

Herne Bay High School

Attendance Policy

Policy reviewed by	Kelly Molloy	Date of last review	June 2020	Date of next review	July 2021	Date of policy ratification by Governors	
Purpose of policy							
Regular school attendance is essential if students are to achieve their full potential. HBHS believes that regular school attendance is the key to enabling students to maximise the educational opportunities available to them and become resilient, confident and competent adults who are able to realise their full potential and make a positive contribution to their community. HBHS values all students' and we will work with families to identify the reasons for poor attendance and try to resolve any difficulties. Our Attendance Policy should not be viewed in isolation; it is a strand that runs through all aspects of school improvement, supported by our policies on safeguarding, bullying, behaviour and SEN. Please also refer to our COVID 19 Attendance Policy Addendum.							
Legislation that underpins this policy							
Section 444 of the Education Act 1996, Section 7 of the Education Act							
Other HBHS policies that should be read in conjunction with this policy <i>(the underlined policies are those that are most pertinent)</i>							
Safeguarding, bullying, behaviour and SEN.							

Policy's Key Points and Principles

Under section 7 of the Education Act 1996, parents are responsible for making sure that their children of compulsory school age receive a suitable education by regular attendance at school, alternative provision, or by education otherwise (e.g. the parent can choose to educate their child at home). Parents have a legal duty to ensure that their children attend school regularly and arrive on time. Regular attendance is essential to the all-round development of the child and they should be allowed to take full advantage of educational opportunities available to them in order to make good progress in their learning. Poor attendance undermines their educational attainment and progress and, sometimes, puts pupils at risk by encouraging anti-social behaviour. We expect pupils to maintain an exemplary attendance record in order to take advantage of the educational opportunities available to them and the aim of the Attendance Policy is to establish an approach that will support and encourage pupils to attend school regularly in order to maximise their potential.

We place high priority on strategies to improve attendance and we believe that the goal of regular attendance should be pursued for every pupil. In pursuing this goal, we try to work closely with parents/carers who are ultimately responsible for securing that their children attend school regularly and punctually.

Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 states that parents are guilty of an offence of failing to secure regular attendance at school unless they can prove that the child was absent:

- with leave (the school has given permission)
- due to sickness or any unavoidable cause (the sickness or unavoidable cause must relate to the child, not the parent or siblings) and must be supported by a medical professional in the case of persistent absence or persistent lateness.
- religious observance
- failure by the Local Authority to provide transport

In law, these are the only acceptable reasons for a child being absent from school.

Statutory Duty of Schools

The Education Act 1996 requires parents/carers to ensure their children receive efficient, full-time education, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise. Schools are responsible for recording pupil attendance twice a day; once at the start of the morning session and once during the afternoon session. There is a requirement that an entry should be made on the attendance register for all pupils of compulsory school age. Schools also have a requirement to ensure that should students not attend regularly, interventions are put in place quickly to allow this situation to improve.

From September 2008 the DCSF reviewed its strategy for improving attendance and the focus is now on dealing with persistent absentees who have 90% attendance or less throughout a school year.

There have also been amendments to the government's attendance regulations which took effect from September 2013. Headteachers and Principals may no longer grant any leave of absence during term time for holidays. We expect pupils to attend school every day when the school is open and where there are more than 5 days (10 sessions) of unauthorised absence in a 50-day period, the school may request a penalty notice. Any holidays taken during term time will be unauthorised and subject to a penalty notice issued by the Local Authority. From April 2005, Kent Local Authority introduced penalty notices for any unauthorised absence from school of at least 10 sessions (5 days) in a 50-day period. Payment of a Penalty Notice within 28 days is £120 reduced to £60 if paid within 21 days of receipt of the notice. Non-payment of a Penalty Notice may result in prosecution.

Changes have also been made to the statutory guidance on absence for medical appointments. Missing morning or afternoon registration for a GP, consultant or dental appointment will be considered an absence. Parents/carers are encouraged to make appointments out of school hours and, where this is not possible, to ensure that pupils are only out of school for the minimum amount of time.

Authorising Absence

Only the Principal can authorise absence using a consistent approach. The Principal is not obliged to accept a parent's explanation. A letter or telephone message from a parent does not in itself authorise an absence. If absences are not authorised, parents will be notified.

