



Pupil Attendance Policy

POLICY CONTROL

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Introduction

Highbury School Governors and staff are committed to working together with parents and carers to promote and sustain good school attendance. We believe that regular attendance is essential to the all-round educational development of our pupils.

Legal Requirements

The Education Act 1996 requires:

- Parents or guardians to ensure their children receive efficient, full time education, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise
- Schools are responsible for recording pupil's attendance twice a day
- An entry must be made in the attendance register for all pupils of compulsory school age who are on the School's admission register.

Target for Attendance

The Government's target for attendance is at least 95%. Highbury School's target for attendance is at least 94% as we recognise the medical and health needs of our pupils and the impact this can have on attendance in terms of good health and the requirement to attend appointments and assessments during school time.

Parents/Carers must

- Ensure that a child of compulsory school age attends school regularly
- Phone the school office before 9.30am on the first day of absence to report the reason (and duration if known)
- Ensure school are contacted prior to any further days absence
- Ensure that their child attends school prior to or following a medical appointment whenever possible
- Apply to the Attendance Manager (Deputy Head) for pupil leave of absence via the relevant WEDUC form. If parent/carers are unable to access this form for any reason they must contact the school office for support
- Keep requests for their child to be absent for any reason to a minimum
- Contact the school in confidence whenever any problem occurs that may keep their child away from school
- To provide the school with up to date working contact arrangements (including an emergency contact that is not living at the same house) so that contact can be made promptly by school at anytime
- To provide parent/carer photos and password to comply with safer collection arrangements. This information will be requested via the school office when a child joins the school and will be confirmed annually
- To work in collaboration with the school Family Liaison Officer and/or Attendance Manager when concerns regarding pupil attendance arise and proactively engage in the support offered

The school will

Demonstrate our commitment to meeting our obligations with regards to school attendance, including those laid out in the Department for Education (DfE) statutory guidance on 'Working Together to Improve School Attendance 2024' by:

- Promote pupils' learning and achievements, offering a clear vision for attendance, underpinned by high expectations and core values which are communicated to and understood by staff and families
- Aim to increase levels of attendance throughout the school
- Have a designated attendance lead in the senior leadership team with clearly assigned responsibilities which are identified within the policy, procedures and school improvement plan

- Meet the legal requirements set out by the Government policy
- Promote a positive attitude to attendance and punctuality
- Consistently record authorised and unauthorised absence accurately
- Monitor and challenge extended or repeated patterns of absence, offering additional support when necessary which may include referrals to services or professionals
- Offer additional targeted support to pupils and their families where there are attendance concerns
- Make referrals to wider support services and external partners where required
- Professionally challenge cases where there is a lack of engagement and clearly outline the potential need for legal intervention in the future
- Liaise closely with the Local Authority SEND Team and Educational Welfare Officer (EWO) regarding individual cases as necessary
- Contact Educational Welfare Officer or Social Services as appropriate
- In the case of long term absence due to exceptional and unavoidable circumstances, provide regular contact with the family and pupil and provide an appropriate remote education specific to the child
- Adopt their remote learning policy when pupil absence is directly linked to whole school or class closure

Absence

If pupils are absent from school. It is parent/carer's responsibility to notify the school, by phone, before 9.30am. Any absence not notified will be marked down as unauthorised.

Where the school are not notified of a pupil's absence, first day calling procedures will be followed (see below)

Pupils are expected to attend school for the full 190 days of the academic year, unless there is a good reason for absence.

Authorised absence

Unless designated, it is the school who will ultimately decide whether an absence is authorised.

Authorised absence - School have accepted the reasons for absence as legitimate and there are no grounds for the local authority to consider the appropriateness of prosecution.

Absences can only be authorised by the school when permission has been given *in advance* for a pupil to be absent or an explanation for absence has been accepted afterwards.

Acceptable reasons for absence:

- Illness
- Illness with a risk to others e.g. infection
- Exceptional family circumstance e.g. bereavement of close family member
- Medical/dental appointments which cannot be made out of school time
- Taking part in special tuition outside of the school
- Religious observance (recommended maximum of 3 days per academic year regardless of faith)
- Exclusion

Notice of request for planned leave needs to be submitted via WEDUC form 4 weeks before. If parent/carers are unable to access this form for any reason they must contact the school office for support.

Unauthorised absence

Highbury School are committed to improving attendance in a supportive manner and working jointly with families and wider professionals to break down the barriers to attendance for our children. As a school we do not authorise term time holidays including gifted respite holidays. We take a supportive and proactive

approach to improving and maintaining attendance figures outside of those potential absences. However where families do not actively engage in the support process, their child is in the 'persistent absence' range or parents/carers make repeated absence requests the school will seek advice from the Education Welfare Officer and pursue legal intervention as per the updated guidance (2024).

Unauthorised absence – unacceptable reasons in which the school cannot approve pupil leave

Unacceptable reasons for absence:

- Unexplained absence
- The explanation provided by parent/carer is deemed insufficient
- Truancy
- Shopping
- Birthdays
- Visiting friends or relatives
- Holidays

The attendance manager and/or EWO will issue letters of concern to parents/carers in relation to unauthorised or persistent absences.

