



ATTENDANCE and PUNCTUALITY POLICY

Last Review Date: September 2020

Next Review Date: September 2023

Member of staff responsible: Headteacher

Attendance Policy

Rationale

Heworth Primary School is committed to providing a welcoming environment where every child is valued and given opportunities to flourish. Our Christian ethos and school values are important in making a difference to children's lives. Every child is a gift from God - we show compassion for difficulties they may face, while developing endurance for their lifelong journey. Trust between school and families is very important to us and we seek to work with and support you in creating good attendance and punctuality, in order for pupils to achieve their true potential. Heworth will do all that we can to ensure that all pupils attend school to their fullest and that any barriers to full attendance are identified and acted upon as soon as possible.

Providing safe and happy places to learn is essential to achieving school improvement, raising achievement and attendance, promoting equality and diversity and ensuring the safety and well-being of all members of the school community. Every member of the community has rights and responsibilities which enable us to work and learn in a school environment in which we feel safe and supported.

This policy outlines the underlying philosophy, purpose, nature, organisation and management of attendance at Heworth Primary School. It is a working document designed to promote positive attendance and reduce absence from school. It reflects current practice within the school. Its fair and consistent implementation is the responsibility of all staff. Our school takes an active approach to promoting good attendance. With the support of parents, the wider community, the MAT, the local authority and the pupils themselves, we take a positive approach to safeguard the well-being of all pupils and staff.

Aims

At Heworth Primary School, children should be in school from 8:40am, every day unless they are unwell and unable to attend. The better a child's attendance the higher they achieve and research shows that attendance levels at primary school have an impact on GCSE results at the end of secondary school.

We expect children to aim for 100% attendance at school. However, we also understand that there are times when a child will be ill and may be absent. The national average for attendance is 96%, the equivalent of missing around 8 days over a year, and all children should aim to have this as a minimum for attendance.

Any child whose absence falls below 90% (or around 19 days off over the year) is classified by the Government as a Persistent Absentee.

In order to improve the overall attendance of pupils in school we aim to:

1. Make attendance and punctuality a priority for all those associated with the school including pupils, parents/carers, teachers and governors.
2. Develop a framework which defines agreed roles and responsibilities and promotes consistency in carrying out designated tasks.
3. Develop a systematic approach to gathering and analysing attendance related data.
4. Implement a system of rewards (for example; weekly attendance trophy, termly certificates and end of year certificates)
5. Provide support, advice and guidance to parents/carers and pupils.
6. Further develop positive and consistent communication between home and school.

7. Develop effective partnerships with supporting services and agencies through the Local Area Teams (LATs) and their Support Practitioners (LASPs).
8. Recognise and address the needs of the individual pupil when planning reintegration following significant periods of absence.

Definitions

It is the Headteacher's discretion as to whether a child's absence is recorded as authorised or unauthorised. (DfE, Guide to Absence Statistics, May 2016).

Authorised absence:

Authorised absence means that the school has either given approval in advance for a pupil to be away, or has accepted an explanation offered as justification for the absence (DfE, School Attendance Guidance for Schools, 2014)

Unauthorised absence:

Unauthorised absence is where a school is not satisfied with the reasons given for the absence or no reason has been given (DfE, School Attendance Guidance for Schools 2014)

Persistent absence (PA):

The Department for Education (DfE) define a 'persistent absentee' as a pupil who, at any point in the year, has accumulated absence at 10% or more of the available sessions regardless of whether or not any of it is authorised. The PA status may change as the terms progress, but these pupils are at particular risk of achieving poor outcomes at school and beyond.

Registration of Attendance and Punctuality

What we expect from parents/carers:

First day contact:

On the first day of absence, if the school has not received a reason for a child being away from school, the Office team will make contact with the parents/carers. This is done by phone call. Where no contact can be made, the child's absence will be unauthorised.

Codes

There are a series of codes which are used to denote authorised and unauthorised absence (DfE, School Attendance Guidance for Schools, 2014).

It is the school's responsibility to ensure the correct codes are recorded and that patterns and trends in children's absence are analysed. The national codes enable schools to record and monitor attendance and absence in a consistent way which complies with the regulations. They are also used for collecting statistics through the School Census System. The data helps schools, local authorities and the Government to gain a greater understanding of the levels of, and reasons for, absence.

Close of registers

We need children to arrive at school punctually so that they can access all learning opportunities. If a child misses the start of the day they will miss time spent with their class teacher getting vital information and news for the day. Late arriving pupils also disrupt lessons and it can be embarrassing for the children which may encourage further absence. We actively encourage all children to arrive at school on time.

Children who arrive at school within 20 minutes of the doors opening are marked down as attending the session (i.e. 8:40am–9:00am). Children arriving after 9:00am will be recorded as Late (using the code 'L').

It is a legal requirement that school registers must be completed at the start of both morning and afternoon sessions and the same time scales apply.

