



Heathside School

Attendance Policy Students

Staff Member with Responsibility:	Miss H Balson, Assistant Principal
Reviewed by:	Student Learning and Progress Committee
Reviewed Date:	May 2017
Next Review Due:	May 2020

Statement of Intent

The staff of Heathside School are committed, in partnership with the parents, students, Local Advisory Board and the Local Authority, to building a school which serves the community and of which the community is proud.

Heathside School firmly believes that all students benefit from regular school attendance. Full and regular attendance at school is crucial for a child's future life chances and establishes a positive work ethic early in life. To this end we will do all we can to encourage parents/carers to ensure their children achieve maximum possible attendance and that any problems that prevent full attendance are identified and acted on promptly. Students will be expected to achieve 100% attendance but when absence is unavoidable, parents/carers will be required to inform the school at the earliest opportunity.

Parental Responsibility and the Law

Parents/carers, whose children are of compulsory school age and are registered at the school, are responsible for ensuring that their children attend school regularly. If they do not do so they may be committing an offence under the Education Act 1996 and could be liable to prosecution or to be served with a penalty notice.

In line with the Education (Student Registration) Regulations 2006, all unexplained absences of 10 days or more are required to be reported to the Local Authority. Schools are required to report all absence figures to the Local Authority and the DCSF and to ensure they are reported to parents on at least an annual basis. Rates of absence are also taken into account by Ofsted as part of a school's inspection.

Expectations

The Local Advisory Board expect that all students will:

- Attend school regularly.
- Attend school punctually.

- Attend appropriately prepared for the day.
- Discuss promptly with their form tutor/class teacher, Student Support Co-ordinator or Head of Learning, any problems that may affect their school attendance.

The Local Advisory Board expect that all parent/carers and persons who have day to day responsibility for the children will:

- Encourage regular school attendance and be aware of their legal responsibilities.
- Ensure that their child/children in their care arrive at school punctually, prepared for the school day and have completed any homework they have been given.
- Ensure that they contact the school on the first day of absence or if known in advance, whenever their child is unable to attend school.
- Contact school promptly whenever any problem occurs that may keep their child away.
- Notify the school immediately of any changes to contact details.
- Notify the school of any home circumstances that might affect the behaviour and learning of their child.

The Local Advisory Board expect that the school will:

- Provide a welcoming atmosphere and a safe learning environment for children.
- Keep regular and accurate records of AM and PM attendance and punctuality for all students
- Contact parents as soon as possible when a student fails to attend and where no message has been received to explain the absence.
- Follow up all unexplained absences to obtain explanations from parents. Although parents may offer a reason, only the school can authorise the absence. In the case of long term or frequent absence due to medical conditions, verifications from a GP or other relevant body may be requested.
- Monitor every student's attendance and punctuality
- Provide a sympathetic response to any student's or parent's concerns.
- Make initial enquiries to parent/carers of students who are attending irregularly, expressing the school's concerns and clarifying the school and the Local Authority's expectations regarding regular school attendance.
- Liaise with the School's attached Education Welfare Officer (EWO) to follow up concerns about attendance by contacting or visiting parents/carers at home. Failure by the family to comply with the planned support set by Education Welfare may result in further actions, e.g. an application for an Education Supervision Order, or court prosecution.
- Encourage and celebrate 100% attendance and punctuality through a system of reward and recognition.
- Provide regular updates to parents regarding their child's attendance through the termly reporting cycle and progress monitoring appointments.

The Local Advisory Board expect that the Attendance Officer and relevant Pastoral staff will:

- Oversee the registration process and ensure that registers are completed accurately and punctually
- Consult and liaise closely with the EWO regularly, including making referrals when necessary
- Share any concerns expressed about attendance or disaffection that might lead to non-attendance with the Head of Learning and EWO
- Manage the school's scheme for contacting parents/carers on the first day of absence
- Initiate contact with parents/carers in cases of unexplained absence and lateness before referring to the EWO
- Send regular letter to parents where attendance is causing concern.
- Have 1 to 1 meetings with any students below 90% on a half termly basis.

- Request parental meetings with students below 90% on a half termly basis.

