



Attendance Policy 2023-2025

Introduction

At Howley Grange we strongly believe that attendance and punctuality are vital for a child to maximise their potential and create a feeling of belonging in their class/school community.

We maintain a whole school culture that promotes the benefits of good attendance. In promoting the belief that attendance and punctuality are important values we will be helping to equip our children for life and potentially impacting upon their futures as employees and employers.

We believe that;

- Prolonged and consistent absence affects access to the curriculum ultimately impacting on progress.
- Repeated and consistent lateness is an unsettling start to the school day for both the child and school.
- Unnecessary absence should be challenged and both school and parents/carers are held responsible for the impact this may have on any pupils' attendance.

Children with poor attendance tend to achieve less in both primary and secondary school. There is a clear link between poor attendance at school and low levels of achievement. The pupils with the highest attainment at the end of key stage 2 and key stage 4 have higher rates of attendance over the key stage compared to those with the lowest attainment. Recent statistics show at KS2, pupils not meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and maths had an overall absence rate of 4.7%, compared to 3.5% among those meeting the expected standard. Moreover, the overall absence rate of pupils not meeting the expected standard was higher than among those meeting the higher standard (4.7% compared to 2.7%).

As a school we have identified a senior leader responsible for the strategic approach to attendance at Howley Grange. This person is **Kate Trueman-Brown** and can be contacted by ringing the school number on **01384685101** or emailing in to **info@howley.dudley.sch.uk**

School responsibilities for all pupils

School Attendance Registers are 'legal documents' and as such must be kept in accordance with Pupil Registration Regulations. Schools are responsible for ensuring that the Attendance Register is accurately completed and up to date. (It is an offence in law not to do so).

Attendance Registers can and are viewed by school staff, parents/carers (for their own child/ren), Governors, Local Authority Officers, Ofsted and the Magistrates Court.

All pupils must be registered twice every day, once at the beginning of school in the morning and once in the afternoon.

Every half-day registration mark must show if the pupil was Present or Absent.

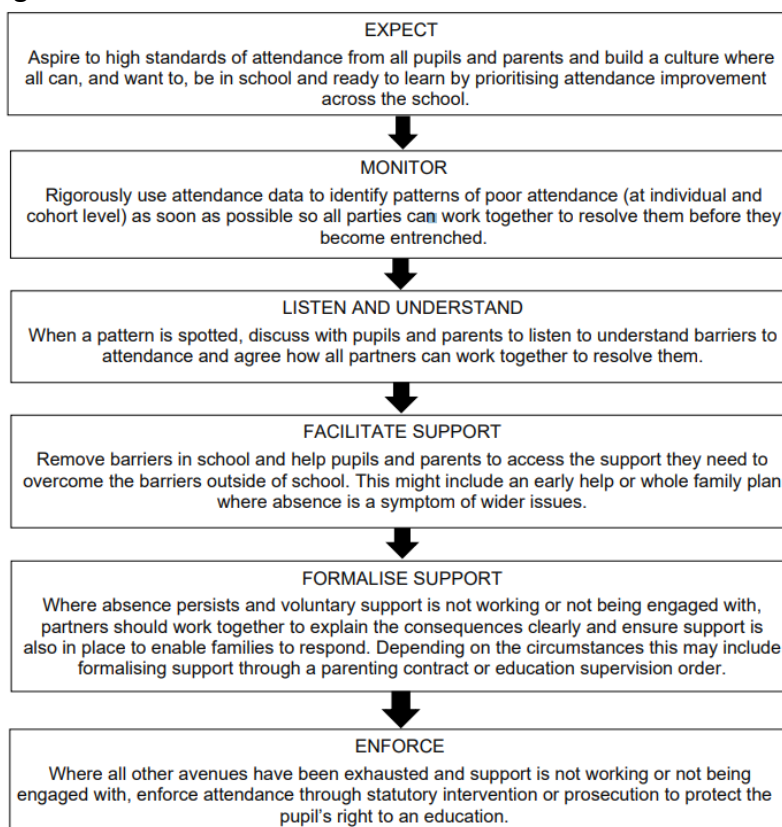
All absence from school has to be classified by the school as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED in accordance with the DfE Guidelines.