Medical appointments

We encourage families to book medical appointments outside of the school day. Where this is not possible, the following codes are used:

If a child arrives back in school before the official close of the register at 10:00am, this will be recorded as 'L' and therefore the child is marked as attending school. If a child arrives back after the official close of the register, the child will be marked as 'M' for a medical appointment.

Requests for leave of absence

We believe that all children need to be in school for all sessions, so that they can make the most progress possible. For this reason, as a general rule, we do not authorise leave of absence (including holidays) in term time unless for exceptional reasons.

Please note: a child who has two weeks of absence for a holiday (or any other reason) means they will have a lower than average attendance for the year. We follow the guidance written by the City of York Council (Guidance relating To Pupil Leave of Absence from School for Family Holidays June 2013).

The Headteacher has the discretion to make exceptions to this rule and can authorise leave of absence in exceptional circumstances, when the leave of absence is for no more than 10 days (Using Code 'H': Family Holiday Agreed).

Special circumstances may include:

- Service personnel and other employees who are prevented from taking holidays outside term time if the holiday will have minimal disruption to the pupil's education.
- When a family needs to spend time together to support each other during or after a crisis.

The national guidance suggests that requests for the following reasons should not be authorised:

- Availability of cheap holidays.
- Availability of desired accommodation.
- Poor weather experienced in school holiday periods.
- Overlap with beginning or end of term.

If we know that the pupil has siblings in other schools, it is strongly advised that we make contact with the other school to come to an agreement when coding the leave of absence (i.e. whether the leave of absence is authorised or unauthorised).

Religious Observance

The DfE recommends the use of Code 'R' when children are absent from school to take part in any day set aside exclusively for religious observance by the religious body to

which the parents belong, including religious festivals. Parents should be encouraged to give advance notice.

This is interpreted to mean that if the parent's religious organisation sets the day as a religious festival then the school must authorise the absence. Where necessary, schools should seek advice from the parent's religious body about whether it has set the day apart for religious observance.

If the religious body has not set the day apart there is no requirement for the school to approve the absence or grant a leave absence. Additional holidays and days off linked to the religious festival but not "exclusively set aside for religious observance" by the religious body are not marked using Code 'R'.

Roles and responsibilities

All members of the school community have roles and responsibilities in promoting and ensuring good attendance and punctuality.

Role of the pupils:

All pupils will:

- Ensure that they attend school regularly and on time.
- Be aware of the consequences of poor attendance or truancy.
- Arrive to lessons punctually.
- Not leave school without permission.
- Follow correct procedures for known absences.
- Respect themselves and others.
- Encourage friendships and a sense of belonging.
- Be happy and encourage others to feel happy.
- Inform a trusted adult if they feel they are being bullied or feel unhappy at school.

Role of parents/carers:

Parents and carers have an essential role in ensuring their child's good attendance:

- Establish good attendance habits by acting as a role model and showing the children that good attendance and punctuality is important.
- Praise and reward good attendance: even small successes, e.g. getting ready quickly, even if resisting going to school.
- Talk regularly with their child about school and how they feel about it. Children are more likely to want to attend and learn if they feel supported and their anxieties are listened to. If your child is reluctant to come to school, you can talk to us about this.
- Contact the school by phone as soon as possible to say why their child is absent and when they are expected to return.
- To ensure that when the child returns to school after their absence they provide a letter of explanation for the absence.
- Only grant days at home for genuine illness.
- Arrange for a friend to take a child to school if a sibling is sick.
- Avoid taking holidays in school time.
- Ensure that wherever possible, medical appointments are made outside of the school day.
- Know routines of the school day to avoid issues, e.g. ensuring children have their PE kits on the right days.
- Establish a good bedtime routine, so that their child can sleep well, get enough sleep and make mornings less of a struggle.

Role of the Class Teacher:

- Encourage good attendance.
- Ensure that registers are correctly and promptly marked.
- Set a good example in matters of attendance and punctuality.
- Provide a safe and secure environment in which to learn.
- Provide engaging and worthwhile learning experiences that encourage pupils to regularly attend lessons.
- Listen to and value children's views.
- Make initial contact with parents when concerns arise and mention children's attendance as a matter of course as parent's evenings, meetings, etc.

Role of the School:

- Create a school ethos and environment that pupils want to be part of.
- Give a high priority to punctuality and attendance.
- Develop procedures that enable the school to identify, follow up and record unauthorised absence, patterns of absence and parent condoned absence with effective monitoring and intervention.
- Meet the legal requirements set out by the Government and consistently record authorised and unauthorised absences within the guidance of The Education Act, 1996 & 2005.
- Develop a range of effective strategies to follow up intermittent and long term absenteeism and promote good attendance.
- Encourage open communication channels between home and school.
- Develop procedures for the reintegration of long term absentees.
- Develop procedures leading to the formal referral to Local Area Team.
- Adequately provide for pupils with difficulties, within the bounds of the resources available, and ensure that appropriate delivery of the curriculum.

