



# ATTENDANCE POLICY

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## 1. Introduction

Regular school attendance is essential if children are to achieve their full potential. High Ash believes that regular school attendance is the key to enabling children to maximise the educational opportunities available to them and become emotionally resilient, confident and competent young people who are able to realise their full potential and make a positive contribution to their community.

This policy aims to show our commitment to meeting our obligations with regards to school attendance, including those laid out in the Department for Education's (DfE's) statutory guidance on [working together to improve school attendance \(applies from 19 August 2024\)](#), through our whole-school culture and ethos that values good attendance. High Ash values all pupils. We will work with families to identify the reasons for poor attendance and try to resolve any difficulties.

Our Attendance Policy should not be viewed in isolation; it is a strand that runs through all aspects of school improvement, supported by our policies on safeguarding, bullying, behaviour and inclusive learning. This policy also takes into account the Human Rights Act 1998 and the Equality Act 2010.

## 2. Legal Framework

Our Attendance policy is based on the Department for Education's (DfE's) statutory guidance on [working together to improve school attendance \(applies from 19 August 2024\)](#) and [school attendance parental responsibility measures](#). The guidance is based on the following pieces of legislation, which set out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- Part 6 of the [Education Act 1996](#)
- Part 3 of the [Education Act 2002](#)
- Part 7 of the [Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006 \(and 2010, 2011, 2013, and 2016 amendments\)](#)
- [The School Attendance \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2024](#)
- [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013 and the 2024 amendment](#)

Section 7 of the 1996 Education Act states that parents must ensure that children of compulsory school age receive efficient full-time education suitable to their age, ability and aptitude and to any special educational needs they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

A child is of Compulsory School Age at the beginning of the term following their 5<sup>th</sup> birthday. A child ceases to be of compulsory school age on the last Friday in June of the school year in which they reach the age of 16.

## 3. Roles and Responsibilities

High Ash believe that improved school attendance can only be achieved if it is viewed as a shared responsibility of the school staff, governors, parents, pupils and the wider school community

### 3.1 Staff

All Staff will:

- Actively promote the importance and value of good attendance to pupils and their parents
- Form positive relationships with pupils and parents

- Contribute to a whole school approach which reinforces good school attendance; with good teaching and learning experiences that encourage all pupils to attend and to achieve
- Comply with the Registration Regulations, England, 2006 and other attendance related legislation
- Implement systems to report, record and monitor the attendance of all pupils, including those who are educated off-site
- Analyse attendance data to identify causes and patterns of absence
- Contribute to the evaluation of school strategies and interventions
- Work with other agencies to improve attendance and support pupils and their families
- Document interventions used to a standard required by the Local Authority should legal proceedings be instigated

### **3.2 Parents**

We request that parents:

- Talk to their child about school and what goes on there. Take a positive interest in their child's work and educational progress
- Instil the value of education and regular school attendance within the home environment
- Encourage their child to look to the future and have aspirations
- Contact the school if their child is absent to let them know the reason why and the expected date of return. Follow this up with an email or phone call where possible.
- Try to avoid unnecessary absences. Wherever possible make appointments for the doctors, dentists etc. outside of school hours
- Ask the school for help if their child is experiencing difficulties
- Inform the school of any change in circumstances that may impact on their child's attendance
- Support the school; take every opportunity to get involved in their child's education, form a positive relationship with school and acknowledge the importance of children receiving the same messages from both school and home
- Encourage routine at home, for example, bed times, homework, preparing school bag and uniform the evening before
- Not keep their child away from school to go shopping, to help at home or to look after other members of the family
- Avoid taking their child on holiday during term-time. Where this is unavoidable, complete and return a Leave of Absence Request to the Headteacher in advance of booking the holiday.

