

Hamilton School

Striving to be a great school where people work together to transform lives

Tel: 0121 464 1676

Hamilton Road, Handsworth, Birmingham, B21 8AH

Fax: 0121 464 4808

Email: enquiry@hamilton.bham.sch.uk

Student Attendance Policy

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1. Aims

Our school aims to meet its obligations with regards to school attendance by:

Promoting good attendance and reducing absence, including persistent absence

Ensuring every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled

Acting early to address patterns of absence

We will also support parents to perform their legal duty to ensure their children of compulsory school age attend school unless there is a valid reason not to, and will promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

Good school attendance is key to children's learning. Our students learn best when they have regular access to consistent approaches to their learning.

2. Legislation and guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the [school attendance guidance](#) (July 2019) 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:

- [The Education Act 1996](#)
- [The Education Act 2002](#)
- [The Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2010](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2011](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2016](#)
- [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.

3. School procedures

3.1 Attendance register

By law, all schools (except those where all pupils are boarders) are required to keep an attendance register, and all pupils must be placed on this register.

The attendance register will be taken at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. It will mark whether every pupil is:

Present

Attending an approved off-site educational activity

Absent

Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

The original entry

The amended entry

The reason for the amendment

The date on which the amendment was made

The name and position of the person who made the amendment

See appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes. (these include covid sub codes)

Every entry in the attendance register will be preserved for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

Pupils must arrive in school by 9am on each school day.

The register for the first session will be taken at 9.15am and will be kept open until 9.25am. The register for the second session will be taken at 1.05pm and will be kept open until 1.15pm.

3.2 Unplanned absence

Parents must notify the school on the first day of an unplanned absence – for example, if their child is unable to attend due to ill health either via the school app or by phone. All calls should be made no later than 7.30am, or as soon as practically possible (see also section 6). This is due to staffing costs and distribution of staff throughout the school.

Absence due to illness will be authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may ask parents to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents will be notified of this in advance.

3.3 Medical or dental appointments

Missing registration for a medical or dental appointment is counted as an authorised absence; advance notice is required for authorising these absences.

However, we encourage parents to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

If your child has a medical appointment during the school day, please ring the school to let us know or email enquiry@hamilton.bham.sch.uk. You may be asked for evidence of the appointment. This is for our records.

Applications for other types of absence in term time must also be made in advance. Information relating to whether the school can authorise such absences can be found in section 4.

3.4 Lateness and punctuality

A pupil who arrives late but before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code.

A pupil who arrives after the register has closed will be marked as late (after registration is closed), using the appropriate code.

We will always endeavor to support Parents to arrive on time to school. We may set target times to work towards throughout the year. We will also inform Parents about the lessons the child is missing each time they are late. We want to work with Parents to improve punctuality.

3.5 Following up absence

The school will follow up any absences to ascertain the reason, ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary, identify whether the absence is approved or not and identify the correct attendance code to use.

Wherever possible, it is important that Parents give a reason for their child's absence when they inform the school that their child will not be attending that day. If no reason is given, we will follow this up on the same day to make sure we are aware of why a child may be absent from school. If no clear reason can be obtained, we will liaise with the safeguarding lead to ascertain the next steps.

3.6 Reporting to parents

We send home a copy of the attendance record at the end of each school year. Where attendance has been below 90%, we will write to the Parents and inform them that their child's attendance needs improving. We will offer an early help appointment where Parents can explain the issues around the attendance. We will then work with Parents to put in a plan of action. Where attendance improves, we will inform Parents. We also send out certificates each term for 100% attendance.

3.7 Other factors that may contribute to attendance issues.

Transport: the majority of our students travel to and from school via minibuses provided by the local authority. These buses can be late, break down, and have other problems that can prevent the prompt arrival of the students to school. Some children have missed significant periods of school due to transport being delayed because families have moved out of the local authority.

Sleep: Sleep issues are a frequent problem presented by Parents of the students that attend our school. We work with Parents to develop a plan that can improve sleep issues. We invite Parents into school to work with our Clinical Psychologist and the Pastoral manager.

