to attend a meeting in the Academy depending on the circumstances. The Academy will work with you to discuss ways that we can offer support in finding a way to improve the situation.

**Persistently and severely absent students**

Persistent Absence (those whose attendance falls below 90%, 19 days absence) and Severe Absence (those whose absence falls below 50%, 95 days absence).

The Academy will adopt a whole school approach to help and support students and parent/carers to remove barriers. This will include support from the Attendance Officer, and when needed the School Counsellor. The Academy will help students and parents/carers to access the support they need to overcome the barriers outside of school. This might include a referral to local support services where absence is a symptom of wider issues. Students will become part of a Support Monitoring Group depending on the needs of the student this will be led by; the student's Year Manager, Attendance Officer, and/or SENDCO. The Academy may also request that a parent/carer provides the Academy with supporting medical evidence to verify prolonged or frequent absences and will refuse to authorise absences unless this proof is provided.

Where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or not being engaged with, a referral will be made to the LA Attendance Improvement Team to consider enforcement action through statutory intervention or prosecution to protect the student's right to an education.

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## The Law

The Education Act 1996 places a duty on parents to ensure that their child of compulsory school age receives a suitable education either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

In April 2017, the Supreme Court held that attending school 'regularly' means attending in accordance with the rules prescribed by the school and not 'sufficiently frequent attendance'. This means that a child must attend school on every day that the school requires him or her to do so and failure to do this may lead to the committing of an offence.

Legal action to enforce school attendance includes a Parenting Order, an Education Supervision Order, a School Attendance Order or a fine.

In accordance with Section 444 of The Education Act 1996. If a child is absent without authorisation, then the parent is guilty of an offence. This is a strict liability offence i.e., all that needs to be shown is a lack of regular attendance. Sanctions can include a fine of up to £1000. If the child is absent without authorisation and the parent knew about the child's absence and failed to act, then the parent is guilty of an aggravated offence. Sanctions can include a fine of up to £2500 and a prison sentence of up to three months.

## Leave of Absence in Term Time

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

Headteachers are no longer able to grant leave of absence during term time **unless there are exceptional circumstances**. The Academy will consider each request of absence individually; considering the circumstances, such as the nature of the event for which leave is sought and any key events taking place in the Academy at that time e.g., termly tests.

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

An application for leave of absence must be submitted at least two weeks in advance via a form which is available from the Academy website or in person from the Academy reception. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the Headteacher's discretion (or in the absence of the Headteacher, the Assistant Headteacher (Pastoral) is the person authorised in that behalf by the proprietor of the school). Where a leave of absence is granted, the Headteacher will determine the number of days a pupil can be away from the Academy. 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 will be recorded as unauthorised regardless of circumstances.

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If the academy refuses a request for term-time leave and the child is still taken out of school, this will be recorded as unauthorised absence and a Penalty Notice may be issued by the Local Authority. The Local Authority criteria for issuing a Penalty Notice is 7 days or more of unauthorised absence in a minimum 12 rolling school week period. A separate notice will be issued to each parent for each child. A Penalty Notice is a fine of £60 if paid between 1 – 21 days after issue, increasing to £120 if paid between 22 – 28 days.

In exceptional circumstances, however, the Academy may be prepared to authorise a holiday during term-time. Proof of exceptional circumstances must be provided at the time of submitting the Leave of Absence Request form. If a leave of absence is taken during term-time without the Academy's permission, the student's absence will be recorded as unauthorised. In the event of a student not returning to the academy on the agreed date, any absences after this date will be recorded as unauthorised.

### **Rewarding Good Attendance**

The Academy will look for every opportunity to reward high attendance. Each time a student has attended for a full week, they will receive Praise Points and their name is placed into the half termly prize draw, which is drawn in assemblies. In addition, there will be a grand draw at the end of the academic year for those students who have achieved 100% attendance. High attendance is a pre-requisite for attendance at the Year 11 prom.