The Local Advisory Board expect that the Form Tutors and subject teachers will:

- Complete registers accurately and punctually using SIMs Lesson Monitor.
- Follow up any unexplained non-attendance or lateness with the Head of Learning and Student Support Co-ordinator.
- Inform the Head of Learning and Student Support Co-ordinator of concerns
- Be alert to signs of disaffection that may lead to non-attendance and report them to the Head of Learning and Student Support Co-ordinator.
- Set termly attendance targets during progress monitoring appointments.

Progress Monitoring:

- As part of our progress monitoring process, Mentors will ensure that students have suitable attendance / punctuality targets, and understand the importance of outstanding attendance.

Categorisation of Absence

Any student who is on roll but not present in school must be recorded within one of these categories:

1 Unauthorised absence

This is for students where no reason has been provided or whose absence is deemed to be without valid reason. This includes:

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily
- Absences which have never been properly explained
- Shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- Excessive illness without medical evidence

2 Authorised absence

This is for those students who are away from school for a reason that is deemed to be valid under the Education Act 1996.

3 Approved Educational Activity

This covers types of supervised educational activity undertaken off site but with the approval of the school. This would include:

- Work experience placements
- Field trips and educational visits
- Sporting activities
- Link courses or approved education off site activities
- Most types of dual registration

Requests for leave of absence during term time

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 which becomes law on 1st September 2013 state that Head teachers (Principals) may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. The Head teacher (Principal) is required to determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if leave is granted.

All requests for holidays will be considered to be unauthorised leave of absence.

If a family needs to request absence in term-time then an Application for Leave of Absence Form must be completed prior to the leave date and where possible at least two weeks before. These forms can be obtained from the website, the school office or by writing to the Head of Learning. The Principal in consultation with the Vice Principal / Assistant Principal or Head of Learning, will then decide whether or not to authorise the absence requested. Each request will be considered separately and a decision made based on the reasons for each request.

Permission for leave of absence for special family events, special sporting activities, special occasions or family funerals should also be sought by filling in the Application for Leave of Absence Form. The Vice Principal or Assistant Principal, in consultation with the Head of Learning, will then decide whether or not to authorise the absence requested. Each request will be considered separately and a decision made based on the reasons for each request.

- School holiday dates, external exam dates and INSET days are published in advance.
- Requests for absences during term time for students in Years 10 and 11 will never be authorised.
- Requests for absences during term time will not be authorised during internal and external examination periods.
- If a holiday is taken without prior authorisation by the school, it will be recorded as an unauthorised absence and the Education Welfare Service will be notified.

Failure to ensure regular school attendance: Penalty Notices.

The Education Welfare Service, acting on behalf of Surrey County Council may issue a Penalty Notice as an alternative to the prosecution of a parent / carer for their child's unauthorised absence from school and requires the recipient to pay a fixed amount.

- The amount payable on issue of a Penalty Notice is £60 if paid within 21 days of receipt of the notice, rising to £120 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days.
- If the Penalty Notice is not paid in full by the end of the 28 day period, the Local Authority is then obliged to prosecute for failing to ensure regular school attendance under Section 444 Education act 1996.

Circumstances when a Penalty Notices may be issued.

A Penalty Notice may be issued to parents / carers who are failing to secure their child's regular school attendance and are failing to engage with supportive measures to improve attendance, proposed by the school or EWO. The issue of a penalty notice will be considered where attendance has fallen below 90% and there is no less than 10 unauthorised sessions (10 half days) in the preceding 6 school weeks. Unauthorised absence will include late arrival to school, after the close of registration without good reason.

- The Principal is able to request that the Local Authority issue a Penalty Notice to parents / carers, when students are taken out of school for 5 or more days holiday or leave of absence without school authorisation. **Each parent** is liable to receive a penalty notice for **each** child. In these circumstances, a warning will not be given where it can be shown that parents had previously been warned that such absences would not be authorised.
- Penalty notices may also be issued when a student is late to school after the registration is closed, on 5 occasions during a half term, where the student's attendance falls below 90%.

With the exception of unauthorised holidays or leave of absence taken in term time, parents will be sent a formal warning of their liability to receive such a notice before it is issued.

Registration and Punctuality

Punctuality to school is crucial and registration at the beginning of the day with a student's tutor is one of the most important periods in the day. Lateness into school causes disruption to that individual's learning and to that of the other students in the class. It is paramount therefore that all students arrive at school on time.

