

The Henley School Partnership Attendance Policy

Aims

Current research has established a clear link between attendance and a student's academic attainment. The aim of this policy is to ensure that no students are deprived of their educational opportunities, by either their own non-attendance, or that of other students, in accordance with the principle of equal opportunities for all.

Principles

The Henley School Partnership believe that good attendance and punctuality are a crucial factor in enabling students to benefit from the education we offer. We will do all we can to ensure maximum attendance for all students and to identify and address any problems as quickly as possible. Our goal is 100% attendance for all students.

We recognise that parents have a vital role to play and that there is a need to establish good home-school links and communication systems for those occasions when there are concerns about attendance.

The School will ensure that students feel happy coming to school and are treated with dignity and respect irrespective of their academic and social abilities.

This attendance policy reflects Education law and guidance produced by the DfE.

Criteria for Successful Practice

Valley Road School expects that students:

- Will attend school regularly
- Will arrive on time and appropriately prepared for the day
- Will inform a member of staff of any problem or reason that may hinder them from attending school

Valley Road School expects that parents:

- Will ensure that their child attends school, regularly and on time
- Will contact the school as soon as it reasonably practical whenever their child is unable to attend school, and certainly on the first day of absence
- Will ensure that their child arrives in school well prepared for the school day
- Will contact the school in confidence whenever any problem occurs that may keep their child away from school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents and the child. If your child is reluctant to attend, it is best not to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and usually make things worse.

Parents and students should expect the following from Valley Road School

- Regular, efficient and accurate recording of attendance
- Early contact with parents when a child fails to attend without providing good reason
- Prompt action on any problem notified to us
- The referral of specific issues to supporting agencies where appropriate

Responsibilities

Class Teachers will:

- Follow the school's attendance procedure
- Follow the school procedures to ensure that registration of students is completed accurately in each lesson
- Monitor the attendance of individuals within a class and inform the relevant person/s where patterns of non-attendance are detected - would like further discussion
- Ensure that appropriate work is set and marked for long-term absentees and those either on alternative curriculum programmes or on long-term exclusions
- Welcome back students who have returned from a long-term absence in a professional manner and adhere to the re-integration plan
- Ensure that all students within lessons are able to access the curriculum through a range of teaching and learning strategies in line with the school's Standard Operating Procedures

The Headteacher will:

- Take overall responsibility for developing Attendance Policy within the school
- Promote and encourage good attendance through the annual celebration of attendance awards ceremony
- Liaise with teachers on attendance issues relating to individuals or groups
- Liaise with the attendance officer responsible for maintaining the school's database for attendance (Attendance SOP)
- Oversee the collation of attendance data and the analysis of data to identify patterns of poor attendance amongst groups of students or year groups

Absence Notes

- First Day Absence

Parents are requested to inform school on the first day and any subsequent day of a child's absence preferably before 10.30am. This may be via a telephone call, email or note sent with another child. After 10.30am un-notified absences will be investigated via a text message or telephone call from the administrative staff. In the event of the school not being able to contact the parents, a letter of concern will be sent.

- Third Day Absence

A further letter of concern will be sent, requesting parents contact the school immediately.

- Ten Day Absence

Any pupil who is absent without an explanation for 10 consecutive days will be referred to Oxfordshire County Council, Attendance and Engagement Team. This is a legal requirement. The school will include details of the action they have taken.

Authorising Absence

Only the school within the context of the law can authorise absences. The provision of a note of explanation does not automatically authorise absences. The Local Authority can only take action on unauthorised absence when prosecuting parents/carers.

Medical Appointments

Class teachers should check the appointment note for the time of the appointment. Pupils are expected to be in school for the remainder of the day. If they are not, the standard absence procedures should be followed. Genuine medical appointments may be categorised as 'M' for a maximum of half a day unless there are exceptional circumstances.

Illness

Students should speak to their teacher if they feel unwell during the day where arrangements to contact parents/guardians will be made. Parents should inform the school as soon as possible on the first day that their child is unwell, telling the school the nature of the illness and expected duration. Sickness absences of longer than 5 days will need an accompanying doctor's note. If the school is concerned at the number of days illness a student has had, a letter requesting permission to contact the student's GP will be sent home.

A Welcome Back

It is important that on return from an absence that all pupils are made to feel welcome. This should include ensuring that the pupil is helped to catch up on missed work and brought up to date on any information that has been passed to other pupils.

