

Student Attendance Policy

Contents

1. Aims	2
2. Legislation and guidance	2
3. School procedures	2
4. Authorised and unauthorised absence.....	4
5. Strategies for promoting attendance	5
6. Attendance monitoring	6
7. Roles and responsibilities	7
8. Monitoring arrangements	9
9. Links with other policies	9
Appendix A: attendance codes	11

1. Aims

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

Promoting good attendance and reducing absence, including persistent and severe absence

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

Acting early to address patterns of absence

Providing support to families to ensure that all students attend school regularly

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.

The school meets the requirements set out in Working Together to Improve School attendance by having a Senior Attendance Champion. This is our Strategic Pastoral Manager, Sarah Eaton.

seaton@hamilton.bham.sch.uk

2. Legislation and guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the statutory guidance working together to improve school attendance (September 2024) from the Department for Education (DfE).

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 students are boarders) are required to keep an attendance register, and all students must be placed on this register.

The attendance register is taken twice a day, at both the start of the morning and afternoon sessions (9.05am and 1pm). It will mark whether every student 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.

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

Students must arrive in school by 9.05am on each school day.

The register will open at 9am and will close at 9.30am. Any child arriving at school after 9.15 will receive an L code. Any child arriving to school after 9.30am will receive a U code. The register for the second session will be taken at 1pm and will be kept open until 1.30pm. This is to allow for the secondary lunches to finish.

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 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. We will not normally authorize an entire day for a medical appointment. If this is required, prior notice should be given to the school.

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

A student 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 their child is missing each time they are late. We want to work with Parents to improve punctuality. Regular lateness can have a detrimental impact on children's progress.

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

All Parents will receive a copy of their child's attendance record at the end of each school year. Where attendance has dropped to below 90%, we will work with parents to improve their child's school attendance. This may include home visits, letters, dojo posts, and meetings with a member of the Pastoral and Inclusion team. We will also 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. Each child and their family will require a bespoke approach to the support offered.

3.7 Other factors that may contribute to attendance issues.

Transport: The majority of our students travel to and from school via minibuses or taxis provided by the local authority. These vehicles 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 Strategic 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.

4. Authorised and unauthorised absence

4.1 Granting approval for term-time absence

Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence to students 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, considering the specific factors, circumstances, and relevant context behind the request. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the head teacher's discretion. Please note that no leave of absence will be agreed for a holiday.

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 student's parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart

Traveller students 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 student is attending educational provision

Exceptional circumstances are as follows:

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

The school or local authority can fine parents/carers for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age. If issued with a fine, or penalty notice, each parent/carers must pay £80 within 21 days or £160 within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the local authority. Penalty notices can be issued by a headteacher, local authority officer or the police. The decision on whether to issue a penalty notice may consider: The 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 or withdraw the notice.

More information can be found in the guidance 'Working Together to Improve School Attendance' September 2024

5. Strategies for promoting attendance

We 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. If a child does not want to come to school, we will work with the child and their family to understand what the barriers are, and collaboratively write a plan of action.

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.

Where attendance improves, we will call Parents and write to them to let them know that they are doing well, and that their child's attendance is improving.

6. Attendance monitoring

The Pastoral and Inclusion team monitors student absence on a daily basis. The team then meet weekly to discuss attendance issues and begin any actions required, and then compile a report at the end of each half term to review actions taken.

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 student's absence goes above 3 days we will contact the parents to discuss the reasons for this.

If after contacting parents a student's absence continue to rise, we will consider taking further action, such as a home visit, or speaking to Childrens services for advice.

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

Severe absence is any attendance that is 50% or below. This level of poor attendance is rare, however the senior attendance champion will take necessary action to ensure that the attendance improves.

Student-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, as well 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.

If a child's attendance does not improve after the interventions from school staff, the Pastoral and Inclusion team will seek advice and further support from the Early help team and the Attendance team at the Local Authority. If there are safeguarding concerns linked to poor attendance, the Pastoral and Inclusion team will directly liaise with the Designated Safeguarding Lead who will seek advice from social care and take further action if required.

