



Attendance Policy

Date approved:	Summer 2024
Approved by:	New Generation Schools Trust Board
Next Review date:	Summer 2025

Attendance Policy

The importance of school attendance

Improving attendance is everyone's business. The barriers to accessing education are wide and complex, both within and beyond the school gates, and are often specific to individual pupils and their families. Good attendance begins with our school being somewhere pupils want to be and therefore the foundation of securing good attendance is that our school is a calm, orderly, safe, and supportive environment where all pupils are keen and ready to learn.

Some pupils find it harder than others to attend school and therefore at all stages of improving attendance we work in partnership with pupils and their families collaboratively to remove any barriers to attendance by building strong and trusting relationships and working together to put the right support in place.

At Hope Community School, we believe that good attendance is essential to effective learning. Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will affect their attainment and social integration with their peers. Pupils who attend regularly achieve more highly. Punctuality is equally as important. If children are late for school, they miss out on the regular morning routines and disrupt the class teaching and the learning of other children. We want every child to enjoy and achieve to their full potential at school. Whatever ability, ethnicity or background, each child will thrive and prosper throughout their time with us at Hope.

Absence

We monitor attendance regularly and therefore expect excellent attendance from every child. If you have concerns with attendance, the school can provide support to help you to improve the attendance of your child.

Reporting absence:

All matters relating to absence must be reported to the school office before 9.15am on the first day of absence giving the reason why the pupil is not in school. It is the responsibility of the school to check absences by telephone if we do not hear from the family.

If a child is absent or taken out of school during the day due to a medical appointment, families should notify the school by providing a note/appointment letter/E-consult booking or contacting the school office in advance with the above evidence.

Please contact the school via the following:

HCS Sidcup

Tel: 0203 223 2000

Email: Enquiries@hopecommunityschool.org

HCS Southampton

Tel: 02380 385122

Email: southampton@hopecommunityschool.org

Authorised Absence

Some absences are allowed by law and are known as "authorised absences." For example: if a child is ill, death of a close relative, religious observance.

We realise that there are rare occasions when there might be a particular problem that causes

your child to be absent. Please let us know and we shall try to deal with it sympathetically. Requests for an authorised absence should be made in writing. Families will be asked for supporting evidence.

Unauthorised Absence

There are times when children are absent for reasons, which are not permitted by law. These are known as “unauthorised absences.” Examples of unauthorised absences are:

- Holidays during term time
- Waiting for a delivery
- Going out for a hair cut
- Going for a family day out
- Birthdays
- Sleeping in late after a night out
- Unapproved holidays
- Parental sickness or sibling’s sickness
- Caring for a sick relative
- Where there is no explanation for the absence or when the explanation or reason for the absence is considered unsatisfactory

Individual Needs/Persistent Absence

Whilst every pupil has a right to a full-time education and high attendance expectations are set for all pupils, Hope Community School is careful to account for the specific needs of pupils and pupil cohorts. The school will always consider the individual needs of pupils and their families who have specific barriers to attendance and work closely with families to support and work towards overcoming these barriers.

Where there is a case of persistent absence the Family Liaison Officer/Attendance Officer and Education Welfare Officer will work with the family to identify barriers and support them in accessing wider support services. When working with the family the school will ensure the child is fully involved and their voice is heard. Strategies that may be adopted include:

- A personal attendance plan
- Additional rewards for attendance
- Pastoral support for the child
- Parenting support/workshops
- Accessing wider external services such as social care or therapeutic services

Responsibilities

Families:

- To ensure their child attends school and arrives on time
- To contact the school on the first day of absence and give a reason and on each morning of absence thereafter
- To keep medical and dental appointments outside school hours where possible
- To ensure that holidays are taken outside of termtime
- To keep contact details, correct and up to date
- Provide a note or copy of the medical appointment card for absences during school hours.
- To support the school’s aim of 97% (+) attendance

School:

- To improve the overall attendance target to 97%
- To make attendance and punctuality a priority for all those associated with the school including pupils, families, teachers and governors
- To provide support, advice and guidance to families and pupils
- To celebrate pupils who achieved at least 97% over the year and to highlight those who have achieved 100% over a term and over the year
- To recognise the needs of the individual pupil when planning reintegration following significant periods of absence
- When attendance fails to improve the Attendance Officer / Family Liaison Officer will contact the family to attend a meeting to discuss the issue and offer support to improve attendance
- Where no improvements in attendance have been made, a formal referral is made to EWO. This could lead to the EWO issuing a penalty charge notice or taking further action

Promoting and Incentivizing Good Attendance:

At Hope Community School we strive to ensure school is a happy place where pupils want to be. Care is taken to ensure all children feel seen and heard and every child recognized and celebrated for being the individual they are. We promote good attendance by visibly demonstrating the benefits of good attendance throughout school life. These incentives are used sensitively and without discrimination. This includes:

- Positive attendance displays
- Celebration of good attendance in collectives and classrooms
- Certificates for good attendance
- Whole class rewards for attendance and punctuality
- Promotion and celebration of attendance in the school newsletter and website
- Modelling of good attendance and punctuality by staff

Monitoring and Data

As poor attendance is habitual, prevention and early intervention is crucial. The key to this is regular data analysis to both identify and provide immediate additional support to pupils or pupil cohorts that need it, and to look at historic and emerging patterns across the school and develop strategies to address them. To achieve this we will:

- Monitor and analyse weekly attendance patterns and trends and deliver intervention and support in a targeted way to pupils and families.
Undertake frequent individual level analysis to identify the pupils who need support and focus staff efforts on developing targeted actions for those cases
- Conduct thorough analysis of half-termly, termly, and full year data to identify patterns and trends.
- Benchmark attendance data against local, regional, and national levels to identify areas of focus for improvement.
- Devise specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data.
- Monitor in the data the impact of school wide attendance efforts, including any specific strategies implemented.
- Provide data and reports to support the work of the board or governing body

School Governing Body

It is a legal responsibility of the trust board to monitor and evaluate attendance in their schools. This function has been delegated to each school Local Governing Body. Attendance figures and updates are presented to the Local Governing Body on a termly basis.

