

HITCHIN GIRLS' SCHOOL

ATTENDANCE POLICY

INITIAL STATEMENT

At Hitchin Girls' School, it is our aim that all members of the school community, governors, 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.

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.

TARGET SETTING AND MONITORING

The Department for Education (DfE) expects all schools and local authorities to focus on reducing overall absence, particularly unauthorised absence and persistent absence by working closely together in partnership with parents/carers. Absence will be monitored closely via the student level school census and the Secretary of State's power to require an individual school to set absence targets where a school's absence record is of particular concern is being retained. Although as an Academy Trust this is not a requirement, we will continue to do so as this is good practice.

Attendance data is an indicator which will be used by OFSTED. A new inspection framework for maintained schools and academies, introduced in September 2019, followed a year-long consultation. The quality of teaching and learning judgement relates to attendance because, however good the teaching, it does not benefit students if they are not present.

We need to monitor, evaluate and put in place appropriate interventions for those students who fall below the expected percentage attendance and/or are frequently late.

The member of SLG with responsibility for overseeing attendance is Mrs. Ruth Cooper.

EXPECTATIONS

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

The school will:

- ✓ 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 school 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.

DOORS OPEN

Students should not arrive at school before 8.20am. They may enter the buildings and proceed to their tutor base at that time.

REGISTRATION

The Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006 require that schools maintain an attendance register for each form with the names of all students attending in each form. This register must be marked accurately and promptly using the time designated for morning and afternoon registration.

Attendance registers

The registers are called at 08.45 am and 1.30 pm. Registers close at 9.05 am and 1.40 pm.

The form tutor/cover teacher (morning session) will only mark students as present, absent or late. A note of explanation should be flagged on the Management Information System if appropriate.

The period 4 subject/cover teacher (afternoon session) will only mark students as present, absent or late. A note of explanation should be flagged on Management Information System if appropriate.

The register must be completed electronically unless there is a problem with Management Information System in which case a manual register must be completed and handed in to the Main Office straight after registration has closed.

Any student arriving after closure of the register will be marked absent for the whole of the session.

Students should be called by name and respond in the prescribed formal manner.

Registers will be marked in accordance with DfE guidance (see Appendix). The correct code must be entered and there should not be any dashes or blanks.

Attendance registers are legal documents that may be required as evidence in court cases.

Lesson registers

In order to reduce the possibility of post registration truancy subject/cover teachers should take class registers in each lesson.

The subject/cover teacher will only mark students as present, absent or late. A note of explanation should be flagged on the Management Information System if appropriate.

The register must be completed electronically unless there is a problem with the Management Information System in which case a manual register must be completed and handed in to the Main Office as soon as it has been taken.

Registers must be taken at the start of the lesson to enable our safeguarding procedures to be implemented should a need arise.

Students are not usually permitted to leave lessons.

Removal of a student from the school admissions register

A student can lawfully be deleted from the admission register on the grounds prescribed in regulation 8 of the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (as amended).

If a student has been taken off roll a member of the office administration staff will be responsible for completing and sending off the EWN1 form and return it to the local Attendance Team Office.

LATENESS

Students arriving during the registration period but after their names have been called will be deemed late.

Students arriving after the close of registration are required to have their parents/carers explain their absence. The student must sign in the designated signing in/out book located under the stairs opposite the Administration Office.

Entries in the designated signing in/out book will be transferred to the computerised registration system by a member of the office administration staff at the earliest opportunity with a note flagged on the Management Information System to indicate the time of arrival and reason for lateness.

In the event of a fire or other evacuation of the building, the designated signing in/out book will be used to identify those students who are present in school but arrived after the close of registration.

In extenuating circumstances the school may decide to authorise a late arrival after the registers have been closed. For example, in the event of bad weather or a road closure.

Post-16 students will be treated in the same way as Years 7 – 11 with regard to attendance and punctuality.

FOLLOWING UP LATENESS

Registration

The names of students who arrive late for morning registration will be collected by the staff that are on late duty and passed on to a member of the office administration staff. If a student is already in school but arrives late for morning registration they will be marked late by the subject/cover teacher. Students will be issued with an L1.

If a student is already in school but arrives late for afternoon registration, period 4, they will be marked late by the subject teacher/cover supervisor. The student will be issued with a C1.

If a student has more than two late arrivals (two L1's) during the course of one week they will be issued with an L2 and a one hour after school detention.

