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ATTENDANCE POLICY



DOCUMENT CONTROL

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Introduction

The importance of regular school attendance cannot be overestimated. Regular attendance is a prerequisite to a good education and securing it must therefore be a high priority for the school, parents and the pupil themselves. By failing to attend school regularly, pupils diminish the value of the education provided for them; they may also damage the learning of others because fluctuations in the size of the pupil group may restrict the scope for effective teaching.

Philosophy

The Heights Free School is committed to providing a full and efficient educational experience to all pupils. We believe that, if pupils are to benefit from education, punctuality and good attendance are crucial. As a school, we will organise and do all we can to ensure maximum attendance for all pupils. Any problems that impede punctuality and regular attendance will be identified and addressed as speedily as possible.

It is the philosophy of our school to celebrate achievement. Attendance is a critical factor to a productive and successful school career. Our school will actively promote and encourage 100 percent attendance for all our pupils.

Our school will give a high priority to conveying to parents and pupils the importance of regular and punctual attendance. We recognise that parents have a vital role to play and there is a need to establish strong home-school links and communication systems that can be utilised whenever there is concern about attendance.

If there are problems, which affect a pupil's attendance we will investigate, identify and work with parents, pupils and partner agencies where necessary to resolve those problems as quickly and efficiently as possible. We will adopt a clearly focused approach aimed at returning the pupil to full attendance at all times.

Principles

Parents of registered pupils have a legal duty under the Education act 1996 to make sure that children of compulsory school age attend school on a regular and full-time basis. Permitting unauthorised absence from school is an offence and parents may be referred to The Heights Family Liaison & Attendance coordinator if problems cannot be resolved by agreement.

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by the parent/ carer) as either authorised or unauthorised. This is why information about the cause of each absence is always required.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason (i.e. illness or other unavoidable cause.)

Unauthorised absences are those, which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been given. This includes keeping children off school unnecessarily, truancy and absences, which have not been properly explained. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents and the child. If a child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and may make things worse. Parents are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving problems together. The school will:

- Ensure that all staff are aware of the registration procedures and receive in service training on registration procedures, regulations and education law.

- Complete registers accurately at the beginning of each morning, during each lesson and at the end of each day.
- Stress to parents/ carers the importance of contacting staff early on the first day of absence.
- Reward good and improved attendance of all pupils.
- Raise the profile of attendance as a whole school issue by displaying promotional DfE material throughout the school.
- Promote positive staff attitudes to pupils returning after absence.
- Consult with all members of the school community and the Family Liaison and Attendance coordinator in developing and maintaining the whole school attendance policy.
- Ensure regular evaluation of attendance procedures by senior leadership team.
- Work towards ensuring that all pupils feel supported and valued. we will send a clear message that, if a pupil is absent, he/she will be missed.
- Have in place procedures which will allow absentees to catch up on missed work without disrupting the learning of others
- Have procedures in place to encourage 'best-possible' preparation for attendance at official examination times.

Procedures

The school applies the following procedures in deciding how to deal with individual absences:

Illness and other legitimate reasons

If the pupil is unfit for school, parents are asked to contact the school on the first day of absence by 9.00am. Absences will not be authorised without this procedure. In exceptional circumstances, further evidence of a child's illness, such as a doctor's note, may be requested. Other reasons for absence must be discussed with the school each time; notes will not necessarily be accepted as providing valid reasons. It is not appropriate for the school to authorise absences for shopping, looking after younger children, day trips, birthdays, etc. Leave may, however, be granted in an emergency (e.g. bereavement) or for medical appointments which take place during school time. However, medical appointments should be made for out of school hours whenever possible.

Leave of absence

Government legislation, The Education Regulations (Pupil Registration, 2013) clearly supports full attendance in school, and as such The Heights in the majority of cases, will not authorise leave of absences during term time. There are however a few exceptional circumstances, but parents should be aware that there is no right to such leave; if granted, it is at the sole discretion of the Headteacher.

