

Attendance Policy

Harper Bell SDA School



Issue Date:

Version: V1

Review Date:

16/03/27 or when new legislation requires changes.

This policy will also be reviewed annually or when new legislation requires changes, whichever is the soonest. This policy is approved by *The Governing Body*.

Date approved:

Headteacher/Principal.....Susan Sidhu

Chair of Governors Richard Beamish

Date approved: 16/03/26

Date approved: 16/03/26

Harper Bell Seventh-day Adventist School

Attendance Policy

Contents

1. How this policy has been written
2. Why attendance matters
3. Our attendance processes
4. How families can support excellent attendance
5. Supporting pupils and families where attendance becomes a concern

Additional Information

- A. Roles and responsibilities
- B. Local support for attendance
- C. Authorised and unauthorised absence
- D. Legal sanctions
- E. Keeping and maintaining registers
- F. Monitoring attendance
- G. Links to other policies and legislation
- H. Policy monitoring
- I. Attendance codes

1. How this policy has been written

This attendance policy has been written to help families understand how Harper Bell Seventh-day Adventist School approaches attendance and punctuality.

At Harper Bell, we believe that strong attendance is essential for pupils to flourish academically, socially and spiritually. As a Christian school, we believe that every child is created with purpose and potential, and regular attendance ensures that pupils can fully participate in the learning, character development and community life of the school.

This policy reflects:

- Department for Education statutory guidance *Working Together to Improve School Attendance*
- Our commitment to strong family partnerships
- Our school values of **Love, Learning, Laughter, Prayer, Progress and Purpose**

We want this policy to be clear, supportive and transparent so that families understand how we work together to secure excellent attendance for every pupil.

2. Attendance is important

Attendance at school is essential. When pupils attend school regularly they benefit from:

- high quality teaching and learning
- strong friendships and social development
- opportunities to develop confidence and independence
- participation in enrichment and wider curriculum experiences
- belonging to a positive school community
-

At Harper Bell we aim to make school an irresistible place to learn, where pupils feel safe, valued and inspired to attend every day.

Our approach to attendance includes:

- building strong relationships with pupils and families

- creating a positive learning culture through our STARS expectations
- ensuring lessons begin with Strong Starts, helping pupils recall prior learning
- carefully monitoring attendance patterns
- celebrating excellent attendance and improvements
- supporting families where barriers to attendance arise

We expect pupils to attend school **at least 97% of the time** wherever possible. When attendance drops below this level, pupils can begin to miss important learning and experiences that cannot easily be replaced.

Attendance is therefore a shared responsibility between school, families and pupils.

The Headteacher holds overall responsibility for ensuring that attendance is prioritised and promoted across the school.

Senior leaders with attendance oversight are Mrs S. Sidhu and Mr J. Dearing.

Staff supporting the day-to-day attendance process are Mrs D. Dawati and Mrs S. Campbell. They support register checks, first-day contact, attendance monitoring, family communication and referral processes where required.

3. Our attendance processes

The school takes attendance registers twice daily in line with statutory requirements.

Registers are taken:

- **Morning session:** 8:30am
- **Afternoon session:** 1:15pm

Pupils are expected to arrive at school by **8:40am** so that they are ready for the start of learning.

Late arrival

- Pupils arriving after **8:40am** will be recorded as late.
- Pupils arriving after **9:00am** will be recorded as **absent for the morning session** in line with Department for Education guidance.

Punctuality is important because late arrival disrupts learning and causes pupils to miss the Strong Start of lessons, where key retrieval practice takes place.

First day absence procedures

If a pupil is absent and the school has not been notified:

1. The school will contact parents or carers by telephone or message.
2. If contact cannot be made, further attempts will be made throughout the day.
3. If absence continues without explanation, the school may carry out a **home visit** or involve the **Local Authority Attendance Service** to ensure the pupil is safe.

This safeguarding procedure is an important part of keeping pupils safe.

Monitoring attendance

Attendance is monitored:

- daily by school staff
- weekly by the attendance lead
- half-termly by senior leaders

Where patterns of absence begin to emerge, the school will contact families early so that support can be provided.

Recognising good attendance

At Harper Bell we celebrate and recognise excellent attendance. This may include:

- class attendance awards
- termly recognition certificates
- celebration assemblies
- rewards for improved attendance
- acknowledgement of strong attendance in school communications

Our aim is to celebrate commitment and improvement while reinforcing the importance of being in school every day.

