

Hele's School Attendance Policy



Hele's School is committed to providing a quality education for all pupils. We believe that pupils can only benefit from the education in our school through regular school attendance. We will, therefore, strive to achieve the maximum possible attendance for all pupils and we will make sure that any problems are identified and resolved quickly. Our first day calling procedures ensure that timely contact is made with parents when a pupil is absent from school without reason.

PURPOSES

- To promote the good habit of punctuality and outstanding attendance.
- To ensure and reinforce regular school attendance.
- To minimise educational disadvantage through infrequent attendance by support for the tutorial programme and aid in the delivery of the curriculum.
- To conform to and strengthen legal attendance requirements.
- To restrict anti-social and negative activities caused by truancy.
- To ensure punctuality is a priority for all.
- To further develop positive and consistent communication between home and School.

AIMS

It is recognised that:

- All pupils of statutory school age have an equal right to access an education.
- Our policy aims to promote the welfare and safeguarding of our pupils.
- No pupils should be deprived of their opportunity to receive an education that meets their needs and personal development.
- In the first instance, it is the responsibility of pupils and their parents to ensure attendance at school as required by law.
- Many pupils and their parents may need to be supported and rewarded at some stage in meeting their attendance obligations and responsibilities.
- Situations beyond the control of pupils and/or parents may impact on attendance. We will, with the agreement and support of parents, work in partnership with external agencies to resolve these.
- The vast majority of pupils want to attend school to learn, to socialise with their peer group and to prepare themselves fully to take their place in society as well-rounded and responsible citizens with the skills, knowledge and understanding necessary to contribute to the life and culture of their communities.

EXPECTATIONS

We expect the following from our pupils:

- That they attend school regularly.
- That they will arrive on time and be appropriately prepared for the day.
- That they will inform a member of staff/tutor of any problem or reason that may prevent them from attending school.
- They will follow signing in/out procedures.

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We expect the following from parents:

- To ensure their children attend school regularly and punctually as is legally required.
- To ensure that they contact the school as soon as it is reasonably practical on the first day and every subsequent day of absence whenever their child is unable to attend.
- To contact the school whenever any problem occurs that affect the pupil's performance in school, either through the Tutor, Head of House, Pastoral Support Manager or Inclusion Unit.
- To maximise the number of days their child spends in school by not taking holidays during term time.

Parents and pupils can expect the following from school:

- Consistent application of school policy including actions taken to minimise educational disadvantage through infrequent attendance.
- Regular monitoring of attendance and absence trends.
- Regular, efficient and accurate recording of attendance.
- Early contact with parents when a pupil fails to attend school without providing good reason as part of our standard safeguarding procedures.
- Regular monitoring, with the EWO, of persistent absentees (students with attendance less than 90%).
- Immediate action on any problem notified to us.
- We will reward good and improved attendance at regular intervals throughout the year.
- Swift action to alert the EWO to any migrating, missing or removed children.
- A multi-agency response, where appropriate, to support improved attendance.

To ensure that students are aware of the importance of good attendance and punctuality staff will:

- Establish and maintain a high profile for attendance and punctuality;
- Relate attendance issues directly to the values, ethos and curriculum of the School;
- Reward students half termly for 100% attendance;
- Record 'lates' to School and 'lates' to lessons;
- Include students in reintegration plans;
- Highlight attendance in assemblies;
- Not allow students off site for lunchtimes without a lunch pass produced at the request of parents.

RESPONDING TO NON-ATTENDANCE

When a pupil does not attend, the school needs to respond effectively.

- If a note or telephone call is not received from parents, the parents will be contacted on the first day and every subsequent day of absence by telephone. If parents are not contactable, messages will be left.
- Where non-attendance continues, the case will be discussed with the Education Welfare Officer for the school and further action planned. This may, in appropriate cases, result in a referral to the EWS.
- If there is no improvement, then the case will be discussed again with the Education Welfare Officer with a view to a formal referral being made to the Education Welfare Service, if one has not already been made at an earlier stage. If a referral had already been made then the case will be reviewed and the meeting used to plan further action.
- Attendance plans with time specific targets will be set up to help support the removal of any barriers to learning.
- The school will not automatically grant leave of absence for holiday unless in exceptional circumstances. No absence will be granted in Year 11 or if attendance rate is less than 95%.