Leavers

If your child is leaving other than at the end of Year 6 to go to Secondary School, families are asked to:

- Give the school full information about their plans including date of move, new address or at least the town you will be moving to, new school and start date if known and reasons for moving
- Confirm the school has your current mobile number
- Give the new school Hope's contact details so that files can be transferred
- Let us know when you moved

Children Missing In Education

When pupils leave and you have not given us the above information and we cannot contact you, then your child is considered to be a Child Missing in Education. This means that the Local Authority has a legal duty to carry out investigations, which will include liaising with Bexley Borough Social Care, the Police and other agencies to try and track and locate your child.

Penalty Notices:

Penalty notices are issued to families as an alternative to prosecution where they have failed to ensure that their child of compulsory school age regularly attends school. A penalty notice can be issued to each parent/carer liable for the offence or offences.

The DFE states that schools must consider whether a penalty notice is appropriate in each individual case where one of their pupils reaches the national threshold for considering a penalty notice. Judgements will be made based on each individual case to ensure fairness and consistency.

The threshold is 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks. A school week means any week in which there is at least one school session. This can be met with any combination of unauthorised absence (e.g. 4 sessions of holiday taken in term time plus 6 sessions of arriving late after the register closes all within 10 school weeks).

These sessions can be consecutive (e.g. 10 sessions of holiday in one week) or not (e.g. 6 sessions of unauthorised absence taken in 1 week and 1 per week for the next 4 weeks). The period of 10 school weeks can also span different terms or school years (e.g. 2 sessions of unauthorised absence in the Summer Term and a further 8 within the Autumn Term).

For full details of penalty notices please read the DFE Working Together to Improve School Attendance.

Contact Information

Designated Senior Leader for Attendance

HCS Sidcup – Mrs. Sara Donnelly

HCS Southampton – Mr. Steve Wright

School Attendance/Family Liaison Officer

HCS Sidcup – Jacqueline Anglin

HCS Southampton – Claire Rodgers

Attendance Timeline Processes:

Recommended Time Scale	Attendance Concern	Actions to be taken
Day 1 Stage 1	Any absence without reason and no telephone/email contact made to school by latest 9.15am on first day of absence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First day of absence without reasonable reason, telephone call to be made by Office Administrator • If no contact made by telephone with Parent/Carer or any contact listed on pupil record Office Administrator to email request for reason for absence
Day 2 Stage 2	No response from Stage 1 after attempts to contact Parent/Carer or any listed contact	<p>Stage 1 actions to be followed again if there is still no response or reason provided for absence.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Second day of absence without reasonable reason, telephone call to be made by Office Administrator • If no contact made by telephone with Parent/Carer or any contact listed on pupil record Office Administrator to email request for reason for absence
Day 3 Stage 3	Continued no response from Parent/Carer or any listed contact or reason for absence raises safeguarding concerns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Escalated to Family Liaison Officer (FLO) • Home visit to be carried out • If no response then Police welfare check to be requested by telephoning 0800 7311888. • Contact with LA MASH team. • All information to be recorded on 'Safeguard' • Education welfare officer (EWO) to be notified

When attendance falls below 93% the following actions will be taken:

1

- Child added to Attendance Watchlist
- Attendance/Family Liaison Officer (FLO) to send first letter to Parent/Carer with attendance certificate

2

- Monitored by school & Educational Welfare Officer (EWO)
- EWO to send 'Cause for Concern' letter if no improvement to attendance

3

- Parent invited to Attendance Surgery with Principal, FLO & EWO
- Official Referral to Education Welfare Service if still no improvement to attendance

4

- EWO may escalate to court proceedings
- Penalty Notice maybe issued

Attendance Matters

You must notify the office before 9:15am about your child's absence.

If your child arrives after the registers have closed at 9:15am their mark will show as an unauthorised absence for the entire morning session.

Families will be contacted via telephone or email at 9:30am if no contact with the school has made regarding their child's absence.

The attendance of each child is monitored and reviewed weekly by the Principal and Attendance/Family Liaison Officer. The Principal is the strategic lead for attendance.

A letter with your child's attendance certificate attached will be sent home every half term.

HCS Sidcup

The school gate opens at 8:40am and closes at 8:50am, registers are taken at 9am. Children who arrive after this time must report to the school office. This will then be recorded and added to the register on Arbor.

HCS Southampton

The school gate opens at 8:30am for soft start, registers are taken at 9am. Children who arrive after this time must report to the school office. This will then be recorded and added to the register on SIMS.

Links to other policies

This policy is linked to the following policies and guidance:

- Children with Health Needs Who Cannot Attend School
- Special Educational Needs (SEN)
- Equality Information & Objectives
- DfE guidance - [Working together to improve school attendance - August 2024](#)