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 holds 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 student's name is removed from the register. This duty does not apply where the student'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 student'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 student;
- The full name and address of any parent with whom the student lives;
- At least one telephone number of any parent with whom the student lives;
- The full name and address of the parent who the student is going to live with, and the date the student is expected to start living there, if applicable;
- The name of student's other or future school and the student's start date or expected start date there, if applicable; and
- The ground prescribed in regulation 8 under which the student'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 students and issues fixed-penalty notices, where necessary.

7.3 The Senior Attendance Champion

The Senior Attendance Champion:

Monitors attendance data at the school and individual student level

Reports concerns about attendance to the headteacher

Works with education and attendance team 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 Inclusion Manager

The Inclusion Managers will ensure that all absences are recorded with the correct codes, and that any absences without a reason are followed up and any actions are taken. The Inclusion Managers will create a weekly report for the attention of the Senior Attendance Champion to evaluate and provide next steps. They will also meet with Parents regarding punctuality, sickness absence and behaviour related absence. The Inclusion Managers will also have responsibility for any students that are not in school due to emotionally based school absence.

7.5 Class teachers

Class teachers are responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis, via the register, and informing the office of any student absences.

7.6 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 make enquiries as to why a student is absent from school. Office staff are to make the Pastoral and Inclusion team aware of any unanswered phone calls regarding attendance queries.

8. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Senior Attendance Champion. 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 5th December 2024

Appendix A: attendance codes

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

SCHOOL ATTENDANCE CODES - DESCRIPTIONS AND MEANINGS School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024

CODE	DESCRIPTION	MEANING
/	Present (AM)	Present
\	Present (PM)	Present
L	Late (before registers closed)	Present
B	Educated off site (NOT Dual registration)	Approved educational activity
K	LA arranged provision at a place other than a school	Approved educational activity
P	Approved sporting activity	Approved educational activity
V	Educational visit or trip	Approved educational activity
W	Work experience	Approved educational activity
C	Absent with leave (not covered by another appropriate code/description)	Authorised absence
C1	Absent due to participating in a regulated performance or regulated employment abroad	Authorised absence
C2	Part-time timetable	Authorised absence
E	Excluded (no alternative provision made)	Authorised absence
I	Illness (NOT medical or dental etc. appointments)	Authorised absence
J1	Interview	Authorised absence
M	Medical/Dental appointments	Authorised absence
R	Religious observance	Authorised absence
S	Study leave	Authorised absence
T	Traveller absence	Authorised absence
G	Family holiday (NOT agreed <u>or</u> days in excess of agreement)	Unauthorised absence
N	No reason yet provided for absence	Unauthorised absence
O	Unauthorised absence (not covered by any other code/description)	Unauthorised absence
U	Late (after registers closed)	Unauthorised absence

D	Dual registration (i.e. pupil attending other establishment)	Not counted in possible attendances
Q	Lack of transport or boarding access arrangements arranged by LA	Not counted in possible attendances
X	Untimetabled sessions for non-compulsory school-age pupils	Not counted in possible attendances
Y1	Transport normally provided by LA or school not available	Not counted in possible attendances
Y2	Widespread disruption to travel due to local, national or international emergency	Not counted in possible attendances
Y3	School partially closed	Not counted in possible attendances
Y4	Whole school site unexpectedly closed	Not counted in possible attendances
Y5	Pupil in criminal justice detention	Not counted in possible attendances
Y6	Travel or attendance contrary to public health guidance or law on transmission of disease	Not counted in possible attendances
Y7	Unable to attend due to unavoidable cause	Not counted in possible attendances
Z	Pupil not yet on roll	Not counted in possible attendances
#	School closed to pupils (planned closure)	Not counted in possible attendances

KEY

Present
Approved Education Activity (Present)
Authorised absence
Unauthorised absence
Not counted in possible attendances