Behaviour: Many of our student's exhibit behaviours that can interrupt the daily routine and can prevent Parents getting their child on to the minibus or into school on time.

Where behaviour is the cause of attendance issues, we work with families to write an action plan of strategies that can help regulate their child.

Covid-19: Covid-19 has had a huge impact upon student's attendance. Many students have missed large proportions of school due to national lockdown, or because of isolation. This is incredibly challenging for both the students, their families and the class teams.

Where a national lockdown is enforced, we will attempt to contact Parents every week to check in and see what support the family require. If the class teacher is unable to make contact with a family, it is passed on to the safeguarding team who evaluate the risk and either write to the family, or carry out a home visit. If this is unsuccessful, we will liaise with any sibling's schools to establish if we have cause for concern. If we believe we have a reason to, we will make a referral to social care.

4. Authorised and unauthorised absence

4.1 Granting approval for term-time absence

Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence to pupils during term time unless they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'.

We define 'exceptional circumstances' as the instance when there is no other course of action that can be taken. It is in the child's best interests that the leave be taken, and that these interests outweigh the amount of education that will be missed while the child is absent from school.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific factors, circumstances and relevant context behind the request. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the head teacher's discretion.

Valid reasons for authorised absence include:

Illness and medical/dental appointments – as explained in sections 3.2 and 3.3

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

Exceptional circumstances are as follows:

- death of parent/carer or sibling of the pupil
- life threatening or critical illness of parent or sibling of the pupil

- Parent/ Carer recuperation from critical illness or surgery (leave request to be made within 6 months of recovery and medical evidence required.)

If a Parent chooses to take their child out of school and the absence is unauthorised, Parents will receive a letter from the school explaining the implications and the possibility of legal action being taken. We will also invite Parents into school to discuss a plan of action to ensure that their child's attendance improves.

4.2 Legal sanctions

Schools can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age.

If issued with a penalty notice, parents must pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the local authority.

The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice ultimately rests with the headteacher, following the local authority's code of conduct for issuing penalty notices. This may take into account:

A number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year

One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission

Where an excluded pupil is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason

If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute the parent or withdraw the notice.

5. Strategies for promoting attendance

We send out letters and certificates to congratulate either perfect attendance, or improved attendance. We also promote good attendance through our half-termly newsletter. Where appropriate, we work with our students to explain the importance of attending school regularly. As our students are autistic, most of our students prefer to come to school, as it is part of their daily routine.

Where attendance is not improving, we offer a range of support. Early help is vital to identify the problems before they develop or worsen. We hold meetings with Parents and we run attendance workshops to inform Parents about the strategies we can support with to improve their child's attendance.

Hamilton School has a dedicated Pastoral and Inclusion team. They are on hand to discuss issues that parents have with their child's attendance and can offer support and guidance.

6. Attendance monitoring

The attendance officer monitors pupil absence on a daily basis. The attendance officers meet fortnightly to discuss attendance issues and compile a report at the end of each half term to discuss next steps.

Parents are expected to call the school in the morning if their child is going to be absent due to ill health (see section 3.2).

Parents are expected to call each day to inform the school of the continuing absence, unless a time period for the absence had already been agreed. .

If a pupil's absence goes above 5 days we will contact the parents to discuss the reasons for this.

If after contacting parents a pupil's absence continue to rise, we will consider involving an education welfare officer.

The persistent absence threshold is 10%. If a pupil's individual overall absence rate is greater than or equal to 10%, the pupil will be classified as a persistent absentee.

Pupil-level absence data is collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. We compare our attendance data to the national average, and share this with governors.

At Hamilton School we collect individual student data, and also whole school, to track attendance. This is for internal use only. We use a system of recording attendance called Sims. Sims is password protected and can only be used by staff who have the required authority. We analyse data from individual students to look for possible patterns of absence and for the reasons given for a student being absent from school.

