



Hednesford Valley High

Attendance Policy

Reviewed by:	S. Stokes
Last reviewed:	October 2023
Next review due by:	October 2024

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1. Rationale

Regular and punctual attendance at school is both a legal requirement and essential for Students to maximise their educational opportunities. In recognition of this, the law makes it an offence for a Parent/Carer to fail to secure the regular attendance of their child at a school at which the child is a registered Student, without good reason or the agreement of the school.

Penalty Notices are one of the sanctions available for this offence and offer a means of swift intervention, which can be used to combat attendance problems before they become entrenched.

Parents/Carers and Students will be supported by the school, the Local Support Teams for Targeted Services and, as appropriate, other Partner Agencies, to overcome barriers to regular attendance, through a range of intervention strategies.

Penalty Notices and other sanctions will only be used where Parental/Carer co-operation with this process is either absent or deemed to be insufficient to resolve the problem. They will be used as a means to support and challenge Parents/Carers to meet their legal responsibilities and where there is a reasonable expectation that their use will secure improved school attendance.

Section 444(1/1A) of the Education Act 1996 states that an offence occurs where there is a failure by a parent or carer to secure regular attendance at school of a registered pupil. Section 23 of the Anti-Behaviour Act 2003 empowers designated Local Authority officers, Headteacher and the Police to issue Penalty Notices in cases of unauthorised absence from school

2. Legislation and Guidance

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

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

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

3. Attendance

Regular absences from school can affect

- Attainment levels – the quality of school work, qualifications gained.
- School routine – disrupting your child's learning and that of the other students.
- The chances of children and young people being involved in anti-social behaviour.
- A child or young person's general wellbeing and long-term life opportunities.
- Improving regular attendance at school is therefore a key priority, both locally and nationally.

We are aware that children can miss school due to unavoidable illness. It is essential that you communicate the reasons for your child's absences on the first day of absence. If there are long-term attendance difficulties, then please discuss this with us so that we may support the situation.

100%	Outstanding Attendance	Gives a child the very best chance of success.
95%	Good Attendance	Few interruptions to learning – a very good chance of success.
94%	Worrying Attendance	Your child has missed almost 3 weeks of learning.
90% or less	Serious concern	Persistent Absence Student (as defined by the DfE) This is worrying attendance. A child has had the equivalent of one day off school every fortnight/ almost 4 weeks off school (or more). It is less likely that good progress in learning can be made.

Attendance is an important part of your child's education, they cannot learn if not in school.

Attendance = Attainment Every Day Counts.

You are legally responsible for seeing your child attends school every day and on time. It should be noted, that the school monitors absence sessions as well as % attendance to form it's monitoring and tracking processes.

4. Absences

Students should arrive at school on time, every day that the school is open. Absence from school with a valid reason is sometimes unavoidable due to illness or appointments.

Every half day is counted as part of the attendance figures. If a Student is absent then their absence is counted as either Authorised or Unauthorised.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school with a valid reason (for example – illness). Unauthorised absences are morning or afternoon sessions which the school does not consider to be a valid reason. This includes keeping Students away from school unnecessarily, absences that have not been properly explained or Students who are late.

Staff responsible for monitoring attendance of Students are the Headteacher, Assistant Headteacher and the Attendance Officer.

5. Reporting Absences

If your child is going to be absent from school due to sickness or a medical appointment, please follow this reporting procedure:

1) If your child is going to be absent from school please telephone the student absence line before 8.50 am on each day your child is absent and leave a message containing the student's name, reason for the absence and the name of the person reporting the absence. The student absence line telephone number is 01543 423714 option 1.

- 2) Registration takes place between 8.50 am and 9.10 am.
- 3) Students who arrive at school between 9.10 am and 9.25 am are marked as arriving late, but before the register is closed – using the L code.
- 4) Students who arrive school after 9.25 am are marked as U – arrival after registers have closed. Unless the delay was caused by school transport issues.
- 5) By 10.00 am, an absence text message will be sent to parents/carers who have not contacted the school regarding their child's absence.
- 6) If by 11.00 am, there has been no response from parents/carers a follow up telephone call will be made. If still no response, another telephone call will be made at 1.00 pm.

Please note, if the unauthorised absence continues for more than two days without contact from parents/carers, the absence will be reported to the Designated Safeguarding Lead/Deputy who will decide what further action is to be taken, by either a letter home or a home welfare visit. Such visits can also take place at any time if deemed necessary by the school.

It is vitally important that you contact school as soon as you know that your child will be staying at home due to illness or any other circumstances. This is to ensure your child is safe. If your contact details have changed please ensure you inform the school office.

Our Attendance Officer, monitors attendance closely. Attendance below our school target of 95% will be investigated. Following investigation, any unresolved issues or attendance percentages of less than 90% could result in parents receiving a FINE.