## **4. Recording attendance**

### **4.1 Attendance register**

We will take our attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. The register will mark, using the appropriate national attendance and absence codes from the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024, whether every pupil is:

- Present
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity
- Absent
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

We will also record:

- Whether the absence is authorised or not [for pupils of compulsory school age]
- The nature of the activity, where a pupil is attending an approved educational activity
- The nature of circumstances, where a pupil is unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances
- We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 6 years after the date on which the entry was made.

## 4.2 The school day

The school day starts at 8.50am and ends at 3.20pm. Pupils can arrive at school from 8.40am on each school day.

The register for the first session will be taken at 8.50am and will be kept open until 9.30am. The register for the second session varies by year group (see below) but will be kept open until 1.40pm for all children.

- Foundation and KS1 – register taken at 1pm
- Years 3/4 – register taken at 1.15pm
- Years 5/6 – register taken at 1.30pm

## 4.3 Lateness and punctuality

A pupil who arrives late:

- Before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code
- After the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code
- Letters will be sent to parents to highlight ongoing punctuality issues and offering school support

**Late Arrival:** The gates are open from 8.35am to 8.50am. Pupils arriving after the gates have closed **must sign their child in at reception** to ensure that we can be responsible for their health and safety whilst they are in school.

Registration begins at 8.50am and closes at 9.00am. Pupils arriving after this time will be marked as present but having arrived late, children arriving after 9.30am will be recorded as absent for that school session. An absence will only be authorised if a satisfactory explanation for the late arrival can be provided, for example, attendance at a medical appointment. The absence will be recorded as unauthorised if the pupil has arrived late after the registers have closed without justifiable cause, for example, if they woke up late or were waiting for their uniform to dry. Examples of unsatisfactory explanations include:

- A pupil's/family member's birthday
- Shopping for uniforms
- Having their hair cut
- Closure of a sibling's school for INSET (or other) purposes
- "Couldn't get up"
- Illness where the child is considered well enough to attend school
- Holidays taken without the authorisation of school

## 4.4 Unplanned absence

The pupil's parent must notify the school of the reason for the absence on the first day of an unplanned absence and as soon as practically possible. This can be done by email via [absence@highashschool.co.uk](mailto:absence@highashschool.co.uk) or calling the school office from 7.45am onwards (tel 01525 261620).

We will mark absence due to physical or mental illness as authorised, unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness. Where the absence is longer than 5 days the school will ask for medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily. If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and the Family Liaison Officer will call to discuss this with the parents and potentially arrange a meeting with Headteacher or School Counsellor.

#### **4.5 Planned absence**

Absence to attend a medical or dental appointment, or for compassionate grounds (such as a funeral) will be counted as authorised as long as the pupil's parent notifies the school in advance of the appointment. Parents should email [absence@highashschool.co.uk](mailto:absence@highashschool.co.uk) or call the school office (tel 01525 261620). We will ask all parents for proof of an appointment to ensure fairness. We encourage parents to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible but understand this is not always feasible. The pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

Parents wishing to take their child out of school during term time must send a written request, via the Leave of Absence Application Form ([form](#)), to the Headteacher not less than one month before the proposed period of absence. Documentary evidence of leave and return dates may be required in order to process your request. Retrospective requests will not be considered and therefore will result in the absence being categorised as unauthorised.

Leave may be authorised or unauthorised depending on the individual circumstances. Please see Section 9 for more detail on which term-time absences the school can authorise.

#### **4.6 Following up unexplained absence**

Where any pupil we expect to attend school does not attend, or stops attending without known reason, the school will:

- Call the pupil's parent on the morning of the first day of unexplained absence to ascertain the reason. If the school cannot reach any of the pupil's emergency contacts High Ash will contact the school any siblings attend, social workers where relevant, or may ultimately need to contact police.
- Aim to identify whether the absence is approved or not
- Identify the correct attendance code to use and input it as soon as the reason for absence is ascertained – this will be no later than 5 working days after the session(s) for which the pupil was absent
- Call the parent on each day that the absence continues without explanation, to make sure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary. If absence continues, the school will consider involving an education welfare officer
- Where relevant, report the unexplained absence to the pupil's to any other parties supporting the child e.g. social workers
- Where appropriate, offer support to the pupil and/or their parents to improve attendance
- Identify whether the pupil needs support from wider partners, as quickly as possible, and make the necessary referrals
- Where support is not appropriate, not successful, or not engaged with other sanctions may be applied (see Section 10).

