



# Haslingden High School and Sixth Form

## Attendance and Punctuality Policy

### RATIONALE

For our students to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and maintain the highest possible percentage attendance. Your child should be at school, on time, every day the school opens, unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

Any absence affects the consistency of a student's education and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any student's absence disrupts teaching routines and so may affect the learning of other students.

It is your legal responsibility to ensure your child's regular attendance at school and permitting absence from school without good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

Promoting excellent attendance is the responsibility of: parents / carers, students and all members of school staff.

### PURPOSE

- To ensure the school's statutory, legal obligation is met.
- To promote maximum attendance by all students.
- To provide information for staff, parents / carers, the Governing Body and employers.
- To assist in the early detection of attendance issues so that a variety of agencies can become involved to support students and their families.

### PROCEDURES

- That all student attendance, absence and punctuality is regularly monitored.
- Students whose attendance begins to cause a concern will be tracked and monitored by one of more of the Attendance Officer, Attendance and Punctuality Improvement Worker (APIW), Form Tutor, Head of Year (HoY), Heads of School (HoS), whichever the school feels is the most appropriate.
- If no significant improvement in punctuality or attendance or both occurs, parents / carers may be required to come to punctuality or attendance meeting to discuss the situation, to

set formal targets or to sign a contract. The panel could consist of the APIW, HoY, HoS, the student, parent / carer, a member of the school's leadership team and where appropriate a governor and/or a representative from an external agency. Failure to attend the meeting may result in all future absences being deemed as unauthorised even if absence notes are supplied, until such time as the parent / carer visits the school. Legal action could be sought through the process of Fixed Penalty Notices or prosecution.

### **To promote excellent attendance and punctuality the school will:**

- Provide parents / carers with details on attendance and punctuality in student reports.
- Report to parents / carers on how a student is performing in school, what his/her attendance and punctuality rate is and how this relates to his/her academic attainment.
- Celebrate excellent attendance through: Attendance Challenges, housepoints; e-postcards; the rewards trip and at Commendation Assemblies.

Staff responsible for attendance matters include:

Attendance Officer

Attendance Punctuality Improvement Worker

Heads of Year / Pastoral Managers

Heads of School

Mr R. Clarke Deputy Headteacher – Care, Guidance and Support

### **TYPES OF ABSENCE**

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by parents / carers) as either **authorised** or **unauthorised**. This is why information about the reason for any absence is always required. Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason: illness, medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable cause. Where a medical / dental appointment cannot be arranged outside school hours, parents / carers should ensure their child is absent for the minimum time possible and must provide a copy of an appointment card.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been given. This type of absence can lead to the school and the Local Authority employing sanctions and/or legal proceedings, i.e. Fixed Penalty Notices and prosecution. This type of absence includes:

- Parents / carers keeping or allowing students to stay off school unnecessarily.
- Truancy at any time during the school day.
- Absences which have never been properly explained.
- Students who arrive at school too late to get a mark.
- Shopping, looking after other children, or birthdays.

- Day trips and holidays in term time.

## **PERSISTENT ABSENTEEISM**

A student becomes a “persistent Absentee” when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year or across a half term for whatever reason. Research shows that absence at this level can have a detrimental effect on any child’s education and future prospects, the school requires parents’ / carers’ fullest support and cooperation to minimise this immediately. Parents / carers of students whose attendance is near or falls below 90% are likely to be asked to provide medical evidence for each subsequent absence; otherwise these absences will be recorded as unauthorised. The school acknowledges that some students may have long term medical / health issues and works to support students and families in minimising the impact of such issues on attendance.

## **ABSENCE PROCEDURES**

### **If your child is absent you must:**

- Contact school as soon as possible on the first day of absence by telephone, 01706 215726 or by email ktaylor@haslingdenhigh.com, with a reason for the absence. This process should be repeated for every subsequent day of absence.
- Send a note in or medical evidence on the first day they return with an explanation of the absence unless you have already provided this information.
- Notify school if the student will not be residing at their home address.

