Attendance Policy

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# 1. Aims

This policy aims to show our commitment to meeting our obligations with regards to HLH attendance, including those laid out in the Department for Education’s (DfE’s) statutory guidance on [working together to improve HLH attendance (applies from 19 August 2024)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-improve-school-attendance), through our whole-HLH culture and ethos that values good attendance, including:

* Setting high expectations for the attendance and punctuality of all pupils
* Promoting good attendance and the benefits of good attendance
* Reducing absence, including persistent and severe absence
* Ensuring every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled
* Acting early to address patterns of absence
* Building strong relationships with families to make sure pupils have the support in place to attend HLH

We will also promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

# 2. Legislation and guidance

This policy is based on the Department for Education’s (DfE’s) statutory guidance on [working together to improve HLH attendance (applies from 19 August 2024)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-improve-school-attendance) and [HLH attendance parental responsibility measures](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/parental-responsibility-measures-for-behaviour-and-attendance). The guidance is based on the following pieces of legislation, which set out the legal powers and duties that govern HLH attendance:

* Part 6 of the [Education Act 1996](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1996/56/contents)
* Part 3 of the [Education Act 2002](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/32/contents)
* Part 7 of the [Education and Inspections Act 2006](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/40/contents)
* The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (and 2010, 2011, 2013, and 2016 amendments)
* [The HLH Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2024/208/made)
* [The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 and the 2024 amendment](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2013/757/regulation/2/made)
* It also refers to:
* [HLH census guidance](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/complete-the-school-census)
* [Keeping Children Safe in Education](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2)
* [Mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance: guidance for HLHs](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/mental-health-issues-affecting-a-pupils-attendance-guidance-for-schools)

# 3. Roles and responsibilities

**3.1 The governing board**

The governing board is responsible for:

* Setting high expectations of all HLH leaders, staff, pupils and parents
* Making sure HLH leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties, including:
  + Making sure the HLH records attendance accurately in the register, and shares the required information with the DfE and local authority
  + Making sure the HLH works effectively with local partners to help remove barriers to attendance, and keeps them informed regarding specific pupils, where appropriate
* Recognising and promoting the importance of HLH attendance across the HLH’s policies and ethos
* Making sure the HLH’s attendance management processes are delivered effectively, and that consistent support is provided for pupils who need it most by prioritising staff and resources
* Making sure the HLH has high aspirations for all pupils, but adapts processes and support to pupils’ individual needs
* Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data and helping HLH leaders focus improvement efforts on individual pupils or cohorts who need it most
* Working with HLH leaders to set goals or areas of focus for attendance and providing support and challenge
* Monitoring attendance figures for the whole HLH and repeatedly evaluating the effectiveness of the HLH’s processes and improvement efforts to make sure they are meeting pupils needs
* Where the HLH is struggling with attendance, working with HLH leaders to develop a comprehensive action plan to improve attendance
* Making sure all staff receive adequate training on attendance as part of the regular continued professional development offer, so that staff understand:
  + The importance of good attendance
  + That absence is almost always a symptom of wider issues
  + The HLH’s legal requirements for keeping registers
  + The HLH’s strategies and procedures for tracking, following up on and improving attendance, including working with partners and keeping them informed regarding specific pupils, where appropriate
* Making sure dedicated training is provided to staff with a specific attendance function in their role, including in interpreting and analysing attendance data
* Holding the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy

**3.2 The headteacher**

The headteacher is responsible for:

* The implementation of this policy at the HLH
* Monitoring HLH-level absence data and reporting it to governors
* Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils
* Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies
* Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary, and/or authorising to be able to do so
* Working with the parents of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) to develop specific support approaches for attendance for pupils with SEND, including where HLH transport is regularly being missed, and where pupils with SEND face in-HLH barriers
* Communicating with the local authority when a pupil with an education, health and care (EHC) plan has falling attendance, or where there are barriers to attendance that relate to the pupil’s needs
* Communicating the HLH’s high expectations for attendance and punctuality regularly to pupils and parents through all available channels