As a school, we have a robust daily process to follow up absence. All morning registers need to be completed by 9:05am and in the afternoon 10 minutes after the session starts. Once completed our attendance officer promptly identifies pupils who are absent from school where an explanation by a parent or guardian has not been given, and then contacts the family to establish the child's whereabouts. If an explanation has been given all absence notes/messages from parents will be stored with the attendance officer. Only notes regarding absences where there are concerns will be brought to the attention of the designated senior leader, who may then choose to speak to the parents. For those pupils where an explanation has not been given, initially a text message will be sent to the 'priority one' contact held on the system. This will ask for an explanation to be provided to school by 11am for a morning session. If by 11 am this has not been given attempts to contact the 'priority one' contact will be made by phone call. If needed a message will be left and also an email sent. Attempts will be made using the 'priority two' contact if we have still not received an explanation by 1pm. If a second day absence occurs and we have still not received an explanation the attendance officer will inform the designated safeguarding lead. Attempts by phone, email and text message will again occur. Dependent on knowledge held by the designated safeguarding lead a decision will be made if a home visit will be necessary at this point. If a third day absence occurs and still no explanation has been given a home visit will happen. If school can still not establish the whereabouts of the child a designated safeguarding lead will contact the 'child missing education' officer for advice.

Should a class teacher have any concerns about a child's attendance and punctuality, the identified senior leader for attendance must be informed. In addition to this the identified senior leader will regularly analyse data to identify pupils who require support and devise specific strategies. The identified senior leader and attendance officer will benchmark attendance data, including that of cohorts of pupils, against local, regional and national levels.

Working together to improve attendance

Successfully treating the root causes of absence and removing barriers to attendance, at home, in school or more broadly requires schools and local partners to work collaboratively with, not against families. All partners should work together to:



School responsibilities for pupils at risk of becoming persistently absent

As a school, we will proactively use data to identify pupils at risk of poor attendance. This will involve the senior leader responsible for attendance working with each identified pupil and their parents to understand and address the reasons for absence, including any in-school barriers to attendance. Where out of school barriers are identified, we will signpost and support access to any required services in the first instance. If the issue persists, we will take an active part in the multi-agency effort with the local authority and other partners. We will act as the lead practitioner where all partners agree that the school is the best placed lead service. Where the lead practitioner is outside of the school, we will continue to work with the local authority and partners. We expect parents to work us and the local authority to help them understand their child's barriers to attendance. We also expect them to proactively engage with the support offered to prevent the need for more formal support.

School responsibilities for persistently absent and severely absent pupils

Schools will continue offering support as for pupils at risk of becoming persistently absent in addition to putting additional targeted support (with partners) in place to remove any barriers. If there is a lack of engagement we will hold more formal conversations with parents and be clear about the potential need for legal intervention in future. Where support is not working, being engaged with or appropriate, schools will work with the local authority on legal intervention. Where there are safeguarding concerns, schools will intensify support through statutory children's social care. We will also work with other schools in the local area, such as schools previously attended and the schools of any siblings. We expect parents to work with us and the local authority to help them understand their child's barriers to attendance. We also expect them to proactively engage with the support offered - including any parenting contract or voluntary early help plan to prevent the need for legal intervention.

Support school will offer

We will use data to identify cohorts with, or at risk of, low attendance and develop strategies to support them. We will also work with other schools in the local area and the local authority to share effective practice where there are common barriers to attendance.

We will maintain the same ambition for attendance for pupils with medical conditions or SEND as their peers and work with those pupils and parents to maximise attendance. We will ensure join up with pastoral support and where required, put in place additional support and adjustments, such as an individual healthcare plan and if applicable, ensuring the provision outlined in the pupil's EHCP is accessed. We will consider additional support from wider services and external partners, making timely referrals. We will regularly monitor data for such groups, including at governing body meetings and with local authorities. We expect parents to work with us and the local authority to help them understand their child's barriers to attendance and to proactively engage with the support offered.

For pupils with a social worker school will inform the pupil's social worker if there are any unexplained absences and if their name is to be deleted from the register. We expect parents to work with us and the local authority to help them understand their child's barriers to attendance and to proactively engage with the support offered.

Promoting good attendance

At Howley Grange we have a culture of celebrating all kinds of achievement and progress, academic and non-academic. Attendance is included in this.