Parents/carers may be asked to attend an attendance meeting in school with the Attendance Lead. The EWO can also be invited to attend where concerns arise.

Education Penalty Notices

Any absence from school is cause for concern. Regular and consistent attendance will give your child the best chance to get the most from their education.

The education Welfare Service (EWS) works to support all schools to reduce persistent and unauthorised absentee levels in accordance with DFE expectations and thresholds. The EWS is the enforcement agency of the Local Authority and as well as providing guidance and support through its officers; it may take legal action if parents fail to ensure that their children attend school regularly and there is no legitimate reason for the absence (under section 444 of the Education Act 1996).

The Attendance Manager, local authority or police can fine parents or 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 over a copy of the penalty notice issued.

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

- Whether the threshold for considering a penalty notice has been met (10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a rolling 10 week period)
- Whether a penalty notice is the best tool to improve attendance for the pupil(s)
- Whether further support, a notice to improve or another intervention would be more appropriate
- When 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 (this will usually only be the parent who allowed the absence). The payment must be made directly to the local authority. 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 child, the parent must pay £160.

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 notice. In this case alternative action would be taken.

'Fixed penalty notices are intended to prevent the need for court action and should only be used where a fixed penalty notice is deemed likely to change parental behaviour' (Working together to improve school attendance September 2022)

Punctuality & Registers

The school day is from 9am – 3.10pm. School doors are open from 8.55am and departures start from 3.10pm. School is closed to pupils at 3.30pm.

Due to the transport arrangements regarding arrival and departures to school; Highbury School Upper Site receive children from 8.50am and start to load the buses at the end of the school day at 2.50pm.

Highbury School Lower Site receive children from 8.55am and start to load the buses at the end of the school day at 3.10pm.

Register close for both sites at 9.20am and 1.20pm. Pupils arriving after this time are marked as late where appropriate and after individual circumstances have been considered.

First-Day Calling Procedures

Families are responsible for directly informing school of any absence by 9.30am at the latest on the first morning of their child's absence.

If school do not hear from a family with regards to absence, contact will be attempted by the admin team via the contact priority list. Where we are unable to make contact, SLT will be informed and a home visit will be completed by a Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL).

Following a home visit, concerns may be reported to the police using the non-emergency number or via 999 dependent on the situation.

Procedures are adopted in keeping with Calderdale Safeguarding Board's advice.

Education for Child with health needs who cannot attend school

As outlined in the 2023 statutory guidance from the Department for Education 'Arranging education for children who cannot attend school because of health needs' ; Local Authorities have a statutory duty to provide suitable education provision for children and young people who do not, or cannot, attend full-time education normally, e.g. due to long-term medical needs. Where this is a case for a pupil in school, the school will liaise closely with the SEND team and may refer to the Medical Needs team. The school will remain in contact with the family throughout the absence and appropriate provision will be arranged on a case by case basis and following advice from the Local Authority and relevant professionals.

In Calderdale the Medical Needs team is a group of experienced teachers. They work with schools and parents/carers of a child or young person. The aim is to give a balanced curriculum with the main focus on English, Mathematics and Science. All curricular planning and resources are provided by the school.

Contact for the medical needs team in Calderdale is outlined below.

- Medical Needs team
- Email James.Robinson@calderdale.gov.uk
- Telephone 01422 394118
- Address
PO Box 51
Halifax
HX1 1TP

Further details including how to refer a child are available via the below hyperlink.

<https://www.calderdale.gov.uk/v2/residents/schools-and-children/parental-support/children-medical-needs>

Important Contact Information

Highbury School Attendance Lead: Sarah Nelson deputy@highbury.calderdale.sch.uk

Highbury School Office: 01484 716319 admin@highbury.calderdale.sch.uk

Education Welfare Officers: Duncan Thorpe Duncan.thorpe@calderdale.gov.uk or Glenys Craig
glenys.craig@calderdale.gov.uk

Where parents are considering Home Education for their child they must seek advice from Richard Coulthard the Home Education Officer at Richard.coulthard@calderdale.gov.uk and the SEND Team.

SEND Team: SEN.Team@calderdale.gov.uk

Useful documents

[Working together to improve school attendance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/campaigns/working-together-to-improve-school-attendance)

[Arranging education for children who cannot attend school because of health needs \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk/government/publications/arranging-education-for-children-who-cannot-attend-school-because-of-health-needs)

[School attendance and absence: Overview - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/overviews/school-attendance-and-absence)

[Equality Act 2010: guidance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/equality-act-2010-guidance)

[Children and Families Act 2014 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2014/12)

[SEND code of practice: 0 to 25 years - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/send-code-of-practice-0-to-25-years)

[Education Act 2011 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2011/25)

Summary

Whilst many schools chose to publish their attendance figures regularly and publicly; we have chosen not to as we understand school attendance for many of our pupils with complex medical needs can be a sensitive subject. As a school we choose to celebrate all our pupils attendance efforts with their individual circumstances taken into consideration.

If you require further information regarding our attendance data please contact the Attendance Manager.