

Hartismere High School

POLICY DOCUMENT No C1

ATTENDANCE POLICY



Policy approved March 2009
(to be reviewed Autumn 2009)

CONTENTS

	PAGE
1. Introduction	3
2. School's roles and responsibilities	3
3. Collection and analysis of data	7
4. Systems and strategies for managing and improving attendance	7
5. Term-time holidays	9
6. Extended leave of absence	9
7. Parents' / Carers' responsibilities	10
8. Pupils' / Students' responsibilities	10
9. Governors' responsibilities	10
10. Conclusion	11

HARTISMERE HIGH SCHOOL

ATTENDANCE POLICY

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Hartismere High School is committed to providing an education of the highest quality for all its pupils / students and recognises this can only be achieved by supporting and promoting excellent school attendance for all. This is based on the belief that only by attending school regularly and punctually will children and young people be able to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them. High attainment depends on good attendance.
- 1.2 The whole school community – pupils / students, parents and carers, teaching and support staff and school governors – have a responsibility for ensuring good school attendance and have important roles to play. The purpose of the policy is to clarify everyone's part in this.
- 1.3 The policy is based on current government and Local Authority guidance and statutory Regulations. The school will ensure that all members of the community have access to this policy.

2. School roles and responsibilities

- 2.1 All staff (teaching and support) at Hartismere High School have a key role to play in supporting and promoting excellent school attendance and will work to provide an environment in which all our pupils / students are eager to learn, feel valued members of the school community and look forward to coming to school every day. Staff also have a responsibility to set a good example in matters relating to their own attendance and punctuality.

2.2 Attendance Leaders

Designated Key Stage Managers will oversee, direct and co-ordinate the school's work in promoting regular and improved attendance and will ensure the Attendance Policy is consistently applied throughout the school. These persons will also ensure that up-to-date attendance data and issues are shared regularly with the Senior Leadership Team. They will ensure that attendance issues are identified at an early stage and that support is put in place to deal with any difficulties.

2.3 Registration

- i) The school is required to mark the attendance register twice each day; once at the start of the day and once during the afternoon session. Classroom teachers / form tutors are responsible for completing the attendance registers using the prescribed codes (shown overleaf).

REGISTER CODES

CODE	DESCRIPTION	MEANING
/	Present (AM)	Present
\	Present (PM)	Present
B	Educated off site (NOT Dual registration)	Approved Education Activity
C	Other Authorised Circumstances (not covered by another appropriate code/description)	Authorised absence
D	Dual registration (i.e. pupil attending other establishment)	Approved Education Activity
E	Excluded (no alternative provision made)	Authorised absence
F	Extended family holiday (agreed)	Authorised absence
G	Family holiday (NOT agreed or days in excess of agreement)	Unauthorised absence
H	Family holiday (agreed)	Authorised absence
I	Illness (NOT medical or dental etc. appointments)	Authorised absence
J	Interview	Approved Education Activity
L	Late (before registers closed)	Present
M	Medical/Dental appointments	Authorised absence
N	No reason yet provided for absence	Unauthorised absence
O	Unauthorised absence (not covered by any other code/description)	Unauthorised absence
P	Approved sporting activity	Approved Education Activity
R	Religious observance	Authorised absence
S	Study leave	Authorised absence
T	Traveller absence	Authorised absence
U	Late (after registers closed)	Unauthorised absence
V	Educational visit or trip	Approved Education Activity
W	Work experience	Approved Education Activity
X	Non-compulsory school age absence	Not counted in possible attendances
Y	Enforced closure	Not counted in possible attendances
Z	Pupil not yet on roll	Not counted in possible attendances
#	School closed to pupils	Not counted in possible attendances

- ii) The register will be called promptly at **9.00 am** and **2.00 pm** by each form tutor and a mark will be made during the registration period in respect of each child.
- iii) The registers will close at **9.30 am** and **2.25 pm**. Any pupil / student who arrives **after** the closing of the register will count as **absent**. Pupils / students who arrive before the register closes will be counted as **present** but will be dealt with under the school's policy on punctuality and lateness (see para. 4.4 on page 6).