Children Missing education

A child going missing, particularly repeatedly, can act as a vital warning sign of a range of safeguarding risks, including abuse and neglect, which may include sexual abuse or exploitation; child criminal exploitation; mental health problems; substance abuse and other issues. Early intervention is necessary to identify the existence of any underlying safeguarding risks and to help prevent the risk of them going missing in future.

Hamilton School always hold two or more emergency contact numbers for each pupil. All our attendance work will liaise closely with the DSL. We will adapt our attendance monitoring on an individual basis to ensure the safety of each child at our school.

Deletion from Roll

Deletions from the Admission Register A pupil can lawfully be deleted from the admission register on the grounds prescribed in regulation 8 of the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 as amended.

Amendments to the Admission Register and Attendance Register

Every amendment made to the admission register and the attendance register must include: the original entry; the amended entry; the reason for the amendment; the date on which the amendment was made; and the name and position of the person who made the amendment. Preservation of the Admission Register and Attendance Register Every entry in the admission register and attendance register must be preserved for a period of three years after the date on which the entry was made.

All schools must notify the local authority when a pupil's name is to be deleted from the admission register under any of the grounds prescribed in regulation 8 of the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 as amended, as soon as the ground for removal is met and no later than the time at which the pupil's name is removed from the register. This duty does not apply where the pupil's name is removed after they have completed the school's final year, unless the local authority requests for such information to be provided.

Where a school notifies a local authority that a pupil's name is to be deleted from the admission register, the school must provide the local authority with the following information:

- The full name of the pupil;
- The full name and address of any parent with whom the pupil lives;
- At least one telephone number of any parent with whom the pupil lives;
- The full name and address of the parent who the pupil is going to live with, and the date the pupil is expected to start living there, if applicable;
- The name of pupil's other or future school and the pupil's start date or expected start date there, if applicable; and
- The ground prescribed in regulation 8 under which the pupil's name is to be deleted from the admission register.

7. Roles and responsibilities

7.1 The governing board

The governing board is responsible for monitoring attendance figures for the whole school on at least a termly basis. It also holds the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy.

Governors are inquisitive about the reasons for poor attendance and seek answers from attendance officers to explain the rationale and the strategies used to improve attendance figures. Regular updates are provided for Governors in safeguarding sessions as attendance can have a big impact on safeguarding concerns.

7.2 The Headteacher

The headteacher is responsible for ensuring this policy is implemented consistently across the school, and for monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors.

The headteacher also supports other staff in monitoring the attendance of individual pupils and issues fixed-penalty notices, where necessary.

7.3 The attendance officer

The attendance officer:

Monitors attendance data at the school and individual pupil level

Reports concerns about attendance to the headteacher

Works with education welfare officers to tackle persistent absence

Arranges calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues

Advises the headteacher when to issue fixed-penalty notices

7.4 Class teachers

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

7.5 Office staff

Office staff are expected to take calls from parents about absence and record it on the school system using the correct codes. Office staff will also make enquiries as to why a student is absent from school.

8. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Pastoral manager and the Inclusion manager. At every review, the policy will be shared with the governing board.

9. Links with other policies

This policy is linked to our safeguarding policy.

Signed 

Chair of Governors

Date 24th March 2022

Appendix A: attendance codes

The following codes are taken from the DfE's guidance on school attendance.

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	Pupil is present at morning registration
\	Present (pm)	Pupil is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Pupil arrives late before register has closed
B	Off-site educational activity	Pupil is at a supervised off-site educational activity approved by the school
D	Dual registered	Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
J	Interview	Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
P	Sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
V	Educational trip or visit	Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised, or approved, by the school
W	Work experience	Pupil is on a work experience placement

Code	Definition	Scenario
Authorised absence		
C	Authorised leave of absence	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
E	Excluded	Pupil has been excluded but no alternative provision has been made
H	Authorised holiday	Pupil has been allowed to go on holiday due to exceptional circumstances
I	Illness	School has been notified that a pupil will be absent due to illness
M	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment

