



St Hugh's School

Attendance policy

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1. Aims

We are committed to meeting our obligations with regards to school attendance by:

- Promoting good attendance and reducing absence, including persistent absence
- Ensuring every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled
- Acting early to address patterns of absence

We will also support parents to perform their legal duty to ensure their children of compulsory school age attend regularly and will promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

2. Legislation and guidance

This policy meets the requirements from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on [school attendance parental responsibility measures](#). These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- Part 6 of [The Education Act 1996](#)
- Working together to improve school attendance.
- [Support for Pupils where a mental health issue is affecting attendance \(2023\)](#)
- [Handling Strike Action in Schools \(2023\)](#)
- 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](#), [2016](#) amendments)
- [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)
- [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#)

This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the [school census](#), which explains the persistent absence threshold.

3. Roles and responsibilities

3.1 The governing board

The governing board is responsible for monitoring attendance figures for the whole school on at least a termly basis. It also holds the head teacher to account for the implementation of this policy.

3.2 The head teacher

The head teacher is responsible for:

- Implementation of this policy at the school
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors termly
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils
- Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary
- Responding to parents requests for absences for term time holidays/ weddings and funerals etc

3.3 The attendance officer

The school attendance and Data officer:

- Monitor attendance data across the school and at an individual pupil level
- Report concerns about attendance to the head teacher and pathway leader
- Works with education Inclusion officers to tackle persistent absence
- Arranges calls and meetings with parents and professionals to discuss attendance issues
- Advises the head teacher when to issue fixed-penalty notices
- Organises the sending of letters to parents as part of the monitoring process
- Keeps a comprehensive log of letters sent home

3.4 Class teachers

Class teachers are responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the school data officer.

Class teachers receive a weekly update on the attendance of individual pupils (through Arbor) as well as persistent absence for students in their class and are expected to maintain an awareness of these pupils and work collaboratively with the attendance officer, data officer, pathway leaders and SLT in order to promote good attendance.

3.5 School admin/office staff

School admin staff are expected to take calls from parents about absence and record it on the school system. The admin team will pass the messages received on to team staff and the Data and Attendance Officer in a timely manner.

4. Recording attendance

4.1 Attendance register

We will keep an attendance register and place all pupils onto this register.

We will take our attendance register at the start of the morning session of each school day and at the start of the afternoon session. It will mark whether every pupil is:

- Present
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity
- Absent
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances
- Alternately, any other DfE approved attendance code

Any amendment to the attendance register is actioned by the data and/or attendance officers in a timely manner whereby the erroneous code is overwritten with the correct code and an appropriate comment provided explaining the reason for the change. The office will inform teams of any late arrivals to school in addition to the attendance and data officers who will adjust the register on behalf of the class team. For late bus arrivals, ordinarily the attendance officer will meet student arrivals at the student entrance alongside the data officer in order to record their attendance. In circumstances where this is not possible, students will enter school via reception and admin staff will note student attendance and share it with the data officer at their earliest convenience.

See appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes.

We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

Pupils must arrive in school by 8.50 on each school day unless otherwise agreed at the discretion of the head teacher with the expectation that any anticipated long term reasonable adjustments are similarly reflected in the pupil's EHCP and HCP as appropriate. Reasonable allowance is given for late arrivals due to school transport however ongoing specific issues will be addressed directly with transport services.

The register for the morning session will be taken by 9.25 in order to be ready for the start of the first lesson at 9.25 am. The register for the afternoon session will be taken by 1.15pm in order to be ready for the start of the first lesson at 1.15pm.

4.2 Unplanned absence

The pupil's parent/carer must notify the school on the first day of an unplanned absence by 9.00 or as soon as practically possible (see also section 7).

This can be done by phoning the school reception, using the Parent App, or emailing admin, the information will be passed to the relevant staff.

We will mark absence due to illness as authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

Where appropriate / relevant, the school may ask the pupil's parent/carer to provide 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 parents/carers will be notified of this.

4.3 Planned absence

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the pupil's parent/carer notifies the school in advance of the appointment.

Details of the appointment can be proved by sending in a copy of the appointment card or letter.

However, we encourage parents/carers to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary. Where reasonably practicable, the expectation is that the pupil will return to school / come into school before / after the appointment.

For planned long term absences due to medical needs, the school will explore what reasonable adjustments can be made to provide an ongoing education offer. This may include, but is not limited to, the provision of learning activities and engaging external education providers such as TAMNET.

The pupil's parent/carer must also apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence. Go to section 5 to find out which term-time absences the school can authorise.

4.4 Lateness and punctuality

A pupil who arrives late:

- After the register has closed will be marked using the appropriate code corresponding to the reason for the student being late and determined at the discretion of the school.

Continual late marks will be monitored closely and may result in a telephone conversation with parents/carers and or a follow up informing Education Inclusion.

4.5 Following up absence

Where any child we expect to attend school does not attend, or stops attending, the school will:

- Follow up on their absence with their parent/carer to ascertain the reason, by asking the parent/carer for verification of the illness by way of a GP's letter or pharmacy prescription to show your child has attended either of them.
- Ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not
- Identify the correct attendance code to use
- Liaise with external services as appropriate (e.g. SPOC ; Education Inclusion etc.)