6. Procedures for Dealing with Student Absences

The school applies the following procedures when dealing with absences from school:

1. Parents/Carers are asked to inform the school immediately when an absence becomes necessary following the schools procedures.
2. If not informed, then the absence will be recorded as an unauthorised absence.
3. For absences longer than 2 days and medical evidence has not been sought, parents/carers are requested to write a letter to the school giving the reason for absence.
4. Holidays are not allowed during term time. The Head Teacher may only grant leave in exceptional circumstances after this being requested in writing.
5. High absences due to medical reasons are followed up with the School Nurse.
6. SCC protocol for Penalty Notice is followed for unauthorised absences and persistent lateness.
7. Where there has been a number of days of absence due to illness without medical evidence, the school can ask for medical evidence to support future authorisation of absence

7. Modified Timetables (Alternative Provision)

All professionals have a statutory responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. The tracking and reporting of attendance at alternative provision is an essential component in achieving this. Children at alternative provision are additionally vulnerable and will be closely monitored.

The senior leader with responsibility for alternative provision is Mr Stokes, Headteacher.

The arrangements for monitoring of attendance, contacting of parents and carrying out safe and well checks will form part of a written individual plan, agreed with the child, parents and alternative provider before the

child begins their placement. Attendance at off-site alternative provision will be monitored daily by the Attendance Officer who will ensure that swift action is taken when a child does not attend their alternative provision place.

The school will make regular contact with the alternative provision to check on well-being and academic progress. Alternative providers are required to contact the school on the first day by 9.30am whenever the child is absent. The senior leader with responsibility for alternative provision will ensure arrangements are in place to formally monitor, report on attendance at alternative provision to SLT on a weekly basis, liaising with the DSL, SENCo, LAC coordinator or other key colleagues as necessary.

Children whose attendance falls below the school's target will have a plan put in place to support better attendance. There is an expectation that any safeguarding concerns are raised with the designated safeguarding lead and that all alternative providers adhere to the child protection and safeguarding policies held by the school.

8. Part-Time (reduced) Timetables

All children, regardless of their circumstances, are entitled to a full-time education which is suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs they may have. Schools have a statutory duty to provide full time education for all children. In very exceptional circumstances there may be a need for a temporary part-time timetable to meet a child's individual needs. For example, where a medical condition prevents a child from attending full-time education and a part-time timetable is considered as part of a re-integration package.

A part-time timetable will not be treated as a long-term solution. Any individual support programme or other agreement will have a time limit by which point the child is expected to attend full-time or be provided with alternative provision. There will be an identified lead person with responsibility for monitoring the part-time timetable and the local authority will be informed through their dedicated portal.

Part time timetables should last no longer than 6 weeks and formal written reviews will take place at least fortnightly and will include the child, parents/carers and other professionals as appropriate. In agreeing to a part-time timetable, a school has agreed to a child being absent for part of the week or day and therefore must record it as authorised absence.

The school will ensure that the DSL has been consulted, a risk assessment carried out and suitably robust arrangements are in place to ensure the ongoing safeguarding of any child on a part time timetable.

9. Suspensions and Permanent Exclusions

All incidents where a child is sent home due to poor behaviour, will be coded on the register as a suspension, even if pre-agreed with a parent, i.e. children being sent home during lunch times. If a suspension is for part of the day (including lunchtime), it will be noted as a half day suspension.

Whilst a child is suspended from school, parents have a duty to ensure that their child is safe and well and appropriately supervised at home. A child must not be present in a public place during school hours throughout the suspension period, unless there is reasonable justification for this. Parents may be liable to prosecution and/or receive a penalty notice from the local authority if their child is present in a public place during school hours during the dates of the suspension. It will be for the parent to show reasonable justification.

The Headteacher will take account of the legal duty of care when sending a child home following a suspension. The school will continue to ensure regular safe and well checks are completed. This is particularly important for additionally vulnerable children

Following a permanent exclusion, safe and well checks will be carried out until the result of any appeal is known.

10. Monitoring attendance

Attendance for all students is monitored throughout the school. The school uses absence sessions and overall percentages to inform its decision making. There are regular meetings between the attendance team to ensure attendance is tracked and monitoring so effective support can be provided to students/families. The following are interventions the school uses to support student attendance (dependent on reasons for student absence):

- Attendance letters
- Individual attendance plans
- Reduced or modified timetables
- Parental meetings
- Consideration to Early Help or other external agencies
- Referral to Inclusion Panel
- Referral to local authority for statutory action

11. Targets and Rewards

The school sets an attendance target annually.

The school recognises students with exceptional attendance. Attendance forms part of the school's criteria for rewards.

There are also Attendance Badges for 100% attendance, which is monitored every term.

1 Term = Bronze 2 Terms = Silver 3 Terms = Gold

The school appreciates that reduced attendance can be a result of exceptional circumstances and parents/carers can ask the school for mitigation in relation to their child's attendance.

12. Penalty Notices

All school Attendance Policies should include information on the issuing of Penalty Notices and this will be brought to the attention of all Parents/Carers.

Issuing of Penalty Notices as a sanction is included in the Authority's Attendance Policy.

Identifying information about Penalty Notices issued to particular Parents/Carers or specific Students should not be made public.

