

Attendance Policy

Policy Number: HBS028

Trustee Committee: Pastoral

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Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed in full by the Board of Trustees no less than annually.

The policy was last reviewed and agreed by the Board of Trustees on 02/07/2024
It is due for review in 12 months from the above date.

Signature _____

Date _____

Headteacher

Signature _____

Date _____

Chair of Board of Trustees

INITIAL STATEMENT

At Hitchin Boys' School it is our aim that all members of the school community, Trustees, staff, parents/carers and students are committed to and encourage excellent levels of attendance and punctuality in order to enable our students to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them and assist our students to achieve the following outcomes:

- To be healthy
- To stay safe
- To enjoy and achieve
- To make a positive contribution
- To achieve economic well-being

There is a correlation between attendance and achievement. Poor attendance will have a negative impact on the progress and achievement of a student. Poor attendance will affect the personal wellbeing and social development of a student. If students are not attending, they cannot benefit from their education and will not achieve. They are neither learning nor actively contributing to school life. If they are absent, they may not be in a safe environment; or they may be practising unhealthy lifestyles.

Legislation and guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the [working together to improve school attendance](#) from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on [school attendance parental responsibility measures](#). These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- Part 6 of [The Education Act 1996](#)
- Part 3 of [The Education Act 2002](#)
- Part 7 of [The Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006 \(and 2010, 2011, 2013, 2016 amendments\)](#)
- [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)

This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the school census, which explains the persistent absence threshold.

TARGET SETTING AND MONITORING

The Department for Education (DfE) expects all schools and local authorities to focus on reducing overall absence, particularly unauthorised absence and persistent absence by working in partnership with parents/carers. Absence will be monitored closely via the student level school census and the Secretary of State's power to require an individual school to set absence targets where a school's absence record is of particular concern. Although as an Academy Trust this is not a requirement, we will continue to do so as this is good practice.

Attendance data is an indicator which will be used by OFSTED. A new inspection framework for maintained schools and academies, introduced in September 2019, followed a year-long consultation. The quality of teaching and learning judgement relates to attendance because, however good the teaching, it does not benefit students if they are not present.

We need to monitor, evaluate and put in place appropriate interventions for those students who fall below the expected percentage attendance and/or are frequently late. The member of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) with responsibility for overseeing attendance is Mr Dami Ajagbonna (Deputy Headteacher).

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The responsibility for good attendance and punctuality is shared between school, parents/carers and students.

The governing board

The governing board is responsible for:

- Promoting the importance of school attendance across the school's policies and ethos
- Making sure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties
- Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data
- Monitoring attendance figures for the whole school
- Making sure staff receive adequate training on attendance
- Holding the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy

The headteacher

The headteacher is responsible for:

- Implementation of this policy at the school
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to Trustees
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils
- Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies
- Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary

The designated senior leader responsible for attendance

The designated senior leader is responsible for:

- Leading attendance across the school
- Offering a clear vision for attendance improvement
- Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes
- Having an oversight of data analysis
- Devising specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data
- Arranging calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues
- Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families

The designated senior leader responsible for attendance is Dami Ajagbonna and can be contacted via dajagbonna@hitchinboys.co.uk

The attendance officer

The school attendance officer is responsible for:

- Monitoring and analysing attendance data (see section 7)

- Benchmarking attendance data to identify areas of focus for improvement
- Providing regular attendance reports to school staff and reporting concerns about attendance to the designated senior leader responsible for attendance and the headteacher
- Working with education welfare officers to tackle persistent absence
- Advising the DHT to issue fixed-penalty notices

The attendance officer is Ms L O'Callaghan

Class teachers/form tutors

Class teachers/form tutors are responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the school office

3.6 School admin/office staff

School admin/office staff will:

- Take calls from parents about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the school system
- Transfer calls from information from parents to the Pastoral Team in order to provide them with more detailed support on attendance

3.7 Parents/carers

Parents/carers are expected to:

- Make sure their child attends every timetabled session on time
- Call the school to report their child's absence before 9am on the day of the absence and each subsequent day of absence unless it is a planned period of longer absence, and advise when they are expected to return
- Provide the school with more than 1 emergency contact number for their child
- Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day

3.8 Pupils

Pupils are expected to:

- Attend every timetabled session on time
- Parents of Sixth Formers will call the school to report their absence before 9am on the day of the absence and each subsequent day of absence

REGISTRATION

We will keep an electronic attendance register and place all pupils onto this register.

