Highters Heath Community School

Attendance policy

This policy was approved by Trustees on 17th December 2025.

Pam Garrington

…… Chair of Trustees

Adopted on 5th January 2026.

This policy will be reviewed at least annually on or before 17th December 2026 or sooner as the trustees consider necessary in response to the ongoing review of attendance data.

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1 Aim of this policy

1.1 To support excellent levels of attendance for all pupils to enable fulfilment of their potential at Highter Heath Community School, "the school".

1.2 This policy has been prepared with regard to the school's statutory duties relating to attendance, including those set out in the Department for Education's statutory guidance entitled Working Together to Improve School Attendance (2024), which is referred to in this policy as the "DfE Attendance Guidance".

2 Key principles

- High levels of attendance and punctuality levels are promoted and rewarded.
- It is the responsibility of everybody in the school to improve attendance and punctuality.
- Where attendance or punctuality fall short of expected standards, steps will be taken to address this, and sanctions may be applied in accordance with the behaviour policy.
- Some pupils find it harder than others to attend school. The school will work with pupils, parents and other local partners to remove any barriers to attendance.
- Subject to the terms of this policy, any day-to-day attendance issues that parents or pupils have should be discussed with the class teacher. Where more detailed support around attendance is required, parents and pupils should contact Mrs Lindsay (Deputy Head/ SENCO/ Attendance Lead).

3 Roles and responsibilities

3.1 The school

3.1.1 The school will:

- Develop and maintain a whole school culture that promotes the benefit of high attendance. This includes celebrating good attendance as part of the weekly celebrations assembly, and entries to a monthly raffle for 100% attendance and significant improvers.
- Work with pupils and their families, building strong relationships, to support high levels of attendance and punctuality and understand any barriers to attendance.
- Investigate unexplained or unjustified absence, applying sanctions where appropriate.
- Take into account individual needs when implementing this policy, including having regard to the school 's obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

- Share information, including returns information required to be shared in accordance with regulations[1] and the DfE Attendance Guidance, and work collaboratively with the local authority, other schools in the area and other partners including, where required, making appropriate referrals in accordance with local procedures, legislation and guidance.
- Regularly monitor, review and analyse attendance and absence data, including to identify pupils or cohorts that require attendance support and to set targets for the future.
- Ensure that all pupils can access full-time education, putting strategies in place where there is evidence to suggest that this is not the case.
- Ensure that the governor advocates, trustees and school's leadership team work together to monitor attendance levels and the effectiveness of this policy.
- Ensure that all legislation and guidance are complied with and reflected in our policies and procedures, including the DfE Attendance Guidance.
- Have in place appropriate safeguarding responses for children who are at risk of missing education, having regard to the statutory guidance Keeping Children Safe in Education (please refer to our child protection policy – https://www.excelsiormat.org/assets/Documents/Attachments/Child-Protection-and-Safeguarding-Policy-2025.pdf
- Provide information requested by the Secretary of State, including termly absence data collected by the Department for Education.
- Regularly inform parents about their child's attendance and absence levels
- Support pupils who are returning to education following long-term absence.
- Ensure that effective systems to record and report attendance data are in place, including accurate completion of admission and attendance registers, using an electronic management information system.

[1] School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024

- Assign overall responsibility for championing and improving attendance at the school to a designated senior leader, known as the Senior Attendance Champion.
- Observe and fulfil the responsibilities set out in guidance issued by the Department for Education (Summary table of responsibilities for school attendance (applies from 19 August 2024) (publishing.service.gov.uk) to the extent not covered above or elsewhere in this policy.

3.2 **Parents and carers**

We expect parents and carers to:

- Ensure that their child arrives at the school on time, in the correct uniform, and with the necessary equipment.
- Promote the importance of regular attendance at home.
- Follow the correct procedure for reporting the absence of their child from the school (see section 6.3 below).
- Avoid unnecessary absences.
- Keep the school informed of any circumstances which may affect their child's attendance.
- Not take their child out of education for holidays during term time (see section 6.5. below)
- Inform the school in advance of any proposed change of address for their child(ren), along with the name of the parent with whom the child shall live.
- Observe and fulfil their responsibilities set out in the guidance issued by the Department for Education (Summary table of responsibilities for school attendance (applies from 19 August 2024) (publishing.service.gov.uk) .