**3.3 The designated senior leader responsible for attendance**

The designated senior leader responsible for:

* Leading, championing and improving attendance across the HLH
* Setting a clear vision for improving and maintaining good attendance
* Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes
* Having a strong grasp of absence data and oversight of absence data analysis
* Regularly monitoring and evaluating progress in attendance
* Establishing and maintaining effective systems for tackling absence, and making sure they are followed by all staff
* Liaising with pupils, parents/carers and external agencies, where needed
* Building close and productive relationships with parents to discuss and tackle attendance issues
* Creating intervention or reintegration plans in partnership with pupils and their parents/carers
* Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families

**3.4 The attendance officer**

The HLH attendance officer is responsible for:

* Monitoring and analysing attendance data (see section 7)
* Benchmarking attendance data to identify areas of focus for improvement
* Providing regular attendance reports to HLH staff and reporting concerns about attendance to the designated senior leader responsible for attendance, and the headteacher
* Working with education welfare officers to tackle persistent absence
* Advising the headteacher (authorised by the headteacher) when to issue fixed-penalty notices

**3.5**

Class teachers are responsible for recording attendance for both morning and afternoon sessions on a daily basis, using the correct codes (see Appendix 1), and submitting this information to the HLH office.

**3.6 Staff**

Staff will:

* Take calls from parents/carers about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the HLH system
* Transfer calls from parents/carers to HLH where appropriate, in order to provide them with more detailed support on attendance

**3.7 Parents**

Where this policy refers to a parent, it refers to the adult the HLH and/or local authority decides is most appropriate to work with, including:

* All natural parents, whether they are married or not
* All those who have parental responsibility for a child or young person
* Those who have day-to-day responsibility for the child (i.e. lives with and looks after them)

Parents are expected to:

* Make sure their child attends every timetabled session on time
* Call the HLH to report their child’s absence before 9am on the day of the absence and each subsequent day of absence), and advise when they are expected to return
* Provide the HLH with more than 1 emergency contact number for their child
* Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the HLH day
* Keep to any attendance contracts that they make with the HLH and/or local authority

**3.8 Pupils**

Pupils are expected to:

* *Attend every timetabled session, on time*

# 4. Recording attendance

**4.1 Attendance register**

We will keep an electronic attendance register, and place all pupils onto this register.

We will take our attendance register at the start of the first session of each HLH day and once during the second session. It will mark, using the appropriate national attendance and absence codes from the HLH Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024, whether every pupil is:

* Present
* Attending an approved off-site educational activity
* Absent
* Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

* The original entry
* The amended entry
* The reason for the amendment
* The date on which the amendment was made
* The name and position of the person who made the amendment

See Appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes.

We will also record:

* Whether the absence is authorised or not
* The nature of the activity, where a pupil is attending an approved educational activity
* The nature of circumstances, where a pupil is unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 6 years after the date on which the entry was made.

The HLH day starts at 8am and ends at 3pm.

Pupils must arrive in HLH for planned sessions on each HLH day.

The register will be taken at the beginning and end of each session arranged.

**4.2 Unplanned absence**

The pupil’s parent must notify the HLH of the reason for the absence on the first day of an unplanned absence, or as soon as practically possible, by calling the HLH.

We will mark absence due to physical or mental illness as authorised, unless the HLH has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

Where the absence is longer than 3 days, or there are doubts about the authenticity of the illness, the HLH will ask for medical evidence, such as a doctor’s note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

If the HLH is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents will be notified of this in advance.

**4.3 Planned absence**

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the pupil’s parent notifies the HLH in advance of the appointment.

However, we encourage parents to make medical and dental appointments out of HLH hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of HLH for the minimum amount of time necessary.

The pupil’s parent must also apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence. Go to section 5 to find out which term-time absences the HLH can authorise.