- The school day begins at 8.30am and students who arrive after 8.30am will be recorded as late to school.
- Registers close at 9.00am and after this, lateness is recorded as an unauthorised absence and can be subject to prosecution by the LA.
- Persistent lateness by a student will be dealt with through school detentions and may be referred to the Education Welfare Service.

The school reserves the right that in exceptional circumstances, the timing of am and/or pm registration may be subject to review and/or amendment.

Students Leaving During the School Day

- Students are not allowed to leave the premises without prior permission from the school.
- Whenever possible, parents should try to arrange medical and other appointments outside of school time. Any absence for such appointments should be for the required time only; the school will not authorise more absence than is required to attend the appointment.
- Parents are requested to confirm in writing the reason for any planned absence, the time of leaving, the expected return time and whether the student is being collected or will make their own way to their destination. Evidence of the appointment may be requested.
- Students must sign out at main reception on leaving the school and sign back in on their return.
- Where a student is being collected from the school, parents are requested to report to the main reception before the student is allowed to leave the site.
- If a child becomes ill during the school day, she / he must ask for permission to go to the main reception and if necessary, parents will be contacted for the child to go home. Children must never contact parents directly to make arrangements to go home.
- If a student leaves the school site without permission their parents will be contacted. Should the school be unable to make contact with the family it may be appropriate, in certain circumstances, to contact the Police and register the student as a missing person.

Responding to Non Attendance.

If a child is absent for any reason, it is the responsibility of the parent to notify the school. However if the child is absent and no reason has been provided the following procedure will apply:

- On the first day of absence, if no note or telephone call is received from the parent/carer by 9.30am, the school will endeavour to contact them that day by phone, text message or e-mail. A message will be left where no contact can be made.
- On the second day of absence the same procedure will be followed.
- If, after two days of absence there has still been no contact made, the school will send a letter of concern to parents/carers and invite them into school to discuss their concerns and to provide the reasons for the absence.

Parents will be informed that if the absence persists a referral will be made to the EWO.

- Failure to comply with the expectations set by the EWO may result in further action including an application for an education Supervision Order or court prosecution
- Any student who is absent without an explanation for 10 consecutive days will be notified to the Local Authority, by submitting a referral to the Education Welfare Service. This is a legal requirement. The school will include details of the action that they have taken.

Frequent Absence

Whilst any child may be off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. 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 unhelpful for parents 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 usually makes things worse.

The Education Welfare Service meets with school staff regularly to discuss concerns.

In cases where a student begins to develop a pattern of absences, the school will try to resolve the problem with the parent by:

1. A phone call to the parent / carer by the Form Tutor or Student Support Co-ordinator team and issues discussed with student in school.
2. Letter sent to parents stating concerns.
3. Meeting with parents at school with Attendance officer and/or Head of Learning.

If this is unsuccessful the school will refer to the Education Welfare Service.

Persistent Absence (PA)

A student becomes a persistent absentee when they miss 10% or more days schooling across the school year for whatever reason. Absence at this level is considerably damaging to a child's education prospects and we need parents' fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

We monitor all absences thoroughly. Any cases that are seen to have reached the Persistent Absence mark or are at risk of moving towards that mark are given priority and parents will be informed of this immediately.

Persistent Absence students are tracked and monitored carefully through our pastoral system and we also combine this with academic mentoring where absence affects attainment.

Parents will be notified by a letter if their child becomes a persistent absentee and be invited to a meeting where an action plan will be drawn up to address the issues identified.

Changing Schools

It is important that if families decide to send their child to a different school that they inform the Principal in writing as soon as possible. A student will not be removed from the school roll until the following information has been received and investigated:

- The date the student will be leaving the school and starting the next
- The address of the new school
- The new home address if it is known

School staff will then confirm with the parents the leaving date for their child. Following this date the student's school records will be sent on to the new school as soon as possible and within ten days of the child leaving. The Student Tracking Office at County Hall will also be sent appropriate information within ten days of anyone leaving or joining the school. If no notification is received from a new school then the child's name will not be removed from the school roll until after an investigation by the Education Welfare Service.

Deleting a student from the Admission Register

Under the new regulations a student's name will be deleted from a school's register if

- a) The student fails to return to school within 10 school days immediately following the expiry of the period of approved leave of absence.
- b) The Principal does not have reasonable grounds to believe that the student is unable to attend by reason of sickness or any unavoidable cause.
- c) Both the school and the Local Authority have failed after reasonable enquiry to ascertain where the student is.