### **If you child is absent the school will:**

- Contact you on the first day of absence using the school’s Truancy Call Messaging Service if we have not heard from you.
- If school do not hear from you following the truancy call, school may contact you by telephone.
- The APIW or HoY may contact you on the third day of absence to discuss support for your child, by telephone or a home visit.

## **FREQUENT ABSENCES**

It is the responsibility of Attendance Officer / APIW / Pastoral Team to bring attention to any emerging attendance concerns. In these circumstances, the school will try to resolve the problem with the parents / carers. If unsuccessful, the school will take further action and advice as appropriate.

## **PUNCTUALITY**

Being late to school is not acceptable. If your child misses the start of the day they will miss work and often not receive vital information and news, likewise if they miss assembly. Students arriving late also disrupt lessons which can be embarrassing for the student and has a negative impact on teaching and learning. Students persistently arriving late will be given detentions and persistent lateness will result in parent / carer being notified and where appropriate, required to come to a punctuality meeting. The school day begins at 8.40 am and all students are expected to be in school for 8.35 am in order to be in the correct place by this time. Students will receive a late mark if they are not in their tutor room by 8.40 am. Students arriving after 8.55 am must sign in at the Attendance Office. The School Register will close at 9.30 am. Any student arriving after this time without a good reason (e.g. medical appointment) will receive an "unauthorised absence". HoY / Pastoral Managers will be notified of latecomers and will issue detentions.

## **LEAVE OF ABSENCE**

Any requests for Leave of Absence must be addressed to the Headteacher outlining when the leave of absence is required; why the leave of absence is exceptional and include copies of any supporting information to support the exceptional circumstances. The regulations do not permit any leave of absence, including holidays, during term time, unless there are exceptional circumstances. Any period of leave taken without the agreement of the school, or in excess of that agreed, will be classed as unauthorised and may lead to sanctions such as a Fixed Penalty Notice or prosecution.

## **ONGOING MEDICAL CONDITIONS INCLUDING PREGNANCIES / DISABILITIES**

The school prides itself on its inclusive ethos and on the achievements of students with long-term medical issues and recognises that there may be occasions when these students are unavoidably absent. If, for medical reasons a student needs to attend ACERS (a medical short stay school) instead of school the HoY and the APIW will co-ordinate the collection of work and liaise with teaching staff at ACERS so that minimum disruption occurs. If the student is attending ACERS, "B" will be entered in the register rather than "M", (i.e. a present mark is recorded).

## **LEGAL INTERVENTIONS**

A Fixed Penalty Notice for non-attendance may be issued in cases of unauthorised absences. The circumstances in which a Fixed Penalty Notice for non-attendance will be issued include:

- Parentally condoned absence
- Unauthorised leave
- Unwarranted delayed return from authorised leave
- Persistent late arrival after the register has closed. Each case will be considered individually.

Penalty Notices can be issued when a student has 5 days (10 sessions) of unauthorised absence in a term or 7 days (14 sessions) in two consecutive terms. Parents / carers may now be issued with up to three penalty notices in a year. Penalty notices can also be issued when students are located in a public place without justification during the first five days of any period of exclusion. Please see the Lancashire County Council guidance document on Penalty Notices attached as Annex A to this Policy. In extreme cases the school will apply to the Court Officer to initiate legal action.

## **SCHOOL ATTENDANCE TARGETS**

Excellent attendance is the key to successful education; to future employment and to success in an increasingly diverse technological society; we have the highest expectations of our students and their parents / carers in upholding the values and ethos of the school. All schools acknowledge the detrimental effect of poor attendance on achievement and set targets to further improve attendance. Your child has an important part to play in meeting these targets.

## **SUMMARY**

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents and to promote attendance. Equally, parents / carers have a duty to make sure that their children attend. Students have a responsibility and a legal requirement to attend school, on time. All school staff are committed to working with parents / carers and students to ensure the highest possible levels of attendance.

