

HEREFORDSHIRE PUPIL REFERRAL SERVICE



ATTENDANCE POLICY & PROCEDURES

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| Status | Non-Statutory |
| Responsible Management Committee (MC) | Wellbeing |
| Date last approved by MC | 17 November 2022 |
| Responsible Person | Head of Centre |
| To Review Date | November 2024 |
| Last Amended Date | June 2022 |

Rationale

Herefordshire Pupil Referral Service will provide a welcoming, safe and caring environment in which each pupil is valued and supported. We strive to achieve regular attendance through building positive relationships with pupils and by ensuring a broad and rich curriculum offering that engages pupils to take part in the learning opportunities and experiences that we offer. Regular school attendance is essential if pupils are to achieve their full potential. HPRS believes that regular school attendance is the key to enabling pupils to maximise the educational opportunities available to them and become resilient, confident and competent adults who are able to realise their full potential and make a positive contribution to our community. Poor attendance can lead to gaps in knowledge and cause pupils to fall behind their peers. HPRS will work with families to identify the reasons for unsatisfactory attendance and try to resolve any difficulties.

HPRS recognise that poor attendance can be an indication of difficulties in a pupil's life. This may be related to problems at home and or in school. Parents should make school aware of any difficulties or changes in circumstances that may affect their child's attendance and or behaviour in school, for example, bereavement, divorce/separation, incidents of domestic abuse. This will help HPRS to identify any additional support that may be required.

HPRS recognise that some pupils at a PRU are more likely to require additional support to attain good attendance. We will work with families to support all our pupils to attend and take advantage of the opportunities that we can offer, so that they can leave us ready to move onto the next stage of their education.

Why Regular Attendance is Important

- **Learning attainment:** Regular absence seriously affects your child's learning, progress and future opportunities. It is difficult to catch up work and develop confidence to attempt new work when lessons are frequently missed.
- **Safeguarding:** When your child is at school you know they are in a safe environment and not at risk.
- **Social cohesion:** Regular absence affects your child's relationships with other children and their ability to form lasting friendships.
- **Promoting regular attendance:** Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility; parents, pupils and all members of the HPRS.

Roles and Responsibilities

HPRS believes that improved school attendance can only be achieved if it is viewed as a shared responsibility of the school staff, management committee, parents, pupils and the wider school community. As such, the

Management Committee will:

- Ensure that the importance and value of good attendance is promoted to pupils and their parents
- Regularly review the school's Attendance Policy and ensure the required resources are available to fully implement the policy
- Ensure that the Registration Regulations, England, 2013 and other attendance related legislation is complied with
- Agree school attendance targets and, where appropriate, link these to the Performance Management of Senior Leadership within the school
- Monitor the school's attendance and related issues through termly reporting at Management Committee Meetings
- Ensure that attendance data is reported to the Local Authority or Department for Education as required and on time
- Ensure that there is a named member of the Management Committee to lead on attendance
- Ensure that the school has clear systems to report, record and monitor the attendance of all pupils, including those who are educated off-site
- Ensure that there are procedures for collecting and analysing attendance data frequently to identify causes and patterns of absence
- Ensure that data is understood and used to devise solutions and to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions

The Leadership Team will:

- Actively promote the importance and value of good attendance to pupils and their parents
- Form positive relationships with pupils and parents
- Ensure that there is a whole school approach which reinforces good school attendance. For example, good teaching and learning experiences that encourage pupils to attend and achieve

