

ATTENDANCE POLICY

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Approved by:	Executive Team – to be approved by Local Academy Council Autumn Term 2023
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Policy Information:

Date of last review	N/A	Review period	Annually
Date approved	July 2023	Approved by	Executive Team – To Be Approved by Local Academy Council Autumn Term 2023
Policy owner	Nicola Redhead	Date of next review	July 2024

Updates made since the last review:

Review date	Changes made	By whom

Rationale

The Heights Academy places a high priority on achieving standards and feel that excellent pupil attendance and punctuality are essential. Central to raising standards in education and ensuring all pupils can fulfil their potential is an assumption so widely understood that it is insufficiently stated – pupils need to attend school regularly to benefit from their education.

Missing out on lessons leaves children vulnerable to falling behind. Children with poor attendance tend to achieve less in both primary and secondary school.

In order for children to achieve their potential, pupils must be highly motivated to learn as well as keen and eager to attend school. Regular, punctual attendance will establish good habits that will support them throughout their lives.

To achieve this, The Heights Academy are committed to working in partnership with parents and carers to ensure that maximum attendance is achieved, whilst discouraging any form of unauthorised absence. Parents/carers will be informed regularly of the requirements on attendance. Statistics show that, in general, the higher the percentage of sessions missed, the greater the impact on learning;

Attendance during one school year	equals this number of days absent	which is approximately this many weeks absent	which means this number of lessons missed
95%	9 days	2 weeks	50 lessons
90%	19 days	4 weeks	100 lessons
85%	29 days	6 weeks	150 lessons
80%	38 days	8 weeks	200 lessons

Pupils are admitted to the school only after request for a placement from Solihull Local Authority. All pupils have an Education Health Care Plan (EHCP).

Aims

1. To improve the overall attendance of pupils at the school.
2. To make attendance and punctuality a priority for all those associated with the school including pupils, parents/carers, all staff and governors.
3. To provide support and advice (including medical advice and guidance to parents/carers and pupils).
4. To develop a systematic approach to gathering and analysing attendance related data.
5. To further develop positive and consistent communication between home and school.
6. To implement an effective monitoring and intervention strategy.
7. To highlighting poor attendance and implement appropriate interventions to increase the attendance

8. To recognise the needs of the individual pupil when planning reintegration following significant periods of absence through illness.

Registration

A register of attendance for all pupils on the school roll is taken twice a day: once at the start of the morning registration session and once during the afternoon registration session.

For each pupil, the register will be marked either as present, engaged in an approved educational activity away from the school site or absent. If the pupil is absent, the register will say whether or not the absence has been authorised by the school.

Registrations begins at 8.45 a.m. in the morning and at 1.00 p.m.

Registers close at 9.15 am and 1.15 pm.

A mark will be made in respect of each pupil during registration. Any pupil who is not present at this time will be marked unauthorised absent 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. School staff will amend the registers to indicate lateness if a pupil arrives after the register closes. (See Appendix A) In the case of unavoidable delay for pupils using school transport, arrival after 9.20 a.m. will not incur a late mark.

Authorised & Unauthorised

The school are not allowed to authorise holiday for any reason. Authorised Leave is where the school has either given approval in advance for a pupil to be absent or has accepted an explanation offered afterwards as a satisfactory justification for absence e.g. illness. Only the school may authorise the absence. Unauthorised absence is absence without permission from an authorised representative of the school. This includes all unexplained or unjustified absences.

Authorised absences may include the following:

- Illness, medical and dental appointments
- unavoidable Religious day observance (parents/carers are requested to notify the school well in advance with documentary evidence)
- Dual registration
- Exceptional compassionate circumstances

Holiday in Term Time

The Heights Academy does not allow absence for holidays. Any absence, other than for illness or emergency medical attention, will be coded as unauthorised:

(G) – Family holiday not agreed or (O) Unauthorised.

The Heights Academy follows Solihull Local Authority guidance on Term Time Holidays

Parents/carers do not have a right to take their children out of school during term time and may be fined for taking holidays without the school's consent. A penalty notice (similar to a parking ticket) may be issued where parents/carers fail to ensure regular school attendance. For further information please view Solihull's guidance.

Parents/carers may choose to complete an 'Exceptional Circumstances Pupil Term Time Leave Request Form' stating why they are removing their child during term time. This is given to the Headteacher. Only exceptional circumstances will be authorised on a case by case basis. (For a list of examples of exceptional circumstances – See Appendix B). If an "Exceptional Circumstances Pupil Term Time Leave Request Form" is rejected the absence, should the parent still proceed with the removal of their child during term time, maybe dealt with under Leave in Term Time Penalty processes.