## **MONITORING AND EVALUATION**

This Policy will be monitored and reviewed, by the Pastoral Team, School Leadership Team and Governing Body to ensure it continues to meet the needs of our stakeholders and the statutory regulations.

## PENALTY NOTICES

### Tackling Poor School Attendance

#### The Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003 and the Education Act 1996

#### Information for Parents and Carers

##### **Introduction**

The law gives powers to the Local Authority and other designated bodies to issue penalty notices where a parent/carer is considered able but unwilling to ensure their child's school attendance. Reducing absences from school is a key priority nationally and locally because missing school damages a pupil's attainment levels, disrupts school routines and the learning of others, and can leave a pupil vulnerable to anti-social behaviour and youth crime.

##### **What is a penalty notice?**

Parents/carers commit an offence if a child fails to attend school regularly and those absences are classed as unauthorised. Depending on the circumstances, such cases may result in prosecution under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996.

A penalty notice is an alternative to prosecution, which does not require an appearance in court unless the fine is unpaid after 28 days. Full payment of the penalty means that parents/carers can avoid being prosecuted and convicted.

##### **What is the cost?**

Penalty notices are issued at £120 however, if paid within 21 days of being issued the cost is £60.

##### **How are they issued?**

Penalty notices will always be issued by post to your home and are issued to each parent/carer individually in respect of each child.

##### **When are they issued?**

Lancashire County Council considers that regular attendance at school is of such importance that penalty notices may be used in a range of situations where unauthorised absence occurs, such as:

- ✓ unauthorised absence
- ✓ truancy (including pupils found during truancy sweeps);
- ✓ parentally condoned absence without good reason;
- ✓ persistent late\*\* arrival at school;
- ✓ unauthorised leave in term time
- ✓ delayed return from authorised leave;

In every case a pupil must have had a minimum of 5 school days unauthorised absence in a term or 10 school days unauthorised absence over 2 consecutive terms before a penalty notice is considered.

\*\* persistent lateness refers to pupils who arrive after the school register has closed

\* The expression "parent", in relation to a child or young person, includes any person who is not a parent of the child but who has parental responsibility for him or her, or who has care of the child.

\*\* persistent lateness refers to pupils who arrive after the school register has closed

**Is a warning given?**

In cases of unauthorised absence and persistent lateness\*\*, you will receive a written warning of the possibility of a Notice being issued. This will tell you the extent of your child's absences and give you 15 school days in which to bring about an improvement. In that time, your child should have no unauthorised absences from school.

In cases of unauthorised leave, warnings will be issued where sufficient notice of the intended absence has been given. This means that in some cases, penalty notices may be issued without a warning.

**Is there an appeal process?**

There is no statutory right of appeal once a penalty notice has been issued. However on receipt of a warning or penalty notice, you can make representations should you wish.

**How do I pay?**

Details of payment arrangements will be included on the penalty notice. You need to be aware that payment in part or by instalment is not an option with penalty notices. No reminders will be sent.

**Can I be prosecuted if I pay the penalty but my child is still absent from school?**

Not for the period stated in the penalty notice, since payment of the penalty discharges your liability for that period. However, it could be the case that a prosecution might be considered for further periods of poor attendance not covered by the notice, depending on the circumstances. If this is an issue, it is vital that you work closely with your child's school.

**What happens if I do not pay?**

You have up to 28 days from receipt of the notice to pay the penalty in full, after which the Authority is required in most instances to commence proceedings in the local magistrates' court for the original offence of failing to ensure your child attends school regularly.

If proven, this can attract a range of sentences including fines up to £2,500 and/or up to three months imprisonment. Other disposals such as Parenting Orders or Community Sentences can be imposed depending upon the circumstances. Costs may also be imposed.

**Can I get help if my child is not attending school regularly?**

Yes, Lancashire County Council and your child's school will give you advice and support if you need help to secure an improvement in your child's attendance.

It is very important that you speak with the school or with Lancashire County Council at the earliest opportunity if you have any worries at all about securing your child's school attendance.