Circumstances where a Penalty Notice may be issued:

- A Penalty Notice can only be issued in cases of unauthorised absence including unauthorised holidays taken in term time and persistent lateness.

- Use of a Penalty Notice or formal warning of a Penalty Notice for unauthorised absence will be restricted to one notice/ warning per parent of a student per academic year.
- There will be no limit on the times a Penalty Notice for unauthorised leave of absence can be used in an academic year.
- In cases where there is more than one student in a family with unauthorised absences, Penalty Notices may be issued for more than one child.
- Penalty Notices may be considered appropriate if one of the following criteria is met:
 - There is unauthorised persistent absence, 'Persistent' means at least 20 sessions of unauthorised absence over a period of twelve school weeks, excluding holidays. These absences do not need to be consecutive.
 - There is a period of absence not authorised by the Head Teacher or in excess of the period authorised by the Head Teacher (e.g. family holiday).
 - Persistent late arrival at school, i.e. after the register has closed. 'Persistent' means at least 10 sessions of unauthorised late arrival over a period of 12 school weeks, excluding holidays. These late episodes do not need to be consecutive.
 - The presence of an excluded child in a public place at any time during school hours in that child's first five days of exclusion. An 'excluded child' is one who has been excluded from school for a given period under the Education and Inspections Act 2006.

A Penalty Notice will not be issued in respect of Students in the care of the Local Authority with whom other interventions will be used.

13. Procedure for Issuing Penalty Notices

The designated officers within Education Core Offer Team will be the only individuals permitted to issue Penalty Notices. This will ensure consistent and equitable delivery, avoid duplication of issue, to allow school to maintain good relationships with Parents/Carers and ensure that they reinforce other enforcement sanctions.

Penalty Notices will only be issued by post and never as an instant action, e.g. during a truancy sweep. This will enable officers to ensure that all evidential requirements are in place, duplication of issue is avoided and limit the health and safety risks associated with delivering such Notices by hand.

Where Schools, Police or neighbouring local authorities ask Staffordshire County Council to issue a Penalty Notice, their request will be investigated and actioned by the Education Core Offer Team provided that:

- The circumstances of the case meet the criteria specified in this Code of Conduct.
- The Student is registered at a Staffordshire School
- All necessary evidence is provided to the Education Core Offer Team to establish that an offence under Section 444(1) or 444(1A) of the Education Act 1996.
- Issuing a Penalty Notice would not conflict with another intervention strategy already in place or another enforcement sanction already being processed; and
- There is reasonable expectation that the use of a Penalty Notice would improve the Student's attendance.

The Education Core Offer Team will respond to all requests within 10 school days of receipt or if part of ongoing casework, and where satisfied that all of the relevant criteria are met, will:

- Issue an initial warning to the Parent/Carers of the possibility of Penalty Notice being issued;
- Set a period of 20 school days within which the Student must have no unauthorised absence and give the Parent/Carer an opportunity to respond; this information will be included in the formal written warning letter.
- After due consideration of the facts of the case, only issue a Penalty Notice through the post at the end of the 20-day period, if the required level of improved school attendance has not been achieved.

Where the Penalty Notice is requested from a school in response to a leave of absence (holiday) related unauthorised absence or is in relation to an offence under section 103 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006, the formal warning letter and 20-day improvement period will not apply.

All Penalty Notices will be entered onto a database maintained by Targeted Services to assure that no duplicate Penalty Notices are issued.

14. Procedure for Withdrawing Penalty Notices

Once issued a Penalty Notice may be withdrawn if the Targeted Services is satisfied that:

- The Penalty Notice was issued to the wrong person
- The use of the Penalty Notice did not conform to this Code of Conduct
- The Penalty Notice was delivered to the wrong address
- The evidence demonstrates that the Penalty Notice should not have been issued, e.g. medical evidence
- The exceptional circumstances of the case warrant its withdrawal.

15. Payment / Non-Payment of Penalty Notices

Payment of Penalty Notices:

- Arrangements for payment will be detailed on the Penalty Notice;
- Payment of a Penalty Notice discharges the Parent/Carer's liability for the period in question and they cannot subsequently be prosecuted under other enforcement powers for the period covered by the Penalty Notice;
- Payment of Penalty Notice within 21 days is £60 and payment after this time but within 28 days is £120; and
- The County Council retains any revenue from Penalty Notices to cover enforcement costs (collection or prosecuting in the event of non-payment).
- Payments will not be accepted in part or by instalments. Non-payment of Penalty Notices: Non-payment of a Penalty Notice will result in the withdrawal of the Penalty Notice and will trigger the fast-track prosecution process under the provisions of section 444(1) of the Education Act 1996.

16. Links with Other School Policies

This policy should also be considered within the context of the following policy:

- Penalty Notices – Code of Conduct for Issuing (SLA)
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Positive Relationships and Behaviour Policy

17. Dissemination and Review

The policy will be disseminated widely both Staff and Governors through appropriate meetings.

The policy will be reviewed October 2024.