- Monitor the implementation of the Attendance Policy and ensure that the policy is reviewed regularly
- Ensure that staff are aware of the Attendance Policy and are able to address attendance issues
- Ensure that the Registration Regulations, England, 2013 and other attendance related legislation is complied with
- Ensure that there is a named senior manager to lead on attendance and allocate sufficient time and resource
- Return school attendance data to the Department for Education as required and on time
- Report the school's attendance and related issues through termly reporting to the Management Committee
- Ensure that systems to report, record and monitor the attendance of all pupils, including those who are educated off-site are implemented
- Ensure that attendance data is collected and analysed frequently to identify causes and patterns of absence
- Interpret the data to devise solutions and to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions
- Ensure that all the above priorities are shared with and reinforced by all relevant school staff
- Develop a multi-agency response to improve attendance and support pupils and their families
- Document interventions using the standard required should legal proceedings be instigated
- Celebrate good attendance by displaying individual pupil achievements
- Invite you and your child to an attendance meeting to identify if we can offer support in any way
- Refer to the Education Welfare Consultant if we have on-going concerns about a pupil's attendance
- Refer pupils with unauthorised absence to Herefordshire Local Authority for consideration of legal sanctions
- Request medical evidence for pupils who have a high level of absence due to illness.

We request that parents will:

- Talk to their child about school and education. Take a positive interest in their child's work and educational progress
- Instil the value of education and regular school attendance within the home environment
- Encourage their child to look to the future and have aspirations
- Contact the school each day by 9.15 am if their child is absent to let them know the reason why and the expected date of return.
- Avoid unnecessary absences
- Wherever possible make appointments for the doctors, dentists etc. outside of school hours. Where appointments are in school hours, pupils should only be absent for the duration of the appointment.
- Ask the school for help if their child is experiencing difficulties
- Inform the school of any change in circumstances that may impact on their child's attendance
- Support the school; take every opportunity to become involved in their child's education, form a positive relationship with school and acknowledge the importance of children receiving the same messages from both school and home
- Encourage routine at home, for example, bed times, homework, preparing school bag and uniform the evening before

- Not keep their child off school to go shopping, to help at home or to look after other members of the family
- Not take their child out of school for holidays. Term time leave will only be authorised in exceptional circumstances. Any requests for leave should be made in writing to the Head of Centre at least 6 weeks in advance.

Understanding Types of Absence

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school as either 'AUTHORISED' or 'UNAUTHORISED'.

Authorised absence means that the school has either given approval in advance for a pupil of compulsory school age to be away, or has accepted an explanation offered afterwards as justification for absence.

Unauthorised absence is where a school is not satisfied with the reasons given for the absence or no explanation has been received.

Absence will be categorised as follows:

Illness (Code I on the register)

Parents will be asked to provide medical evidence to allow the Centre to authorise absence where appropriate. This will usually be in the form of an appointment card, prescription etc.

Medical/Dental Appointments (Code M on the register)

Parents are advised where possible to make medical and dental appointments outside of the school day. Where this is not possible, pupils must only be absent for the duration of the appointment. Parents must show the appointment card to school.

Other Authorised Circumstances (Code C on the register)

This relates to where there is cause for absence due to exceptional circumstances, e.g. serious family illness or bereavement.

Suspended (No alternative provision made) (Code E on the register)

Suspension from attending school is counted as an authorised absence. The school will make arrangements for work to be sent home.

Unauthorised Absence (Code O on the register)

Where there is not considered to be a justified reason for being absent from school or the absence has not been explained.

Legal Sanctions Penalty Notices (Anti Social Behaviour Act 2003)

Penalty Notices will be considered when:

- A pupil is absent from school and the absence has not been authorised by the school
- A pupil has accrued unauthorised absence following written warning to improve.

A Penalty Notice gives each parent the opportunity to discharge themselves of their legal responsibility if a £120 fine is paid within 28 days, reduced to £60 if paid within 21 days of the date the Notice was issued. Failure to pay the Penalty Notice may result in a prosecution under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996. Penalty Notices will be used in accordance with Hereford City Council's Penalty Notice Protocol.

Prosecution

Where intervention fails to bring about an improvement in attendance, the Local Authority will be notified and legal action in the Magistrates' Court may be taken. The school will provide the Local Authority with evidence required for a prosecution under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 and will appear as a prosecution witness if required by the court. This is to ensure that parents realise their own responsibilities in ensuring attendance at school and most importantly about returning children to education.

Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 states that if a parent fails to ensure the regular school attendance of their child if he/she is a registered pupil at a school and is of compulsory school age, then they are guilty of an offence.

