Hitchin Girls' School



Attendance Policy

This is a Statutory document required of all schools.

Date of issue: September 2022

Trust Board approval: 13 September 2022

Review date: September 2025

Mission Statement/Vision

At Hitchin Girls' School, it is our aim that all members of the school community, trustees, staff, parents/carers and students are committed to and encourage good levels of attendance and punctuality. Underpinning this commitment is the belief that if students attend school regularly and punctually they will be best able to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them. Students cannot learn if they are absent from school and there is a correlation between attendance and achievement. Poor attendance will have a negative impact on the progress and achievement of a student. Poor attendance will affect the personal wellbeing and social development of a student. If they are not attending they cannot benefit from their education and will not achieve. They are neither learning nor actively contributing to school life. If they are absent they may not be in a safe environment; or they may be practising unhealthy lifestyles. Therefore, we aim to ensure that all our young people take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them and to raise standards by promoting regular attendance and punctuality of all students.

Aims/Expectations

The responsibility for good attendance and punctuality is shared between school, parents/carers and students.

- √ Provide a safe learning environment
- √ Respond promptly to any issue which may lead to non-attendance
- ✓ Ensure that records of attendance are maintained on a daily basis according to Government legislation and guidance
- ✓ Encourage good attendance and will investigate all unexplained and unjustified absence
- ✓ Encourage good attendance and punctuality and will follow up all instances of poor attendance and punctuality
- ✓ Ensure that staff set a good example in matters of attendance and punctuality
- √ Keep parents/carers informed of their child's attendance/punctuality record
- ✓ Work closely with parents/carers if attendance or punctuality give cause for concern
- ✓ Work actively to maximise attendance rates both in relation to individual students and for the student body as a whole

Parents/carers will:

- √ Be legally responsible for ensuring their child's regular and punctual attendance
- √ Ensure that their child attends school regularly, punctually, properly dressed and equipped and in a fit condition to learn
- ✓ Ensure that they are aware of the attendance policy for Hitchin Girls' School
- ✓ Inform school on the first day of absence, of the reason for their child's absence from school
- √ Avoid arranging family holidays during term time
- √ Avoid arranging medical/dental appointments during school hours
- √ Work in partnership with the school to resolve issues which may potentially lead to
 non-attendance
- √ Maintain regular communication with school staff where necessary
- ✓ Ensure that schools are informed of any changes of contact details

Students will:

- √ Attend school and all of their lessons regularly and punctually and aim to reach the 'Gold Standard' of 95% or more attendance in an academic year
- ✓ Remember to hand any note giving reasons for absence to the relevant person
- √ Be ready to learn
- √ Not leave the school without permission

Attendance Targets/Attendance Registers

Attendance aims:

To achieve and maintain whole school attendance above 97%

The rules governing the maintenance of registers, including removal from roll, are contained in the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006. Attendance registers are legal documents that may be required as evidence in court cases.

Leadership & Management

- Offer a clear vision for attendance, underpinned by high expectations and core values, which are communicated to and understood by all staff, students and families.
- Make sure all staff, students and families understand that absence from school is a potential safeguarding risk and understand their role in keeping children safe.
- Expect good attendance and punctuality from all members of the school community and make sure that all students understand its importance.
- Convey clear messages about how absence affects attainment, wellbeing and wider outcomes. Empower all staff to take responsibility for attendance.
- Recognise attendance as an important area of school improvement. Make sure it is resourced appropriately (including through effective use of pupil premium funding) to create, build and maintain systems and performance.
- Have a designated attendance champion in the senior leadership team with clearly assigned responsibilities which are identified within the attendance policy, escalation of procedures and school improvement plan.
- Make sure staff receive professional development and support to deploy attendance systems effectively.
- Trustees should have an accurate view of school attendance and engage in escalation procedures where appropriate.

