



Hedgewood School

Attendance Policy

Date policy last reviewed: January 2024

Signed by:

_____ Headteacher Date: _____

_____ Chair of governors Date: _____

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Statement of intent

Hedgewood School believes that in order to facilitate teaching and learning, good attendance is essential. Pupils cannot achieve their full potential if they do not regularly attend school.

We understand that barriers to attendance for our pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) are complex, and that some pupils find it harder than others to attend school; therefore, we will continue to prioritise cultivating a safe and supportive environment at school, as well as strong and trusting relationships with pupils and parents. The key principles woven through this policy are **commitment** and **communication** which will form the basis of great partnership between home and school.

Attendance and punctuality will be monitored throughout the year. The school's attendance target will be set each academic year and we will keep parents / carers updated about how the school is performing against our overall attendance target.

We are committed to:

- Promoting and modelling high attendance and its benefits.
- Celebrating good attendance
- Informing you about your child's attendance and punctuality
- Take into consideration the sensitivity of some of the reasons for pupil absence and will approach families to offer support rather than immediately reach for punitive approaches.
- Ensuring equality and fairness for all.
- Ensuring this attendance policy is clear and easily understood.
- Building strong relationships with families to overcome barriers to attendance.
- Working collaboratively with the local authority, as well as other agencies.
- Ensuring parents follow the framework set in section 7 of the Education Act 1996, which states that the parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause them to receive efficient full-time education suitable to their age, ability and aptitude, and to any SEND they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.
- Regularly monitoring and analysing attendance and absence data to identify pupils or cohorts that require more support.

The school's attendance officer is Hayley Carlo and can be contacted via 'Attendance Officer' on Seesaw or the school office (via phone or email). Staff and parents will be expected to contact the attendance officer for queries or concerns about attendance.

1. Legal framework

This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation and statutory guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

- Education Act 1996
- Equality Act 2010
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (As amended)
- The Children (Performances and Activities) (England) Regulations 2014
- Children and Young Persons Act 1963
- DfE (2022) 'Working together to improve school attendance'
- DfE (2023) 'Keeping children safe in education (KCSIE) 2023'

This policy operates in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy (including children missing education)
- SEND Policy
- Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions Policy

2. Roles and responsibilities

The governing board has overall responsibility for:

- Monitoring the implementation of this policy and all relevant procedures across the school.
- Promoting the importance of good attendance through the school's ethos and policies.
- Working with the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) to set goals for attendance and providing support and challenge around delivery against those goals.
- Regularly reviewing attendance data.
- Ensuring that this policy, as written, does not discriminate on any grounds, including, but not limited to, ethnicity/national origin, culture, religion, gender, disability or sexual orientation.
- Having regard to KCSIE when making arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children, including children missing education.

The Co-Headteachers are responsible for:

- The day-to-day implementation and management of this policy and all relevant procedures across the school.
- Appointing a member of the SLT to the school attendance lead role.
- Ensuring all parents are aware of the school's attendance expectations and procedures.
- Ensuring that every pupil has access to full-time education and will act as early as possible to address patterns of absence.

Staff are responsible for:

- Understanding this policy and their role in working together to improve school attendance
- Modelling good attendance behaviour.
- Using their professional judgement and knowledge of individual pupils to inform decisions as to whether any welfare concerns should be escalated.
- Where designated, taking the attendance register at the relevant times during the school day.

The attendance officer is responsible for:

- Monitoring attendance and the impact of interventions.
- Analysing attendance data and identifying areas of intervention and improvement.
- Communicating with parents with regard to attendance.
- Following up on incidents of persistent poor attendance.
- Working collaboratively with the school attendance lead and the LA.

Parents are responsible for:

- Providing accurate and up-to-date contact details.
- Providing the school with at least one emergency contact number.
- Updating the school if their details change.
- The attendance of their children at school.
- Promoting good attendance with their children.

3. Definitions

The following definitions apply for the purposes of this policy:

Absence:

- Arrival at school after the register has closed
- Not attending the registered school for any reason

Authorised absence:

- An absence for sickness for which the school has granted leave
- Medical or dental appointments which unavoidably fall during school time, for which the school has granted leave
- Religious or cultural observances for which the school has granted leave
- An absence due to exceptional circumstances (granted at the discretion of the Co-Headteachers)

Unauthorised absence:

- Parents keeping children off school without reason
- Absences which have not been properly explained
- Arrival at school after the register has closed

- Absence due to day trips and holidays in term-time which have not been agreed with the Co-Headteachers in advance

Persistent absence (PA):

- Missing 10% or more of school across the year for any reason

Severe absence (SA):

- Missing 50% or more of school across the year for any reason

4. Attendance expectations

Hedgewood is a small but successful specialist school and every child makes a wonderful and unique contribution. We have high expectations for pupils' attendance and punctuality, and will work with pupils and parents to put in additional support and adjustments, ensuring the provision outlined in their Educational Health and Care Plan (EHCP) is accessed.

Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect acquisition of learning because of the patterns established. **This is especially true for the young person with autism.**

The school gate opens at 8:30am, and pupils are expected to be in their classroom, ready to begin lessons by 8:45am when the school gate closes.

- The morning register will be marked by 8:50am. Pupils will receive a late mark if they are not present for registration by this time. Pupils attending after this time will receive a mark to show that they were on site, but this will count as a late mark
- The morning register will close at 9:20am. If your child arrives after this time, they will receive a mark to show that they were on site, but this will **not** count as a present mark and it will mean that they have an unauthorised absence for that morning

5. Absence procedures

Parents will be required to contact the Attendance Officer or school office before 9:00am on the first day (and each day) of their child's absence – they will be expected to provide an explanation for the absence

Where a pupil is absent, and their parent has not contacted the school by the close of the morning register to report the absence, our Attendance officer and / or administrative staff will contact the parent by telephone call as soon as is practicable on the first day that they do not attend school.

The school will always follow up any absences in order to:

- Ascertain the reason for the absence.
- Ensure the proper safeguarding action is being taken.
- Identify whether the absence is authorised or not.
- Identify the correct code to use to enter the data onto the school census system.

The school will not request medical evidence in most circumstances where a pupil is absent due to illness; however, the school reserves the right to request supporting evidence in some circumstances.

In the case of persistent absence, arrangements will be made for parents to speak to the attendance officer. The school will inform the LA, on a termly basis, of the details of pupils who fail to attend regularly, or who have missed 10 school days or more without authorisation.

If a pupil's attendance drops below 80%, attendance monitoring procedures will commence and the attendance officer will consider inviting parents to a formal meeting to explore how we can support you to improve your child's attendance.

6. Attendance register

The school uses SIMS to keep attendance registers to ensure they are as accurate as possible and can be easily analysed and shared with the appropriate authorities.

The school will use the national attendance codes to ensure attendance and absence are monitored and recorded in a consistent way.

7. Authorising absence requests

Leave of absence

The school will only grant a pupil a leave of absence in exceptional circumstances. There is **no** automatic entitlement to time off school to go on holiday. In order to have requests for a leave of absence considered, the school will expect parents to contact the Co-Headteachers in writing ideally at least two weeks prior to the proposed start date of the leave of absence, providing the reason for the proposed absence and the dates during which the absence would be expected to occur.

Any requests for leave during term time will be considered on an individual basis. The pupil's previous attendance record and the impact on their education will be taken into account. Where the absence is granted, the Co-Headteachers will determine the length of time that the pupil can be away from school.

If term-time leave is not granted, taking a pupil out of school will be recorded as an unauthorised absence and may result in sanctions, such as a holiday penalty notice (HPN). The school cannot grant leaves of absence retrospectively; therefore, any absences that were not approved by the school in advance will be marked as unauthorised.

Health conditions and medical appointments

We are aware that our pupils have a range of health needs and their fair share of medical appointments. Where possible, we request that parents make medical or dental appointments outside of school hours. Where this is not possible, parents will be expected to inform our Attendance Officer about their child's absence to attend such appointments as far in advance as is practicable.

In line with the SEND Policy and Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions Policy, the school will ensure that reasonable adjustments are made for our pupils to reduce barriers to

attendance, in line with any EHCPs or Individual Healthcare plans (IHP) that have been implemented. The school will secure additional support from external partners to help bolster attendance where appropriate.

Religious observance

Parents will be expected to request absence for religious observance in advance.

8. Persistent absence (PA) and Severe absence (SA)

We are aware that our pupils are vulnerable to PA due to their SEND. The school will use a number of methods to help support pupils at risk of and with PA to attend school. This may include partnership working with our Family Services Team and Positive Behaviour Support.

The school will focus particularly on pupils who have rates of absence over 50%, and will work with the LA and other partners to engage all relevant services needed to identify and address the wider barriers to attendance these pupils are facing. Pupils with severe absence will have an Attendance Improvement Plan co-produced with parents identifying the barriers to attendance and tailored interventions to support them.

The school will allow sufficient time for attendance interventions and engagement strategies to improve pupils' attendance; however, where engagement strategies to improve attendance have not had the desired effect after one term, the school will consider:

- Holding a formal meeting with parents and the school's point of contact in the LA Attendance Support Team.
- Engaging the school designated safeguarding lead (DSL) and/or children's social care where there are safeguarding concerns.

Where the above measures are not effective, the school will consider submitting a referral for a fixed penalty notice for non-attendance in line with the LA's code of conduct.

9. Children Missing Education (CME)

The school will inform the Local Authority CME Team of any pupil who has not attended school for 10 consecutive school days without provision of reasonable explanation.

If a pupil is absent from school and their whereabouts is unknown, we will make reasonable enquiries to locate them; this may include calling emergency contacts and visiting the home address. Where the safety of a child is in doubt then a referral will be made to social care or the local Police.

All Hedgewood pupils have an EHCP and will not be removed from roll without the agreement of the LA's SEN team.

10. Monitoring and review

This policy will be reviewed annually. The next scheduled review date for this policy is January 2025.

Any changes made to this policy will be communicated to all relevant stakeholders.