2.4 Categorising absence

- i) A mark will be made in respect of each child during registration. Any child who is not present at this time will be marked unauthorised absence unless leave has been granted by the school in advance or the reason for absence is already known and accepted by the school as legitimate. Where a reason for absence is given and accepted by the school at a later stage, the register will be amended in such a way that the original entry and the amendment / correction are distinguishable. The decision about whether the absence should be authorised or unauthorised rests with the classroom teacher / form tutor.
- ii) Hartismere High School recognises the clear links between attendance and attainment, and attendance and safeguarding children. It recognises that inappropriate authorisation of absence can be as damaging to a child's education as authorised absence, will potentially send a message to parents that any reason for non-school attendance is acceptable and can render children extremely vulnerable to harm. If absence is frequent or continuous, and except where a child is clearly unwell, staff at the School will therefore challenge parents about the need and reasons for their child's absence and will encourage them to keep absences to a minimum. A note or explanation from a pupil's home does not mean an absence becomes authorised. The decision whether or not to authorise an absence will always rest with the school.
- iii) If no explanation about an absence is received by the school within 2 weeks, the absence will normally remain unauthorised;
- iv) Absence will be authorised in the following circumstances:
 - (a) where leave has been granted by the school in advance, for example –
 - a pupil is to participate in an approved performance for which a licence has been granted by the Local Authority,
 - a pupil is involved in an **exceptional** special occasion – in authorising such an absence the individual circumstances of the particular case and the pupil's / student's overall pattern of attendance will be considered,
 - in **exceptional** circumstances, permission has been granted for a family holiday for which the parents have sought permission in advance
 - (b) where the school is satisfied that the child is too ill to attend;
 - (c) where the pupil / student has a medical appointment (although parents should be encouraged to make these out of school hours wherever possible, and to return their child to school immediately afterwards – or send him / her to school beforehand);

- (d) where there is an unavoidable cause for the absence which is beyond the family's control, e.g. extreme weather conditions;
 - (e) the absence occurs on a day exclusively set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's / student's parents belong;
 - (f) the pupil / student lives more than two miles (if he/she is under eight) or three miles (if he/she has reached eight) and no suitable transport arrangements have been made by the Local Authority;
 - (g) the pupil / student is of no fixed abode, his/her parent is engaged in a trade which required him/her to travel, the pupil / student has attended school as often as the nature of the trade permits **and**, have reached the age of six, he/she has attended 200 sessions in the preceding 12 months;
 - (h) in other exceptional circumstances (e.g. a family bereavement) and for a limited period.
- v) Except in the circumstances described above, absences will be unauthorised. Some examples of reasons for **not** authorising absence would be:
- no explanation has been given by the parent;
 - the school is not satisfied with the explanation;
 - the pupil / student is staying at home to mind the house;
 - the pupil / student is shopping during school hours;
 - the pupil / student is absence for unexceptional reasons, e.g. a birthday;
 - the pupil / student is absence from school on a family holiday without prior permission;
 - the pupil / student has been stopped during a truancy sweep and is unable (or the parent is unable) to give a satisfactory reason for the absence.

2.5 Approved educational activity

Where a student is engaged in off-site approved educational activities, the school will check his/her attendance on a daily basis before entering the appropriate code in the register.

2.6 Class registers

In order to track pupils' / students' whereabouts throughout the day, deal with any truancy that occurs after morning or afternoon registration and to ensure the safety of pupils / students, subject teachers will take a register at the beginning of every lesson to record absence and lateness.

2.7 Staff Training

The School Attendance Leader will ensure that all staff responsible for taking registers, including any temporary or supply staff, receive sufficient training to enable them to perform the task accurately.

3. Collection and analysis of data

- 3.1 Key Stage Leaders will ensure that attendance data is complete, accurate, analysed and reported to the senior leadership team, parents and the governing body. The data will inform the school's future practice to improve attendance and prevent disaffection.
- 3.2 Attendance is monitored by year group, tutor group, at subject level and by reasons for absence. It is also analysed by gender, ethnicity, pupils / students with special educational needs and those who are vulnerable to poor attendance.
- 3.3 Accurate attendance returns are made to the Department for Children Schools and Families.

4. Systems and strategies for managing and improving attendance

- 4.1 Attendance has a very high profile at Hartismere. Parents are reminded in newsletters and school meetings about the importance of good attendance and its links to attainment.

4.2 First-day calling

The School has in place a system of first-day calling. This means that parents will be telephoned, where practicable, on the first day a pupil / student is absent without explanation to establish a reason for the absence. This helps to identify at an early stage pupils / students who do not have a good reason for absence or who may be absent without their parents' knowledge. Where it is not possible to make contact with parents on the first day of absence, the school will send a letter to them by first class post on the same day if practical.

4.3 Meetings with parents

Where there is an emerging pattern to a pupil's / student's absence over a 3 to 4 week period (or sooner if staff are particularly concerned), with or without explanation, the school will make contact with the parents seeking reasons for the absences. Plans should be put in place with the parents and pupil / student to resolve any difficulties and improve the attendance within a specified time limit – usually no more than 6 weeks. It may be considered appropriate to explain to parents that any future absences may not be authorised unless there is clear evidence of a good reason for them.

4.4 Referral to the Education Attendance Service

If there continue to be unauthorised absences by the end of the specific time (or sooner if the pupil / student is failing to attend school at all), the matter may be referred to the Education Attendance Service.

4.5 Lateness and punctuality

Pupils / students are expected to arrive at school, and be in the correct room for registration, on time every day. It is very disruptive to their own education and that of others in their class, if they are late. Pupils / students who arrive after the register closes will be marked absent for the whole session (a session being a morning or an afternoon). This absence will be unauthorised unless the school is satisfied that there is a legitimate reason for the pupil / student to be late. Such a reason will not include things such as missing the bus, clothes in the washing machine or lost shoes. A

student who is persistently absent by reason of lateness will be dealt with in the same way as other students with an emerging pattern of absence. If the matter is not resolved quickly, it may be referred to the Education Attendance Service.