First Day Contact and Persistent Absence

Parents/carers will be contacted by telephone on the first day of absence if no message has been sent into school giving reasons for the absence. Attendance which falls below 90% during a term, will trigger investigative action by the school. If further action is required, a model of escalation will be followed, beginning with a supportive phone call, a possible meeting with the Headteacher or Deputy Headteacher and the Local authorities Attendance Officer.

During this process, agreed strategies will form an action plan for improving attendance where appropriate. Where structured intervention fails to bring about an improvement in attendance, the school may consider taking legal action where this is deemed necessary. Attendance is monitored regularly through individual summary sheets and analysis of data trends. Parents/carers are encouraged to communicate with the school via telephone or Class Dojo. Transport escorts may provide the first point of contact between parents/carers and the school.

School attendance, Safeguarding and Children Missing Education

If a child goes missing from education it is a potential indicator of abuse or neglect. School staff will follow the Local Authority procedures for dealing with children that go missing from education. All Schools are required to make the local authority aware of every registered pupil who fails to attend school regularly and any children who have been absent from school, where the absence has been treated as unauthorised for a continuous period of not less than 5 school days. This attendance policy is part of broader suite of Safeguarding policies including the schools Safeguarding Policy and the Behaviour and Welfare Policy which support the wellbeing of our children. Regulations 8(f) and 8(h) of the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, as amended, place a duty on schools and local authorities to jointly carry out reasonable enquiries to try and locate pupils absent from school whose whereabouts are unknown.

This might be:

- A child who is not at their last known address and:
 - has 5 or more days of continuous absence from school without explanation, or:
 - has left school suddenly and their destination is unknown.
- The family moving within the area but the parents fail to inform the school of the house move or transfer to a new school.
- The family move out of the area and relocate to a new area within the UK but parents fail to inform the school.
- The family relocate abroad and fail to inform the school of their destination.
- The family is displaced as a result of 'crisis' e.g. domestic violence, homelessness.
- Parent/school disagreement and parents withdraw the child from school.
- Family separation.

Where a child cannot be accounted for the school may carry out a home visit or a health and wellbeing concern may be raised. Any child whose whereabouts are known but continues to have unauthorised absences, should be assessed to determine if they have additional needs and require support such as a referral to Early Help, or to the school nurse or the Local Authority's Safeguarding Team. If there are no additional needs and the parent does not consent to additional support, or support has been put in place and it has not impacted on attendance, the school should seek advice from the local authority attendance team and sanctions may be implemented.

Parents who wish to educate their child at home

Where a parent notifies the school in writing of their intention to home educate, the school must inform the local authority. Pupils with a statement of Special Educational Needs / Education Health and Care Plan can be educated at home providing the Local Authority (Special Education Needs team) judges the arrangements to be appropriate for the child's age, ability and aptitude. The EHCP will need to be amended so that the child is no longer on role at the school.

If you home school your children, or if you are thinking about home education, call for advice from the Local Authority on 0121 569 8147 for advice and support.

Roles and Responsibilities

Parents and Carers

- Have a legal responsibility to send their child to school and to inform school of a child's absence.
- It is a parent/carers responsibility to contact school directly when their child is absent.
- Where attendance is highlighted as a concern, parents/carers will engage with school.

Teachers:

- To keep an accurate attendance register
- To inform the school via the school office if no message has been received regarding a pupil absence
- To highlight concerns regarding attendance to the Leadership team.

Administration Staff:

- Input attendance data via BROMCOM
- Print off reports weekly for monitoring purposes
- Managing the Pupil Signing in/out procedures.
- Make the first day absence calls and record reasons for absence

Pupil Wellbeing and Engagement Lead:

- To act as 'attendance leader' with responsibility for the strategic management of the attendance agenda
- To set clear, challenging and realistic targets as part of the school self-review
- Intervene early when individual pupil absence gives cause for concern
- Monitor patterns of attendance and lateness
- Inform/meet with parents/carers where there are attendance concerns
- Liaise with the Special School Nursing Team (where appropriate)
- Monitor attendance and any child below 95% and if below 90% attendance will trigger concern and an action plan put in place where appropriate
- Take legal action if and when necessary

Head Teacher

- Inform the Trust of attendance issues and records.
- Ensure all staff have the training required to fulfil responsibilities and duties
- Meet regularly with the PW&EL to monitor attendance
- Work collaboratively with other schools in FET

Local Academy Council:

- Monitor whole school attendance half-termly and take appropriate action, which may be seeking support from the trust.
- Receive appropriate, relevant and up to date training on attendance procedures and processes

Promoting Good Attendance

At The Heights Academy we believe in celebrating fantastic attendance and appreciate the support we receive from families. We aim through the following methods:

- Home/School Agreement
- School Newsletters
- Attendance Newsletters
- Class Attendance Displays
- Certificates for attending and improving attendance/ house attendance weekly and termly
- Attendance celebration Assemblies
- Improved Attendance Certificate and reward (Improved attendance compared to the previous half term)
- Letters/texts are sent to parents/carers congratulating them on their child's improved or outstanding attendance
- Pupils who achieve 100% per half term are awarded a Diamond Card, which allows pupils to have a reward time to celebrate their attendance success.