### **5. Attendance monitoring**

#### **5.1 Monitoring**

The school will monitor attendance and absence data (including punctuality) on a monthly, half-termly, termly and yearly across the school and at an individual pupil, year group and cohort level. Specific pupil information will

be shared with the DfE on request. The school has granted the DfE access to its management information system so the data can be accessed regularly and securely.

Data will be collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. The school will benchmark its attendance data at whole school, year group and cohort level against local, regional, and national levels to identify areas of focus for improvement, and share this with the governing board.

The school will also review attendance data at an individual level and identify pupils whose absences may be a cause for concern, especially those who demonstrate patterns of persistent or severe absence and then develop strategies to address these patterns

## **5.2 Using data to improve attendance**

The school will:

- Develop targeted actions to address patterns of absence (of all severities) of individual pupils, groups or cohorts that it has identified via data analysis
- Provide targeted support to the pupils it has identified whose absences may be a cause for concern, especially those who demonstrate patterns of persistent or severe absence, and their families (see Section 7 below)
- Provide regular attendance reports to Headteacher, School Counsellor and DSL and SENCO as appropriate to facilitate discussions with pupils and families
- Use data to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place in order to modify them and inform future strategies
- Share information and work collaboratively with other schools in the area, local authorities and other partners where a pupil's absence is at risk of becoming persistent or severe, including keeping them informed regarding specific pupils, where appropriate

## **5.3 Reducing persistent and severe absence**

Persistent absence is where a pupil misses 10% or more of school, and severe absence is where a pupil misses 50% or more of school. Reducing persistent and severe absence is central to the school's strategy for improving attendance.

The school will:

- Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence
- Consider potential safeguarding issues and, where suspected or present, address them in line with Keeping Children Safe in Education
- Hold regular meetings with the parents of pupils who the school (and/or local authority) considers to be vulnerable or at risk of persistent or severe absence, or who are persistently or severely absent, to:
  - Discuss attendance and engagement at school
  - Listen, and understand barriers to attendance
  - Explain the help that is available
  - Explain the potential consequences of, and sanctions for, persistent and severe absence
- Review any existing actions or interventions
- Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance, in conjunction with the local authority, where relevant
- Consider alternative support that could be put in place to remove any barriers to attendance and re-engage these pupils. In doing so, the school will sensitively consider some of the reasons for absence

## **6. Communicating with Parents**

The school will regularly inform parents/carers about their child's attendance and absence levels. When a child's attendance falls below 90% (period) , the school will write to the parent.

## **7. Support Systems**

High Ash recognises that poor attendance can often be an indication of other difficulties in a child's life. This may be related to problems at home and or in school. Parents should make school aware of any difficulties or changes in circumstances that may affect their child's attendance and/or behaviour in school, for example, bereavement, divorce/separation. This will help the school identify any additional support that may be required.

High Ash also recognise that some pupils are more likely to require additional support to attain good attendance, for example, those pupils with special educational needs, those with physical or mental health needs, migrant and refugee pupils and looked after children.

The school will implement a range of strategies to support improved attendance. Strategies used will include:

- Discussion with parents and pupils
- Referrals to support agencies
- Learning mentors
- Friendship groups
- Reward systems
- Time limited part time time-tables
- Additional learning support
- Behaviour support
- Reintegration support packages
- Support offered to families will be child centred and planned in discussion and agreement with both parents and pupils.

