



Howard Community Academy

Attendance Policy

October 2022

1. Introduction

Every day missed from school is a lost opportunity. Requests for holidays during term time have increased and it is important that parents are aware that these will be refused unless there are really exceptional circumstances. If a child is taken away for a two week holiday every year and has the average number of days off for sickness and appointments, by the time they leave at 16 they will have missed a year of school. We expect attendance at school to be 100%, unless there are exceptional or unavoidable reasons for absence, which would then be authorised.

When absence levels reach 96% then parents will receive letters from school to remind them of the attendance expectations and/ or be invited to have a conversation with attendance officer.

Howard Community Academy aims to:

- raise levels of achievement by ensuring the highest possible levels of attendance, punctuality and involvement in the school.
- ensure that every child has access to the education to which they are entitled.
- be proactive in addressing early patterns of absence.

- stress the need for home and school to work in partnership towards attendance matters.

2. Legal and National Context

Amendments to the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006 make clear that Headteachers may not grant leave of absence during term time unless there are very exceptional circumstances. The School upholds these regulations and applications for holiday or leave during term time will not be authorised. To avoid difficulty or disappointment, parents are asked to refrain from such requests.

Amendments have also been made to the 2007 Regulations in the Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013. The amendments described below came into force on 1st September 2013.

Penalty notices (fines) may be issued to each parent who fails in accordance with the code of conduct drawn up by the Local Authority to ensure their children's regular attendance at school for more than 8 sessions or fails to ensure that their excluded child is not in a public place during the first five days of exclusion. Both parents must pay £60 for each child if paid within 21 days; or £120 each per child within 28 days to Suffolk County Council. E.g. A family of 2 parents with 2 children would equal £240 if paid within 21 days or £480 if paid after 21 days. If parents are separated and one parent takes the child away, the fine still applies to **both** of the parents if they hold parental responsibility.

3. Implementation

Howard Community Academy will:

- ensure that school policy with regard to term-time holidays is clearly stated in the prospectus, on the school website and is communicated to parents
- remind parents of the importance of ensuring their children's regular, uninterrupted school attendance
- actively discourage parents from arranging holidays during term-time
- unequivocally remind parents that they do not have any right or entitlement to expect term-time leave to be granted and that all leave is granted at the discretion of the Headteacher (or those authorised to exercise discretion on her behalf)
- advise parents that if leave is taken without authorisation it will be recorded in the school attendance register as unauthorised absence, and that the matter may be referred to the attendance team
- advise parents that non-attendance or absence that is unauthorised and that attendance which falls below 96% will result in contact from the school; attendance below 90% could result in attendance contracts, or legal enforcement including Penalty Notices, School Attendance Orders, Education Supervision Orders or prosecution
- provide attendance data on the school report
- report on attendance to Governors
- pass on attendance data to all secondary schools as required

4. Promoting Attendance

The school uses opportunities as they arise to remind parents and pupils of the importance of attendance for instance through parent information evenings, Parent Handbooks and home/school agreements.

In addition the following personnel have a key role in supporting good attendance.

4.1. Senior Leadership Team, who will:

- give attendance a high profile at assemblies and school events
- monitor attendance every week.
- implement system of rewards and sanctions
- support Teachers on issues of non-attendance and with internal truancy, remedying causes and applying sanctions
- meet with parents to discuss attendance problems as soon as they are identified
- lead on strategies to improve attendance of children who are identified as being a concern through meetings with child's and parents
- work to implement the three letter warning system
- refer if absence is unauthorised for 90% or less over a 6 week period.
- ensure work is provided for excluded child's and long-term absentees
- look for patterns of absences and consider impact of curriculum upon attendance alongside other possible causes
- work with the EWO, SENCO, Locality Team to create individual packages and re- integration plans, where appropriate.

4.2. Teachers who will:

- be a good role model for children
- give attendance a high profile
- praise children for arriving on time
- take prompt action where children are late or absent without explanation, recording lateness and referring to Senior Leadership Team
- keep an accurate register
- inform the Headteacher/Home School Liaison Officer when absence is causing concern
- praise children's for their punctuality to lessons
- maintain an accurate class register
- alert the Headteacher/ Home School Liaison Officer if there are concerns over child absence

4.3. Office Staff, who will:

- oversee administration of the Bromcom register system
- contact parents of any child whose absence is unexplained by phone from 9.30 onwards and log absences in the record book kept in the office
- keep parents informed of any unexplained absences before they become unauthorised
- support the work of SLT by providing regular attendance information
- liaise with teachers to monitor accuracy of record keeping
- keep the Headteacher informed of attendance issues through regular reports

- keep the Headteacher informed of inaccurate marking of staff registers as part of an alert system for staff who may not be maintaining accurate recording of registers.

