



Harton Academy Attendance Policy

1.0 Principles

At Harton, we believe there is a strong correlation between good attendance and attainment. Our aim is to encourage and maintain high levels of attendance across the school. Children should be at school, on time, every day the school is open, unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. Operating a robust and consistent process allows us to support children where this will make a difference, as well as identify any safeguarding issues affecting their overall welfare.

Our policy and procedure relates to children who are on the Harton school roll, and the measures we will take to protect them and their educational opportunities.

1.1 The Role of the School

As a School, we promote good attendance and ensure that our teaching and learning encourages regular attendance. Pupils are taught the value of high attendance for their own personal progression and achievement. Teaching and appropriate support staff ensure that attendance is recorded accurately and promptly, to ensure that non-attendances are dealt with without unnecessary delay. We ensure that our pastoral team monitor attendance, including daily registers and on-going issues, as well as being aware of factors which may affect a pupil's attendance. We have a clear school attendance policy with effective day to day processes and the policy is available to all parties via the school website. Staff build strong relationships with families, they listen to and understand barriers to attendance and work with families to remove them. We share information and work with other schools in the area, the local authority, and other partners when absence is at risk of becoming persistent or severe.

1.2 Parents and Carers

It is the responsibility of Parents or Carers to do everything they can to prevent unnecessary absences. A Parent or Carer must inform the School of any circumstance which may affect the child's attendance, and work with the Pastoral Team as required securing any improvements in attendance.

Taking an interest in their child's education and promoting the value of education, including attending school, is a simple and effective way of supporting both their child and the School. These expectations are outlined for parents in the home/school agreement which features in the pupil planner.

1.3 How we define 'Attendance'

Every absence from school has to be classified by the school as either 'authorised' or 'unauthorised'. It is important for parents and carers to advise the school for each absence so this can be done accurately.

- **Authorised absences** are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason, such as illness or other unavoidable cause.
- **Unauthorised absences** are those, which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no “leave” has been approved. This includes, but is not limited to :
 - Parents keeping children off school unnecessarily.
 - Truancy before or during the school day.
 - Absences which have never been properly explained.
- **Late Arrivals:** Robust procedures are in place to deal with lateness.
- **Persistent Absentees (PA)** are those pupils whose attendance falls below 90% (PA). Pupil progress is carefully monitored by pastoral staff, with a view to preventing students from falling into this category.

1.4 Children ‘absent from education’

The term “absent from education” now applies if a child:

- has left school without permission during the school day and their whereabouts is unknown, or
- they have not attended school as expected by their parent / carer and their whereabouts is unknown.
- For absences which are becoming persistent or severe, pastoral staff will be working closely with other agencies such as the local authority who will be automatically informed whenever a child is removed from the school register.

In these cases the school will take steps to identify the reasons for the absence. This will include trying to contact parents or carers and making a home visit if necessary. Parents or carers may be invited into school to discuss the absence.

The local authority has in place a response system to manage missing children. It is called the Missing Child Protocol. If staff consider the child to be at risk, or if the situation cannot be clarified before the end of the school day, the Missing Child Protocol will be completed and appropriate agencies informed.

2.0 Procedure for dealing with absences – in all cases

2.1 Notification of an absence

Parents or Carers are required to contact school on the first day of a child’s absence and every day thereafter. They should advise of the reason for the absence and a likely day/date when they expect the child to return to school.

If no contact is made, or reason given, the Attendance Team will contact the home by means of a text message or phone call. If an acceptable response is not received, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised, and a letter sent home to confirm this. There will be further follow up with another phone call.

- 2.2 Where a pupil has not returned to school within a week, and no contact has been made, a home visit will be carried out, to identify the reasons for the absence and determine the appropriate course of action.

NB Following the coroner's report on the Morningside Primary school case when a child died when he was unable to raise the alarm after his mother died from a fit, we have amended our policy to take account of the coroner's statement. The coroner recommended that "if a child unexpectedly fails to attend school and no relevant adult can be contacted, the school should immediately send a member of staff to the family home. If there is no answer at the family home when staff members attend, they should immediately contact the police, who in most cases are likely to force entry"

2.2 Monitoring attendance

- 2.2.1 All form tutors, or staff undertaking that role, monitor attendance by means of the electronic registration system used by the school:

Attendance is monitored on a daily basis at morning and afternoon registration. Following the start of each lesson, or tutorial, the register is held open for ten minutes, before being closed at which point the child will be marked absent.

Spot checks are also carried out periodically in order to make pupils aware that attendance is being closely monitored.

In addition to this, all staff acting as form or subject tutors will be vigilant over attendance and will notify the Attendance Team about unauthorised or unexplained absences during the school day.

The Attendance Team should be notified immediately if a pupil is found to be missing from a lesson. The relevant Head of Year will be informed.

The electronic registration system records attendances, and allows the Attendance Team to quickly identify absentees in order to take the appropriate action.