A parent found guilty of this offence can be fined up to £2500 and or be imprisoned for a period of three months.

Alternatives to Section 444 prosecution are Parenting Contracts, Penalty Notices or an Education Supervision Order.

Children Missing Education (CME)

'Children missing education' are children of compulsory school age who are not registered pupils at a school and are not receiving suitable education otherwise than at a school. Children missing education are at significant risk of underachieving, being victims of harm, exploitation or radicalisation, and becoming NEET (not in education, employment or training) later in life.

Details of pupils who fail to attend school regularly, or have missed ten school days or more without permission, will be passed to the Local Authority as possible 'children missing education' cases.

There is a CME checklist for use by the school in assessing pupils at risk included as part of the procedures at the end of this policy.

Lateness

Late arrival at school affects your child's learning and the learning of other pupils as it interrupts the lesson flow and pupil focus. Pupils missing the start of the day miss contact with their personal tutor/mentor and registration time when they hear important news for the day or week.

Pupils with a pattern of repeated late arrival may be required to work in an individual study situation until the next full lesson begins. This is to ensure other pupils' learning is not disrupted.

If a pupil has a persistent late record parents/carers will be asked to meet with a representative of HPRS to resolve the problem. Parents/carers can approach HPRS at any time if having difficulties getting a pupil to school on time.

The Centre may consider a referral to the Education Welfare Consultant for continued late arrival.

Pupils will be recorded as late in the register if they do not arrive at their agreed start time. Any pupil arriving more than 30 minutes after their agreed start time will be recorded as late after registration closes. This is considered an unauthorised absence for the session.

Medical & Dental Appointments and Illness

Where possible, medical and dental appointments should be arranged out of school time.

If it is necessary for a pupil to be out of school for a medical or dental appointment they should only be absent from school for the duration of the appointment, attending school prior to the appointment and returning directly after the appointment.

If a pupil is absent due to vomiting or diarrhoea in relation to a virus they should not return to school for **48** hours after their symptoms disappear. This is to reduce the risk of infection to other pupils and adults at the Centre.

If a pupil is frequently absent due to illness HPRS may request medical evidence and/or permission to contact a GP for confirmation that they are too ill to attend school.

If a pupil attends school and feels unwell during the school day the school will contact you to arrange collection.

Leave in Term Time

Taking leave (including holidays) in term time will affect pupil's schooling and learning progress as much as any other absence. Parents/carers are therefore strongly urged to avoid booking a family holiday in term time.

There is no automatic entitlement in law to time off in school time to go on holiday.

The decision to authorise term time leave rests entirely with HPRS and, in exceptional circumstances only.

Any application for term time leave must be made in writing 6 weeks in advance of the planned leave.

Parents/carers can be issued with a fine for taking a pupil on term time leave without consent from HPRS. Such leave will be classified as 'unauthorised' and will be referred to Herefordshire Local Authority who will issue a fixed Penalty Notice or may consider other legal sanctions. The Penalty Notice is a fine of £60 per parent per child if paid within 21 days or £120 per parent per child if paid before 28 days. Failure to pay a Fixed Penalty Notice may lead to legal proceedings under the Education Act 1996 section 444(1(a)).

PARENTS & CARERS FAQs (Frequently Asked Questions)

What should I do if my child is reluctant to attend school?

There may be many reasons why a child is reluctant to attend school, both issues related to school but also issues which are not related to school in any way. Contact us as soon as possible if your child is reluctant to attend school. We will suggest a meeting with you and your son/daughter to discuss strategies which can be put into place to support his/her attendance at school.

If my child refuses to attend school, can I be held responsible?

Yes. As the child's parent, you are expected to ensure that they receive an education. If your child does not attend school, you could face legal action resulting in a possible fine and or even imprisonment. Please contact us if you are concerned about your child's attendance.

Do I need to send in a letter about my child's absence?

We require an explanation of EVERY absence. If you have rung or otherwise contacted the school, then we would not require a note as well.

My child seems ill but I don't think it is severe enough for him/her to take the day off. What should I do?