Role of the Headteacher/Family Support Worker:

- Monitor attendance across year groups.
- Analyse attendance data alongside academic data.
- Identify students at risk of becoming persistent absentees, set appropriate targets and implement intervention strategies to meet targets.
- Ensure that information is regularly communicated and that all staff are aware of which pupils are persistent absentees.
- Work and communicate effectively with external agencies.
- Ensure that parents are aware of their legal responsibility and ensure that information is communicated through a variety of means.

Role of Governing Body

Under the Education (Student Registration) Regulations 2013, the governing body are responsible for making sure the school keeps an attendance register that records which pupils are present at the start of both the morning and the afternoon sessions of the school day. This register will also indicate whether an absence was authorised or unauthorised. The governing body monitors the rate of attendance and ensures the policy is adhered to fairly and consistently, by annual attendance reports.

Role of the Local Authority

There is a Local Authority Team (LAT) where Support Practitioners are available to offer information regarding a child and advice on other services available.

The Local Authority employs a School Attendance Advisor who is able to support the school with attendance panel meetings and provides guidance on National Legislation and Local Initiatives.

Intervening with Attendance Concerns

At Heworth we believe in working closely with parents and recognise the importance of collaboration. We would like your support to improve levels of attendance and punctuality. Our support will happen in the following ways:

1) Letter: each half term letters will be sent out to parents/carers if a child's attendance has dropped below 92% (raised from 90% autumn 2020)

(Please note: we do not send letters to families when we know of genuine reasons why attendance has dropped below 92%)

2) Informal meeting: If attendance does not improve sufficiently over the next half term, an informal meeting will take place at school with the Family Support Worker and Headteacher. The aim of this meeting is to work with you and discuss support in helping to improve your child's attendance.

3) Attendance Panel: After half a term, if attendance has not improved sufficiently, we will invite you to a meeting with a Governor, the Headteacher and/or Family Support Worker. This panel is a relatively formal meeting at which concerns about the pupil's attendance are put to parents/carers. The aim of the meeting is always to secure an improvement in attendance, however, parents should be reminded that the LA may decide to issue a Fixed Penalty Notice. The meeting is seen as a supportive meeting in which a parenting contract may be agreed upon. A target for the young person's attendance may be agreed, with a review date.

4) Review: This will be held at the agreed date following Stage 3. If at the review there has been no acceptable improvement in the young person's attendance then discussion should take place with the Headteacher, Family Support Worker and Attendance or Safeguarding Governor.

If it is decided that a Fixed Penalty Notice should be issued then the school has to request this from the LA's School's Attendance Advisor.

A penalty notice would mean the parents/carer's have to make a payment of either £60.00 or £120.00 per parent, per child depending on when they pay the penalty notice.

Generally, in such situations parents will be issued with a fixed penalty notice fine through the Local Authority which does have the power to prosecute parents rather than issue a fine.

Penalty Notice:

If parents do not pay penalty notice fines it is likely they will be prosecuted by the Local Authority as parents have a duty to ensure their child receives an appropriate full time education. If they fail in this duty they may be guilty of an offence under Section 444(1A) of the Education Act 1996 and liable to prosecution. If convicted parents can be fined up to a maximum of £2500 per parent and/or receive a custodial sentence of up to 3 months.

(Schools should inform parents in newsletters or letters if they wish to use Fixed Penalty Notices and also have the process written in their attendance policy.)

Children Missing in Education

All schools (including academies and independent schools) must notify their local authority when they are about to remove a pupil's name from the school admission register. This duty does not apply when a pupil's name is removed from the admission register at standard transition points – when the pupil has completed the final year of education normally provided by that school – unless the local authority requests that such returns are to be made.

When removing a pupil's name, the notification to the local authority must include: (a) the full name of the pupil, (b) the full name and address of any parent with whom the pupil normally resides, (c) at least one telephone number of the parent, (d) the pupil's future address and destination school

(DfE Children Missing Education, Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities, September 2016). <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/children-missing-education>

When pupils leave and parents have not provided the school with the above information, and the school cannot contact you, then your child is considered to be a 'Child Missing Education'. This means that the school and Local Authority have a legal duty to carry out investigations, which may include liaising with Children's Services (formerly Social Services) the Police and other agencies to try to track and locate your child. By providing us the above information, unnecessary investigations can be avoided.

We value your support in helping us to maintain high standards at Heworth Primary School.

Relevant Legislation:

- The Children Act 1989 (section 36);
- The Education Act 1996 (sections 7, 19, 436A, 437-39, 443-447);
- Crime and Disorder Act 1998 (section 8-10);
- The Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003 (ASB Act) (sections 19-24);
- The Education Act 2005 (section 115);
- The Education and Inspections Act 2006 (sections 97-111) ;
- The Education (Parenting Contracts and Parenting Orders) (England) Regulations 2007;
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007;
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2012;
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013;
- The Education and Skills Act 2008 (section 2 and 155);
- Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 1995 and amendments.