

Heathlands School Attendance Policy

Approved by PWC Committee 13th June 2016

Review due June 2018

Introduction

At Heathlands, we want the whole school community; governors, staff, parents and pupils to be committed to high standards of attendance and punctuality. Good attendance is an essential pre-requisite for effective learning particularly for children who have a Statement of SEN. If children are not in lessons each day they are deprived of the educational opportunities to which they are legally entitled. This policy will support us all to achieve high levels of attendance and punctuality.

Aims

To encourage excellent levels of attendance and punctuality to enable all pupils to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them.

To reduce persistent absence in order that all pupils are assisted in reaching their potential.

Expectations

The responsibility for good attendance is shared between school, parents and pupils. All involved need to understand and agree to the expectations contained in this policy.

The expectations for **Heathlands:**

- Heathlands will provide a safe learning environment
- Heathlands will ensure that records of attendance are maintained according to Government legislation and guidance on a daily basis.
- Heathlands will encourage good attendance and will investigate all unexplained and seemingly unjustified absence
- Heathlands staff will set a good example in matters of attendance and punctuality.
- Heathlands will follow up all instances of poor attendance and punctuality
- Heathlands will keep parents informed of their child's attendance/punctuality record
- Heathlands will work closely with parents should attendance or punctuality give cause for concern

The expectations for **Parents:**

- Parents are legally responsible for ensuring their child's regular and punctual attendance
- Parents are expected to ensure that their child attends school regularly, punctually, properly dressed and equipped and in a fit condition to learn
- Parents will inform school on the first day of absence, of the reason for their child's absence from school
- Parents will not arrange family holidays during term time
- Parents will maintain regular communication with school staff where necessary
- Parents will ensure that school is informed of any changes of contact details

The expectations for **Pupils:**

- All pupils are expected to attend school and all of their lessons regularly and punctually

- Pupils must remember to hand any note giving reasons for absence to the relevant person
- Pupils are expected to be ready to learn
- Pupils will not leave the school without permission

School Opening times:

- School doors open at 8:45 am. Pupils may enter the building at that time. Pupils arriving before this, unless residents in Heath House, are the responsibility of taxi staff until teachers come on duty at 8.45
- School finishes at 3.30pm for all pupils unless staying for an organised after school activity or resident in Heath House.

Registration

- Registers are called at 8:45 am and 1.10 pm. Registers close at 9.00 am in the morning and 1:15 pm in the afternoon. Registers are marked consistently by staff.
- Any pupil arriving after closure of the register will be marked absent.
- Registers will be marked in accordance with DfE guidance.
- Any pupil arriving after 9am should report to and sign in at the office.
- School will authorise a late arrival after the registers have closed if there is sufficient reason e.g. bad weather, road closure.

Absences

Parents must provide an explanation for all absences from school.

Designated school staff will decide whether to accept the reason given and to authorise the absence. It is the school and not the parent who authorise absence.

Absence from school may be authorised if it is for the following reasons:

- Sickness
- Unavoidable medical/ dental appointments (though these should be made, whenever possible, outside school hours)
- Days of religious observance
- Exceptional family circumstances such as bereavement
- Educational visits to other schools and colleges

Heathlands are able to accept notification of absence by email, phone, letter and text.

Absences will be unauthorised if:

- no explanation for the absence is given
- the school is dissatisfied with the explanation
- the pupil is absent for **unexceptional** special occasions (e.g. a birthday)
- The pupil is looking after siblings or parents who are unwell

If, at the time of taking the register, the reason for the pupil's absence is not known the absence will be recorded as unauthorised. The records may be corrected should the absence be subsequently authorised.

Following up Absences

- Heathlands will follow up all absences from school.
- If no reason has been provided for a pupil's absence by 10 am on the first day of absence, a parent of the pupil will be contacted.
- If a pupil returns to school after an absence without a written explanation from his/her parent and this has still not been received within 3 days, a letter requesting this will be sent to his/her parents
- Attendance is monitored on a 4 weekly cycle.
- Parents whose children have more than 10% absence from school in a period of a term will be contacted by a member of school staff who will work with the parent(s) to bring about an improvement in attendance.
- Pupils whose attendance is less than 90% will have an allocated mentor, an Action Plan and regular reviews of attendance until they have reached their target attendance
- If the pupil's attendance does not improve sufficiently, the pupil will be referred to the Attendance Improvement Officer

Leaving and returning to School during the School Day

- Parents must notify school staff if the pupil needs to leave the school site during the school day
- Pupils must provide an appointment card or a letter from their parent/carer requesting that they be allowed to leave school. They must show this to their class teacher or form tutor and the office.
- Pupils should sign out of school
- Pupils must sign back into school on their return
- The signing in and out record will be the responsibility of main office secretaries in the event of fire.