## **8. Supporting pupils who are absent or returning to school**

### **8.1 Pupils absent due to complex barriers to attendance**

Arrangements will be made on a case-by-case basis depending on need and will be agreed after a meeting with parents. These could include a phased return and reduced timetable or amendments to the school day. The duration of these arrangements will depend on need.

### **8.2 Pupils absent due to mental or physical ill health or SEND**

As above, and amendments will be depend on individual needs and will be addressed with parents. Support will be offered through the School Counsellor if required, adjustments may be required to the school day, additional resources will be purchased and training provided for staff as necessary. Whilst confidentiality will respected at all times, communications may be sent to parents if there are specific risk of infections or reduced immunity for example. Remote learning will be provided if appropriate.

Where a pupil has an education health and care (EHC) plan and their attendance falls, or the school becomes aware of barriers to attendance that related to the pupil's needs, the school will inform the local authority.

### 8.3 Pupils returning to school after a lengthy or unavoidable period of absence

A meeting will be arranged with parents to agree a plan for return to school, such as phased timetable, adaptations to the school day and support to catch-up on missed lessons.

## 9. Authorised and Unauthorised absence

### 9.1 Approval for term-time absence

Where pupils of compulsory school age are recorded as absent, the register must show whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised. Absence can only be authorised by the school and cannot be authorised by parents. **All absences will be treated as unauthorised unless a satisfactory explanation for the pupil's absence has been received.**

1. Illness: In most cases a telephone call or email from the parent/carer informing the school that their child is ill will be acceptable. Parents may be asked to provide medical evidence where there are repeated absences due to reported illness. This will usually be in the form of an appointment confirmation, prescription etc.
2. Medical/Dental Appointments: Parents/carers are advised where possible to make medical and dental appointments outside the school day. Where this is not possible, pupils should attend school for part of the day. Parents should show the appointment confirmation to school.
3. Excluded (no alternative provision made): Exclusion from attending school is counted as an authorised absence. The child's class teacher will make arrangements for work to be sent home.
4. Religious Observance: High Ash acknowledges the multi-faith nature of British society and recognises that on some occasions, religious festivals may fall outside school holiday periods or weekends and that this necessitates a consideration of authorised absence or special leave for religious observance. It is reasonable for a parent to allow their children not to attend school on any day of religious observance if recognised by the parent's religious body. However, in the interests of fulfilling the academic requirements of the school and limiting the authorised absence rate of the school, it is identified as reasonable that no more than three days in total in any academic year be designated for religious observance/festival. Absence in excess of this will be categorised as unauthorised. Parents are requested to give advance notice to the school if they intend their child to be absent.
5. Traveller Absence: The aim for the attendance of Traveller children, in common with all other children, is to attend school as regularly and as frequently as possible.

To protect Traveller parents from unreasonable prosecution for non-attendance, the Education Act 1944, section 86, states that a Traveller parent is safe from prosecution if their child accrues 200 attendances (i.e. 200 half days) in a year. Traveller absence is acceptable only when the family is engaged in a trade or business that requires them to travel and when the child is attending school as regularly as that trade permits. It does not mean that part-time education for Traveller children is legally acceptable, nor does it relieve parents of their duties to ensure that their children are receiving suitable education when not at school.

When in or around Buckinghamshire, if a Traveller family can reasonably travel back to their base school (see below) then the expectation is that their child will attend full-time. High Ash will be regarded as the base school if it is the school where the child normally attends when they are not travelling. Traveller children can register at other schools temporarily whilst away from their base school. In such cases, the pupil's school place at High Ash will be kept open for them whilst travelling. This is to protect them from unfairly losing their place at their school of usual attendance.

High Ash can operate effectively as the child's base school only if we are engaged in on-going dialogue with Traveller families. This means that parents must:

- advise of their forthcoming travelling patterns before they happen; and
- inform the school regarding proposed return dates

High Ash will authorise absence of Traveller children if we are satisfied that a family is travelling and has given indication that they intend to return. Traveller children will be recorded as attending an approved educational activity when:

- The child is on roll and attending another visited school
- Undertaking supervised educational activity under the jurisdiction of another Local Authority's Traveller Education Service
- The child is undertaking computer based distance learning that is time evidenced

Where Traveller children are registered pupils at a school and are known to be present either at a site (official or otherwise) or in a house and are not attending school, the absence will be investigated in the same way as for any other pupil.