3.3 **Pupils**

We expect pupils to:

- Attend the school regularly and on time.
- Be punctual to all lessons.
- Follow the correct procedure if they arrive to the school late (see sections 4 and 5 below).

3.4 **Senior Attendance Champion**

3.4.1 The Senior Attendance Champion ("SAC") at the school is Mrs Lindsay.

3.4.2 The SAC has overall responsibility for championing and improving attendance at the school and will:

- Set a clear vision for improving and maintaining good attendance.
- Establish and maintain effective systems for tackling absence and ensure that these are followed by all staff.
- Evaluate and monitor attendance expectations and processes.
- Have a strong grasp of absence data to focus the collective efforts of the school.
- Ensure that key attendance messages are communicated to parents and pupils.
- Provide data and reports to support the work of the board of trustees (see below).

3.5 The board of trustees

The board of trustees will:

- Take an active role in attendance improvement, recognise the importance of school attendance and promote it across the trust and school's ethos and policies.
- Ensure the school 's leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties.
- Regularly review attendance data, discuss and challenge trends, and help school leaders focus improvement efforts on the individual pupils or cohorts who need it most.
- Ensure school staff receive adequate training on attendance, including dedicated training for staff with specific attendance responsibilities and any additional training that would help support pupils or cohorts overcome common barriers to attendance.
- Require the school to report to the governor advocates on the school 's attendance at regular intervals.
- Require the trust to have a dedicated attendance team who will drive improvement across the trust and act as a central point for academies with attendance queries.

4 Registration

4.1 The school maintains an attendance register and uses this to record each pupil's attendance at the start of the school day and again in the afternoon.

Registration session	Start time	End time
Morning	8.55am	9.25am
Afternoon	12.55pm (Infants)	1.10pm
	1.10pm (Juniors)	1.25pm

4.2 Pupils who arrive after the start of a registration session but before the end of the registration session will be marked as late. Where pupils arrive after the end of a registration session, the process set out at section 5 applies.

4.3 The register is marked using the national statutory attendance and absence codes which can be found in the DfE Attendance Guidance.

5 Late arrival

5.1 If a pupil arrives at the school after the relevant registration period has ended but within the relevant session, they must immediately go to the school office to sign in and provide a reason for the lateness, to enable the school to establish the appropriate attendance or absence code. In the absence of a satisfactory explanation, the register will be marked as unauthorised absence.

6 Reasons for absence and how to report or request authorisation

6.1 ***Authorised absence*** – absence will only be authorised where the school has given approval in advance for a pupil to not be in attendance or has accepted an explanation offered afterwards as justification for the absence. Only the school can authorise absence.

6.2 ***Unauthorised absence*** – absence will be marked as unauthorised where the school is not satisfied with the reasons given for the absence.

6.3 **Reporting absence from the school**

6.3.1 Where a pupil is to be absent from the school without prior permission, the parent/carer should inform the school by telephone on the morning of the day of the first absence and let the school know when they expect the pupil to return. If the return date is not confirmed on the first day of absence, parents/carers must contact the school on each day of absence.

6.3.2 Any unexplained absence will be followed up by the school promptly. This may include a phone call home, an invitation to a meeting to discuss the absence and/or a safe and well check visit to the child's home.

6.3.3 In cases where the school needs clarification to accurately record the absence in the attendance register, the parents/cares may be asked to provide the school with medical evidence, such as a note from the child's doctor to support an absence for illness. If satisfactory evidence is not provided, the absence may be marked as unauthorised.

6.4 Appointments

6.4.1 Medical, dental and other essential appointments for a pupil should take place outside of school hours where this is reasonably possible.

6.4.2 Where an appointment must take place during school time, the pupil should attend the school for as much of the day as possible and as much prior notice as possible should be given to the school office, who will inform relevant staff members.

6.5 Leave of absence (including holidays during term time)

6.5.1 The school will grant permission for a pupil to be absent from school in the circumstances described in paragraph 37 of the DfE Attendance Guidance which can be summarised as follows:

- Taking part in a regulated performance or employment abroad.
- Attendance at an interview for entry into another educational setting or future employment.
- Study leave for public examinations.
- Temporary, time-limited part-time timetable.
- Other exceptional circumstances.