Truancy.

Whilst this has never been an issue within the school community, we are aware it may happen in the future. This would be dealt with in line with the behaviour policy.

Term Time Holidays.

Due to the changes contained in the education regulations 2013 Head Teachers may not grant leave for any students during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. Leave may not normally be granted for family holidays and absences for this reason will be unauthorised. In exceptional circumstances leave may be granted for sporting or learning opportunities of benefit to the pupil.

Penalty Notices

At Heathlands we hope and expect parents will work with us to address attendance problems should they arise. Where a parent is judged capable of improving their child's attendance but is not willing to take responsibility for doing so a Penalty Notice may be considered.

The school will only consider a penalty notice where the parent has been advised in advance that this may happen and where other supportive measures to secure good attendance have been tried and failed.

The school will work within national legislation and the framework set by Herts County Council for the use of penalty notices.

Rewards

Heathlands rewards good attendance through the whole school House system on a weekly and termly basis. Annual certificates are awarded for excellent and improved attendance.

Integrated Working

Heathlands works with other agencies and professionals to ensure that our pupils receive all the support available to achieve good attendance.

School will demonstrate full commitment to integrated working by:

- Using the Common Assessment Framework
- Sharing information.
- Encouraging staff to take on the role of Lead Professional.
- Working with other agencies and being part of 'teams around the family'.
- Working in partnership with the allocated Attendance Improvement Officer (AIO) to improve attendance for individual pupils and the whole school.
- Working with individual pupils and their parents to improve poor attendance.
- When attendance does not improve sufficiently, and after discussion with the AIO the school will make a referral to Children, Schools and Families for the AIO to work with the family on a formal basis.

Publication of Information

- Heathlands shares information on individual pupils' attendance as necessary with parents, pupils and staff.
- We will provide current attendance statistics on the school website and in each newsletter.
- Attendance is reported to Governors in each Head Teachers' report.
- Pupils will be informed about the importance of school attendance through assemblies, tutor time, presentations by visiting professionals, statistics, displays in school

APPENDIX A

WORKING WITH THE ATTENDANCE IMPROVEMENT OFFICER

You can expect your Attendance Improvement Officer to work with you in the following way:

a) Consultation Visits (if applicable): These will be arranged with you at a mutually convenient time. During the consultation visit the Attendance Improvement Officer (AIO) will meet with the relevant member(s) of staff. Together, they will identify pupils who are experiencing attendance difficulties, agree on action to be taken and exchange information on work undertaken.

b) Casework: the AIO and a member of staff from school will agree which referrals will be made.

c) Other work: The AIO will offer advice, guidance and strategies to support schools to improve attendance. These may include:

- analysing attendance data to identify and highlight issues, trends and concerns
- working in partnership with heads and pastoral staff to plan, implement and evaluate systems, procedures and policies to address issues identified
- disseminating good practice

You can expect the AIO to:

- inform the school as soon as possible of any dates arranged for visits that cannot be kept.
- provide a basic cover service if the allocated AIO is absent through illness for more than one consultation visit.

To ensure that schools are able to make the most of Attendance Improvement Officer consultation visits and support, and that the Attendance Improvement Officer is able to provide schools with the best service, your co-operation is needed in the following areas.

- designate members of staff to attend consultation visits

- ensuring that your SIMS registers are up to date for consultation visits, and where requested individual registration certificates are printed off immediately prior to the consultation visit
- ensuring that allocated staff members are given adequate time to meet with the AIO.
- giving as much notice as possible if the consultation visit has to be re-arranged as school staff are not available
- ensuring that there is a quiet, private place where the consultation visit can take place without interruption
- ensure work is undertaken by the school prior to referral and that copies of letters and records of meetings accompany the referral forms
- ensuring that any actions agreed in the consultation visit are followed up as soon as practically possible
- ensuring that EWN1 forms are completed accurately and promptly (see guidance overleaf).

Attendance Improvement Officers are keen to support schools whenever the need arises so please contact them between visits if you need their help or advice on an attendance issue.