We will take our attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. This register must be marked accurately and promptly using the time designated for morning and afternoon registration.

Attendance registers

Registers are called at 8:45 am (beginning of tutor time) and 1:30 pm (beginning of period 4). Registers close at 9:10 am and 1:40 pm.

The teacher will only mark students as present, absent or late. A note of explanation should be flagged on SIMS if appropriate.

The register must be completed electronically unless there is a problem with SIMS in which case a manual register must be completed and handed in to the School Attendance Officer straight after registration has closed.

Any student arriving after closure of the register will be marked absent for the whole of the session.

Registers will be marked in accordance with DfE guidance (see Appendix). The correct code must be entered and there should not be any dashes or blanks.

Attendance registers are legal documents that may be required as evidence in court cases.

Lesson registers

In order to reduce the possibility of post registration truancy subject/cover teachers should take class registers in each lesson.

The subject/cover teacher will only mark students as present, absent or late. A note of explanation should be flagged on SIMS if appropriate.

The register must be completed electronically unless there is a problem with SIMS in which case a manual register must be completed and handed in to the School Attendance Officer as soon as it has been taken.

Registers should be taken at the start of the lesson to enable our safeguarding procedures to be implemented should a need arise.

Students are not usually permitted to leave lessons.

LATENESS

Students arriving during the registration period but after their names have been called will be marked as late.

Students arriving after the close of morning registration must sign in the designated signing in/out book located in Reception.

Entries in the designated signing in/out book will be transferred to the computerised registration system by the Reception team at the earliest opportunity with a note flagged on SIMS to indicate the time of arrival and reason for lateness.

In the event of a fire or other evacuation of the building, the designated signing in/out book will be used to identify those students who are present in school but arrived after the close of registration.

In extenuating circumstances, the school may decide to authorise a late arrival after the registers have been closed – for example, in the event of bad weather or a road closure.

Post-16 students will be treated in the same way as Years 7-11 with regard to punctuality.

FOLLOWING UP LATENESS

Registration

If a student arrives late to school, without an acceptable explanation, on three separate occasions, they will be issued with a one hour after school detention. In addition, Year 11 students will lose their lunchtime off-site privilege for the day if they arrive late to school that morning.

Parents/carers will be informed of sanctions imposed by telephone or by email.

Where a student is regularly late for school, parents/carers will be contacted by the relevant Head of Year who will work with the student and parent/carer to bring about an improvement in punctuality.

Lesson time

All lateness to lessons should be challenged by subject/cover teachers.

Repeated lateness to lessons will be dealt with by subject teachers, with department detentions as necessary.

ABSENCES

Schools must clearly distinguish between authorised and unauthorised absences of students of compulsory school age.

The responsibility for authorising absences rests with the school. Written or verbal parental communication does not itself constitute authorisation. The school may or may not accept the reason offered as valid.

Parents/carers must provide an explanation for all absences from school. It is the parent's responsibility to let the school know if the child is likely to be out of school for a long period of time. This enables the school to put in place early interventions so that the child can get the support they need.

Approval for term-time absence

The headteacher will only grant a leave of absence to a pupil during term time if they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'. A leave of absence is granted at the headteacher's discretion, including the length of time the pupil is authorised to be absent for.

We define 'exceptional circumstances' to include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments (see sections 4.2 and 4.3 for more detail)
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart
- Traveller pupils travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh gypsies, Irish and Scottish travellers, showmen (fairground people) and circus people, bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and new travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational

purposes and has agreed this with the school, but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision

Designated school staff will decide whether to accept the reason given and to authorise the absence. It is the school and not the parent who authorises the absence.

Absence from school may be authorised if it is for the following reasons:

Sickness or emotional reason.

- Unavoidable medical/dental appointments (though these should be made, whenever possible, outside school hours).
- Days of religious observance.
- Exceptional family circumstances such as bereavement.

Examples of unauthorised absence from school include:

- Holidays in term-time.
- Birthdays.

If there is any doubt as to whether an absence should be authorised then the Headteacher should be consulted.

If an absence is to be unauthorised, the parents/carers will be notified either by letter or via email from the School Attendance Officer or a member of the pastoral team for the relevant year group.

Although there is no role for the Local Authority Attendance Officer with regard to attendance of Post-16 students, our expectations are broadly the same as for those in Years 7-11. The codes are different and have been agreed by the Consortium of Hitchin Schools.