4. How families can help

Families play a vital role in supporting good attendance and punctuality. We ask families to support us by focusing on three key areas:

- regular attendance
- punctual arrival
- clear communication about absence

Regular attendance

Families can support regular attendance by:

- avoiding holidays during term time
- booking medical appointments outside the school day wherever possible
- ensuring pupils attend school whenever they are well enough
- encouraging positive routines at home

Even small amounts of absence add up over time.

For example:

- **95% attendance = half a day missed every two weeks**
- **90% attendance = one day missed every two weeks**

This can significantly affect learning and progress.

Arriving on time

Pupils should arrive at school by **8:30am** so that they are ready to begin learning.

Being punctual helps pupils:

- settle calmly into the day
- take part in Strong Start retrieval activities
- avoid missing important instructions

Informing school about absence

If a pupil is absent, parents or carers must inform the school **before 8:30am** on the same day.

Absences can be reported through the school's 'Under the Weather' / absence reporting Microsoft Form on the school website, or by telephoning the school office on 0121 693 7742.

Parents should provide:

- the reason for absence
- the expected length of absence if known

If a pupil is absent for multiple days, parents must keep the school informed.

The school may request evidence in cases of repeated or extended absence, such as:

- appointment confirmations
- medical advice

Term-time leave

The Department for Education states that schools may only authorise leave during term time in **exceptional circumstances**.

Requests must:

- be made in writing
- be submitted before booking travel

Each request will be considered individually by the Headteacher.

Communication and support

If families are experiencing difficulties affecting attendance, we strongly encourage early communication with the school. The school will always aim to work in partnership with families to identify solutions and provide support.

A parent and carer attendance guide, including key legal information, support routes and an acronym glossary, will be made available to families and shared with new families joining the school so that the right information is available at the right time.

5. Supporting pupils and families where attendance becomes a concern

Harper Bell takes a supportive and graduated approach to improving attendance.

Attendance is monitored using an attendance support pathway, which identifies pupils whose attendance is beginning to fall.

Early support

When attendance begins to decline, the school may:

- contact parents to discuss concerns
- explore possible barriers to attendance
- offer support strategies
- monitor attendance closely

Targeted support

If attendance continues to decline, the school may:

- arrange a meeting with parents or carers
- create an **attendance improvement plan**
- implement targeted support
- involve external support services where appropriate

Formal intervention

Where attendance does not improve despite support, the school may involve:

- the Local Authority Attendance Service
- formal monitoring procedures
- legal intervention where required

Legal action is always considered **a last resort**, and the school will work with families to resolve attendance concerns before this stage wherever possible.

5. Supporting pupils and families where attendance becomes a concern

At Harper Bell Seventh-day Adventist School we work in **partnership with families to promote excellent attendance**. Our approach follows the Department for Education's principle that schools should **expect, monitor, listen, support and enforce** attendance where necessary.

Our aim is always to identify barriers early and provide support before attendance problems become entrenched.

Attendance improvement process

Our approach to improving attendance follows a clear stepped process. This ensures that:

- expectations are clear for all pupils and families
- attendance is monitored carefully
- barriers are identified early
- appropriate support is put in place
- statutory action is only used where support has not been successful.

The process used at Harper Bell is shown below.



This process ensures that:

Expect

The school promotes a culture where high attendance is expected from all pupils. Pupils are encouraged to attend school every day and families are supported in prioritising attendance.

Monitor

Attendance data is analysed regularly so that any patterns of absence can be identified early.

Listen and understand

Where concerns begin to appear, the school will speak with pupils and families to understand any barriers that may be affecting attendance.

Where three half-day sessions of absence, repeated lateness or another emerging pattern gives cause for concern, the school may arrange an informal attendance discussion with the family. Pupil voice will be gathered so that the child's experience and any barriers to attendance are understood.

At this early stage, the school will offer appropriate support, including Early Help where relevant, rather than waiting for attendance to deteriorate further.

Facilitate support

Where barriers exist, the school will work with families and external partners to remove those barriers and support improved attendance.

Support may include reasonable adjustments in class or across school, pastoral or SEND support, health or external-agency input, trusted-adult check-ins, and a Year 1–Year 6 buddy approach where this is appropriate for the pupil.

Where targeted support is needed, an Attendance Support Plan will record the barriers identified, support offered, actions agreed, responsible adults and a review date. The plan will normally be reviewed with the family after 4–6 weeks. Where Birmingham City Council's Support First process applies, agreed early-help support will normally be given at least six weeks to improve attendance before progression to a Formal Attendance Meeting, where appropriate.

Formalise support

If voluntary support is not successful, formal attendance plans or agreements may be put in place to support improvement.