Role of the Headteacher alongside SLG Lead for Attendance

The Headteacher is responsible for:

- The implementation of the policy.
- All staff knowing and understanding their responsibilities for attendance.
- Agreeing whether an absence should be authorised. The
 power to authorise an absence rests with the Headteacher or
 delegated person within the school, and not with parents or
 the local authority see Appendix A for circumstances under
 which an absence will be authorised.
- Working actively to maximise attendance rates, both in relation to individual students and the student body as a whole.
- Having clear policies in place to address persistent absence.
- Ensuring that all staff adopt a consistent approach in dealing with absence and lateness.
- Monitoring trends.
- Implementing a system for all parents to report a child's absence.
- Reporting to the Board of Trustees the attendance figures and progress to achieving the set targets.
- Reminding all parents of their commitment to this policy.
- Building respectful relationships with all staff, students, families and other stakeholders in order to secure their trust and engagement.
- Making sure there is a welcoming and positive culture across the school.
- Communicating openly and honestly with all staff, students and families about their expectations of school life and performance so that they understand what to expect and what is expected of them.
- Liaising with other agencies working with students and their families to support attendance, for example, where a young person has a social worker or is otherwise vulnerable.
- Modeling respectful relationships and appropriate communication for all staff and students. This will help relationships between students and staff to reflect a positive and respectful culture.

Role of all Staff

All staff members should be:

- Treating all students with dignity.
- Building relationships rooted in mutual respect and observe proper boundaries.
- Taking into consideration the vulnerability of some students and the ways in which this might contribute to absence handling confidential information sensitively.
- Understanding the importance of school as a place of safety where students can enjoy trusted relationships with staff and students particularly for children with a social worker and those who have experienced adversity.
- Communicating effectively with all families regarding students' attendance and well-being.
- Delivering clear messages about expectations, routines and consequences to new students and families through prospectus and admission/transition events.
- Using physical presence to reinforce routines and expectations on arrival and departure.
- Regularly communicating expectations for attendance and punctuality and school performance through your regular channels of communication with staff, students and parents.
- Establishing and monitoring implementation of rewards for attendance and punctuality and sanctions for absence and lateness.
- Monitoring implementation of policy and practice, for example through:
 - o tutor time drop in
 - shadow late gate
- Engaging community businesses, partners and residents to promote attendance and report non-attendance.
- Monitoring whole school data regularly to identify reasons for absence, patterns, attendance of particular groups and the impact of interventions.
- Establishing, implementing and monitoring robust arrangements to identify, report and support children missing education (CME).

See guidance on HCC Grid regarding Children Missing Education

https://thegrid.org.uk/admissions-attendance-travel-to-school/attendance/children-missing-from-education

- Developing good support for children with medical conditions (including the use of individual healthcare plans), mental health problems and special educational needs (SEND).
- Engaging students in consultation on attendance policy, practice, rewards and sanctions.
- Ensuring that parents fully understand the demands and responsibilities of elective home education.

See guidance on HCC Grid when a parent is considering EHE

https://thegrid.org.uk/admissions-attendance-travel-to-school/attendance/elective-home-education

Role of the Teaching Staff

Teachers are responsible for:

- Setting an example of punctuality and good attendance.
- Implementing the policy.
- Ensuring that the registers are taken at the start of the morning session and at the beginning of each lesson within the first 5 minutes and are accurate and up to-date.
- Monitoring class and individual attendance patterns.
- Informing the school office via on call of any concerns.
- Emphasising with children the importance of punctuality and good attendance.
- Reminding parents of their commitment to this policy.
- Building respectful relationships with all staff, students, families and other stakeholders in order to secure their trust and engagement. Make sure there is a welcoming and positive culture across the school.
- Communicating openly and honestly with all staff, students and families about their expectations of school life and performance so that they understand what to expect and what is expected of them.
- Liaising with other agencies working with students and their families to support attendance, for example, where a young person has a social worker or is otherwise vulnerable.
- Modelling respectful relationships and appropriate communication for all staff and students. This will help relationships between students and staff to reflect a positive and respectful culture. All staff members should:

- treat students with dignity.
- build relationships rooted in mutual respect and observe proper boundaries.
- take into consideration the vulnerability of some students and the ways in which this might contribute to absence handling confidential information sensitively.
- understand the importance of school as a place of safety where students can enjoy trusted relationships with staff and students particularly for children with a social worker and those who have experienced adversity.
- communicate effectively with all families regarding students' attendance and well-being.