4.4. Parents, who will:

- ensure that children leave for school on time every day
- provide a written explanation for children's absences from school by letter/email
- endeavor not to take children out of school in term time
- notify the school as soon as problems arise with child's attendance
- if no letter has been sent in advance, telephone the school on the first morning child is absent
- Provide satisfactory medical evidence when required
- Complete necessary absence request forms if required.
- Attend attendance planning meetings when requested to do so, with the staff from school and Educational Welfare Officer when necessary.

4.5. Children, who will:

- arrive by 8.50am for registration every morning
- be punctual for lessons
- make sure a note is sent from parents to explain absences
- tell their teacher if they are having any problems attending school.

5. The work of Education Welfare Officer (EWO)

The school and EWO always endeavor to work with children and parents at an early stage to resolve problems. This is nearly always successful. However, the EWO also has a legal role and if other ways of resolving attendance have failed, these officers can use legal sanctions such as Penalty Notices or prosecutions in the Magistrates court.

6. Sanctions for Poor Attendance and Punctuality

The School reserves the right to use any of the following sanctions to fulfill its obligations with respect to school attendance:

- Report for attendance/punctuality
- Parent meetings
- Attendance Contracts
- Penalty notices

Section 444(1) of the Education Act 1996 provides that a parent commits an offence if his or her compulsory school age child who is a registered pupil fails to attend school regularly. This can result in the school offering the parent the opportunity to enter into a parenting contract following a pupil's truancy or non-attendance under section 19 of the Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003.

Section 444(1) of the Education Act 1996 provides that a parent commits an offence if his or her compulsory school age child who is a registered pupil fails to attend school regularly. This can result in

the school instigating a Penalty Notice under section 23 of the Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003 (instigated by the Headteacher and Deputy and Assistant Headteachers authorised by them, or so authorised by the Local Authority).

Amendments have also been made to the 2007 Regulations in the Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013. The amendments described below came into force on 1 September 2013

Penalty notices (fines) may be issued to each parent who fails to ensure their children's regular attendance at school or fails to ensure that their excluded child is not in a public place during the first five days of exclusion. Parents must pay £60 within 21 days; or £120 within 28 days

Parenting orders, Education Supervision Orders or Penalty Notices can also be issued.

Prosecution by the Education Welfare Service on behalf of the LA.

Appendix A: Procedure for reporting absence

1. If a child is absent from school the following procedures are required to ensure the school is fully informed

1.1. First day absence

- The office is notified by telephone: 01284 766278 a message may be left under the report an absence option or on ParentMail absence notification. Information is provided, including the reason for absence, child's name and class.
- On return to school, the parent **provides a note** with an explanation for absence, unless the reason has already been provided via school email.
- If school are unable to make contact through any of the given contact numbers, they may physically go to the home to check the welfare of the child.

1.2. Further day absence

- School must be contacted each day the child is unable to attend.

1.3. Continued absence

- In the case of longer term absence, Home School Liaison Officer is informed so that appropriate work or support can be provided.

1.4. Ten days' absence

- A child who is absent without an explanation for 10 consecutive days will be notified to the Local Authority, by submitting a referral to the Children's Services Attendance Team. This is a legal requirement.
- For children with a medical reason for absence details should be obtained from a qualified medical practitioner. Appropriate work and support should be offered.

2. If a child needs to be absent during the school day the following procedures are required.

- Parent to contact the school on 01284 766278 or on ParentMail to inform of the reason for absence during the day, e.g. dental appointment. Evidence should be provided.
- The parent should sign their child out at the front office before they leave the school premises and sign them back in on their return.

3. School action in the case of persistent child absence or a child on an attendance plan

- On the first day of absence, the Office staff will use telephone contact to confirm absence with the parent if contact has not already been made.
 - Home School Liaison accompanied by the Education Welfare Officer or a Senior Colleague is likely to make a home visit in cases that are deemed 'at risk' of poor attendance.
- In the case of child attendance that is deemed 'at risk', the parent will be invited to school to discuss absence and actions for improving attendance.
- In the case of a child absence moving towards the 90% Persistent Absence (PA) level, the pupil will be referred to the Education Welfare Officer.