6. Other Authorised Circumstances: The Headteacher will allow pupils to be absent from the school site for certain educational activities, or to attend other schools or settings. The Headteacher will only grant a **leave of absence** to a pupil during term time if the request meets the specific circumstances set out in the [2024 school attendance regulations](#). These circumstances are:

- Taking part in a regulated performance, or regulated employment abroad
- Attending an interview
- Study leave
- A temporary, time-limited part-time timetable
- Exceptional circumstances

Other reasons the school may allow a pupil to be absent from the school include (but are not limited to):

- Attending an offsite approved educational activity, sporting activity or visit or trip arranged by the school
- Attending another school at which the pupil is also registered (dual registration)
- Attending provision arranged by the local authority
- If there is any other unavoidable cause for the pupil not to attend school, such as disruption to travel caused by an emergency, a lack of access arrangements, or because the school premises are closed

A leave of absence is granted at the Headteacher's discretion, including the length of time the pupil is authorised to be absent for. We define 'exceptional circumstances' as situations, such as family emergencies or unforeseen events. As a leave of absence will only be granted in exceptional circumstances, it is unlikely a leave of absence will be granted for the purposes of a family holiday. The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant background context behind the request, including:

- Length of the proposed leave
- Age of the pupil
- The pupil's general absence/attendance record
- Proximity of SATs and public examinations
- Pupil's ability to catch up the work missed
- Pupil's educational needs
- General welfare of the pupil
- Circumstances of the request
- Purpose of the leave
- Previous term time holidays taken
- When the request was made

All requests for leave of absence will receive a written response. Where a request has been granted, the letter should state:

- The expected date of return
- That parents must contact school should any delays occur
- If the permission to take leave is not granted and the pupil is absent, the absence will be **unauthorised**.

Parents do not have an automatic right to remove their child from school during term time for the purpose of a holiday. Parents should be aware that if their child is absent for 10 school days they will miss 5% of their education during that academic year.

## 10. Sanctions for Unauthorised Absence

Our school will make use of the full range of potential sanctions – including, but not limited to, those listed below – to tackle poor attendance. Decisions will be made on an individual, case-by-case basis.

### 10.1 Penalty notices

The Headteacher, local authority or the police can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age, by issuing a penalty notice. If the school issues a penalty notice, it will check with the local authority before doing so, and send it a copy of any penalty notice issued.

Before issuing a penalty notice, the school will consider the individual case, including:

- Whether the national threshold for considering a penalty notice has been met (10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks)
- Whether a penalty notice is the best available tool to improve attendance for that pupil
- Whether further support, a notice to improve or another legal intervention would be a more appropriate solution
- Whether any obligations that the school has under the Equality Act 2010 make issuing a penalty notice inappropriate

Each parent who is liable for the pupil's offence(s) can be issued with a penalty notice, but this will usually only be the parent/parents who allowed the absence.

The payment must be made directly to the local authority, regardless of who issues the notice. If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute or withdraw the notice.

- If issued with a **first** penalty notice, the parent must pay £80 within 21 days, or £160 within 28 days.
- If a **second** penalty notice is issued to the same parent in respect of the same pupil, the parent must pay £160 if paid within 28 days.
- A **third** penalty notice cannot be issued to the same parent in respect of the same child within 3 years of the date of the issue of the first penalty notice. In a case where the national threshold is met for a third time within those 3 years, alternative action will be taken instead. This will often include considering prosecution but may include other tools such as one of the other attendance legal interventions.
- Once 3 years has elapsed since the first penalty notice was issued a further penalty notice can be issued, but in most cases, it would not be the most effective tool for changing what may have now become an entrenched pattern of behaviour.