Leave/Holidays during term time

Amendments have been made to the 2006 regulations in the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013. These amendments came into force on 1 September 2013. Headteachers do have the discretion to grant leave, but they should only do so in exceptional circumstances. If a Headteacher grants a leave request, it is for them to determine the length of time that the child can be away from school. This leave is unlikely, however, to be granted for the purposes of a family holiday. Parents can be fined for taking their child on holiday during term time without consent from the school.

If a parent takes a child on holiday without permission, s/he may be sent a Warning Notice by the Attendance and Engagement Team. Should a second holiday be taken without permission, a Penalty Notice, carrying a fine of £50, can be issued, or parents may even be prosecuted under section 444 of the Education Act 1996 for failing to ensure their child attends school.

Exceptional Circumstances include:

- funerals or weddings of family members
- to visit a terminally ill relative
- forces staff returning from abroad
- parents returning from having to work abroad for a fixed, minimum term period
- compassionate leave (as agreed by Governors – Sept. 2013)

The Headteacher will determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted. Retrospective authorisation cannot be given if a parent takes their child on out of school and does not seek permission first. Parents/carers who remove their children from school without authorisation or do not return their child to school on the agreed date following an authorised period of leave of absence, may face a Penalty Notice Warning which could lead to a fine/ prosecution (see Penalty Notices and Legal Action above).

Penalty Notices

A Penalty Notice is a fine that the Attendance and Engagement Service may decide to issue instead of taking legal action through the Magistrates' Court system.

A Parent/ Carer can now be issued with a penalty notice if:

- They fail to ensure that their child attends school, or other education provision regularly, usually defined as 20 or more unauthorised absence sessions (10 school days) over a 10 week period.
- A leave of absence has been taken that has not been approved due to exceptional circumstances during term time, of at least 10 sessions (five school days) of unauthorised absence in a period of no more than 5 weeks.
- They fail to return their child to school on an agreed date after an extended holiday.
- Their child is found out of school, without permission, on two Truancy Sweeps, within the same school year.
- Persistent late arrival at school (after the register has been closed) equivalent to 20 sessions of unauthorised absence in a period of no more than 10 weeks.

Persistent Absenteeism (PA):

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we need parents' fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

The school monitors all absence thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority and parents will be informed of this immediately.

PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully by their teacher and a parenting contract meeting will be offered between parent, pupil and Headteacher to try and help resolve any issues. All PA cases are also automatically made known to the Attendance and Engagement Officer and could also be referred to them and if, necessary, they have a range of legal powers open to them to enforce attendance including: parenting orders, education supervision orders and prosecutions. If convicted of an offence a parent could face a fine of up to £2,500 per parent and/or 3 months imprisonment.

Monitoring and Evaluation

There is a requirement on the school Governing Body to report annually to parents the attendance and unauthorised absence statistics for the preceding school year.

Valley Road School will monitor targets set by the LA based upon previous attendance and unauthorised absence data. The school will look at those interventions which have been successful as part of the evaluation process.

When evaluating success the school will consider whether

- Attendance has improved
- Punctuality has improved
- Parental response to absence has improved
- Re-integration plans have been successful
- Students are fully aware of the importance of punctuality and regular attendance and the attendance procedures operating within the school

Related Policies

- Child protection
- Behaviour for Learning
- SEN
- Health and Safety
- Off-site Visits

ATTENDANCE PROCEDURES

Recording Attendance

- AM and PM attendance is recorded by the teacher at 8:45am and 1:00pm respectively.

Late Arrival

- The teacher will record students who arrive late before the register is sent via Lesson Monitor as code 'L'

- The morning register closes at 9:00am and the afternoon register closes at 1:15pm.
- If the register has been closed and sent students must report to the general office to record their late arrival and reason
- Late marks are recorded and reports are produced and analysed – parents will be informed.

Unexplained Absences:

- Parents will receive a phone call from the office requesting a reason for absence. If they are unable to obtain a reason this way a letter will be sent home requesting a reason for the absence.
- Replies from parents are processed and given the appropriate code in Attendance by the Attendance Officer.
- After 3 weeks have passed and an explanation has not been given the unexplained absence code will be changed to code 'O' for unexplained absence.

Attendance Report to DfE

- School Performance Information and Absence Returns are produced on a termly basis and submitted to the L.A and DfE as scheduled throughout the year.

Official Registers

- Produced on a termly basis for Ofsted Inspection