You may want to:

- rehearse and reinforce attendance and punctuality expectations continually.
- emphasise the importance of attendance and its impact on attainment.
- promote the next lesson and the sequence of the lesson to motivate students to be in the classroom.
- promote rewards and celebrate progress but continue to outline sanctions.
- apply rewards and sanctions consistently.
- follow up on absence and lateness with students to identify barriers and reasons for absence.
- contact parents and carers regarding absence and punctuality.
- review form or tutor group attendance weekly to share data, identify issues, intervene early and help set targets.
- periodically review practice and consistency both across and between departments.
- proactively promote attendance practice as part of staff induction.
- consider the individual needs and vulnerabilities of students.

students at risk of persistent absence

The school will:

 welcome students back following an absence and provide good catch-up support to build confidence and bridge gaps. This could include:

- o lesson resources
- o buddy support
- o one to one input
- meet with students to discuss absence, patterns, barriers and problems.
- establish action plans to remove barriers, provide additional support and set targets.

This could include:

- lunchtime arrangements.
- support with uniform, transport, wake up routines or emotional wellbeing.
- lead daily or weekly check-ins to review progress and the impact of support.
- make regular contact with families to discuss progress.
- consider what support for re-engagement might be needed, including for vulnerable groups.

students who are persistently absent

- prepare supporting resources to ensure students can access learning when they return which can be accessed via google classroom.
- develop targeted intervention to address gaps and build students' confidence (including small group additional support as necessary).
- contribute to action plans which will be actioned by pastoral and year head teams.
- provide tailored praise and encouragement when students attend and arrive on time and reward improved attendance in line with school reward systems.

Role of Parents

- Parents are responsible in law for ensuring that their children of compulsory school age receive an efficient education suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs that they may have. Most parents fulfil this responsibility by registering their children at a school.
- Parents whose children are registered at a school are responsible for ensuring that their children attend and stay at school. Parents are responsible for:
 - ensuring that their children are punctual and know the importance of good attendance.
 - instilling in their children an appreciation of the importance of attending school regularly.
 - impressing upon their children the need to observe the school's code of conduct.
 - informing the school on the first day of absence, by 9.00 am at the latest.
 - providing the school with an explanation for the absence.
 - informing the school of any changes to their contact details.
 - taking an active interest in their children's school career, praising and encouraging good work and behaviour and attending parent's evenings and other relevant meetings.
 - working in partnership with the school to resolve issues which may lead to non-attendance.
 - avoiding arranging medical/dental appointments during school hours.
 - not booking holidays during term-time.
 - treating staff with respect.
 - actively supporting the work of the school.
 - calling on staff for help when they need it.
 - communicating as early as possible circumstances which may affect absence or require support.

Role of Attendance Lead (SLG) in conjunction with School Attendance Officer

The School Attendance Lead/School Attendance Officer is responsible for:

- implementing the policy with the Head; School attendance, safeguarding and pastoral support policies should clearly outline:
 - o the key principles
 - rules students need to follow
 - routines
 - consequence systems
- Monitoring and analysing attendance data regularly to allow early intervention to address issues. This includes raising concerns with other agencies like children's social care and early help services which are working with families.
- Robust school systems which provide useful data at cohort, group and individual student level to give an accurate view of attendance, reasons for absence and patterns amongst groups such as:
 - children who have a social worker including looked-after children
 - young carers children who are eligible for free school meals
 - o children who speak English as a second language
 - o children who have special educational needs and disabilities
- keeping the Head and all school staff informed of attendance figures and trends by providing regular reports to enable them to track the attendance of all students and to implement attendance procedures.
- compiling attendance data for the Head, the Board of Trustees and the Local Authority Attendance Officer (LAAO).
- ensuring registers are kept up to date.
- consultations with the LAAO.
- ensuring parents and contacted if they have not reported their child's absence by 9.00 am.
- sending a letter if no contact is made.
- arranging meetings with parents to ensure clear channels of communication are in place and offer support/interventions where necessary.
- Making sure escalation procedures to address absence are initiated proactively, understood by students and families, implemented consistently and their impact reviewed regularly.

- The escalation of procedures to address absence needs to be:
- o understood by students, parents and carers
- implemented consistently
- reviewed regularly
- ensuring that the Local Authority is notified of any student who fails to attend school regularly via a 10 Day Absence Form.