If a parent or carer wishes to request a leave of absence, they should make a written request to the Headteacher 4 weeks in advance. The school will arrange a meeting between the parents/carers and Headteacher, where the request can be discussed in detail if necessary. The Heights cannot grant such leave retrospectively.

Any leave taken without prior agreement will be recorded as unauthorised. Unauthorised absence may lead to parents being issued with a penalty notice or being prosecuted in magistrates' court.

The Heights will consider any request for leave on an individual basis, but leave will be granted only in truly exceptional circumstances.

Leave would not normally be granted where:

- There are or have been concerns about attendance
- There are concerns about attainment and progress
- There is limited ability to catch up on any work missed
- There are any impending tests, exams or significant school events
- There has been a frequency of any other requests for leave

Lateness

Pupils must attend on time to be given a mark for that session, unless the lateness is unavoidable. Parents are expected to ensure that pupils are present at registration.

School Transport

- For pupils who are collected by school transport, a register will be taken every day on their bus.
- If a pupil is not present at their stop when the bus arrives the member of staff will upon immediate return to school, deliver the transport register to the attendance officer, who will then contact home to ascertain the reason for the absence/failure to be collected at the transport stop

Absences

If no contact is received from the parents/carers of an absent pupil by 09.30 am on the first morning of absence the Family liaison & attendance coordinator (or a member of the office staff in their absence) will:

Day 1.

- Contact the parent/carer by telephone and record the details of the conversation.
- If there are any details regarding the length of time a pupil may be absent this will also be recorded. If no contact is made this is also recorded.
- A home visit will take place if no contact is made with a pupil or if their overall attendance falls below 85%.
- If, after several attempts are made to gain access to the pupils' home, we are unsuccessful, then a card will be left stating the date and time we called and a number to contact. The card will also state that if the pupil does not attend tomorrow that a further visit will take place.

Day 2.

As above.

Day 3.

As above (If pupils are dual rolled, a referral to their commissioning school EWO (Education Welfare Officer) will be made.

Day 4.

A telephone call and letter will be sent home to request a meeting at school. The meeting will include pupil, parent, the family liaison & attendance coordinator and a member of the Senior Leadership Team. The aim of this meeting will be to identify and resolve the difficulties which are preventing the pupil from attending school. The parents/carers will be made aware of the legal requirements regarding school attendance.

Day 5

If there has been no contact for 5 days and all of the above procedures have been implemented, the Family Liaison & Attendance Coordinator will make a referral to the CME (Children missing from education) team or Lawrence Warburton (Learning Access Manager).

All home visits undertaken by the Family Liaison and Attendance officer, are done so under the guidelines of Lone Working.

Improving attendance

- Every pupil will be set a realistic target; this target. The school will look at those interventions which have been successful as part of the evaluation process.
- We will reward pupils who improve their attendance, even if they do not achieve their target.

When evaluating success the school will consider whether or not:

- Attendance has improved
- Punctuality has improved
- Parental response to absences has improve
- The school has been successful in raising the profile of attendance
- Pupils are fully aware of the importance of punctuality and regular attendance and attendance procedures operating within the school
- Attendance issues have been included as topics in Maths projects, Personal, Social and Health Education (PSCHE) lessons, or as a theme in any other lessons.

Practice

The school will recognise the importance of good practice by:

- Keeping and maintaining registers accurately
- Maintaining a consistent approach to marking registers
- Regularly analysing attendance data
- Ensuring prompt follow-up action in cases of non-school attendance
- Liaising closely with the base schools and EWOs for dual registered pupils
- Recording carefully, all telephone messages
- Informing parents of their child's attendance at the end of each half term if they are not meeting the attendance requirements.

In order to ensure the success of this policy every member of staff will make attendance a priority and convey to the pupils the importance of their education.



Policy Impact Assessment

This policy has been scrutinised to ensure that there is no potential adverse impact of the application of this policy to pupils from a variety of ethnic and minority backgrounds.