Appendix A

Attendance codes, Descriptions and Meanings

Code	Description	Meaning
/	Present (AM)	Present
\	Present (PM)	Present
B	Educated off site (NOT Dual Registration)	Approved Educational Activity
C	Other Authorised Circumstances	Authorised Absence
D	Dual Register	Authorised
E	Excluded	Authorised Absence
G	Family Holiday (NOT agreed or days in excess of agreement)	unauthorised Absence
H	Family Holiday (agreed)	Authorised Absence
I	Illness	Authorised Absence
J	Interview	Approved Educational Activity
L	Late (after registers closed)	Present
M	Medical	Authorised Absence
N	Reason for absence not yet provided	Unauthorised
O	Absent from school without authorisation	Unauthorised
P	Participating in a supervised sporting activity	Present
R	Religious Observance	Authorised Absence
S	Study Leave	Authorised Absence
T	Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence	
U	Arrived in school after registration closed	Unauthorised
V	Educational Visit/ Trip	Approved Educational Activity
W	Work Experience	Approved Any absence should be recorded using the relevant code.
X	not attending in circumstances relating to coronavirus (COVID-19)	Authorised
Y	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances	Authorised
Z	Pupil not on admission register	Authorised
#	Whole/ Partial School Closure	Authorised

Appendix B

Examples of exceptional circumstances

Head Teachers may, on rare occasions, make a judgement that there are genuine and exceptional circumstances pertaining to an application to take a pupil out of school during term. Head Teachers should not operate a blanket ban on all term time leave and should consider each application on its merits.

Examples of exceptional circumstances could include:

- death of parent/carer or sibling of the pupil
- life threatening or critical illness of parent or sibling of the pupil
- parent/carer recuperation and convalescence from critical illness or surgery (leave request to be made within 6 months of recovery and medical evidence required)
- leave for armed forces personnel who are prevented by operational duties to take their leave at any other time

It is not always in the best interests of the pupil nor appropriate for them to miss school for family emergencies that are being dealt with by adult family members. School and school relationships can provide pupils with stability and care during difficult times. If leave is granted, the Head Teacher is the person who determines the number of school days a child can be away from school.

Appendix C – Examples of attendance letters

Absences from school awareness letter

Dear Parents and Carers,

I'm writing to make you aware of your child's attendance at The Heights Academy. In line with government guidance, we are required to inform parents when their child's attendance falls below 90%.

[His/her] current attendance has fallen to [percentage]. Falling below 90% attendance will likely have an impact on [his/her] academic achievement.

We acknowledge that each family's circumstances are different and we aim to work with parents to provide the best education for every child.

Our pupils' welfare is of paramount importance to us and we believe that regular attendance throughout the year is essential for their success and fulfilment.

We want to make sure that we can support [name's] education in the best way possible, including looking into how we can help [him/her] to address gaps in learning due to absence.

If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact the school.

Absences from school

Dear Parents and Carers,

I'm writing to express my concern at [name's] recent high levels of absence from school.

[His/her] current attendance has fallen to [percentage]. Falling below 90% attendance will likely have an impact on [his/her] academic achievement.

We acknowledge that each family's circumstances are different and we aim to work with parents to provide the best education for every child.

Our pupils' welfare is of paramount importance to us and we believe that regular attendance throughout the year is essential for their success and fulfilment.

We want to make sure that we can support [name's] education in the best way possible, including looking into how we can help [him/her] to address gaps in learning due to absence.

Please contact the school office on [number] as soon as you can so we can arrange to discuss this.

Unauthorised absences from school

Dear Parents and Carers

I'm writing to express my concern at [name's] recent unauthorised [absence/absences] from school.

[Name] has been absent from school for a total of [number] unauthorised sessions ([number] days) on the following dates:

> [date]

> [date]

> [date]

We acknowledge that each family's circumstances are different and we aim to work with parents to provide the best education for every child.

Our pupils' welfare is of paramount importance to us and we believe that regular attendance throughout the year is essential for their success and fulfilment.

Please note that unauthorised absences can result in a penalty notice being issued if your child has unauthorised absences throughout the academic school year. You can find more information about penalty notices on Solihull's website and our attendance policy found on our school website.

Please contact the school office on [number] as soon as you can so we can arrange to discuss this.