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Persistent Absentee (PA)

A student becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more schooling for whatever reason. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we need parent's fullest support and cooperation to tackle this. We monitor all absence thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the persistent absentee mark, or is at risk of moving towards that level, is given priority and parents will be informed by letter by Pastoral Staff.

Persistent absentee students are tracked and monitored carefully through our pastoral system. All persistent absentee cases and those at risk of becoming persistent absentee are automatically shown to the Local Authority Education Officer.

Reintegration:

- The return to school for a pupil after long-term absence requires special planning. For example, it may be appropriate to establish a Support Plan or Flexible Return to School Programme.
- Pastoral staff should be responsible for deciding on the programme for return and for the management of that programme.
- Programmes may need to be tailored to meet individual need and may involve phased, part-time re-entry with support in lessons as appropriate. Support from the SEN Co-ordinator or the Student Support Base may be required.

Family Holidays:

Parents should not take pupils on holiday during the school term. If a request is not granted and the parent takes the child on holiday, the absence will not be authorised. If the holiday goes on for longer than agreed, the extra day's absence will be unauthorised. Hele's School operates an 'exceptional circumstances' policy in line with all the other schools in our academic council. Holidays will only be authorised if they are considered to fall within this definition.

SCHOOL ORGANISATION

In order for the attendance policy to be successful, every member of the staff must make attendance a high priority and should convey to pupils the importance and value of education.

School Improvement Partner

- Set a realistic target for school attendance.

Senior Leadership Team

- Provide an overview of the attendance of groups of students and an analysis of any emerging patterns or trends.

Heads of House

- To monitor attendance patterns across the designated year group and ensure swift follow-up with EWO/SLT.

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Form Tutor

- To complete the registration process accurately and on time.
- To challenge suspicious or inappropriate reasons for absence.
- To display information on attendance.
- To record all reasons for absence or lateness in the register.
- To inform the Head of House of concerns.

Governors:

- Request annual attendance progress reports for Governors' Meetings.

Parents:

- Contact with school on first day and every subsequent day of absence.
- Provide signed and dated absence notes for all absences.
- Support their child in achieving maximum attendance.
- Only seek approval for holidays taken in term-time in exceptional circumstances.
- Provide medical evidence as requested.

Education Welfare Service:

- Will liaise with identified school staff.
- Where a referral is accepted, will undertake home visits, either pre-arranged or without notice as considered necessary.
- Where necessary EWS will instigate legal proceedings on behalf of the LA including parental prosecutions in the Magistrates' Court and applying for Education Supervision Orders through the Family Court.
- Will accept referrals that meet the EWS referral criteria, initiate contact with parents or carers and undertake assessments.
- Will plan and review casework.
- Will provide feedback to schools.
- Can offer strategic/policy advice and support in relation to matters of attendance, the employment of young people and young people involved in performing.
- Will support schools in the use of penalty notices and parenting contracts within the provisions of the Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003.

Student Services and MIS Officer:

School administrative staff play a vital role in supporting the school's attendance and absence management strategies.

- Produce weekly percentage information and the Official Register.
- Record absences accurately according to information generated by first day calling procedures.
- Maintain a late book.
- Maintain a signed in/out book.

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LIAISING WITH EXTERNAL AGENCIES

Hele's School recognises that poor school attendance may be a symptom of a wide range of institutional, community, family or individual circumstances. Many of these circumstances will demand expert support beyond the remit of the school or the EWS. It is, therefore, vital that strong partnerships are established with all agencies that work with children and young people.

Our main support services are:

- Educational Behaviour and Support Services
- Educational Psychologists
- Special Educational Needs Service
- Social Care
- Careers South West
- Youth Service
- Local Police
- Child and Adolescent Mental Health
- Communications Interaction Team
- School Nurse Service
- Counselling

Data Protection Act

The Data Protection Act places obligations on all agencies that process, store and share information on any individual. It is important to have full regard for the requirements of the Act. Each school has a Data Protection Notification which details the circumstances under which data is managed. Nothing in the legislation prevents a school sharing information with the police or social services where it is believed that a child or young person under the age of 18 is at risk of harm or is in need of safeguarding.