Feeling under the weather – colds, headaches, stomach pains, etc. – affects us all but not to the point that we need to miss school or work. A list of NHS guidelines around absences due to illness is included at the end of this section.

My child claims s/he is ill but I don't think it is genuine. What should I do?

Sometimes your child may want to avoid school. This may indicate there are wider issues that need addressing. Send your child to school and contact your child's mentor or Head of Centre about the situation.

My child has a medical appointment during school time. What should I do?

Please try to avoid doctor or dentist appointments during the school day. Appointments are usually available after school hours as surgeries are open until at least 5 p.m. If your child must attend an appointment during school time, please ensure s/he attends school for part of the day at least, leaving early or arriving late (with a note).

My child's report shows a number of unauthorised absences. What does this mean?

These are absences we do not consider reasonable and for which the school has not given leave. They include such things as parents keeping children off school unnecessarily, truancy, absences not properly explained.

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

Yes, HPRS and external support services can give you advice and support if you need help to improve your child's school attendance, although you should be aware that this is ultimately the legal responsibility of the parent/carer.

It is very important that you speak with us at the earliest opportunity if you have any worries at all about ensuring the regular and punctual attendance of your child at school.

Absence at HPRS is dealt with immediately to ensure the effective safeguarding of all pupils
(See the procedures at the end of this policy for details)

NHS GUIDELINES ON ABSENCE DUE TO ILLNESS

Coughs and colds

It's fine to send your child to school with a minor cough or cold. But if they have a fever, keep them off school until the fever goes. Encourage your child to throw away any used tissues and to wash their hands regularly.

High Temperature / Fever

If your child has a high temperature (fever), keep them off school until it goes away.

Chickenpox

If your child has chickenpox, keep them off school until all the spots have crusted over. This is usually about 5 days after the spots first appeared.

Cold sores

There's no need to keep your child off school if they have a cold sore. Encourage them not to touch the blister or kiss anyone while they have the cold sore, or to share things like cups and towels.

Conjunctivitis

You don't need to keep your child away from school if they have conjunctivitis. Do get advice from your pharmacist. Encourage your child not to rub their eyes and to wash their hands regularly.

Coronavirus (COVID-19)

Your child should try to stay at home and avoid contact with other people if they have symptoms of COVID-19 and they either:

- have a high temperature
- do not feel well enough to go to school or do their normal activities

If they have mild symptoms and they feel well enough, they can still go to school.

Ear infection

If your child has an ear infection and a fever or severe earache, keep them off school until they're feeling better or their fever goes away.

Hand, foot and mouth disease

If your child has hand, foot and mouth disease but seems well enough to go to school, there's no need to keep them off. Encourage your child to throw away any used tissues straight away and to wash their hands regularly.

Head lice and nits

There's no need to keep your child off school if they have head lice. You can treat lice and nits without seeing a GP.

Impetigo

If your child has impetigo, they'll need antibiotic treatment from the GP. Keep them off school until all the sores have crusted over and healed, or for 48 hours after they start antibiotic treatment. Encourage your child to wash their hands regularly and not to share towels, cups and so on with other children at school.

Ringworm

If your child has ringworm, see your pharmacist unless it's on their scalp, in which case you should see the GP.

It's fine for your child to go to school once they have started treatment.

Scarlet fever

If your child has scarlet fever, they'll need treatment with antibiotics from the GP. Otherwise they'll be infectious for 2 to 3 weeks. Your child can go back to school 24 hours after starting antibiotics.

Slapped cheek syndrome (fifth disease)

You don't need to keep your child off school if they have slapped cheek syndrome because once the rash appears, they're no longer infectious. If you suspect your child has slapped cheek syndrome, take them to the GP and let their school know if they're diagnosed with it.

Sore throat

You can still send your child to school if they have a sore throat. But if they also have a fever, they should stay at home until it goes away. A sore throat and high temperature

Threadworms

You don't need to keep your child off school if they have threadworms. Speak to your pharmacist, who can recommend a treatment.