### **The School Day**

Monday:

8:25am - 9:15am – PSHE – morning registration

9:15-10:10 - Period 1

10:10-11:05 - Period 2

11:05-11:25 - Break

11:25-12:20 - Period 3

12:20-1:15 - Period 4 - Afternoon Registration

1:15-2:05 - Lunch

2:05-3pm - Period 5

Tuesday-Friday

8:25-8:50 – morning registration

8:50-9:50 - Period 1

9:50-10:50 - Period 2

10:50-11:10 - Break

11:10-12:10 - Period 3

12:10-1:10 -Period 4 – Afternoon Registration

1:10-2pm - Lunch

2pm-3pm - Period 5

### **Punctuality**

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All students arriving late will be asked the reason for their lateness and this will be recorded on the Academy's attendance data base (SIMs).

- Registration takes place at the beginning of morning and afternoon sessions. Morning registration begins at 8.25am. Students arriving after 8.25am will be marked **L** (late before register closed). Morning registers will be closed at 9am.
- All students who arrive after 9am will be marked using the **U** code, unless a satisfactory reason is given. If no explanation is provided, the morning session will be recorded as an unauthorised absence.
- Afternoon registration takes place at 12:30pm during period four. Students arriving after 12.30pm will be marked **L** (late before register closed). PM registers close at 1pm.
- Students arriving after the registers are closed will be marked with a **U** code unless a satisfactory reason is given. If no explanation is provided the afternoon session will be recorded as an unauthorised absence.
- The Academy operates a three-strike system for lateness. Any lateness after the three occasions will result in students being issued with a detention. Persistent lateness will result in this being increased to one-hour detentions.
- The Attendance Officer will monitor student's punctuality and letters will be sent to parents/carers to inform them of their child's level of lateness.

### **Failure to Attend Registration/Lateness at the Academy**

Where a student is repeatedly late or fails to attend registration, the Year Manager will employ a range of sanctions, which may include detentions, parental contact, internal exclusions, in the worst cases, a fixed term exclusion.

A letter will be sent home from the Academy to parents to say their child's punctuality is causing some concern. An appointment with the Attendance Manager will be offered to discuss ways that the Academy can offer support in finding a way to improve this. Incentives to improve punctuality may also be offered to pupils e.g., through the Academy's rewards system.

### **Lateness to Lessons**

A class register is taken at the beginning of each lesson. Students arriving late will be marked late. Those students who are repeatedly late to lessons will be identified by the Year Manager using the late list printout. Once this is done, sanctions will be used to address the problem. These sanctions will include parental contact, detentions and, in the worst cases, internal exclusions.

### **Lateness to Assembly**

- On assembly days students are expected to be at their form room for 8:25am so the register can be taken, and they can be escorted to the main hall for 8.30am.

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- After a student has been late three times for assembly without good reason, the student will follow the sanctions in relation to lateness.
- If the student is late again, he/she will be given an after-school detention.
- After three detentions the student will receive a one-day internal exclusion each time he/she misses an assembly owing to lateness.

### **Truancy from Lessons and/or the Academy**

The first time a student is identified as truanting from the Academy and/or lessons, the parent/carer of the student will be contacted by letter or telephone, and the student will be given a sanction. The student’s name will be placed on the truancy register and regular spot checks will be carried out to make sure the student is in lessons.

The second time a student is found truanting, he/she will be given a one-day internal exclusion until 4p.m and parents/carers will again be informed. After coming out of the Behaviour unit, the student will be placed on report. Regular spot checks will take place to make sure the student is in lessons.

The third time a student is found to be truanting, the student will be given a two-day internal exclusion. After coming out of the Behaviour unit, the student will be placed on report for a period of time.

### **Leaving the Classroom without Permission**

Any student leaving a classroom without permission will be given a one hour after school detention.

### **Roles and Responsibilities**

#### **Local Academy Council:**

As part of our approach to maintaining high attendance, the Local Academy Council will:

- Ensure that the importance of attendance is made clear by promoting the relevant Trust and Academy policies and guidance directed to parents/carers and staff.
- Annually review the Academy’s attendance policy and ensure that all provisions are in place to allow staff, parents/carers, and students to implement the policy effectively.
- At their termly meetings they will review and discuss attendance issues that have arisen to be fully aware and supportive of expected attendance targets for the year.
- Ensure that the Academy is implementing effective means of recording attendance and organising that data, including for students who are educated off site.

#### **Senior Management Team:**

- Be active in their approach to promoting good attendance with students and their

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parents/carers.