Appendix B: Punctuality

Poor punctuality is not acceptable at Howard Community Academy. If a child misses the start of the day, they can miss vital work and information. Lateness is also disruptive to lessons.

1. The School day

The school day starts with registration at **8.50am**. Children are expected to be in for registration when the first bell rings at 8.50am. The register is then taken and sent to the school office. Any child who arrives after registration has been taken will be recorded as 'L' (late). If they arrive after registration period has finished, they will be recorded as 'U' (unauthorised absence). This is 9.15am at Howard.

Unauthorised absence at the beginning of the day is particularly damaging to a child's academic and social progress and for this reason will be treated very seriously by the school and the EWO.

If a child arrives late to school, for example due to an unavoidable medical appointment, a note or message must accompany the child on their return which they will give to the office, when they sign in. In this case the absence will be recorded as authorised. We can ask for evidence of these appointments.

Appendix C: Understanding types of absence

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school, either as authorised or unauthorised absence.

1. Authorised absences

Authorised absences are approved by the Headteacher. An example of an authorised absence that may be approved would be a morning or afternoon away from school for a reason such as illness or medical/dental appointments that unavoidably fall within the school day, or a sporting commitment, drama, dance or music examination or competition, a wedding of one of their parents (please note, only that 1 day would be authorised and not any subsequent holiday). The school expects authorised absences to be kept to a minimum and therefore routine medical and dental appointments should be arranged out of school hours or during school holidays wherever possible.

All absence requests must be made on the school Leave of Absence form and sent to the Headteacher.

Unauthorised absences

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which permission has not been given. This includes:

- parents keeping children off school unnecessarily
- truancy before or during the school day
- unexplained absence
- children who regularly arrive late, after registration has closed
- holidays/days off school

- children staying off school for invalid reasons such as shopping, caring for siblings, day trips, non-immediate family weddings or events (E.G. not mum or dad) etc

This type of absence can lead to the Local Authority using sanctions and/or legal proceedings

3. Persistent Absenteeism (PA)

A child becomes a 'persistent absentee' (PA) when they miss 15% or more schooling across the year for whatever reason. Absence at this level will cause considerable damage to a child's educational prospects. The school monitors all absence thoroughly. If a child's absence is deemed to be 'at risk' of PA, the parent will be informed of this by the Headteacher or Class Teacher. PA children are tracked through the pastoral system, combined with academic monitoring. All PA cases are made known to the Educational Welfare Officer. All PA children are made subject to an action plan which is discussed between the pupil, parent, Headteacher/Deputy Head/Home School Liaison Officer and EWO if appropriate. Children at risk may also be referred to the Parent Support Adviser, who works with families to provide support and strategies to encourage attendance.

4. Term- Time Holidays

The school strongly discourages holidays being taken in term time as learning is disrupted and the lost time is detrimental to the educational progress of the child. Howard Community Academy follows the new DfE guidelines, which took effect from September 2013, that states that requests for long-term leave can only be granted in 'exceptional circumstances' and decisions are made on a case-by-case basis. No term time leave will be granted, or deemed granted without a formal request on the appropriate forms and a written response given. Interviews following a request may be conducted prior to any decision being made. The school will not authorise any holidays retrospectively and may follow up any reported illness that we feel may have been a term time holiday.

5. Unauthorised Term-Time leave (including holiday)

Any parent who takes a child out of school for term time leave of more than 6 consecutive sessions over a 4 week period, not authorised by the school (under exceptional circumstances rule), may receive a Penalty Notice. Such cases will have to be supported by evidence of parents being warned about a potential Penalty Notice. This warning is stated on the absence request letters and on the school website.

Howard Community Academy

ABSENCE REQUEST FORM (exceptional circumstances only)



Please give two weeks' notice for absence requests

I wish to apply to have an 'avoidable' absence authorised, for:

Child's name Class.....

Date from date to(inclusive)

Name of Parent(s)/Carer(s):

Address:

Signature of both Parent(s)/Carer(s) (This applies even if parents are separated)

Please fully explain the exceptional circumstances that you would like the school to consider. This section must be completed. Please continue on a separate sheet if needed.