FOLLOWING UP ABSENCES

Parents/carers should inform the school by 9am if they know that their son will be absent on that day. This should be done by telephoning the school and leaving a message on the attendance line or emailing the absence inbox absence@hitchinboys.co.uk. The student's name, form and reason for their absence should be given.

If parents/carers leave a message, this will be recorded on SIMS by the school's Attendance Officer as soon as possible and they will not have to supply an absence note on the student's return to school.

In the event of an emergency, parents should call the School Office who will advise the relevant member of the Pastoral team.

In the event of student absence and the parents/carers have not contacted the school on the morning of the absence, the school's Attendance Officer will notify the parent/carer via email and request the reason for absence. Parents/carers can respond to the email directly or provide the reason for absence by telephoning the school or emailing the absence inbox absence@hitchinboys.co.uk. The reason given will be recorded on SIMS and an absence note will not have to be supplied on the student's return to school.

If a student returns to school without an explanation for the absence from the parent/carer, an email to explain that this will now be recorded as an unauthorised absence will be sent to the parents/carers by the school's Attendance Officer.

ATTENDANCE REVIEWS

The Pastoral Team will review student attendance on a half-termly basis.

Where attendance falls below 96%, the pastoral team will review the student's attendance record and decide on the appropriate kind of intervention/support package, if any, to bring about an improvement in attendance. The standard **Absence Letter 1** may be sent to the parents/carers.

If attendance continues to fall, the standard **Absence Letter 2** may be sent to parents/carers advising that should attendance fall further, the school will be unable to authorise any future period of illness without evidence that the student has been seen by a medical professional.

If there is no improvement following Absence Letter 2, the pastoral team will review the student's attendance record and look again at the most appropriate kind of intervention/support package required, if any, to bring about an improvement in attendance. Parents/carers may be invited into school to discuss their son's attendance with the Local Authority Attendance Officer and/or the standard **Absence Letter 3** may be sent to the parents/carers advising any future absence from school will be recorded as unauthorised unless medical evidence is provided to support the absence. Examples of medical evidence include copies of prescriptions or copies of texts confirming GP appointments.

If there is no improvement and unauthorised absence has been recorded, the standard **Absence Letter 4** may be sent to parents/carers. This is a formal warning that parents/carers are at risk of being in breach of The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007 because their child has been absent from school and the absence(s) has/have not been authorised. A Single Service Request form may be completed and a referral made to initiate the formal involvement of the Local Authority Attendance Officer to look at strategies to bring about improvement in attendance. Any future absence from school will be recorded as unauthorised unless medical evidence is provided. An action plan will be drawn up and the student will work with the pastoral team reviewing attendance until they have reached their target attendance.

If the situation does not improve, the pastoral team might seek help from outside agencies or/and a referral to Children Services in more extreme cases.

Interventions to support the improvement of student attendance can be implemented at any time and can include:

1. Parent meetings with the Head of Year and Heads of Keystage
2. Attendance Surgeries with the Local Authority Attendance Officer
3. Part time timetables
4. Counselling/Mentoring
5. Attendance Action Plans

Pupil Premium

Parents/carers of pupil premium students, whose attendance falls below 95%, will be invited to meet with a member of the pastoral team. The Assistant Head of Year will draw up an action plan and the student will work with the pastoral team reviewing attendance with the objective to achieve their target attendance.

INTEGRATED WORKING

Hitchin Boys' School works with other agencies and professionals to ensure that our students receive all the support available to achieve excellent attendance.

Where a student is working with other professionals then a member of the pastoral team will be responsible for alerting those individuals if there are any issues surrounding attendance and/or punctuality.

It is a requirement for a school to see an absent pupil every 10 days. This will take the form of a home visit if the child is unable to come into school.

If a student returns to school after a prolonged period of absence, the Head of Year will work with the relevant Head of Keystage to put together an appropriate reintegration package. The Form Tutor and subject staff will be updated about specific needs by email on a regular basis.

If a student needs to be referred to ESMA (Education Support for Medical Absence) the Head of Year, in conjunction with the relevant Head of Keystage, will do this. The Form Tutor and relevant subject staff will be updated about specific needs by email on a regular basis.

LEAVING AND RETURNING TO SCHOOL DURING THE SCHOOL DAY

Students who need to leave the school during the day for medical appointments or other reasons are required to submit a parent/carer explanation in advance. The student should then sign out in the designated signing in/out book located in reception. Where possible a note will be flagged on SIMS.