A member of the office administration staff will have responsibility for collating lists of pupils arriving late on whom sanctions will be imposed

A member of the office administration staff will have responsibility for advising pupils that they are receiving a consequence/detention.

The consequence for lates will be applied on the earliest date available on the detention rota.

Parents/carers will be informed of the detention via the In-Touch Communication.

If a student does not attend a late detention (unless there is a valid reason) there will be a further sanction of a C3 Friday night detention for 1 hour and 30 minutes. Students who fail to attend their C3 detention will receive a half day C4 isolation as soon as possible.

Parents/carers will be informed of any further consequences needed via In-Touch emails.

Where a student is regularly late for school, parents/carers will be contacted by the relevant Form Tutor/Head of Year or Pastoral Support Assistant who will work with the student and parent/carer(s) to bring about an improvement in punctuality.

If there is no improvement in attendance/punctuality then the relevant Head of Year will put in place a supportive Attendance report to last between 1 – 4 weeks. Parents will be informed and regular reviews to take place. Should an improvement not been seen then the Attendance Improvement Officer will be informed and will work with the student and parents/carers to bring about an improvement in attendance/punctuality.

Lesson time

All lateness to lessons should be challenged by subject/cover teachers.

In accordance with the classroom ground rules, students who arrive late will be marked as late and issued with a C1. Two C1's in one day will result in a C2 and an after school detention for 1 hour.

Parents/carers will be informed of the consequence via In-Touch email.

If a student does not attend a C2 detention (unless there is a valid reason) there will be a further sanction of a C3 Friday night detention for 1 hour and 30 minutes. Students who fail to attend their C3 detention will receive a half day C4 isolation as soon as possible.

Parents/carers will be informed of the further sanction by In-Touch Communication

ABSENCES

Schools must clearly distinguish between authorised and unauthorised absences of students of compulsory school age.

The responsibility for authorising absences rests with the school. Written or verbal parental communication does not itself constitute authorisation. The school may or may not accept the reason offered as valid.

Parents/carers 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

Examples of unauthorised absence from school include:

- Shopping
- Looking after siblings or parents who are unwell
- Birthdays
- Holidays in term time
- Funeral of distant relative involving more than one day of absence
- Pet going to the Vet or death of a pet

If there is any doubt as to whether an absence should be authorised then the member of SLG responsible for overseeing attendance should be consulted who will liaise with the Headteacher as required.

If an absence is to be unauthorised the parents/carers will be notified either by letter or a phone call from the relevant Pastoral Support Assistant depending on the circumstances.

Although there is no role for the Attendance Improvement Officer with regard to attendance of Post-16 students, our expectations are the same as for those in Years 7-11. The codes are different and have been agreed by the Consortium of Hitchin Schools.

FOLLOWING UP ABSENCES

Parents/carers should inform the school by 08.30 am if they know that their child will be absent on that day. This should be done by ringing and leaving a message on the attendance line. The student's name, form and the reason for their absence should be given. This is a 24 hour voicemail service.

If parents/carers leave a message, this will be recorded on the Management Information System by a member of the office administration staff and they will not have to supply an absence note on the student's return to school.

In the event of student absence and the parents/carers have not left a message on the attendance line, a member of the office administration staff will call the parent/carer to ascertain the reason for absence. Once a response has been received, the reason given will be recorded on the Management Information System and an absence note will not have to be supplied on the student's return to school.

If the parent/carer does not respond and the student returns to school after an absence without a written explanation from the parent/carer an In-Touch Communication to explain that this will now be recorded as an unauthorised absence will be sent to the parents/carers.

Student attendance will be reviewed by the member of SLG with responsibility for overseeing attendance along with the Attendance Improvement Officer (termly), Pastoral Support Assistant and when relevant the Student Development Lead on a monthly basis. The Form Tutor and Heads of Year will then be responsible for following up agreed actions and reporting back in preparation for the next meeting.

Where attendance falls below 90% parents/carers will be asked to contact the Pastoral Support Assistant to discuss any underlying issues and emphasise the importance of good attendance. The first (GREEN) standard absence letter will be sent.

If there is no improvement after the next four school weeks, parents/carers will be contacted by email and will be asked to contact the Pastoral Support Assistant to ascertain the ongoing reason for absence and to look again at the most appropriate kind of intervention/support package required to bring about an improvement in attendance. The second (AMBER) standard absence letter will be sent. An action plan will be drawn up and the student will work with the Form Tutor and Head of Year, reviewing attendance on a weekly basis. Any future absence from school will be recorded as unauthorised unless confirmation of medical circumstances is received by a medical professional to show that the student in question has not been fit to attend school.