- 2.2.2 In using the electronic registration system, and information provided by staff, patterns of absence or issues of concern will be identified. This will result in further action being taken, when pastoral staff meet weekly to discuss attendance issues.

Pupils and parents will be contacted as necessary by the school and interviews held with a view to improving the pupil's attendance. Wherever possible, the school endeavours to hold more than one emergency contact number for each child. Pastoral staff use the attendance information to identify any child who may need extra support. This may take the form of targeted intervention and support for individual pupils and families or cohorts of pupils who may have specific needs such as medical conditions or disabilities.

3.0 Different Reasons for Absence

Absences will generally be treated as unauthorised unless a satisfactory explanation can be given.

- 3.1 **Illness** – most cases of illness are short term. For longer periods of absence, parents or carers may be asked to provide medical evidence. For example, a Doctor's note, appointment card or prescription. Where this is required, parents or carers will be advised of this.
- 3.2 **Medical or dental appointments** – every effort should be made to make these outside of school hours. Where this cannot be avoided, children should attend school for as much of the day as possible. Children will usually be asked to produce an appointment card or parental/carers note will be required.
- 3.3 **Family holidays or extended leave** – see Appendix Two

4.0 Strategies for reducing absence and instigating further action

- 4.1 Stressing the importance of good attendance to school is part of the culture of the establishment. It is discussed on a regular basis during tutorials and is highlighted to whole year groups via assembly by Heads of Year and other senior staff. Pupils are made aware of the data and are issued with targets for improvement. Good relationships with parents are sought and pastoral staff will contact parents to discuss any issue. End of term and year incentives for good attendance are offered.

Problems of persistent and severe attendance problems are recognised quickly and followed up appropriately. Where absence escalates and pupils miss 10% or more of school (equivalent to 1 day or more a fortnight across a full school year), school staff will work together to put additional targeted support in place to remove any barriers to attendance and re-engage these pupils.

Severe absence is defined as those missing 50% or more of school. These pupils are likely to need more intensive support across a range of partners which may include specific support with attendance or a whole family plan, but it may also include consideration for an EHCP or an alternative form of educational provision where necessary to overcome the barriers to being in school. If all avenues of support have been facilitated by schools, local authorities, and other partners, and the appropriate educational support or placements (e.g. an education, health and

care plan) have been provided but severe absence for unauthorised reasons continues, it is likely to constitute neglect and the school will be conscious of any potential safeguarding issues in these cases and if necessary, implement a full children's social care assessment.

- 4.2 Where the school has undertaken reasonable steps to manage attendance problems, and the required improvement is not being achieved, the school may resort to seeking to issue a Local Authority Penalty Notice.

The trigger point at which a Penalty Notice will be considered is where the pupil has recorded at least 10 sessions (5 school days) of unauthorised absence in the preceding 6 weeks.

- 4.2 Circumstances in which a Penalty Notice may be a suitable intervention will include:

- Parentally condoned truancy, where the parent is judged capable of securing their child's regular attendance but is not willing to take responsibility for doing so.
- Parentally condoned absence –avoidable absences such as shopping trips, birthday treats and relatives visits.
- Continual failure of parent to provide explanation to school for absences.
- A pupil is taken out of school for a holiday during term-time where this has not been authorised by the Headteacher (or representative) or no request for authorisation has been sought.
- Persistent lateness – after the register is closed and an unauthorised absence is created.
- Following a truancy patrol.
- A referral made by Northumbria Police.
- Medical evidence is not provided.

5.0 Promoting good attendance

The nearer pupils come to full attendance, the greater the probability that they will achieve their potential. The reverse may also be held to apply. Good attendance is therefore encouraged in the following ways:

- Pupils achieving 100% attendance over the year are awarded an 'Attendance Certificate' on Prize Night. Pupils in Year 11 who have achieved 100% attendance over 5 years are awarded a special attendance award.
- Each week, attendance data is produced for every individual pupil, tutor group, year group and the whole school. Awards are given on a form class basis.
- Attendance matters are regularly addressed during assembly time and tutorial. Form group attendance data is displayed and targets are set.
- High expectations are set but school staff will remain conscious of the individual circumstances which may lead to poor attendance and help will always be at hand if it is required.

6.0 Staff responsible for attendance matters

Our Attendance Officer is Mrs Greenwell (Assistant Attendance officer is Miss Eckert). Her role is to deal with attendance and punctuality throughout the school and to promote safeguarding and the welfare of students. Mrs Greenwell can be reached on extension number 202.

On a daily basis, Mrs Greenwell and Miss Eckert will:

- Call parents on the first day of absence
- Follow up on unauthorised absences

And on a routine basis, Mrs Greenwell and Miss Eckert will:

- Make home visits and arrange parental meetings in school. For cases where it is not advisable for Mrs Greenwell and Miss Eckert to make home visit, this will be referred to other senior pastoral staff.
- Contact key members of staff and students in obtaining high levels of attendance and arrange meetings with those staff
- Contact the Local Authority in cases of continued absences implementing legal proceedings.