Students must sign back into school on their return in the designated signing in/out book located in reception.

The signing in and out record will be the responsibility of a designated member of the administration office staff in the event of fire.

TRUANCY

Hitchin Boys' School works with parents/carers, students and staff to reduce truancy during the school day by staff monitoring exit points at both break and lunchtimes. Year 11 have the privilege of being allowed off-site at lunchtime, at the discretion of the Pastoral Assistant Headteacher, providing they have arrived on time to school that morning.

Students are registered in each lesson as well as during registration. If a student is found to be missing, parents/carers are informed without delay. Where a student is found to have truanted, the student is given school detentions to make up any time that he has missed.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE DURING TERM TIME

In accordance with the amendments to the 2006 Pupil Registration (England) Regulations which came into effect on 1st September 2013, Headteachers may not grant leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. It is for the Headteacher to determine what constitutes exceptional circumstances and for them to determine the number of school days a student can be away from school if the leave is granted.

Hitchin Boys' School will not authorise family holidays during term time except in exceptional circumstances.

PENALTY NOTICES

At Hitchin Boys' School we expect parents/carers to work together to address attendance problems.

Parents/carers who fail to respond to requests by the school to send their son(s) to school or who take unauthorised holidays during term time may be issued with a Fixed Penalty Fine by the Local Authority.

The notices will be issued at the discretion of the Headteacher and will be applied to parents/carers whose son has at least 15 sessions (half day = 1 session) of unauthorised absence in the previous and /or current term. Fixed Penalty Notices will operate following the Hertfordshire County Guidance for Schools. The penalty is currently £60 per parent if paid within 21 days of receipt of the notice, rising to £120 per parent if paid after 21 days but within 28 days. If the penalty is not paid the Local Authority may prosecute the parents/carers for their son's irregular attendance.

PROMOTING ATTENDANCE AND REWARDS

The school celebrates and rewards excellent attendance.

Students are informed about the importance of school attendance through assemblies, tutor time and displays in school and these provide an opportunity too to celebrate and promote good attendance. .

The school has an anti-bullying policy designed to prevent behaviour that hinders attendance.

The school curriculum is continually reviewed to ensure that it is broad based, varied, challenging, differentiated and relevant to the needs of students.

Those students gaining 100% attendance during the course of an academic year are awarded certificates.

New ways of celebrating excellent attendance and punctuality are continually being sought.

PUBLICATION OF INFORMATION

Hitchin Boys' School shares information on individual students' attendance as necessary with parents/carers, students, staff and relevant outside agencies.

The Data Manager will be responsible for ensuring that data collected by DfE is accurate.

APPENDIX**ATTENDANCE CODES, DESCRIPTIONS AND MEANINGS**

CODE	DESCRIPTION	MEANING
/	Present (AM)	Present
\	Present (PM)	Present
B	Educated off site (NOT Dual registration)	Approved Education Activity
C	Other authorised circumstances (not covered by another appropriate code/description)	Authorised Absence
D	Dual registration (i.e. present at another school or PRU)	Approved Education Activity
E	Excluded (no alternative provision made)	Authorised Absence
G	Family holiday (NOT agreed or days in excess of agreement)	Unauthorised Absence
H	Family holiday (agreed)	Authorised Absence
I	Illness (NOT medical or dental appointments)	Authorised Absence
J	Interview	Approved Educational Activity
L	Late (before registers closed)	Present
M	Medical/Dental appointments	Authorised Absence
N	No reason yet provided for absence	Unauthorised Absence
O	Other unauthorised absence (not covered by other codes or descriptions)	Unauthorised Absence
P	Approved sporting activity	Approved Educational Activity
R	Day set aside exclusively for religious observance	Authorised Absence
S	Study Leave	Authorised Absence
T	Traveller absence	Authorised Absence
U	Late and arrived after registers closed	Unauthorised Absence
V	Educational visit or trip	Approved Educational Activity
W	Work experience (not work based training)	Approved Educational Activity
X	Untimetabled sessions for non-compulsory school age pupils	Not counted in possible attendances
Y	Partial and forced closure	Not counted in possible attendances

Z	Pupil not on roll	Not counted in possible attendances
#	School closed to all pupils	Not counted in possible attendances

Further information on the correct use of these symbols can be found at:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-attendance>