If no explanation is received for an absence, the absence will not be authorised. If no explanation is given for absence, a text message will be sent home asking for the reason for absence. If there is no re

Absence (for example leave for holidays) during term time can only be approved in "exceptional circumstances". The following reasons are examples of absence that will not be authorised:

- Persistent non-specific illness e.g. poorly/unwell
- Absence of siblings if one child is ill
- Oversleeping
- Inadequate clothing/uniform
- Confusion over school dates
- Medical/dental appointments of more than half a day without very good reasons
- Child's/family birthday
- Shopping trip
- Family Holidays
- Issues in school that have not been reported to a member of staff for investigation
- Issues with students that have happened outside of school
- Social Media concerns

Persistent unauthorised absence currently stands at anything under 90% (10% or more of the school year) and will result in an either a penalty notice being requested or an AS1 referral to the Local Authority School Liaison Officer for consideration of prosecution. The school will follow procedures prior to referral and parents will be notified in writing.

Penalty Notices

A Penalty Notice can only be issued in cases of unauthorised absence or where an excluded child is found in a public place during school hours.

1. Unauthorised absences:

Parents and pupils are supported by HBHS to overcome barriers to regular attendance through a range of intervention strategies. Sanctions of any nature are for use only where parental co-operation in this process is either absent or deemed insufficient to resolve the presenting problem. Sanctions are used as a means of enforcing attendance where there is a reasonable expectation that their use will secure improvement.

Penalty Notices can only be issued in cases where a pupil of compulsory school age has been absent or late for a period, or periods, of time and the absence or lateness has not been authorised by the school, or shown improvement as a result of actions taken by the school.

After a school has taken the steps to improve attendance, any relevant case may be referred directly to the KCC Attendance and Enforcement Service to issue a Penalty Notice for any unauthorised absence where the pupil has been:

- absent for 10 or more half-day sessions (five school days) without authorisation during any 100 possible school sessions or 50 school days – these do not need to be consecutive.
- persistently late (coded U) for 10 or more sessions after the register has been closed (8.45am)
- unauthorised absence for any public examinations of which dates are published in advance

2. Unauthorised Term-Time Leave (including leave for family holiday):

Any parent who takes a child out of school for term-time leave of 10 or more half-day sessions (five school days) during any 100 possible school sessions or 50 school days, not authorised by the school (under exceptional circumstances), may receive a Penalty Notice. The unauthorised term-time leave does not have to be consecutive for a parent to receive a Penalty Notice. In deciding whether to refer a case for the sanction of a Penalty Notice, the school will take into account whether there is known evidence of previous unauthorised term time leave taken in the last 3 years and evidence of parents being warned about a potential Penalty Notice.

3. Exclusion:

Where a child is found in a public place during school hours of day one to five of any fixed term or permanent exclusion.

Procedure for Issuing Penalty Notices

Kent County Council's Attendance and Enforcement Service will issue all Penalty Notices within the administrative area of Kent County Council for all unauthorised absences and exclusions. This ensures consistent and equitable delivery, avoids duplication of Penalty Notices, helps to maintain good school and alternative provision relationships with the home and ensures that there is no conflict with other enforcement sanctions. Penalty Notices will only be issued by post and never as an on the spot action.

KCC will:

- In cases of non-attendance, issue a further written warning to the parent or carer of the possibility of a Penalty Notice being issued; and in the same letter, set a period of school days within which the pupil must have no unauthorised absence; and will issue a Penalty Notice through the post at the end of the 15 day period if there has been any further unauthorised absence. A separate Penalty Notice will be issued per parent per child and will incur a penalty charge if issued. Payment of a Penalty Notice within 28 days is £120 reduced to £60 if paid within 21 days of receipt of the Notice. Non-payment of a Penalty Notice may result in prosecution.
- in the case of a pupil's leave of absence in term-time that has not been authorised by the school or alternative education provider, a Penalty Notice may be issued without setting a period of school days for attendance improvement. (Amendments to the 2006 regulations remove references to family holiday and extended leave as well as the statutory threshold of ten school days. The amendments make clear that Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term-time unless there are exceptional circumstances. Headteachers should determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted.). A separate Penalty Notice will be issued per parent per child and will incur a penalty charge if issued. Payment of a Penalty Notice within 28 days is £120 reduced to £60 if paid within 21 days of receipt of the Notice. Non-payment of a Penalty Notice may result in prosecution.

If a pupil with unauthorised leave of absence in term-time has a sibling (or siblings) attending another school, it is good practice that relevant schools co-ordinate their decisions in order to ensure a consistent approach.

If a Penalty Notice is considered to be appropriate for absence, the school should submit the Penalty Notice request as soon as 10 unauthorised sessions have been reached.

The use of Penalty Notices will normally be restricted to one per pupil per parent per academic year. Should persistent absence continue after this Penalty Notice, an AS1 referral to the KCC PIAS Attendance and Inclusion Service will be submitted.