See guidance on HCC Grid for form -

https://thegrid.org.uk/admissions-attendance-travel-to-school/attendance/attendance-guidance-and-statutory-responsibilities

Attendance Officers & Pastoral Staff

- engage with feeder schools or organisations to access absence information in order to identify target cohorts prior to transfer, including mid-year transfers and managed moves.
- provide appropriate support and challenge to establish good registration practice.
- carry out robust first day calling procedures including priority routine for vulnerable children including children with a social worker.
- undertake home visits in line with your policy to engage families and ensure children are safe.
- identify and, where possible, mitigate potential barriers to good attendance in liaison with families and relevant support agencies.
- implement punctuality routines such as late gate or sign in procedures.
- implement children missing education (CME) procedures when appropriate see above.
- ensure that that parents fully understand the demands and responsibilities of elective home education (EHE) – see above.
- where students have additional vulnerabilities, which may require multi-agency meetings try to arrange those meetings outside of lesson time, where possible.

Students at risk of persistent absence

The school will:

- provide regular attendance reports to tutors to facilitate weekly reviews with pastoral staff (including special educational needs coordinators, designated safeguarding leads and student premium leads) for monitoring and evaluation purposes.
- initiate and oversee the administration of absence procedures.

This will include:

- o letters home
- attendance clinics
- engagement with local authorities and other external agencies and partners.
- work with families and the community to identify which methods of communication work best, recognising potential barriers in hard-to-reach families and find methods that work and are understood.
- consideration if further interventions are required in line with the statutory guidance on parental responsibility measures.
- provide regular reports to leaders on the at-risk cohort.
- provide regular reports/caseloads to local authority attendance team or independent attendance organisations to raise awareness of emerging at-risk students.

Students who are persistently absent

The school will:

- develop and implement persistent absence action plans with students and families which address barriers and help establish positive attendance routines.
- identify tailored intervention which meets the needs of the student, for example:
 - mentoring
 - o careers advice and guidance input
 - o college placement
 - out of hours learning
 - o alternative provision where appropriate
- lead daily or weekly check-ins to review progress and impact of support.
- make regular contact with families to discuss progress.
- hold regular meetings or reviews of caseload with the local authority attendance team, external partners and alternative providers to check on welfare and review progress.
- liaise with school leaders (designated safeguarding, special educational needs coordinator and pastoral leads) on referrals to external agencies and multi-agency assessments.
- coordinate and contribute to multi-agency meetings to review progress and agree on actions.
- work in partnership with local authority attendance team and other agencies to ensure the appropriate use of statutory parental responsibility measures.
- provide regular reports to leaders on the impact of action plans and interventions.

Intervention

- Deliver intervention in a targeted way, in response to data or intelligence.
- Monitor and analyse attendance data regularly to ensure that intervention is delivered quickly to address absence (register inspections, code analysis, cohort and group monitoring, punctuality, lesson attendance across subjects and benchmarking).
- Use attendance, pastoral and SEND staff who are skilled in supporting students and their families to identify and overcome barriers to attendance.
- Create action plans in partnership with families and other agencies that may be supporting families, for example, children's social care and early help services. Commission or deliver interventions to improve attendance.

Monitor the impact of any intervention, making adjustments if necessary and using findings to inform future strategy. Where interventions fail to address attendance issues, identify the reasons why and, where appropriate, change or adjust the intervention. Follow local authority codes of conduct, policies and procedures and make referrals for statutory intervention when interventions have not resulted in improved attendance and relevant triggers / thresholds are met. **Encouraging** The School encourages good attendance by: Good **Attendance** Using clear and consistently applied systems and processes to improve, reward and incentivise attendance and address absences. Making sure these systems are inclusive and appropriate for all students. publicising good attendance during assemblies, newsletters and the termly report to the Trustees. awarding good attendance certificates to students when they have achieved 97%+ attendance and when improvements to attendance have been achieved. **Dealing with** The office and pastoral staff monitor lateness and inform: Lateness the SLG lead for attendance of patterns of lateness. parents of the school's concerns and arrange a meeting so that the problem can be addressed. The School doors are opened at 8.20am and students are then expected to enter the school building and make their way to their classroom. Children who arrive after 8.40 am must be signed in by school for purposes of emergency evacuation etc. Students who arrive between 8.45 am and 9.05 am will be marked as 'late' but counted as present for that session (Code L). Students who arrive after the register has closed at 9.05 am and parent provides a satisfactory explanation will be marked as 'authorised absent' for that session. Students who arrive after the register has closed and parent fails to provide a satisfactory explanation will be marked as 'unauthorised absent' for that session (Code U).