4.6 Reporting to parents

St Hugh's reports attendance to parents termly by way of email, letters and certificates. If the need arises for weekly reporting to parents then this is implemented so that student, parents and school can all work together.

5. Authorised and unauthorised absence

5.1 Approval for term-time absence

The head teacher will only grant a leave of absence to pupils during term time if they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'. A leave of absence is granted at the head teacher's discretion.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments (see sections 4.2 and 4.3 for more detail)
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart
- Traveller pupils travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh Gypsies, Irish and Scottish Travellers, Showmen (fairground people) and circus people, Bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and new travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a Traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision

5.2 Reducing persistent absence

Persistent absence is currently defined where a student's absence is at or below 90%. St Hugh's closely monitors any unauthorised absences on a weekly basis. Unauthorised absences result in letters or phone calls to parents and carers and support meetings are offered. Following support meetings and close monitoring, a referral to Education Inclusion is completed by the attendance officer for a possible penalty notice to be issued.

5.3 Legal sanctions

The school or local authority can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age.

Your local council can give each parent a fine of £80, rising to £160 if you do not pay within 21 days.

From the 2024 to 2025 school year, each parent will only get up to 2 fines for the same child in a 3-year period.

If you get a second fine in 3 years it will be £160. If you do not pay the fine in 28 days you may be taken to court for keeping your child out of school.

If your child is off school 3 or more times within the 3 years you will not be fined but may be taken to court.

Penalty notices can be issued by a head teacher, local authority officer or the police.

The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice may take into account:

- The number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year
- One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission
- Where an excluded pupil is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason

If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute or withdraw the notice.

6. Strategies for promoting attendance

Good and improved attendance and punctuality is rewarded on a half-termly basis.

7. Attendance monitoring

The attendance officer at our school monitors pupil absence on a daily basis and ascertains the reason for any student's absence where it is otherwise unknown as a matter of priority by contacting the parent/carer. Wherever there are any concerns around a student's absence, the attendance officer will then share this information with the appropriate pathway leader / member of SLT / member of the safeguarding team.

A pupil's parent/carer is expected to call the school in the morning before 9am or as soon as possible and every day thereafter if their child is going to be absent and state when they are expected to return if possible. (see section 4.2).

If a pupil's absence continues to rise after contacting their parent/carer and ongoing concerns remain around this, the school will consider involving an education Inclusion officer.

The persistent absence threshold is 10%. If a pupil's individual overall absence rate is greater than or equal to 10%, the pupil will be classified as a persistent absentee.

Pupil-level absence 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 compare attendance data to the national average and share this with the governing board.

The school collects and stores attendance data for internal purposes. For example, to:

- Track the attendance of individual pupils
- Identify whether or not there are particular groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern
- Monitor and evaluate those children identified as being in need of intervention and support
- To use as targets on early help/CIN meetings to support a holistic approach of working with children, families and professionals

8. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the local authority or DfE is updated, and as a minimum- annually by the Attendance officer. At every review, the policy will be approved by the full governing board.

9. Links with other policies

This policy links to the following policies:

- Child protection and safeguarding policy
- Behaviour policy
- School suspensions and permanent exclusions
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-exclusion>

Supporting students with medical conditions

Students returning to school following hospitalisation or prolonged absence

Appendix 1: attendance codes

The following codes are taken from the DfE's guidance on school attendance.

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	Pupil is present at morning registration
\	Present (pm)	Pupil is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Pupil arrives late before register has closed
B	Off-site educational activity	Pupil is at a supervised off-site educational activity approved by the school
D	Dual registered	Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
J	Interview	Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
P	Sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
V	Educational trip or visit	Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised, or approved, by the school
W	Work experience	Pupil is on a work experience placement

Code	Definition	Scenario
Authorised absence		
C	Authorised leave of absence	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances

E	Excluded	Pupil has been excluded but no alternative provision has been made
H	Authorised holiday	Pupil has been allowed to go on holiday due to exceptional circumstances
I	Illness	School has been notified that a pupil will be absent due to illness
M	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment
R	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance
S	Study leave	Year 11 pupil is on study leave during their public examinations
T	Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence	Pupil from a Traveller community is travelling, as agreed with the school
Unauthorised absence		
G	Unauthorised holiday	Pupil is on a holiday that was not approved by the school
N	Reason not provided	Pupil is absent for an unknown reason (this code should be amended when the reason emerges, or replaced with code O if no reason for absence has been provided after a reasonable amount of time)
O	Unauthorised absence	School is not satisfied with reason for pupil's absence
U	Arrival after registration	Pupil arrived at school after the register closed

Code	Definition	Scenario
X	Not required to be in school	Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
Y	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances	School site is closed, there is disruption to travel as a result of a local/national emergency, or pupil is in custody
Z	Pupil not on admission register	Register set up but pupil has not yet joined the school
#	Planned school closure	Whole or partial school closure due to half-term/bank holiday/INSET day