If there is no improvement again after the next four school weeks the parents/carers will be contacted by email and also by the Attendance Improvement Officer. The third (RED) standard absence letter will be sent. This is a formal warning that parents/carers are at risk of being in breach of the The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007 because their child has been absent from school and the absence(s) has/have not been authorised. A Single Service Request form will be completed and a referral made to initiate the formal involvement of the Attendance Improvement Officer to look at strategies to bring about improvement in attendance. A revised action plan will be drawn up and the student will work with the Form Tutor, Head of Year and Attendance Improvement Officer reviewing attendance on a weekly basis until they have reached their target attendance. Again, any future absence from school will be recorded as unauthorised unless confirmation of medical circumstances is received by a medical professional to show that the student in question has not been fit to attend school.

FIRST DAY RESPONSE

Hitchin Girls' School uses First Day Response for identified students/targeted groups:

First Day Response phone calls will be made after the close of morning registration.

The target group/students for First Day Response will be based on both percentage attendance and specific individual needs and/or requests from parents/carers.

First Day Response phone calls will be triggered and made by a member of the office administration staff.

The member of SLG with responsibility for overseeing attendance is responsible for deciding whether to authorise absences notified through First Day Response in liaison with the Headteacher when required.

The telephone contact list will be updated by a member of the office administration staff.

Registers will be updated with First Day Response information by a member of the office administration staff.

INTEGRATED WORKING

Hitchin Girls' School works with other agencies and professionals to ensure that our students receive all the support available to achieve good attendance.

If a student has more complex needs then the possibility of a Family First Assessment will be discussed.

Where a student is working with other professionals then the Pastoral Support Assistant will be responsible for alerting those individuals if there are any issues surrounding attendance and/or punctuality.

If a student returns to school after a prolonged period of absence the Head of Year will work with both the Form Tutor, Pastoral Support Assistant and when relevant the Student Development Lead to put together an appropriate reintegration package. The form tutor and subject staff will be updated about specific needs on a regular basis.

If a student needs to be referred to ESTMA (Education Support Team for Medical Absence) this will be done by the Pastoral Support Assistant in conjunction with the Student Development Lead. The Head of Year, form tutor and relevant subject staff will be updated about specific needs by email on a regular basis.

WORKING WITH THE ATTENDANCE IMPROVEMENT OFFICER

As indicated above Hitchin Girls' School works in partnership with the allocated Attendance Improvement Officer to improve attendance for individual students and the whole school.

LEAVING AND RETURNING TO SCHOOL DURING THE SCHOOL DAY

Students who need to leave the school during the day for medical appointments or other reasons are required to submit a parental/carer explanation in advance. The student should then sign out in the designated signing in/out book located under the stairs opposite the Administration Office. Where possible a note will be flagged on the Management Information System.

Students must sign back into school on their return in the designated signing in/out book located under the stairs opposite the Administration Office.

The signing in and out record will be the responsibility of a designated member of the administration office staff in the event of fire.

TRUANCY

Hitchin Girls' School works with parents/carers, students and staff to reduce truancy during the school day by staff monitoring exit points at both break and lunchtimes. As Year 11 have the privilege of being allowed off-site at lunchtime from November an EXEAT system is in place to carefully monitor and track those students who have permission to be off-site.

Students are registered in each lesson as well as during registration. If a student is found to be missing our On Call system is activated; this will include a member of SLG undertaking initial inquiries, the Pastoral Support Assistant being notified and looking for the student in key areas such as the toilets. If a student cannot be located parents/carers are informed without delay. If parent are not able to confirm the student's whereabouts then school will call 101 to inform them. Where a student is found to have truanted, consequences in line with our Behaviour for Learning Policy are issued at the discretion of the member of SLG overseeing attendance so that the student makes up any time that they have missed.

A member of the administration office staff operates spot checks on attendance in lessons at least once during the school day.

Hitchin Girls' School works with other professionals to minimise truancy e.g. police and Attendance Improvement Officers carrying out truancy patrols

LEAVE OF ABSENCE DURING TERM TIME

In accordance with the amendments to the 2006 Pupil Registration (England) Regulations which came into effect on 1st September 2013, Headteachers may not grant leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. It is for the Headteacher to determine what constitutes exceptional circumstances and for them to determine the number of school days a student can be away from school if the leave is granted. Hitchin Girls' School will not authorise leave of absence during term time except in exceptional circumstances.