- Ensure the Academy's teaching and learning experiences encourage regular attendance and that students are taught the value of high attendance for their own progression and achievement.
- Coordinate with the Local Academy Council to monitor the implementation of the policy and its effectiveness, with annual review of full policy.
- Ensure that all staff are up to date with the Academy's Attendance Policy and that staff are fully trained to recognise and deal with attendance issues.
- Ensure government legislation on attendance is complied with and that the leadership team are up to date with any legislation changes and how to implement them.
- Nominate or appoint a senior leader to take responsibility for overseeing and monitoring attendance provision and that this person has sufficient time and resources to give to the job.
- Report to the Local Academy Council each term on attendance records, data, and provision.
- Ensure that systems to record and report attendance data are in place and working effectively.

#### **Staff:**

- Be active in their approach to promoting good attendance with students and their parents.
- Ensure the Academy's teaching and learning experiences encourage regular attendance and that students are taught the value of high attendance for their own progression and achievement.
- Ensure the senior manager responsible for overseeing attendance and any other relevant personnel are kept fully informed of and up to date with any concerns relating to students that may impact on their attendance.
- Ensure compliance with regulation and guidance on attendance.
- Work professionally with parents, carers, students, and relevant agencies to secure improvements in attendance via appropriate support or enforcement measures.
- Ensure that the correct systems are followed for recording attendance and that registers are taken each lesson and session.

#### **Year Manager:**

- Assist in the implementation of the Academy's Attendance Policy.
- Liaise with the Attendance Manager and the Assistant Headteacher (Pastoral) on matters relating to attendance.
- Assist in the organising of rewards for good attendance.

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- Monitor levels of unauthorised absence in a designated year group and, if necessary, to contact parents/carers regarding unexplained absences.
- Should a parent/carer not contact the Academy, the appropriate Year Manager will contact parents/carers to confirm that the child is not in the Academy and to obtain the reason for the absence.

#### **Attendance Manager:**

- Assist in the implementation of the Academy's Attendance Policy.
- Distribute attendance data to tutor groups.
- Act as a liaison officer between home, the Academy and the LA on matters related to Academy attendance.
- Offer advice, assistance and support to parents/carers and students on attendance issues.
- Assess reasons for non-attendance and initiate and support appropriate action to improve it.
- Initiate and refer cases for legal action as appropriate to the LA Education Welfare Service.
- Provide information and reports which may be used in court when necessary.
- Liaise with the Assistant Headteacher (Pastoral) on matters relating to attendance and monitoring of all sub groups.
- Meet weekly with the Assistant Headteacher and Year Manager to discuss students whose attendance falls below 97%.
- Implement the Academy policy on attendance and punctuality at registration.
- To consider a range of strategies to address the problem of poor attendance including:
  - Attendance meetings with both the parent/carer and student; to decide as to how all parties can work together to improve the student's attendance.
  - Home visits, telephone calls and letters to parents/carers relating to their child's attendance.
  - Refer all appropriate cases to the LA Education Welfare Service.

#### **Parents/Carers:**

- Engage with their child's education – support their learning and take an interest in what they have been doing at the Academy.
- Promote the value of good education and the importance of regular school attendance at home.
- Ensure that you keep the Academy informed of any changes to personal details including home address and emergency contact details.
- Follow the procedures outlined in this policy regarding absences, ill health, medical or dental appointments, leave of absence in term time and punctuality.

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- Do everything they can to prevent unnecessary absences.
- Keep the Academy informed of any circumstances which may affect their child's attendance and work with staff in resolving any issues that may be having an impact on their child.
- Encourage support and motivate their child to attend the Academy every-day, as it is vital that your child receives the same messages at home as they do at the Academy about the importance of attendance and punctuality.

## Students

- Will ensure that they are ready for school and are prepared for their journey to school at the correct time.
- Will ensure that they have prepared their equipment required for school and have packed their bags in readiness for the day ahead.
- Will ensure that once they arrive at school, they proceed directly to the school entrance and DO NOT take any diversions that their parents/carers have not authorised.
- Will ensure that when the first bell goes, they proceed without delay to registration.
- If students arrive after registration due to the bus arriving late, they must sign in at reception. Students will not be marked late if the bus is late.
- Do everything they can to prevent unnecessary school absences.
- If absent from schools, students will proactively catch up on work that has been missed.

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