R	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance
S	Study leave	Year 11 pupil is on study leave during their public examinations
T	Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence	Pupil from a Traveller community is travelling, as agreed with the school
Unauthorised absence		
G	Unauthorised holiday	Pupil is on a holiday that was not approved by the school
N	Reason not provided	Pupil is absent for an unknown reason (this code should be amended when the reason emerges, or replaced with code O if no reason for absence has been provided after a reasonable amount of time)
O	Unauthorised absence	School is not satisfied with reason for pupil's absence
U	Arrival after registration	Pupil arrived at school after the register closed

Code	Definition	Scenario
X	Not required to be in school	Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
Y	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances	School site is closed, there is disruption to travel as a result of a local/national emergency, or pupil is in custody
Z	Pupil not on admission register	Register set up but pupil has not yet joined the school
#	Planned school closure	Whole or partial school closure due to half-term/bank holiday/INSET day

Appendix B. Covid and Lockdown Restrictions

1. Guidance and definitions

This policy meets the requirements of the Department for Education's (DfE's) [guidance](#) on restricting attendance during the national lockdown and local requirements from Birmingham City Council.

Where we refer to 'close contact', this means:

- Face-to-face contact, including:
 - Being coughed on
 - A face-to-face conversation within 1 metre
- Being within 1 metre for 1 minute or longer without face-to-face contact
- Sexual contact
- Being within 2 metres for more than 15 minutes (either as a one-off contact or added up together over one day)
- Travelling in a small vehicle or a plane

This definition is from the DfE's [guidance on restricting attendance during the national lockdown \(linked above, page 24\)](#).

2. Pupils eligible to attend school during national lockdown

2.1 Vulnerable children

We expect all vulnerable children to attend school. In particular, children with a social worker are expected to attend due to their safeguarding and welfare needs.

The definition of vulnerable children includes those who:

- Are assessed as being in need under section 17 of the Children Act 1989, including:
 - Looked-after children
 - Children with a child in need plan
 - Children with a child protection plan
- Have an education, health and care (EHC) plan

Parents/carers must inform the Head Teacher if their child:

- Falls into one of the categories above (and is therefore expected to attend school) but parents/carers wish for their child to learn from home
- Has had a change in circumstances, which means their child now falls into one of the categories above
- Does not fit into one of the categories above but parents/carers have concerns that their child is otherwise vulnerable

2.2 Children of critical workers

Parents/carers who are critical workers **should keep their child at home if they can**. If this is not possible, children of critical workers are able to attend school.

Critical workers are those whose work is critical to the coronavirus and EU transition responses, including parents/carers who work in:

- Health and social care

- Education and childcare (including social workers)
- Key public services (including the justice system, religious staff, charities delivering key frontline services, those responsible for the management of the deceased, and journalists and broadcasters who are providing public service broadcasting)
- Local and national government who are involved in delivering the coronavirus response, EU transition or essential public services
- Food and other necessary goods
- Public safety and national security
- Transport and border (including transport systems through which supply chains pass, and the construction and operational support of critical transport and border infrastructure through which supply chains pass)
- Utilities, communication and financial services

Parents/carers that qualify must notify the school if they wish for their child to attend, by contacting the Head Teacher.

3. Where ‘not attending in circumstances related to coronavirus’ applies

For the 2020/21 academic year, there is a new category of non-attendance to capture circumstances where pupils cannot attend school due to COVID-19: ‘Not attending in circumstances related to coronavirus’.

This applies where a pupil’s travel to, or attendance at, school would be:

- Against guidance from Public Health England and/or the Department of Health and Social Care relating to the incidence of coronavirus or its transmission
- Prohibited by any legislation or statutory directions relating to the incidence or transmission of coronavirus

For example:

3.1 Pupil is not eligible to attend school and must stay at home

Pupils that do not fit into an eligible group (see section 3) must follow public health advice and not come into school.