All members of staff have a responsibility in maintaining accurate registers and reporting instances of truancy. All attendance procedures are carried out in accordance with DfE guidelines (May 2022), 'Working Together to Improve School Attendance'. In addition to Mrs Greenwell and Miss Eckert, the following members of staff have additional responsibilities in this area.

- The Academy's Attendance Champions are Mr G Varley (Deputy Headteacher - Pastoral) and Mr D Royal (Pastoral Lead).
- Heads of Year, who are all Designated Safeguarding Leads
- Form Tutors
- Local Authority Services for Young people.

Appendix One

Electronic registration

- The register is a document which must be kept up to date both for legal reasons and so that tutors, Heads of Year, the Attendance Team, senior staff and local authority staff can monitor attendance and deal effectively with non-attenders. Accurate and up-to-date registers are also essential if Heads of Year are to carry out their own weekly monitoring exercises. The school is also obliged to submit accurate figures on attendance and types of absence to the LA on a termly basis. The latter statistics are used by the DfE to compile 'league tables'.
- Pupils' names will be presented on the electronic system in one alphabetical list. The school office should be notified of any errors on form lists.
- Registers should be completed in line with the symbols on the computerised system. Whilst an absence remains unexplained the symbol is an 'N'. This symbol will remain until such times as staff become satisfied that the absence is authorised at which time (two weeks) the appropriate symbol should be entered.
- Every effort should be made to ascertain reasons for absence. Where such efforts, whether by note or by telephone, have not succeeded in obtaining authorisation for any absence within seven days of the pupil's return to school, the Attendance Team will take appropriate action.
- Parents have been requested to inform school on the 'First Day' of a pupil's absence. If the parent does not notify the school then the Attendance Team will telephone the home.
- Lesson attendance register should be completed as soon as is practicable at the beginning of every lesson. The Physical Education Department should send a return to the school office at the start of each session.

Appendix Two

Leave of absence

Some parents request leave of absence for their child, such as to arrange family holidays during term time, which may lead to the following problems:

- The child's education may suffer.
- Lessons and extra-curricular activities will be missed.
- Continuity of work is lost.
- Classes are disrupted.

Amendments to the 2006 regulations (as of September 2013) remove references to family holiday and extended leave as well as the statutory threshold of ten school days. The amendments make it clear that Head Teachers (or representative) may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are 'exceptional circumstances'.

Parents who wish to request leave of absence for the purpose of a holiday should obtain a holiday application form from the Attendance Team and return it at least four weeks prior to the proposed holiday. Examples of factors which be taken into account are:

- How long the holiday will be.
- The time of year the child will be absent and the likely disruption this may cause (for example, requests for leave at the start of the school year or when examinations are taking place are unlikely to be authorised).
- Previous similar requests (except in exceptional circumstances, no second request will be granted in the same educational year)
- Where the Headteacher (or representative) considers that the absence will prove to be otherwise detrimental to the child's education, for example, if the attendance record is already at a low level.

The leave may be granted under exceptional circumstances. The Headteacher (or representative) has the discretion to determine 'exceptional circumstances'. Under all normal circumstances the 'representatives' of the Headteacher will be the Attendance Team and the Pastoral Leaders. Both will consider and sign all applications.

Children who are taken on holiday without parents seeking permission or where permission was not granted will be marked as being an unauthorised absentee. The LA may issue a fixed penalty notice in all such cases, making a parent liable to a fixed penalty fine for each child involved.

Appendix Three

The Local Authority Penalty Notice

For Harton Academy, a Penalty Notice is issued by the Local Authority. These can be requested by schools, Police and neighbouring Local Authorities. Requests meeting with the above criteria will be actioned within 10 school days by the school through the following process:

- The Local Authority will receive, from the school, a written warning stating the possibility of a Penalty Notice being issued and an agreed period of 15 school days within which the pupil must have no further unauthorised absence.
- Local Authority will monitor attendance and, at the end of 15 school days, where further cases of unauthorised absence have occurred, a Penalty Notice will be issued through the post.
- In exceptional circumstances no warning will be issued i.e. the deliberate taking of a holiday during term-time without/against school permission (where it can be clearly demonstrated permission had/would not be given) and where this has created an unauthorised absence of at least 10 sessions (5 days)

No one parent will receive more than 2 Penalty Notices resulting from the unauthorised absence of an individual child in any 12 month period.

Withdrawal of a Penalty Notice

Once issued, a Penalty Notice can only be withdrawn where there is proof it has been issued to the wrong person or where it can be shown the Penalty Notice was not issued within the terms of the Code of Conduct.

Other school policies that could be considered:

- Behaviour Management
- Children in Care
- Children with health needs who cannot attend school
- Mental Health
- Safeguarding
- School exclusion
- SEND
- Supporting pupils with medical conditions