Office use only			Comments:
Date form Received	No. of school days Absence requested	Current Attendance % as at:	
			Signed _____ Head Teacher/member of the Senior Leadership Team Date: _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Absence Authorised <input type="checkbox"/> Absence Unauthorised	Code: <input style="width: 30px; height: 20px;" type="text"/>		

NOTES TO PARENTS/CARERS

Please note that even if this absence request is authorised you may still receive letters of concern from either the school or Local Authority if your child's attendance drops below a level that the school deems acceptable.

The law does not grant parents/carers an automatic right to take their children out of school during term time. If the request is for an absence in term time you must have Parental Responsibility and be the parent/carer with whom the child normally lives. Permission **must** be sought in **advance**. If the circumstances relating to this request are considered exceptional and the absence is authorised by the school, the authorising of the absences will be conditional on the child(ren) attending satisfactory up to the date covered by this request.

Warning: If the school refuses your request and the child is still taken out of school, this will be recorded as an unauthorised absence. Unauthorised absence may make you liable to a £60 Penalty Notice for each child, payable by each parent/carer (this can apply to both parents regardless of whether they live together), or the subject of court proceedings which could result in a fine of up to £2,500 and/or a term of imprisonment of up to 3 months.

AVOIDABLE ABSENCE IN TERM-TIME

IMPORTANT: Please read carefully the information below.

WARNING: If you allow your child to miss school in term time for an avoidable reason without obtaining the prior approval of the school, you may be issued with a Penalty Notice* per parent per child, or made the subject of court proceedings under section 444 Education Act 1996.

As a parent/carer, you can demonstrate your commitment to your child's education by not allowing your child to miss school for anything other than an exceptional and unavoidable reason.

THE FACTS	THE LAW
<p>School aged pupils are expected to attend punctually on the 190 days that the school is open. Whilst there are a number of unavoidable reasons why a pupil might be away from school (illness, medical appointments, exclusions etc), the legislation is clear that any avoidable absence may only be authorised by a school if there are exceptional circumstances.</p> <p>WHAT YOU SHOULD CONSIDER</p> <p>Research suggests that children who are taken out of school may never catch up on the learning they have missed. This may affect test results and can be particularly harmful if the child is studying for final year examinations.</p> <p>Children who struggle with English or Mathematics may also find it even harder to cope when they return to school, while younger children may find it difficult to renew friendships with their classmates.</p> <p>If the school is unable to authorise the absence and the child is still taken out of school, this will be recorded as unauthorised absence and you may receive a £60* fine per parent for each child.</p>	<p>The law allows schools to consider individual requests to authorise a future avoidable absence. However before the school can authorise any such requests, they must satisfy themselves that there are exceptional circumstances which justify such a decision. It is entirely the responsibility of the parent submitting the request to provide sufficient information/evidence in order to establish this fact. The request for leave must come from a parent with whom the child normally resides</p> <p>If a child then stays away from school for more than the authorised period this must be recorded as unauthorised absence and could be quoted in a prosecution for poor attendance.</p> <p>If the child is away from school for a total of four weeks or more, the school may have the option to take the child off roll subject to the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006.</p> <p>In the case of unexpected extended absence, it is advisable that the parent fully informs the school as to the reasons. If a child is removed from roll, there is no guarantee that the child will regain a place at the school.</p>

<p>Unavoidable absence from school will be authorised if it is for the following reasons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Genuine illness ▪ Unavoidable medical / dental appointments (but try to make these after school if at all possible) ▪ Days of religious observance ▪ Seeing a parent who is on leave from the armed forces ▪ External examinations ▪ When Traveller children go on the road with their parents 	<p>Other examples of absence from school that will not be authorised:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Any type of shopping ▪ Family Holidays (unless there is evidence of exceptional circumstances) ▪ Festivals/concerts ▪ Looking after siblings or unwell parents ▪ Minding the house ▪ Birthdays ▪ Resting after a late night ▪ Relatives visiting or visiting relatives
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Please contact the school if you wish to discuss this issue.

The law requires parents to ensure their children receive an efficient full time education, and every minute of every day is important. Please help them not to miss any of this valuable time.

We hope that when you have read this leaflet you will consider that your child's education is too important to allow them to miss school for avoidable reasons.