Students at risk of Persistent Absence

Persistent absence occurs when a child's attendance falls below 90%. Absenteeism at this level will considerably damage a student's educational prospects and the school will work alongside parents/carers to tackle this issue by:

- establishing robust escalation procedures which are initiated before absence becomes a problem, for example by:
- sending letters to parents and carers
- having a weekly tutor review
- creating attendance clinics
- engaging with local authority attendance teams
- using fixed penalty notices
- engaging with children's social care staff, including Virtual School Heads and social workers where appropriate
- establishing a range of evidence-based interventions to address barriers to attendance
- monitoring the implementation and quality of escalation procedures (and intervention), for example:
- o having a review and clinic drop in
- o sampling of case files
- evaluating the impact of escalation procedures and seeking robust evidence of the escalation procedures that work and that reflect the school context best
- attending or leading on attendance reviews and clinics in line with escalation procedures
- engaging trustees in attendance panels to reinforce messages and outline relevance in terms of training and employment.

Students who are persistently absent

- establish clear and effective service level agreements with external partners to support students with persistent absence, including:
 - local authority attendance services
 - alternative providers
 - youth services
 - school nursing and mental health professionals
 - o children's social care staff where appropriate
 - establish good relationships with a network of voluntary organisations and charities to support vulnerable students including those with persistent absence, for example:

- mental health charities
- mentoring organisations
- young carers association
- engage in or lead on attendance reviews and clinics in line with escalation procedures.

Absence

• Holidays during term time – changes to legislation which came into force in September 2013 made clear that Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. If there are exceptional circumstances behind your request you should discuss these with the Headteacher.

See letter from Jo Fisher, Director of Children's Services on HCC Grid when considering a term-time holiday –

https://thegrid.org.uk/admissions-attendance-travel-to-school/attendance/holidays-in-term-time

- **Religious Observance** a maximum of 2 days absence is allowed for *recognised* religious observance.
- Medical, Dental or Hospital Appointments please ensure these appointments take place out of school time in order not to disrupt your child's education.

Fixed Penalty Notices

Statement on how school follows Hertfordshire County Council's Penalty Notice for Truancy Code of Conduct and procedures.

- We expect parents/carers to work with us to address attendance problems.
- If a student has at least 15 sessions (half day= 1 session)
 unauthorised absence in the current and/or previous term
 (including unauthorised holidays), the Head Teacher may ask
 the Local Authority to issue a Penalty Notice.
- The penalty is £60 if paid within 21 days of receipt of the notice, rising to £120 if paid after 28 days.
- If the penalty is not paid the Local Authority may prosecute parents/carers for their child's irregular attendance.

Follow guidance on HCC Grid when considering a Fixed

	Penalty Notice -			
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Headteacher:	Mr James Crowther	Date:	
Chair of Board of		Date:	
Trustees:			

Appendix A

Absences will be authorised if:

- The student is absent with leave as agreed by the Headteacher.
- The student is ill and has not been asked to provide proof of absence.
- The absence occurs on a day exclusively set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the student's parent belongs.
- The student is the child of Traveller parents who are known to be travelling for occupational purposes and have agreed this with the school but it is not known whether the student is attending alternative provision.
- There is a close family bereavement.
- Leave of absence has been applied for in advance and has been granted because of exceptional circumstances relating to the application (parents cannot expect, as of right, that the school will grant leave of absence).
- Leave of absence to allow a student to take part in a performance within the meaning of s37 of the Children and Young Persons Act 1963 © for which a child performance licence has been issued. HCC will not issue a child performance licence where absence is required without the written permission of the Headteacher.

Only the school can authorise an absence. The fact that a parent has provided a note or other explanation (telephone call or personal contact) in relation to a particular absence does not, of itself, oblige the school to accept it, if the school does not accept the explanation offered as a valid reason for absence. If, after further investigation doubt remains about the explanation offered – or when no explanation is forthcoming at all – the absence will be treated as unauthorised and the parent informed.