### 10.2 Notices to improve

If the national threshold has been met and support is appropriate, but parents do not engage with offers of support, the school may offer a notice to improve to give parents a final chance to engage with support. Notices to improve will be issued in line with processes set out in the local code of conduct for the local authority area in which the pupil attends school. They will include:

- Details of the pupil's attendance record and of the offences
- The benefits of regular attendance and the duty of parents under section 7 of the Education Act 1996
- Details of the support provided so far
- Opportunities for further support, or to access previously provided support that was not engaged with
- A clear warning that a penalty notice may be issued if attendance doesn't improve within the improvement period, along with details of what sufficient improvement looks like, which will be decided on a case-by-case basis
- A clear timeframe of between 3 and 6 weeks for the improvement period
- The grounds on which a penalty notice may be issued before the end of the improvement period

## **11. Deletions from the Register**

In accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, pupils will be deleted from the register only when one of the following circumstances applies:

- The school is replaced by another school on a School Attendance Order
- The School Attendance Order is revoked by the Local Authority
- The pupil has ceased to be of compulsory school age
- Permanent exclusion has occurred and procedures have been completed
- Death of a pupil
- Transfer between schools
- When a parent informs the school in writing that the pupil is to be withdrawn to be educated outside the school system
- Failure to return from an extended holiday after both the school and the local authority have tried to locate the pupil
- A medical condition prevents their attendance and return to the school before ending compulsory school-age
- In custody for more than four months (in discussion with The Youth Offending Team)
- 20 days' continuous unauthorised absence have elapsed and both the Local Authority and school have tried to locate the pupil
- A pupil has left the school but it is not known where he/she has gone after both the school and the Local Authority have tried to locate the pupil

High Ash will follow Buckinghamshire County Council's Children Missing Education Protocol when a pupil's whereabouts is unknown.

## **12. Monitoring of the policy**

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the local authority and/or DfE is updated, and as a minimum at the start of a new academic year by the Headteacher and Family Liaison Officer. At every review, the policy will be approved by the full governing board.

### **13. Related policies**

This policy links to the following policies:

- Child protection and safeguarding policy
- Behaviour policy
- Children with Health Needs Who Cannot Attend School Policy
- Policy for Supporting Pupils with Medical Needs
- Pupil Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy



## Penalty Notices for School Attendance

are changing from 19<sup>th</sup> August 2024

### Escalation Process

#### FIRST OFFENCE

The first time a Penalty Notice is issued for Term Time Leave of Absence or Irregular Attendance, the amount of the fine will be £160 per parent, per child if paid within 28 days and reduced to £80 per parent, per child if paid within 21 days.

#### SECOND OFFENCE

The second time a Penalty Notice (within three years of the first offence) is issued for Term Time Leave of Absence or Irregular Attendance, the amount of the fine will be £160 per parent, per child if paid within 28 days. No reduced rate will be offered.

### National Threshold when considering a Penalty Notice

#### 10 SESSIONS (5 DAYS) OF UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE IN A ROLLING PERIOD OF 10 SCHOOL WEEKS

Penalty Notices will be considered when there have been 10 sessions of unauthorised absences within a 10-week period. Schools should make a judgement based on each individual case and not have a blanket rule whether to issue or not.

#### THIRD OFFENCE AND ANY SUBSEQUENT OFFENCES

The third time an offence is committed for Term Time Leave of Absence or Irregular Attendance, a Penalty Notice will not be issued, and the case will be presented straight to the Magistrates' Court. If found guilty there could be up to a maximum fine of £2,500 or a term of imprisonment not exceeding 3 months.

Please follow the link to view the new guidance from the DfE that comes into effect from 19<sup>th</sup> August 2024  
[Working together to improve school attendance \(applies from 19 August 2024\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/working-together-to-improve-school-attendance)