In the case of a period of unauthorised leave for the purpose of a family holiday in term-time a Penalty Notice may be issued on more than one occasion.

Not more than twelve may be issued per pupil per parent per academic year for being found in a public place whilst excluded

Attendance Service Referral

Should attendance not improve after interventions within school (which may include penalty notice monitoring), consideration will be given to an AS1 referral to the KCC PIAS Attendance and Inclusion Service. When a referral is made, the child's Registration Certificate, copies of all letters sent to parents and minutes of any meetings are attached to the completed AS1 referral form with any other relevant information.

KCC PIAS Attendance and Inclusion Service interventions may include:-

- Attendance Improvement Meeting
- Home visits
- Liaison with other agencies
- Fast Track to Prosecution

Responsibilities

A. HBHS

HBHS will ensure that:

- Pupils are registered accurately twice daily.
- Pupils arriving after the morning registration period will be marked as late after the register has closed at 8.40am (U) and this will be recorded as a missed session. However, this will be authorised if it is an appointment agreed in advance, and in the case of a persistently absent child, medical evidence provided.

- Parents/carers will be contacted when reasons for absence are unknown or the level of attendance is unacceptable. This contact can be in the form of, but is not exclusive to, written notification, text notification, telephone notification or notification during a meeting in school.
- A pupil's attendance and lateness, the latter constitutes an unauthorised absence if it is persistent, will be measured and contact made with parents/carers as appropriate. This contact can be either via written notification, text notification, telephone notification or notification during a meeting in school.
- School attendance statistics will be reported to governors at their regular meetings.
- Attempt to make contact with parents/carers for every day of absence where we have not received notification of absence.
- Vulnerable pupils with specific problems that may affect attendance are supported.
- Appropriate resources are committed to ensure the policy is implemented.

B. Pupils

Pupils will be encouraged to attend regularly and punctually by all staff at HBHS. Support is given through various interventions to secure regular attendance.

Parents/Carers

Parents/carers will:

- Inform the school on the first day of absence – this can be in person, via the HBHS absence line, 01227 289409, via the My Ed App or by text or e-mail to school: absence@hernebayhigh.org. Failure to notify us of a reason will result in the absence being recorded as unauthorised absence.
- Discuss planned absences with the school in advance. It must be noted that requests for holidays (leave of absence) during term time can no longer be granted by the school except in exceptional circumstances and as agreed by the Principal.
- During lengthy absences, maintain regular contact with the school to assist with the monitoring of the student and the provision of work where appropriate.
- Provide medical evidence if the absence is for 5 days or longer. This can be in the form of a doctor's note, appointment card or copy of prescription. Persistent absence due to a medical condition must be supported by a medical professional – appointment cards and prescriptions will not be considered acceptable as medical evidence in persistent absence cases where attendance cannot be improved.
- Arrange appointments and outings after school hours, at weekends or during school holidays where at all possible.

Monitoring, Evaluation & Review

HBHS will review the policy regularly and assess its implementation and effectiveness, ensuring that any changes to statutory legislation is considered.

Implementation

A. Communicating the Policy

HBHS will keep parents/carers informed of how this policy operates as follows:

- Through information shared with parents/carers when a child starts at HBHS; parents will sign up to their acceptance of our attendance policy.
- In the discussions which take place with every parent/carer during their induction interview and at parents' evenings and consultation days.
- Via the school website.
- Through regular newsletters and other communication from HBHS.

B. Explain within this policy the procedure for improving attendance:

HBHS expects all pupils to have 100% attendance at school, however:

- Parent/Carers will be contacted should attendance become a concern. This contact will be in the form of a letter home, telephone call or attendance meeting in school.

- If attendance does not improve, a penalty notice warning letter will be requested from KCC – see above setting a period of school days where a student cannot record any absence.
- If the child's attendance does not improve during the Local Authority monitoring the school requests that a penalty notice be issued by the Local Authority. Where Penalty Notices are imposed, regulations state that the penalty will be £120 to be paid within 28 days, reduced to £60 if paid within 21 days. Penalty Notices are issued to each parent of each child. Failure to pay the penalty in full by the end of the 28-day period will result in prosecution by KCC.
- If there is still no improvement after penalty notice intervention, consideration will be made for a referral to the KCC School Liaison Officer from the PIAS Attendance and Inclusion Service. notified of this decision with either via letter, telephone discussion or during a meeting in school and the case will then be fast tracked to prosecution should no improvement be made.