Where ongoing unauthorised absence reaches the national threshold of 10 sessions within a rolling 10-school-week period, the school will consider the next formal stage in line with Birmingham City Council procedures. This may include a Formal Attendance Meeting and Attendance Contract, a referral to the Education Legal Intervention Team (ELIT), or a Notice to Improve where the Local Authority considers this appropriate.

Enforce

Where absence continues and support has not improved attendance, statutory intervention may be considered in line with Local Authority guidance to protect the pupil's right to education.

For unauthorised leave in term time, a continuous absence of at least 10 sessions (normally five school days) can meet the national threshold for referral to Birmingham City Council without the same support-first steps, because support may not be appropriate in these circumstances. Penalty notices and other legal action are explained in section D below.

Attendance monitoring zones

To help families understand how attendance is monitored, the school uses an attendance zone system.

97-100% missing around 6 days	The Green Zone	When a pupil's attendance is in this zone, this is ideal. Pupils will be benefiting from the full range of what school has to offer.
93-96.9% missing around 14 days	The Yellow Zone Emerging concerns	When a pupil's attendance is in this zone we will begin to keep an eye on attendance patterns. This way, we can get in touch with you to see if any support is needed.
90-92.9% Missing around 19 days	The Amber Zone Concerns	When a pupil's attendance is in this zone, we will get in touch with families/parents and families to let them know. We will ask you if there's any help you need because we know that there is a real risk of a pupil falling significantly behind and missing out.
Below 90% Missing more than 20 days	The Red Zone Significant concerns	When a pupil's attendance is below 90%, this is classified as 'persistently absent'. This is a real worry. We will ask families and pupils to have a discussion with us and to make a plan to improve attendance really quickly so that attendance is back on track.

These zones help the school identify when support may be needed.

Green Zone (97–100%) Attendance in this zone is excellent. Pupils are benefiting from the full curriculum and wider opportunities the school provides. The school will continue to encourage and celebrate strong attendance

Yellow Zone (93–96.9%) Attendance in this zone is an emerging concern. The school will monitor patterns, make early contact where needed and offer support before attendance declines further.

Amber Zone (90–92.9%) Attendance in this zone is a concern. The school will work with the pupil and family to identify barriers, agree support and closely monitor improvement.

Red Zone (below 90%) Attendance in this zone is a significant concern. Missing 10% or more of possible school sessions is classed nationally as persistent absence. The school will use a clear support plan and may progress to formal attendance procedures where unauthorised absence continues.

Additional Information

A. Roles and responsibilities

- The Governing Body / Interim Executive Board is responsible for ensuring that the school meets its statutory duties for attendance and receives appropriate information about attendance, persistent absence and the impact of the school's strategy.
- The Headteacher has overall responsibility for promoting attendance and ensuring that effective systems are in place.
- Senior leaders with attendance oversight are Mrs S. Sidhu and Mr J. Dearing. They provide strategic oversight, review patterns and ensure that support and formal processes are applied consistently.
- Mrs D. Dawati and Mrs S. Campbell support day-to-day attendance procedures, including register checks, first-day response, family contact, attendance monitoring and record keeping.
- Teachers must complete registers accurately and on time, notice emerging patterns, respond positively to pupils returning after absence and report attendance concerns promptly.
- Parents and carers are responsible for ensuring that children of compulsory school age attend regularly and punctually, reporting absence promptly and working with school where barriers arise.
- Pupils are encouraged to take an active role in discussing barriers to attendance and identifying support that will help them attend regularly.

B. Local support for attendance

- The school follows Birmingham City Council's Support First approach: identify concerns early, listen to the child and family, facilitate support, formalise support where needed and enforce only when appropriate.
- Support may include Early Help, SEND and pastoral provision, school nursing or health advice, mental-health support, reasonable adjustments, family support, transport advice and other relevant local services.
- Where statutory attendance intervention is required, the school may refer to Birmingham City Council's Education Legal Intervention Team (ELIT). Birmingham City Council issues education penalty notices in Birmingham.
- Families are encouraged to speak to the school as early as possible so that support can be put in place before absence becomes entrenched.

C. Authorised and unauthorised absence

The school will use the statutory attendance and absence codes and will decide whether an absence is authorised in accordance with the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 and Department for Education guidance.

Examples of absence that may be authorised, depending on the circumstances, include illness, necessary medical or dental appointments, religious observance and leave agreed by the Headteacher because exceptional circumstances apply.

Examples of unauthorised absence include unexplained absence, holidays or leave in term time that have not been agreed as exceptional circumstances, other absence without permission, and arrival after the morning register has closed at 9:00am where no other statutory code applies.