- 4.6 For health and safety reasons it is important that the school knows who is in the building. Pupils / students arriving late should therefore report to Reception. It is important that all pupils / students arriving late following this procedure.
- 4.7 For the same reason it is important that pupils / students leaving the premises legitimately (e.g. for a medical appointment), or returning to school later in the day report to Reception.
- 4.8 Post-registration truancy

Post-registration truancy occurs when a student goes missing from school having previously registered for the session. This behaviour not only means the pupil / student will not be receiving a full-time education, it also potentially renders him/her vulnerable to harm. The School takes this very seriously and will endeavour to ensure it does not happen. If, however, a pupil / student appears to have left the premises without authorisation, the school will try to make contact with his/her parents immediately.

5. Term-time Holidays

- 5.1 Term-time holidays are intended for children whose parents are unable to take holiday at any other time.
- 5.2 The existing attendance record of a student may be taken into account by the Headteacher in considering the authorisation of requested holidays.
- 5.3 The School will consider every application individually, its policy is NOT to grant leave of absence for a holiday other than in the most exceptional circumstances. Time off school for family holidays **is not a right**. An application must be made in writing, with appropriate evidence, **in advance** of the intended holiday.
- 5.4 The School will consider authorising holidays for:
- service personnel and other employees who are prevented from taking holidays during term-time;
 - when a family needs to spend time together to support each other during or after a crisis;
 - parents who are subject to a strict and un-negotiable holiday rota and evidence is provided to this effect.
- 5.5 Requests for holidays for the following reason will not be authorised:
- cheaper cost of holiday;
 - availability of the desired accommodation;
 - poor weather experienced in school holiday periods; and
- 5.6 The School will respond to all requests for a leave of absence in writing giving the reasons for the decision.

5.7 The School will NOT normally authorise a holiday during periods of national tests, ie SATS and GCSE examinations.

6. Extended leave of absence

6.1 In considering absence for extended trips overseas The School will take account of the following:

- a visit to family overseas has a very different significance from a normal 'holiday';
- such visits may be important in terms of children's identity and self-esteem as they grow up;
- parents may feel that the reasons for their visit outweigh the importance of their child's uninterrupted attendance at school (although parents could be encouraged to use the school holiday periods for at least part of their trip);
- the reasons for wishing to make a visit is more difficult, particularly for minority ethnic families, where huge distances and high costs are involved;
- where extended leave of absence is granted there will be an expectation that the pupil undertakes some school-set work during this period.

7. Parents' / carers' responsibilities

7.1 The prime responsibility for ensuring children receive an appropriate and full-time education rests with parents / carers (defined by the Education Act 1996 as those with parental responsibility and those who have the care of a child).

7.2 The School expects parents / carers will:

- ensure their children attend the school regularly;
- support their children's attendance by keeping requests for absence to a minimum;
- not expect the school to automatically agree any requests for absence, and not condone unjustified absence from school.

7.3 Parents will also be expected to:

- notify the School on the first day of absence
- ensure their children arrive at school on time, properly dressed and with the right equipment for the day;
- work in partnership with the school, for example by attending parents' meetings and consultations, signing homework diaries when asked to do so, taking an interest in their children's work and activities;
- contact the school without delay if they are concerned about any aspects of their children's school lives.

8. Pupils' / students' responsibilities

- 8.1 All pupils / students should be aware of the importance of regular school attendance. If they are having difficulties that may prevent them from attending school regularly, they should speak to their class teacher or form tutor.
- 8.2 Pupils / students should attend all their lessons on time, ready to learn. If they have been absent from school they should give their class teacher or form tutor a note from their parents to explain the absence. Pupils / students also have a responsibility for following school procedures if they arrive late.

9. Governors' responsibilities

- 9.1 The governing body of a maintained school shall make arrangements for ensuring that their functions relating to the conduct of the school are exercised with a view to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children who are pupils at the school.

10. Conclusion

- 10.1 Regular school attendance is a necessary contributor to ensuring the outcomes of *Every Child Matters*:

Be healthy –

- attendance at school supports children's emotional and social health and development
- the school curriculum teaches children to be healthy

Stay safe –

- schools and the LA have a statutory duty to promote the safety and welfare of children
- the best way to safeguard children is to ensure they attend school regularly

Enjoy and achieve –

- good school attendance supports children in reaching their maximum potential and enjoying the fulfilment this brings

Make a positive contribution –

- membership of a school community builds confidence, gives children a sense of belonging and teaches them to contribute to and be responsible for the well-being of others

Achieve economic well-being –

- good school attendance supports engagement in further education, employment or training in the future, which in turn helps to support a prosperous and fulfilling life-style