6.5.2 Parents/carers should make every effort to avoid taking pupils out of education for holidays or other extended leave during term time.

6.5.3 To request a leave of absence, parents/carers must make the request in advance and in writing addressed to the headteacher and, wherever possible, at least 4 school weeks ahead of the planned leave.

6.5.4 Where a leave of absence is requested as above, the headteacher will consider the specific facts and circumstances relating to the request. The decision:

- Will be confirmed in writing.
- Is solely at the headteacher's discretion.

- Is final.

6.5.5 Where permission is granted, the headteacher will confirm the number of days and dates of absence which are authorised.

6.5.6 If permission is not granted and the parents/carers proceed to take their child out of the school , the absence will be marked as unauthorised, and parents may be issued with a penalty notice or be subject to prosecution by the local authority (see section 7 below).

6.6 **Religious observance**

6.6.1 We recognise that pupils of certain faiths may need to participate in days of religious observance. Absence from the school will be authorised where a day of religious observance:

- Falls during school time.
- Has been exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil belongs.

6.6.2 We ask that parents/carers notify the school in advance where absence is required due to religious observance.

7 Addressing poor attendance and punctuality

7.1 The school will use data to target attendance improvement efforts to the pupils or groups of pupils who need it most. In doing so, the school, led by the SAC, will:

- Monitor and analyse weekly attendance patterns, proactively using data to identify pupils at risk of poor attendance.
- Provide regular attendance reports to class teachers and relevant leaders.
- Identify pupils who need support from wider partners, as soon as possible, and deliver this support in a targeted manner.
- Conduct thorough analysis of half-termly, termly and full-year data to identify patterns and trends.
- Benchmark school attendance data at each level against local, regional and national level.
- Monitor the impact of school strategies and actions to improve attendance on particular pupils and particular groups.
- Work with the local authority and other local partners to identify groups.
- Hold regular meetings with the parents or carers of pupils who the school and/or local authority consider to be vulnerable.

7.2 Our procedures for managing unexplained absences can be found here: https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/downloads/file/29517/support_first_legal_action_-_information_for_parents (Birmingham schools), or

https://www.dudley.gov.uk/residents/learning-and-school/education-support-service/school-attendance-advice/ (Dudley schools)

7.3 Where absence or punctuality is a cause for concern, for example because there is:

- a pattern of unauthorised absence;
- a question over the reasons provided for a particular absence or late arrival;
- persistent lateness;

we will make contact with the parents/carers with a view to working together to support improved attendance and/or punctuality. This will usually take the form of a supportive meeting where an Early Help Assessment will take place. This will help the school identify what wider support services will be needed.

7.4 In cases where the school has been unable to establish a clear reason for absence and/or has welfare concerns about the pupil, a home welfare check may be carried out.

7.5 Failure to attend or arrive at lessons on time may also be dealt with as a disciplinary matter in accordance with the behaviour policy.

7.6 Absence will be classed as persistent where it falls below 90% across the academic year. Absence at this level is very likely to hinder educational prospects and we expect full parental cooperation and support to urgently address these cases. Intervention steps may include implementation of an attendance action plan, referral to other agencies, and/or seeking to put in place an attendance contract.

7.7 Where out-of-school barriers to attendance are identified, the school will signpost and support access to any additional services.

7.8 Where parents/carers have failed to ensure that their child of compulsory school age is regularly attending the school, and wider support in accordance with this policy is not appropriate or effective, we may consider issuing a penalty notice. A penalty notice is a financial penalty (£80 if paid within 21 days; £160 if paid within 28 days) imposed on parents, which is intended to change behaviour without the need for criminal prosecution.

7.9 When considering whether to issue a penalty notice, we will have regard to:

- The National Framework for penalty notices as set out in paragraphs 176–202 of the DfE Attendance Guidance.
- The local authority's code of conduct for issuing penalty notices.

7.10 In the event that a penalty notice is issued but is not paid within 28 days, the local authority will decide whether to proceed to prosecution. The local authority also has separate powers to prosecute parents if their child of compulsory school age fails to attend school regularly.