**4.4 Lateness and punctuality**

A pupil who arrives late:

* Before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code
* After the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code
* *If your child has a persistent late record you will be asked to meet with their mentor, the Pupil and*
* *Engagement Lead Officer and/or the Headteacher to help resolve the problem. You can always approach us*
* *at any time if you are having problems getting your child to HLH on time.*

**4.5 Following up unexplained absence**

Where any pupil we expect to attend HLH does not attend, or stops attending, without reason, the HLH will:

* Call the pupil’s parent on the morning of the first day of unexplained absence to ascertain the reason. If the HLH cannot reach any of the pupil’s emergency contacts, the HLH may contact police.
* Identify whether the absence is approved or not
* Identify the correct attendance code to use and input it as soon as the reason for absence is ascertained – this will be no later than 5 working days after the session(s) for which the pupil was absent
* Call the parent on each day that the absence continues without explanation, to make sure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary. If absence continues, the HLH will consider involving an education welfare officer
* Where relevant, report the unexplained absence to the pupil’s youth offending team officer
* Where appropriate, offer support to the pupil and/or their parents to improve attendance
* Identify whether the pupil needs support from wider partners, as quickly as possible, and make the necessary referrals

**4.6 Reporting to parents**

The HLH will regularly inform parents (see definition of ‘parent’, as used in this policy, in section 3.7 above) about their child’s attendance and absence levels at pupil progress meetings, letters.

# 5. Authorised and unauthorised absence

**5.1 Approval for term-time absence**

The headteacher will allow pupils to be absent from the HLH site for certain educational activities, or to attend other HLHs or settings.

The headteacher will only grant a **leave of absence** to a pupil during term time if the request meets the specific circumstances set out in the [2024 HLH attendance regulations](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2024/208/made#:~:text=11.,an%20%E2%80%9Cauthorised%20person%E2%80%9D).&text=(b)regulated%20employment%20abroad.). These circumstances are:

* Taking part in a regulated performance, or regulated employment abroad
* Attending an interview
* Study leave
* A temporary, time-limited part-time timetable
* Exceptional circumstances

A leave of absence is granted at the headteacher’s discretion, including the length of time the pupil is authorised to be absent for.

* *Leave to attend a high-level sporting commitment or to travel with the family due to the illness of a close family*
* *member may be deemed as exceptional circumstances. The HLHs’ term dates are published a year in*
* *advance and are made available on their websites in the expectation that parents/carers will ensure that*
* *holidays are taken during HLH holiday times.*
* *Leave of absence will not be granted for a pupil to take part in protest activity during HLH hours.*
* *As a leave of absence will only be granted in exceptional circumstances, it is unlikely a leave of absence will be granted for the purposes of a family holiday.*

*The HLH considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant background context behind the request.* Any request should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated and, where possible, at least two weeks before the absence, and in accordance with any leave of absence request form, accessible the HLH website/HLH office. The headteacher may require evidence to support any request for leave of absence.

Other valid reasons for **authorised absence** include (but are not limited to):

* Illness (including mental-health illness) and medical/dental appointments (see sections 4.2 and 4.3 for more detail)
* Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil’s parent(s) belong(s). If necessary, the HLH will seek advice from the parent’s religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart
* Parent(s) travelling for occupational purposes– this covers Roma, English and Welsh gypsies, Irish and Scottish travellers, showmen (fairground people) and circus people, bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and new travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the HLH, but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision
* If the pupil is currently suspended or excluded from HLH (and no alternative provision has been made)

Other reasons the HLH may allow a pupil to be absent from the HLH site, which are not classified as absences, include (but are not limited to):

* Attending an offsite approved educational activity, sporting activity or visit or trip arranged by the HLH
* Attending another HLH at which the pupil is also registered (dual registration)
* Attending provision arranged by the local authority
* Attending work experience
* If there is any other unavoidable cause for the pupil not to attend HLH, such as disruption to travel caused by an emergency, a lack of access arrangements, or because the HLH premises are closed

**5.2 Sanctions**

Our HLH will make use of the full range of potential sanctions – including, but not limited to, those listed below – to tackle poor attendance. Decisions will be made on an individual, case-by-case basis.