Vomiting and diarrhoea

Children with diarrhoea or vomiting should stay away from school for 2 days after their symptoms have gone.

ATTENDANCE PROCEDURES

MANAGING NON-ATTENDANCE – DAY ONE

T2P sent to primary contact within 30 minutes of non-arrival.

*If there is no response to T2P within 1 hour:
Follow-up phone call to primary contact.*

*If there is no response to phone call
Call back. Risk assess in 2 hours.*

If there is a response to phone call

*No response after 2 hours
Inform mentor & DSL/DDS
Phone additional emergency contacts*

EITHER:
*The parent/carer answered the call, the child is safe with them:
Reason for absence recorded in SIMS.*
OR
*The person answering is not the parent/carer for child and HPRS is not reassured that the child is at home or safe:
The DSL/DDS should be consulted on a risk assessment & the degree of vulnerability of the child.*

*No response from additional contacts
DSL/DDS conduct further risk assessment*

OR
*The parent/carer answered the call, the child is not with them or safe and the parent is concerned:
HPRS to advise the parent to:*

- Contact the local police station to inform them that the child is missing
- Contact people and places the child is known to talk to and visit to tell them that the child is missing and ask if they can help to find the child, by providing information which may shed light on the child's whereabouts or actively searching for the child
- Contact the family GP and Accident and Emergency Centres near where the child lives and goes to school, in case he/she has sustained an injury and been taken in for medical treatment
- Report back to school if the child is found or remains missing.

If the judgement on Day One is that there is reason to believe that the child is at risk of harm HPRS will contact Police and/or children's social care immediately.

If the judgement on Day One is that there is no reason to believe that the child is at risk of harm school continues to make enquiries and considers CME

MANAGING NON-ATTENDANCE – PERSISTENT ABSENTEEISM

Safeguarding of pupils not attending school

A pupil is in a pattern of persistent absence



Normal day-to-day attendance procedures still apply:
Parents/carers notified of absence



In cases where a pupil is persistently absent for over a week:
Member of HPRS staff (or any other agency involved with the pupil) to conduct an "eyes-on" safe and well check of the pupil by carrying out a home visit.
In ongoing cases, pupils can also be spoken to over the phone



ONGOING SUPPORT



HPRS will offer continued support to get the pupil to return to school.

This may take the form of:

- Parent/carer & pupil meetings in school / at home / at a neutral location
- A re-integration programme, such as returning on an induction-style timetable
- Education Welfare Officer Liaison
- CAMHS / CLD / SYM referrals
- Referral to social care (EHA or MASH depending on level of need identified)

Where other agencies are involved with the pupil, there will be full liaison between parties.

CHILDREN MISSING EDUCATION – SAFEGUARDING CHECKLIST (Assessing a Child’s Vulnerability)

This guidance (from Herefordshire Council) should be considered when a child is missing from education to ascertain their vulnerability and assist in the decision making process for making a referral.

| Risk Areas | YES | NO |
|--|-----|----|
| Does the child have a formal child protection plan/child in need plan? | | |
| Is the child ‘looked after’ (LAC)? | | |
| Is there a history of domestic violence, parental mental health, parental substance or alcohol misuse? | | |
| Has there been adult’s or children’s criminal justice involvement in the past or at present? | | |
| Is this child mixing with known offenders? | | |
| Is there a good reason to believe that the child may be a victim of crime? | | |
| Is this child at risk of sexual exploitation? (please refer to CSE risk assessment) | | |
| Are there wider concerns about this child or their family with regards to possible radicalisation? (Please refer to PREVENT guidance) | | |
| Are there religious or cultural reasons to believe that the child is at risk? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rites of passage or forced marriage planned for the child • Female genital mutilation • Historical information relating to older siblings. | | |
| Does the child have any health requirements that place the child at risk? | | |
| Was the child noted to be depressed/self-harming prior to the unexplained absence? | | |
| Is there a person present in, or visiting the family that has convictions for an offence against a child? | | |

If the answer to any of the above is **yes**, advice should be sought from MASH and a referral submitted in the first instance.