The school will not routinely require medical evidence for every illness. Evidence may be requested where there are repeated, prolonged or unusual patterns of absence and where it is reasonable and necessary to understand the barrier and determine appropriate support.

D. Legal sanctions

Birmingham City Council's Education Penalty Notice Code of Conduct applies the national framework for penalty notices. The national threshold is 10 unauthorised sessions within a

rolling 10-school-week period. The sessions can be a combination of unauthorised leave (G), other unauthorised absence (O) and late arrival after the register has closed (U). For unauthorised leave in term time, a continuous period of at least 10 sessions (normally five school days) may be referred to Birmingham City Council for consideration of a penalty notice once the school has followed the relevant leave-of-absence legal process.

- First penalty notice for the same parent and child within a rolling three-year period: £160, reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days.
- Second penalty notice for the same parent and child within the rolling three-year period: £160, with no reduced rate.
- A third penalty notice cannot be issued to the same parent for the same child within that three-year period. If the threshold is met again, alternative legal action may be considered, including prosecution.
- A separate penalty notice can be issued to each liable parent for each child. Birmingham City Council, not the school, makes the decision to issue the notice.
- For ongoing unauthorised absence, the Local Authority may use a Notice to Improve as a final opportunity to engage with support. If issued, attendance may be monitored for up to six weeks and further unauthorised absence can lead to a penalty notice.
- Schools must submit the Local Authority referral within the required timescale and retain evidence of support, communications, meetings and attendance. ELIT referral and outcome reference details will be recorded on the school chronology.

E. Keeping and maintaining registers

Attendance registers are legal records. They are completed twice daily, amended only where appropriate, and retained in accordance with statutory requirements. The school uses the current Department for Education registration codes.

Before deleting a pupil from the admission register, the school will use a deletion-from-roll checklist and follow the statutory grounds in the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024. The school will take reasonable steps to establish the pupil's destination and education arrangements.

Where a pupil is moving school or moving area, the school will confirm the receiving school or relevant Local Authority arrangements and transfer records through the appropriate secure route.

Where a pupil has an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP), the school will check the plan and liaise with Birmingham's SENAR service and/or the relevant Local Authority as required before any roll action is taken.

Where a family reports that a pupil is going abroad, the school will seek the new address, expected date of return where relevant, destination school or education arrangements, and other information required by law. If the child's whereabouts or education cannot be established, the school will follow Children Missing Education (CME) procedures and refer to the Local Authority as required.

F. Monitoring attendance

- Attendance is checked daily, reviewed weekly by the attendance team and reviewed at least half-termly by senior leaders.
- Senior leaders monitor whole-school attendance, pupil groups, persistent absence, severe absence, punctuality and repeated or unusual patterns of absence.
- Persistent absence means missing 10% or more of possible school sessions. Severe absence means missing 50% or more of possible sessions.
- Attendance information will be compared with relevant local and national benchmarks and reported to governors / the Interim Executive Board so that leaders can evaluate the impact of attendance work.

- The school will evaluate whether support is improving attendance and will adapt reasonable adjustments or the Attendance Support Plan where needed.

G. Links to other policies and legislation

- Department for Education: Working Together to Improve School Attendance (statutory guidance).
- School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024.
- Education Act 1996, including sections 444 and 444A.
- Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007, as amended, including the 2024 national framework changes.
- Birmingham City Council Education Penalty Notice Code of Conduct (September 2024).
- Birmingham City Council Support First Framework (September 2025) and Birmingham School Attendance Strategy 2026–2029.
- The school's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, SEND Policy, Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions Policy and Behaviour Policy.

H. Policy monitoring

This policy will be reviewed at least annually and sooner where legislation or statutory guidance changes. The impact of the attendance strategy will be monitored through attendance data, persistent and severe absence, punctuality, the use and impact of support plans, pupil and parent voice, and the outcomes of Local Authority referrals.

I. Attendance codes

The school uses the statutory Department for Education attendance codes. The codes most commonly seen by parents include:

- / or \ – present at the morning or afternoon session.
- L – late arrival before the register has closed.
- U – arrived after the register has closed and no other statutory code applies; this is an unauthorised absence.
- I – illness (not medical or dental appointment).
- M – medical or dental appointment.
- R – religious observance.
- C – leave of absence for exceptional circumstances authorised by the school.
- G – holiday / leave in term time not granted by the school.
- N – reason for absence not yet established; this must be followed up and changed to the correct code within the statutory timeframe.
- O – other unauthorised absence.

A full list of current statutory attendance codes is available from the Department for Education and Birmingham City Council. The school will update its coding practice whenever national regulations change.