**Penalty notices**

The headteacher (or someone authorised by them), local authority or the police can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from HLH, where the child is of compulsory HLH age, by issuing a penalty notice.

If the HLH issues a penalty notice, it will check with the local authority before doing so, and send it a copy of any penalty notice issued.

Before issuing a penalty notice, the HLH will consider the individual case, including:

* Whether the national threshold for considering a penalty notice has been met (10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 HLH weeks)
* Whether a penalty notice is the best available tool to improve attendance for that pupil
* Whether further support, a notice to improve or another legal intervention would be a more appropriate solution
* Whether any obligations that the HLH has under the Equality Act 2010 make issuing a penalty notice inappropriate

Each parent who is liable for the pupil’s offence(s) can be issued with a penalty notice, but this will usually only be the parent/parents who allowed the absence.

The payment must be made directly to the local authority, regardless of who issues the notice. If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute or withdraw the notice.

If issued with a **first** penalty notice, the parent must pay £80 within 21 days, or £160 within 28 days.

If a **second** penalty notice is issued to the same parent in respect of the same pupil, the parent must pay £160 if paid within 28 days.

A **third** penalty notice cannot be issued to the same parent in respect of the same child within 3 years of the date of the issue of the first penalty notice. In a case where the national threshold is met for a third time within those 3 years, alternative action will be taken instead.

A penalty notice may also be issued where parents allow their child to be present in a public place during HLH hours without reasonable justification, during the first 5 days of a suspension or exclusion (where the HLH has notified the parents that the pupil must not be present in a public place on that day). These penalty notices are not included in the National Framework, not subject to the same considerations about support being provided, and do not count towards the limit as part of the escalation process.

In these cases, the parent must pay £60 within 21 days, or £120.

**Notices to improve**

If the national threshold has been met and support is appropriate, but parents do not engage with offers of support, the HLH may offer a notice to improve to give parents a final chance to engage with support.

Notices to improve will be issued in line with processes set out in the local code of conduct for the local authority area in which the pupil attends HLH.

They will include:

* Details of the pupil’s attendance record and of the offences
* The benefits of regular attendance and the duty of parents under [section 7 of the Education Act 1996](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1996/56/section/7)
* Details of the support provided so far
* Opportunities for further support, or to access previously provided support that was not engaged with
* A clear warning that a penalty notice may be issued if attendance doesn’t improve within the improvement period, along with details of what sufficient improvement looks like, which will be decided on a case-by-case basis
* A clear timeframe of between 3 and 6 weeks for the improvement period
* The grounds on which a penalty notice may be issued before the end of the improvement period

# 6. Strategies for promoting attendance

* *Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody’s responsibility - parents, carers, pupils and all*
* *members of HLH staff.*
* *To help us all to focus on this we will:*
* *Report to you at least half-termly on how your child is performing in HLH, their level of attendance,*
* *whether there are issues with punctuality and how this relates to their attainments;*
* *Celebrate good attendance by displaying individual achievements on a weekly basis.*
* *Reward good or improving attendance through certificates and trips out.*

# 7. Supporting pupils who are absent or returning to HLH

**7.1 Pupils absent due to complex barriers to attendance**

*HLH will offer continued support to encourage the pupil to return to HLH.*

*This may take the form of:*

*• Parent/carer and pupil meetings in HLH / at home / at a neutral location*

*• A re-integration programme, such as returning on an induction-style timetable*

*• Education Welfare Officer Liaison*

*• CAMHS / CLD / SYM referrals*

*• Referral to social care (EHA or MASH depending on level of need identified)*

*Where other agencies are involved with the pupil, there will be full liaison between parties.*

**7.2 Pupils absent due to mental or physical ill health or SEND**

*Pupils absent from HLH due to mental or physical ill health or their SEND needs may require adjustments to*

*be made and/or additional support.*

*HLH will work collaboratively with families, pupils and any relevant external agencies to ensure the most*

*appropriate support is offered. Where appropriate, referrals to external agencies may be made including to the*

*local authority to seek additional support (including the children missing from education, children who cannot*

*attend HLH and inclusion team).*

*Where a pupil has an education health and care (EHC) plan and their attendance falls, or the HLH becomes*

*aware of barriers to attendance that related to the pupil’s needs, the HLH will inform the local authority.*

Where a pupil has an education health and care (EHC) plan and their attendance falls, or the HLH becomes aware of barriers to attendance that related to the pupil’s needs, the HLH will inform the local authority.