3.2 Pupil due to attend school develops symptoms or lives with someone who develops symptoms

The pupil’s parent/carer must notify the school on the first day that their child needs to self-isolate. The pupil will stay at home until they or the symptomatic person they live with receives their coronavirus test result.

If the pupil’s test result is negative: the pupil will return to school when they feel well and no longer have symptoms similar to coronavirus. They should continue to stay at home if they remain unwell (e.g. with a different illness).

If the symptomatic person the pupil lives with tests negative: the pupil will stop self-isolating and return to school.

3.3 Pupil due to attend school or a ‘close contact’ of theirs receives a positive test result

The pupil’s parent/carer must notify the school about the positive test result as soon as possible.

Pupils who test positive must self-isolate for at least 10 days from the onset of symptoms (i.e. the day the symptoms started and the next 10 full days), and must only return to school when they no longer have symptoms (other than a cough or a loss of sense of smell or taste).

If a member of the pupil's household tests positive, the pupil must self-isolate for 10 days from the onset of the household member's symptoms (as above, the isolation period includes the day the symptoms started and the next 10 full days).

If a 'close contact' of the pupil tests positive, the pupil must self-isolate for 10 days from the day after the pupil last met with the 'close contact' who received the positive result (i.e. the isolation period includes the date of the last contact and the next 10 full days).

See the definition for 'close contact' in section 1 of this appendix.

3.4 Pupil due to attend school is required to shield

Shielding is in place during the national lockdown. Pupils who are clinically extremely vulnerable should not attend school.

4. Remote learning provision

The school will provide access to remote education for pupils not attending school for the scenarios included in the section above, or other examples that come under the category of 'not attending in circumstances related to coronavirus'.

See the Remote Learning Policy.

5. Recording attendance of all pupils

We will take our attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. It will mark whether every pupil is:

- Present
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity
- Absent
- Unable to attend due to 'exceptional circumstances'
- Not attending in circumstances related to coronavirus

See Section 9 for the relevant absence codes and when we will use them.

6. Following up on absence

Where any child we expect to attend school does not attend, or stops attending, we will:

- Follow up on their absence with their parent or carer by telephone.
- Notify their social worker, where they have one

Parents will not be penalised if their child does not attend school during this period.

7. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the local authority or Department for Education is updated. At every review, it will be approved by the full governing board.

8. Pupil absence codes

The following codes are taken from the DfE's [guidance](#) on restricting attendance during the national lockdown, and its [addendum](#) to the school attendance guidance for the 2020/21 academic year.

If not covered here, our normal attendance codes apply.

Code	Definition	Scenario
X	Not attending in circumstances related to coronavirus (COVID-19)	Pupil is not eligible to attend school and is learning from home
X	Not attending in circumstances related to coronavirus (COVID-19)	Pupil is a child of a critical worker (and therefore eligible to attend school) but is learning from home
X	Not attending in circumstances related to coronavirus (COVID-19)	Pupil is a child of a critical worker attending school part-time, and not expected to attend this session
C	Leave of absence authorised by the school	Pupil is a child of a critical worker and expected to attend the session, but has not attended (and there isn't another authorised absence code that is more applicable)
C	Leave of absence authorised by the school	Vulnerable pupil is eligible for a place in school but their parent/carer wants them to learn from home
X	Not attending in circumstances related to coronavirus (COVID-19)	Pupil due to attend school has to self-isolate because they have symptoms or live with someone who has symptoms, and are waiting for their test results
I	Illness	Pupil due to attend school remains unwell following a negative test result (i.e. with a different illness)
I	Illness	Pupil due to attend school has to continue to self-isolate because they tested positive
X	Not attending in circumstances related to coronavirus (COVID-19)	Pupil due to attend school has to self-isolate because someone they live with tested positive
X	Not attending in circumstances related to coronavirus (COVID-19)	Pupil due to attend school has to self-isolate because they are a close contact of someone who tested positive
X	Not attending in circumstances related to coronavirus (COVID-19)	Pupil is required to shield