

# Horton Lodge Community Special School

'Working Hand in Hand to Achieve Potential'



## Attendance Policy

**Approved by:**

**Date:**

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## 1. Aims

Horton Lodge believes;

- Regular school attendance to key in enabling all children to maximise the educational opportunities available to them, becoming emotionally resilient, confident and reaching their own potential, making a positive contribution to their community
- Promoting excellent attendance is the responsibility of the whole school community
- Attendance, and this policy, should not be seen in isolation but is a strand that underpins all other policies relating to the well-being of children, including safeguarding, behaviour, bullying and support for children with medical needs
- Through the school curriculum and learning materials, positive behaviour and attendance will be promoted
- All children should in school, on time, every day that the school is open, unless the reason for absence is unavoidable or in exceptional circumstances

Horton Lodge aims to meet its obligations with regard to school attendance by;

We are committed to meeting our obligation with regards to school attendance through our whole-school culture and ethos that values good attendance, including:

- Promoting 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 ensure pupils have the support in place to attend school

We will also support parents to perform their legal duty to ensure their children of compulsory school age attend regularly.

Horton Lodge will;

- Monitor the attendance of all pupils and work with parents to resolve problems which may affect a child's attendance. This may involve other agencies that work with school such as the school Nurse or Local Support Teams, where required
- Be proactive in encouraging the attendance for all pupils and will react swiftly to intervene to improve the attendance of individual children should this become a concern
- Work co-operatively with parents/carers, as they have the legal duty to ensure their children of compulsory school age attend school.

## 2. Legislation and Guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the [working together to improve school attendance](#) 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. School Procedures**

#### **3.1 Attendance Register**

By law, all schools are required to keep an attendance registers and all pupils must be placed on this register.

The attendance register will be taken twice in the day. The morning register will be taken at 9am and will be kept open until 9:20am. The afternoon register will be taken at 1:30pm and will be kept open until 1:45pm.

It will mark whether every pupils is;

- Present
- Attending an approved off-site education activity
- Absent
- Unable to attend

See appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes.

We will also record:

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

#### **3.2 Unplanned absence**

Parents must notify the school office on the first day of an unplanned absence – for example, if their child is unable to attend due to ill health by 9:30am or as soon as practicably possible (see also Section 6). Parents should notify the school office by telephoning and speaking to a member of staff or by leaving a message.

Absence due to illness will be authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.



If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may ask parents/carers to provide 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 school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents will be notified of this.

### **3.3 Planned absence**

Missing school sessions for a medical or dental appointment is counted as an authorised absence; advanced notice is required for authorising these absences. Parents/carers should give advance notice by informing the school office.

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

Applications for other types of absence in term time must also be made in advance. Please see Section 4.

### **3.4 Lateness and punctuality**

A pupil who arrives late but before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code. A pupil who arrives after the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code.

Pupils who arrive late because of difficulties with school transport will be marked as present. Where patterns of consistent lateness by contractors occur, school will liaise with the relevant local authority transport department.

### **3.5 Following up unexplained absence**

The school will follow up any absences to ascertain the reason, ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary, identify whether the absence is approved or not and identify the correct attendance code to use.

On the first day of absence where a reason has not been given, the school will make a telephone call to parents to ascertain the reason for the absence. If contact cannot be made, the school will send a text message asking parents to contact the school. A 'safe and well' visit may be made if the school has concerns regarding the absence. If the school cannot reach any of the pupil's emergency contacts, the school may contact police.

## **4. Authorised and unauthorised absence**

### **4.1 Granting approval for term-time absence**



Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence to pupils during term time unless they consider there to be exceptional circumstances.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request. This includes the current and previous year attendance percentage. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the headteacher's discretion.

Valid reasons for authorised absence include;

- Illness and medical/dental appointments – as explained in sections 3.2 and 3.3
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents/carers belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the relevant religious body.
- Respite stays – the school acknowledges that these stays are essential and will liaise with the provider to ensure attendance and educational activity.
- Traveller pupils travelling for occupational purpose – absence will only be authorised when a Traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school.

This list is not exhaustive.

#### **4.2 Legal Sanctions**

Schools can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child, where the child is of compulsory school age.

If issued with a penalty notice, parents must pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. The payment must be paid directly to the local authority.

The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice ultimately rests with the headteacher, following the local authority's code of conduct for issuing penalty notices. This may take into account;

- The number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year
- One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission
- Where an excluded pupil is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason.

### **5. Attendance monitoring**

The overall attendance of all pupils is monitored on a monthly basis. Pupils are grouped into categories based on their percentage attendance as follows;



### **Green Group**

**85% - 100%**

**This is good-excellent attendance. Pupils in this group will be monitored on a monthly basis to ensure their attendance continues.**

### **Yellow Group**

**75% - 85%**

**This attendance is a concern – further analysis of absence will be undertaken to find the cause of the absences and ascertain if there is a pattern of absence to be addressed. A decision will be made as to whether the individual circumstances require further and more frequent monitoring.**

- **Blue Group**

- **Less than 75%**

- **This attendance group require more frequent monitoring and we may be asking parents/carers to support with attendance. External agencies may be asked to be involved at this point.**

## **6. Roles and responsibilities**

### **6.1 The governing board**

The governing board is responsible for:

- Promoting the importance of school attendance across the school's policies and ethos
- Making sure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties
- Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data
- Monitoring attendance figures for the whole school on at least a termly basis
- Holding the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy

### **6.2 The headteacher**

The headteacher is responsible for:

- Implementation of this policy at the school
- Monitoring school-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

The headteacher is the attendance officer and also;

- Monitors attendance data at the school and individual pupil level
- Liaised with the safeguarding team around concerns about attendance
- Works with Education Welfare Workers to tackle persistent absence
- Arranges calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues
- Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families

### **6.3 Class Teachers**

Class Teachers are responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes and submitting this information on SIMS.

### **6.4 Office Staff**

Office staff will take calls from parents about absence and record this on SIMs. They will also make first day absence phone calls.

### **6.5 Parents/carers**

- Make sure their child attends every [day/timetabled session] on time
- Call the school to report their child's absence before [time, e.g. 9am] on the day of the absence and advise when they are expected to return
- Provide the school with more than 1 emergency contact number for their child
- Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day

## **7. Monitoring arrangements**

This policy will be reviewed every 2 years by the Headteacher. At every review, the policy will be approved with the governing board.

## **8. Links with other policies**

- Child protection and safeguarding
- Behaviour policy
- Children with Health Needs Who Cannot Attend School Policy