**7.3 Pupils returning to HLH after a lengthy or unavoidable period of absence**

# *Should a pupil require supporting back into HLH after a lengthy or unavoidable period of absence, a*

# *reintegration meeting will be held in HLH for parents and pupils to attend to discuss an appropriate*

# *reintegration plan.*

# *This may include a time monitored reduced timetable, adapted timetable and /or referrals for external support.*

# *A plan will be agreed upon and reviewed frequently. Initial reintegration plans will be for a six week period with*

# *a further meeting held at week six where appropriate.*

# 8. Attendance monitoring

**8.1 Monitoring attendance**

The HLH will monitor attendance and absence data (including punctuality) half-termly, termly and yearly across the HLH and at an individual pupil, year group and cohort level.

Specific pupil information will be shared with the DfE on request.

Data will be collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's HLH absence national statistics releases. The underlying HLH-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics.

The HLH will benchmark its attendance data at whole HLH, year group and cohort level against local, regional, and national levels to identify areas of focus for improvement, and share this with the governing board.

**8.2 Analysing attendance**

The HLH will:

* Analyse attendance and absence data regularly to identify pupils, groups or cohorts that need additional support with their attendance, and
* Identify pupils whose absences may be a cause for concern, especially those who demonstrate patterns of persistent or severe absence
* Conduct thorough analysis of half-termly, termly, and full-year data to identify patterns and trends
* Look at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence, and then develop strategies to address these patterns

**8.3 Using data to improve attendance**

HLH will:

* Develop targeted actions to address patterns of absence (of all severities) of individual pupils, groups or cohorts that it has identified via data analysis
* Provide targeted support to the pupils it has identified whose absences may be a cause for concern, especially those who demonstrate patterns of persistent or severed absence, and their families (see section 8.4 below)
* Provide regular attendance reports to staff to facilitate discussions with pupils and families, and to the governing board and HLH leaders
* Use data to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place in order to modify them and inform future strategies
* Share information and work collaboratively with other HLHs in the area, local authorities and other partners where a pupil’s absence is at risk of becoming persistent or severe, including keeping them informed regarding specific pupils, where appropriate

**8.4 Reducing persistent and severe absence**

Persistent absence is where a pupil misses 10% or more of HLH, and severe absence is where a pupil misses 50% or more of HLH. Reducing persistent and severe absence is central to the HLH’s strategy for improving attendance.

The HLH will:

* Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence
* Consider potential safeguarding issues and, where suspected or present, address them in line with Keeping Children Safe in Education
* Hold regular meetings with the parents of pupils who the HLH (and/or local authority) considers to be vulnerable or at risk of persistent or severe absence, or who are persistently or severely absent, to:
  + Discuss attendance and engagement at HLH
  + Listen, and understand barriers to attendance
  + Explain the help that is available
  + Explain the potential consequences of, and sanctions for, persistent and severe absence
  + Review any existing actions or interventions
* Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance, in conjunction with the local authority, where relevant
* Consider alternative support that could be put in place to remove any barriers to attendance and re-engage these pupils. In doing so, the HLH will sensitively consider some of the reasons for absence
* Implement sanctions, where necessary (see section 5.2, above)

# 9. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the local authority and/or DfE is updated, At every review, the policy will be approved by the full governing board.

# 10. Links with other policies

This policy links to the following policies:

* Child protection and safeguarding policy
* Behaviour policy