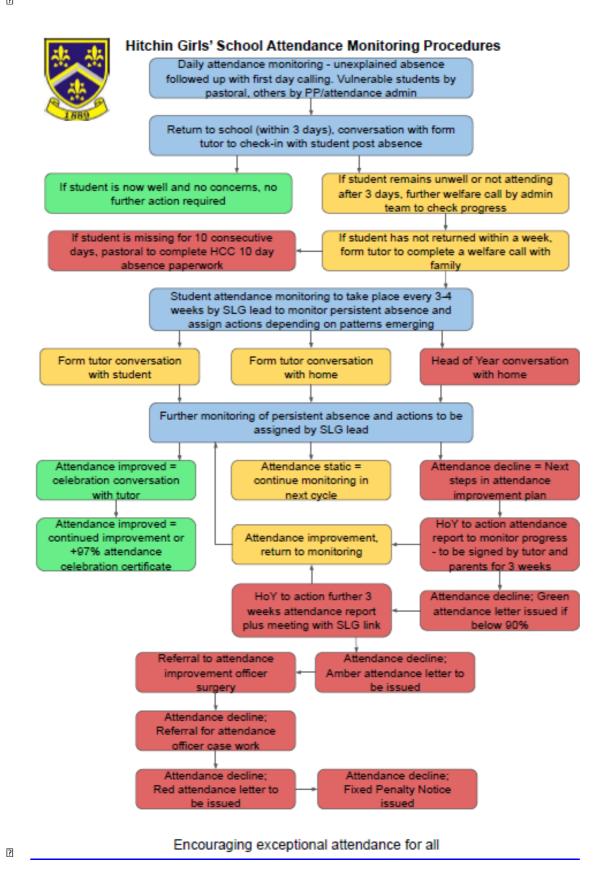
Further resources

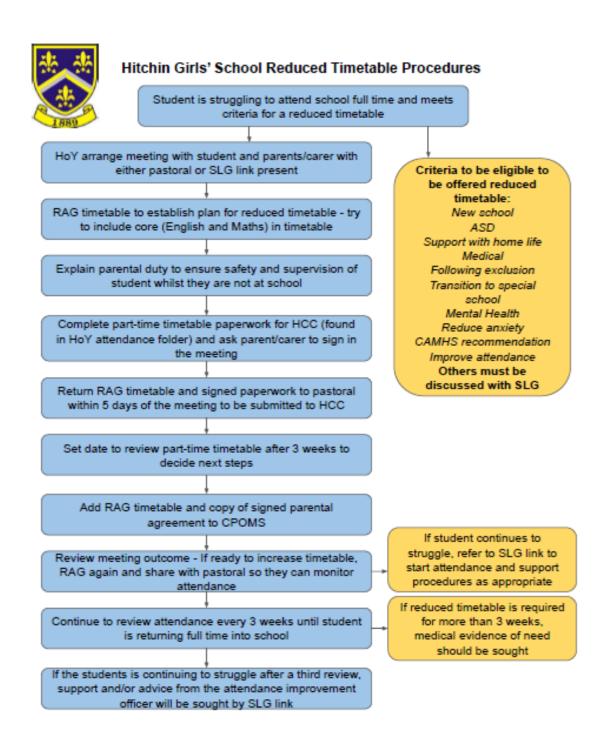
Statutory guidance

- School behaviour and attendance: parental responsibility measures
- Children missing education
- Supporting students with medical conditions at school
- Keeping children safe in education
- Alternative provision
- Education for children with health needs who cannot attend school
- School exclusion

Guidance and resources

- School attendance: guidance for schools
- Checklist for school leaders to support full opening: behaviour and attendance
- Mental health and wellbeing resources
- Mental health and behaviour guidance
- Approaches to preventing and tackling bullying
- Respectful School Communities Tool
- Skills for care: toolkit for social workers to support conversations about returning to education settings in September
- Education Endowment Foundation: research on texting parents
- Education Endowment Foundation: research on parental engagement
- □ National statistics: Pupil absence in schools in England





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