The Importance of Registration:

- An attendance register, using SIMs, must be kept on which, at the **BEGINNING** of each morning, pupils are marked present or absent and for every lesson.
- Accurate marking of registers, and appropriate maintenance of electronic and computerised systems can have a significant impact on overall school attendance and absence figures.
- Emerging patterns of authorised absence should be reported to relevant Deputy Principal/ Head of House.
- Reasons for absence should be entered in the register by the appropriate code symbol.

Authorised or Unauthorised Absence:

Authorised absence is where the school has either given approval in advance for a pupil to be away or has accepted an explanation offered afterwards as a satisfactory reason for absence.

All other absence must be regarded as **unauthorised**.

The following may be reasons for authorising absences:

- Illness
- Family bereavements
- Family holiday – only in exceptional circumstances

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- Medical and dental appointments where proof is available
- Days of religious observance
- Permanent exclusion until removed from roll or re-instated

Approved Educational Activity

Where pupils are away from school but are undertaking an approved educational activity, this should be marked in the usual way but are counted as present for calculating data for the absence return. To avoid confusion in emergency situations pupils who are off site should not be marked as present. The following activities fall within this category.

- Field trips and educational visits both in this country and overseas.
- Interviews with prospective employers and for a place at a higher or further educational establishment (Y11 only).
- Link courses where pupils attend a FE college for part of the time.
- Pupils receiving approved education off site, eg those receiving specialist support or those in receipt of home tuition but remaining on the roll of the school.

Absence should not be authorised under the following circumstances:

- Shopping trips.
- Holidays in term time where the permission of the school has not been given.
- Minding the house or looking after siblings.
- Lateness if registration is missed without explanation.
- Medial appointments that cannot be verified.
- No reason given.
- Absence from work experience without explanation.
- School staff have cause to believe that the note is not genuine or not valid.
- Year 11 pupils who "leave" before the official date.
- Attendance at interviews with no advance notice or adequate explanation.

Unusual circumstances may arise that lead to a young person being absent from school. It is for the Headteacher to decide whether the explanation offered is reasonable. In such situations, the individual circumstances, previous attendance pattern and frequency of school incidents should be considered. Guidance provided by the Education Welfare Service will be adhered to.

Lateness:

Hele's School will actively discourage late arrival by challenging students who are persistently late or arrive late without reasonable explanation. Staff will code as 'L' students arriving after 8.40am to 9.00am.

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If students are late at the start of the day they can miss work and do not spend time with their Tutor getting vital information and news for the day. Late arriving students also disrupt lessons, can be embarrassing for the child and can also encourage absence.

How we manage lateness:

- The School day starts at 8.40am and we expect students to be in registration at that time.
- Afternoon registration is at the start of Period 4.

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- Morning registers are marked by 8.40am and students will receive a late mark if they are not in registration by that time.
- Lateness to School will result in a formal written warning (Planner comment) and a detention.
- If a student is late into registration or school they must report to Student Services.
- Failure to do so will result in a formal written warning (planner comment).
- If a student has a persistent late record parents will be asked to meet with the Pastoral Team to resolve the problem. Parents can approach us at any time if they are having problems getting their child to School on time.

How parents can help us:

Ensure that their children attend school regularly and they arrive on time.

Contact Student Services whenever their child is absent, giving details of the reason for the absence and the length of time the child will be away.

Attend Parents' Consultation Evenings to discuss progress or problems and talk to staff if there are problems or changes in family circumstances which may affect the child.

Contact the school if problems arise which may keep their child away from school, so that the school can help.

Not request taking family holidays in term-time unless under exceptional circumstances. Term time absences, especially during examination periods, may seriously affect the progress of a child.

Work with the school to create an appropriate attendance plan to improve punctuality and overall attendance.

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