PENALTY NOTICES

At Hitchin Girls' School we expect parents/carers to work with us to address attendance problems.

Parents/carers who fail to respond to requests by the school to send their child(s) to school or who take unauthorised holidays during term time may be issued with a Fixed Penalty Fine by the LA.

The notices will be issued at the discretion of the Headteacher and will be applied to parents/carers whose child has at least 15 sessions (half day= 1 session) of unauthorised absence in the previous and/or current term. Fixed Penalty Notices will operate following the Hertfordshire County Guidance for Schools. The penalty is currently £60 if paid within 21 days of receipt of the notice, rising to £120 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days. Each parent is liable to pay a separate penalty and penalty notices are issued for each child to whom the absence relates. If the penalty is not paid the LA may prosecute the parents/carers for their child's irregular attendance.

PROMOTING ATTENDANCE AND REWARDS

The school celebrates and rewards good attendance.

Students are informed about the importance of school attendance through induction week, assemblies, tutor time, presentations by visiting professionals, statistics and displays in school.

The school has an anti-bullying policy designed to prevent behaviour that hinders attendance.

Students are regularly informed that bullying and aggressive behaviour is totally unacceptable. Hitchin Girls' School has a climate in which bullying is reported immediately and dealt with.

The school curriculum is continually reviewed to ensure that it is broad based, varied, challenging, differentiated and relevant to the needs of students.

Those students gaining 100% attendance in a term are recognised in the 'Year Group Celebration Assemblies' which take place every term.

Heads of Year and House have schemes to celebrate both good attendance and punctuality. Significantly our end of term Celebration Assemblies.

New ways of celebrating good attendance and punctuality are continually being sought and our reward system is currently under review ahead of significant changes from September 2019.

PUBLICATION OF INFORMATION

Hitchin Girls' School shares information on individual students' attendance as necessary with parents/carers, students, staff and relevant outside agencies.

Hitchin Girls' School provides current attendance statistics on the school website.

Hitchin Girls' School will provide attendance information and statistics in each newsletter.

Attendance is a standing item on the agenda of school Governors' meetings

New parents/carers and students are made aware of Hitchin Girls' School ethos on attendance and punctuality at Open Evenings and Transition Information Sessions.

The Director of Finance and Resources will be responsible for ensuring that data collected by DfE is accurate.

Governing Body approval: 2 May 2019

APPENDIX

ATTENDANCE CODES, DESCRIPTIONS AND MEANINGS

CODE	DESCRIPTION	MEANING
/	Present (AM)	Present
\	Present (PM)	Present
B	Educated off site (NOT Dual registration)	Approved Education Activity
C	Other Authorised Circumstances (not covered by another appropriate code/description)	Authorised absence
D	Dual registration (i.e. present at another school or PRU)	Approved Education Activity
E	Excluded (no alternative provision made)	Authorised absence
F	Extended family holiday (agreed)	Authorised absence
G	Family holiday (NOT agreed <u>or</u> days in excess of agreement)	Unauthorised absence
H	Family holiday (agreed)	Authorised absence
I	Illness (NOT medical or dental etc. appointments)	Authorised absence
J	Interview	Approved Education Activity
L	Late (before registers closed)	Present
M	Medical/Dental appointments	Authorised absence
N	No reason yet provided for absence	Unauthorised absence
O	Other unauthorised absence (not covered by other codes or descriptions)	Unauthorised absence
P	Approved sporting activity	Approved Education Activity
R	Day set aside exclusively for religious observance	Authorised absence
S	Study leave	Authorised absence
T	Traveller absence	Authorised absence
U	Late and arrived after the registers closed	Unauthorised absence
V	Educational visit or trip	Approved Education Activity
W	Work experience (not work based training)	Approved Education Activity
X	Untimetabled sessions for non-compulsory school age pupils	Not counted in possible attendances
Y	Partial and forced closure	Not counted in possible attendances
Z	Pupil not yet on roll	Not counted in possible attendances
#	School closed to all pupils	Not counted in possible attendances

Further information on the correct use of these symbols can be found at:

<http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/pupilsupport/behaviour/attendance/a00216341/advice-onschool-attendance> from which a PDF document entitled **Draft Advice on school attendance** can be downloaded.