



## **ATTENDANCE POLICY**

Students cannot learn if they do not attend school. We aim to create an environment and opportunities which will make young people want to come to school. However, where there is poor attendance, high persistent absence or persistent lateness the school will take all measures at its disposal to address these.

### **Introduction**

We aim for an environment which enables and encourages all members of the community to reach out for excellence. For our students to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and on time every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

It is very important therefore that students attend regularly and this Policy sets out how together we will achieve this.

### **Why regular attendance is so important**

Any absence affects the pattern of a student's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any student's absence disrupts teaching routines so may affect the learning of others in the same class.

Regular attendance at school is a parent's/carer's legal responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

### **Promoting regular attendance**

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility - parents/carers, students and all members of school staff.

### **As a school, to help us all to focus on this we will:**

- Report to parents/carers at least termly on how their child is performing in school, what their attendance and punctuality rate is and how this relates to their attainments;
- Recognise successful attendance in classes or groups through assemblies and tutor time;
- Celebrate good or improving attendance

### **Understanding types of absence**

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by the parents/carers), as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required, preferably in writing.

*Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason like illness, medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable cause.*

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 school or the Local Authority using sanctions and/or legal proceedings. This includes:

- parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily;
- truancy before or during the school day;
- absences which have never been properly explained;
- children who arrive at school too late to get a mark;
- shopping, looking after other children or birthdays;
- day trips and holidays in term time which have not been agreed.

Whilst any child may be off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents/carers and the child. If a child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and usually makes things worse.

### **Persistent Absenteeism (PA)**

A student becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason. Absence at this level is causing considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we need parents'/carers' full support and co-operation to tackle this.

We monitor all absence thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA mark, or is at risk of moving towards that mark, is given priority and parents/carers will be informed of this immediately.

PA students are tracked and monitored carefully through our pastoral system and we also combine this with academic mentoring where absence affects attainment.

All our PA students and their parents/carers are the responsibility of our Attendance Improvement Officer who will create a file on the student and offer support where there are issues affecting attendance. The AIO is also responsible for referring PA cases to Herts County Council where they believe legal action is required.

### **Absence procedures for parents/carers:**

#### **If a child is absent parents/carers must:**

- Contact the school by 8.30 am on the first day of absence;
- Send a note in on the first day they return with an explanation of the absence –even if a telephone call has already been made;

- Parents/carers can phone the school on the absence line on ?????? or report to Reception with a reason for the absence.

#### **If a child is absent we are likely to:**

- Telephone or text parents/carers on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you.
- Invite parents/carers in to discuss the situation with our Attendance Improvement Officer and/or Pastoral Leaders or Headteacher if absences persist.

#### **Telephone numbers**

There are times when we need to contact parents/carers about lots of things, including absence, so we need to have your contact numbers at all times. Parents/carers should make sure we always have an up to date number – if we don't then something important may be missed. There will be regular checks on telephone numbers throughout the year.

#### **Fixed Penalty Notices**

Parents/carers are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any problems together. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way the school may issue a fixed penalty notice warning ultimately leading to an increasing range of fines. We will try to resolve the situation by agreement but, if other ways of trying to improve the student's attendance have failed and unauthorized absences persist, the school can use sanctions such as Penalty Notices or prosecutions in the Magistrates Court. Full details of the options open to enforce attendance at school are available from the school or the Local Authority.

#### **Lateness**

Poor punctuality is not acceptable and all students must aim to be in school by 8.25am for an 8.30am start. If a child misses the start of the day they can miss work and vital information and news for the day. Students arriving late also disrupt lessons and they may feel embarrassed, which in turn may then encourage absence.

#### **How we manage lateness**

The school day starts at **8.30am** and students are expected to be in school before that time.

Registers are marked at **8.30am** and students will receive a late mark if they are not in by that time. Lateness will result in a same day detention. Parents/carers will be informed of this via text message.

At **9.15am** the registers will be closed. In accordance with the Regulations, if a child arrives after that time they will receive a mark that shows them to be on site, but this will **not** count as a present mark and it will mean they have an unauthorised absence. This may mean that the parents/carers could face the possibility of a Penalty Notice if the problem persists.

If a child has a persistent late record parents/carers will be required to meet with the Pastoral Lead and Head of Year and/or Attendance Improvement Officer to resolve the problem, but parents/carers can approach us at any time if they are having problems getting their child to school on time.

Holidays in Term Time

### **Notes to parents/carers**

The law does not grant parents/carers the right to take their children out of school during term time. If the request is for an absence in term time permission **must** be sought in **advance**. If the circumstances relating to this request are considered exceptional and the absence is authorised by the school, the authorising of the absence will be conditional on the child(ren) attending satisfactorily up to the date covered by this request.

### **Family holidays are not exceptional circumstances.**

If the school refuses a request and the child is still taken out of school, this will be recorded as an unauthorised absence. If there is a significant amount of unauthorised absence a parent/carer may be liable to a Penalty Notice for each child, or the subject of Court proceedings which could result in a fine of up to £2,500 and/or a term of imprisonment of up to three months.

### **Avoidable absence in term-time**

School aged students in Hertfordshire schools are expected to attend punctually on the 190 days that the school is open. Whilst there are a number of unavoidable reasons why a student might be away from school (illness, medical appointments, exclusions etc), the legislation is clear that any avoidable absence may only be authorised by a school if there are exceptional circumstances.

### **What you should consider**

Research suggests that children who are taken out of school may never catch up on the learning they have missed. This may affect test results and can be particularly harmful if the child is studying for final year examinations.

Children who struggle with English or mathematics may also find it even harder to cope when they return to school, while younger children may find it difficult to renew friendships with their classmates.

If the school is unable to authorise the absence and the child is still taken out of school, this will be recorded as **unauthorised absence** and you may receive a £60\* fine per parents/carers for each child.

\*Penalty Notice £60 if paid within 21 days, increasing to £120 if paid after 21 day and before 28 days.

### **The law**

The law allows schools to consider individual requests to authorise a future unavoidable absence. However, before the school can authorise any such requests, they must satisfy themselves that

there are exceptional circumstances which justify such a decision. It is entirely the responsibility of the parent/carer submitting the request to provide sufficient information/evidence in order to establish this fact. The request for leave must come from a parent/carer with whom the child normally resides.

If a child then stays away from school for more than the authorised period this must be recorded as unauthorised absence and could be quoted in a prosecution for poor attendance.

If the child is away from school for a total of four weeks or more, the school may have the option to take the child off roll subject to the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006.

In the case of unexpected extended absence, it is advisable that the parent/carer fully informs the school as to the reason. If a child is removed from roll there is no guarantee that the child will regain a place at the school.

### **School targets, projects and special initiatives**

The school has targets to improve attendance and every child has an important part to play in meeting these targets.

The minimum level of attendance for this school is **96%** attendance and we will keep parents/carers updated regularly about progress to this level and how their child's attendance compares. Our target is to achieve better than this because we know that good attendance is the key to successful schooling and we believe our students can be amongst the best in the County.

Through the school year we monitor absences and punctuality to show us where improvements need to be made. Information on any projects or initiatives that will focus on these areas will be provided in our newsletter and we ask for your full support.

### **Summary**

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents/carers and to promote attendance. Equally, parents/carers have a duty to make sure that their children attend.

All school staff are committed to working with parents/carers and students to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible.