



Hedingham School & Sixth Form

Attendance Policy

Last reviewed by Curriculum and Personnel Committee on:	27 February 2019
Approved by the Curriculum and Personnel Committee on:	16 June 2021
It was ratified by the Full Governing Body on:	30 June 2021
Next review due by:	June 2022

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INTRODUCTION

Hedingham School and Sixth Form is committed to providing a full and effective educational experience for all students. All educational studies confirm that there is a direct link between regular attendance at school and student attainment in public examinations. Those students who attend regularly also establish and develop better social relationships with their peers and members of staff.

The school will do all that it can to ensure maximum attendance for all students. Any problems that prevent full attendance will be identified and addressed as soon as possible.

It is the policy of the school to celebrate achievement and we will actively promote, encourage and reward 100% attendance for all students. We recognise that parents and guardians have a vital role to play and that there is a need to establish strong home-school links and communication systems that can be utilised whenever there is a concern about attendance.

SCHOOL ATTENDANCE AND THE LAW

Under the 1996 Education Act, parents and guardians are responsible for ensuring their children attend school regularly and punctually. Failure to do so could result in legal action being taken against them by the Local Authority.

The register is a legal document and schools must, under the Education (Student Registration) Regulations 2006 take a register at the start of the morning session, and again during the afternoon session.

Under the Education (Student Registration) Regulations 2006, only the school (and not parents/guardians) can authorise an absence. Where the reason for a student's absence cannot be established at the time the register is taken, that absence shall be recorded as unauthorised. If a reason for absence is provided by the parent/carer, the school may decide to authorise the absence using the appropriate code.

At Hedingham School, 'exceptional circumstances' will be interpreted as being of unique and significant emotional, educational or spiritual value to the child which outweighs the loss of teaching time. The fundamental principles for defining 'exceptional' are events that are rare, significant, unavoidable and short. By unavoidable, we mean an event that could not reasonably be scheduled at another time.

The Education (Student Registration) (England) Regulations 2013 have removed all references to family holidays and leave of absence shall not be granted unless an application had been made in advance and the headteacher considers that leave of absence should be granted due to exceptional circumstances. **Headteachers no longer have the discretion to authorise up to 10 days of absence.** This discretion has been removed by the aforementioned Regulations (2013). Whilst the headteacher will consider requests on a case by case basis, parents/guardians must be aware that requests will normally be refused.

We will not consider applications for leave during term time:

- At any time in September. This is very important as your child needs to settle into their new school year
- During assessment periods in the school's calendar affecting your child
- When a student's attendance record already includes any level of unauthorised absence or they have already been granted authorised leave within the academic year

If a student is absent without a leave request having been agreed, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised. This may result in the Local Authority issuing a Penalty Notice, in line with the Essex Code of Conduct (£120 per parent, per child/£60 if paid within 21 days). Parents/Guardians who chose not to pay the fine(s) within relevant time frames could face legal action in the Magistrates Court.

In compliance with section 436A of the Education Act 1996, the school will, after making appropriate checks, report any student who is believed to be "missing from education" to the Local Authority (LA). The LA has a duty to investigate the whereabouts of such children and negotiate their prompt return to suitable education.

ROLES, RESPONSIBILITIES AND PROCEDURES

School

- At Hedingham School an electronic registration system is in place. Student attendance is recorded for every lesson.
- Students will be registered at the beginning of each morning by the teacher. Afternoon registration takes place at the beginning of period 4 and is recorded by the class teacher. [Students arriving after these times will be recorded as late and appropriate interventions will be put in place in line with our Behaviour Policy.](#)
- The School through the Attendance Officer operates a First Day Contact System (Truancy Text) by which parents/guardians will be contacted after morning registration if the student is marked absent and no message has been received.
- It is the legal responsibility of parents/guardians to ensure that their child attends all lessons as appropriate. Parents/guardians will be informed if their child has been identified as truanting from school. A Truancy/Punctuality Report Card may be issued to monitor the student and sanctions applied in the form of detention or removal from class to the Isolation room. Persistent cases of truancy will be referred to the Missing Education and Child Employment Service (MECES) who may consider issuing a Penalty Notice (see School Attendance and Law). [There is a robust procedure in place to support student safety should they be missing from lessons.](#)
- The school Attendance Officer will identify any students whose attendance is of concern. These students will, where appropriate, be brought to the attention of Heads of House and appropriate actions agreed. These actions will involve:
 - Meeting with individual student
 - Contact with parents/guardians via telephone and letters
 - Referral to other agencies where applicable for support
 - Issue of a Legal Warning Letter
 - Referral to County (MECES) for Legal Action
- A reintegration programme will be planned in conjunction with House Leaders for any student following a period of prolonged absence. This could include a part-time timetable involving a late start or early finish to the school day. Student peer support will be offered through the use of a buddying system.
- Recognition systems:
Excellent attendance will be encouraged by all staff. Good attendance and punctuality will be promoted through [Year Leaders](#) emphasising that there is a clear link between excellent attendance and higher academic achievement. [Good time-keeping is a vital life skill which will help students as they progress through their school life and out into the wider world.](#) Students will be recognised and praised for their attendance throughout the academic year.

Parents/Guardians

- It is the responsibility of parents/guardians to ensure that their child attends full time education and arrives at school on time. Regular attendance to school is vital for academic success, school would like all students to aim for 100% attendance.
- If their child is absent, parents should:
 - inform the school by telephone on the first day of absence and if possible give the expected day of return. If the return date is unknown, parents should contact the school every day by 9.00 am
 - keep the school informed especially if the return date alters
 - on the child's return to school, provide a note of explanation covering the period of absence from school
 - If a child has been absent to attend a medical appointment (hospital, doctors, dentist etc), evidence in the form of an appointment letter or card should be provided so that the school is able to authorise the absence as a medical absence. Every attempt should be made to arrange such appointments out of school hours where possible. However, if unavoidable in school hours, please could you inform the school of their approximate time of arrival or collection time. Every effort should be made to attend school for the rest of the day. School will be unable to authorise a whole day's absence for a routine appointment
- Absences of longer than three days for illness may require parents/guardians to provide further evidence in the form of a letter from the GP (NHS medical certificate) appointment card or photocopy of a prescription.
- It is not acceptable for children to be absent for reasons such as:

- Minding the house
 - Looking after younger children
 - Celebrating a birthday
 - No uniform
 - Slept late
 - Missed transport
 - Not enjoying a certain subject
- Parents/Guardians do not have the right for their child to have leave of absence in term time for the purposes of a holiday of any length. Approval must be sought from the school in advance using the appropriate form which is available from the school office.
 - If a child is reported absent due to illness and it subsequently comes to light that they were in fact on holiday, a Penalty Notice will be issued through MECES.
 - Penalty notices may be issued for irregular school attendance where there have been at least 10 sessions of unauthorised absence during the previous ten school weeks.
 - In addition to this above criteria, due to the importance of students settling into school at the commencement of the school year, penalty notices may also be issued if there have been at least 6 consecutive sessions of unauthorised leave of absence during the first two weeks of September.
 - There is an expectation that parents/guardians will support the policy of the school and Missing in Education and Child Employment Service (MECES) with regard to attendance and work in partnership to resolve any attendance issues.

Students

- There is an expectation that students will arrive on time to school and to all lessons. [If they do not, appropriate interventions/sanctions will take place ensuring their lateness is corrected.](#)
- Any student who has an appointment requiring them to leave during the school day must provide written evidence which will be verified by the tutor/House Leader before the student is allowed to sign out of school at the school office.
- Year 11 students wishing to leave the school site at lunch time must sign out with the appropriate member of staff on duty. Prior permission must be gained from parents in writing.
- Students that feel unwell during the school day should speak to their teacher who will provide a note allowing them to leave class. Students should report to reception where their details are logged in the medical book and be seen by the Medical Officer. Parents will be contacted to collect their child should that be felt necessary. Should the student contact a parent directly, avoiding the medical room the remainder of the school day may be marked as unauthorised.

Persistent Absenteeism (PA)

A student is defined by the Government as a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason. Absence at this level will cause considerable damage to any child's education and we need a parent/guardian's fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

Missing Education and Child Employment Service (MECES)

If the work of parents/guardians and school staff does not achieve improvements in a student's attendance levels, a referral may be made to an external agency.

The school may refer a student to the Missing Education and Child Employment Service (MECES) where attendance remains a concern and where no valid reasons for absence have been identified/evidenced. If attendance fails to improve, legal action may be taken against parents/guardians and could include a Penalty Notice, Education Supervision Order or Prosecution.

Children Missing in Education due to a Reduced Educational Offer

A reduced educational offer means an agreement is made with the student and parent/guardians, to reduce the number of hours spent in education for a time limited period.

Under Section 7 Education Act 1996, the parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him to receive efficient full time education suitable:

- To their age, ability and aptitude
- To any special educational needs they may have
- Either by regular attendance at school or otherwise

If the school makes a decision to temporarily reduce a student's timetable, it will be in full consultation and agreement with the student and parents/guardians with a clear time frame and desired educational outcomes.

The school is mindful that it is illegal to discriminate against students based on their SEN and/or disability, including those with social, emotional and health needs.

The school is also aware that when a student is not in school, their vulnerability is increased.

When deciding whether a reduced educational offer is appropriate, the school will complete a risk assessment where the highest consideration will be given to the welfare and safety of the student in line with Keeping Children Safe in Education (DfE 2020) which identifies schools as part of the wider safeguarding system for children.

Reduced Educational Provision (part time or reduced timetables) should only be considered:

1. As part of a planned re-integration into school following an extended period out of school due to exclusion, non-attendance, school refusal or to facilitate a managed transfer between schools.
2. As a temporary fixed-term, closely monitored intervention to address and manage the impact of significantly challenging behaviour or emotional or social needs, whilst alternative arrangements are being made to meet the individual needs or to co-ordinate with therapeutic intervention or other services.
3. In limited circumstances reduced educational provision may also be used as a method of managing student's at risk of exclusion. Essex County Council regards reduced educational provision as the last resort and least desirable method of managing students at risk of exclusion. This 'intervention' is viewed as highly intrusive and may only be chosen, if at all, after other strategies have been implemented and exhausted and the Best Practice Guidance is adhered to.

A reduced educational provision must not be treated as a long-term solution to a problem.

The agreement must have a time limit by which point the student is expected to attend full-time or be provided with alternative provision.

- Is taken in the best interests of the child and attracts the understanding, approval and written agreement of parents/guardians or in the case of a Looked After Child, the allocated social worker;
- Has as its principal purpose the successful reinstatement of the student's full-time school attendance, re-integration and inclusion;
- Is undertaken within the context of person centred planning. Plans should include liaison with the child and take into account the facilities to support the re-integration process, and outreach support where available.
- Complies with the health and safety needs of the student, i.e. the school is satisfied that suitable arrangements are in place to meet the student's care needs when not at school;
- Complies with the statutory responsibility for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of students;
- Provides appropriate work for the student when not in school which is then marked and relevant feedback provided;
- Is time limited, with a clear target of resuming full-time attendance within a period no longer than 6-8 weeks, preferably over a period in which the time in school increases steadily and incrementally in order to prevent further disaffection;

- Ensures reviews are held at the appropriate time for all students with a Statement of SEN or EHCPs

Flexi-Schooling

It is the decision of the Headteacher as to whether the school is willing to enter into an agreement with a parent/guardian with regards to flexi-schooling.

Considerations when considering flexi-schooling

Aside from the impact that a flexi-schooling arrangement will have on a school's overall absence levels, the implications of agreeing partial educational provision at home are significant both in terms of expertise and resources and in the commitment to make a shared provision work. The education provided at home and school should, together, constitute a full-time, suitable education.

Whilst there is no statutory curriculum for the home education part of a flexi-schooling arrangement, parents/guardians will need to be mindful of the impact on the child's access to the school curriculum and the possible fragmentation of the learning experience.

Flexi-schooling is unlikely to be successful if the reasons for choosing it are negative and the choice is motivated by the desire to avoid difficulties around certain subjects, teachers, and peers or aspects of school discipline or attendance itself.

Flexi-schooling should not be seen as a means of opting out of an element of the curriculum with which a student, for whatever reason, is uncomfortable. The student may find that their limited attendance makes it difficult to maintain strong relationships with peers and may experience an element of social exclusion. If a student moves to a different school, there will be no guarantee that flexi-schooling will be able to continue. This will be a decision that the Headteacher of the new school will be required to make.

There is no opt-out for schools regarding the National (Academy) curriculum based on a flexi-schooling proposal, although the student is not attending all school sessions, the school will ensure that the student has appropriate access to the National (Academy) curriculum. The child cannot be dis-applied from the statutory curriculum or assessment arrangements simply because flexible attendance has been agreed. When the curriculum is delivered through cross-curricular activities, arrangements made with the parent/carer would need to protect the cohesion of the student's experience. There may be resource implications; effective co-ordination will require time and, although there is no obligation to do so, the school may well decide that it will need to provide materials so that learning can keep pace with that of other children.

Arrangements for flexi-schooling may make both the identification of SEN and the ability to meet those needs more difficult to secure. Effective assessment would need to take place across both the school and home-schooling elements of the child's education and so could present logistical challenges.

Flexi-schooling for children with an Education, Health and Care Plan

Where a child has an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) the decision to agree flexi-schooling must be taken in conjunction with the local authority (LA). Where flexi-schooling is agreed for a child with an EHCP this will be recorded on the EHCP and progress monitored through the usual annual review process.

The school receives full funding for flexi-schooled students and they must be included on all census returns. The responsibility for the flexi-school arrangement lies with the school and not the LA. The school will work with parents to address any issues which arise.

EVALUATION AND REVIEW

The school will review this policy annually and update accordingly to include changes in the law and guidance on good practice. The policy will be promoted throughout the school community and shared with outside agencies and partners as required.