We promote good attendance and punctuality in the following ways;

- Award children who have attended 100% of the school year with a certificate (September to July).
- Attendance figures are reported to parents termly via the child's report.
- Attendance figures are reported to the Governing body termly through the Headteacher's Report.

- We have clear communication with pupils and parents about the importance of punctuality and good attendance.

Parental Responsibilities

The law entitles every child of compulsory school age to an efficient, full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude, and any special educational need they may have. It is the legal responsibility of every parent to make sure their child receives that education either by attendance at a school or by education other than at a school. Where parents decide to have their child registered at school, they have an additional legal duty to ensure their child attends that school regularly. This means their child must attend every day that the school is open, except in a small number of allowable circumstances such as being too ill to attend or being given permission for an absence in advance from the school.

Parents should ensure that, if their child is to be absent from school for any unavoidable reason such as illness, they should contact the school on the first morning of absence, **before 9:05am**. This may be done by phone, by letter/email or in person. All absences must be explained by the parent. Verbal messages on the parent's behalf from an adult relative, representative such as a childminder or friend or from children, e.g. siblings, will not be accepted.

Parents should, wherever possible, provide sufficient supporting evidence to enable the school to authorise the absence. Should no explanation have been received, the class teacher will inform the attendance officer a child is absent who will endeavour to contact the parent. This will initially be through a text message, however, if no contact is made staff will visit the home address to enquire further.

Parents should ensure that, if their child needs to attend a medical appointment, they should, wherever possible make the appointment out of school hours. Absences may be Authorised for a medical appointment in school time, BUT, school may ask parents/carers to ensure their child attends Registration, is collected from school and then returned after the appointment in order for the Absence to be Authorised. The timing of and venue of the appointment may need to be evidenced and discussed with school to agree arrangements.

In the case of emergency parents/carers should negotiate with the Headteacher on an individual basis. Parents will be advised on the amount of absence that the Headteacher can agree to Authorise in each instance. Any extension to the original agreement may not be Authorised.

Parents may not authorise their child's absence – only the school can do this, on the basis of the explanation provided by the parents. Should parents fail to provide a satisfactory reason; the school will record such absences as unauthorised. In some cases, this may be retrospective and authorisation may be withdrawn should circumstances arise leading the school to decide that the original reason for authorisation requires further explanation and/or no longer applies. If this occurs, this will be discussed with the parent.

Parents should ensure that their child arrives on time for **registration from 8.45-8.55am**.

Children arriving after 8.55am should report to the front office as the classroom's doors are closed and the parent should sign them in. After 8.55am, but before 9:05, children who arrive at school are marked as authorised late (see Lateness). Any child arriving after 9:05 will be marked as unauthorised late.

Parents should avoid booking family holidays during term-time. Such holidays will not be authorised. (see Leave of Absence)

Authorised absence

Any half day Absence from school for which the parent/carer of a child has;

a) Provided the Headteacher (in advance) with a reason for that Absence that can be accepted and/or is allowed for the purposes of authorisation and,

b) That the Headteacher agrees the pupil should not be in school for that half day session.

If the reason you have provided can allow the Headteacher to authorise the absence no further action can or will be taken.

Attendance and Illness

Unfortunately, and from time to time, children do suffer from illness. When this happens, as parents/carers, we need to make a judgement as to if that illness means the child is prevented from or is unable to attend school.

It is very well known that many children can be 'a little under the weather' first thing in the morning and you may decide to keep them at home only for them to recover almost immediately or a little later in the day. If your child has been unwell in the morning and shows signs of recovery, we encourage you to return your child to school later in the morning or after lunch.

Parents/carers are the best people to make this judgement and to decide if their child should stay at home but you must advise school before 9.05am of the circumstances and explain the reason for the absence. If we do not receive an explanation the absence will be recorded as unauthorised.

We encourage parents to make their decisions, knowing that if you bring your child to school and advise us that they may be a little unwell, we are happy to monitor their condition and agree with you that should they deteriorate we will call you to let you know and ask you to collect them where necessary.

The absence for that half day session will be authorised by the Headteacher and no further action will be taken.

Reasons provided for any absence and the frequency of previous absence/illness can and will determine if that absence is recorded as authorised or unauthorised

Medication

We would want parent/carers to know that in the case of a child being prescribed medicines that this does not automatically mean that the child should be absent from school or that the absence will be authorised. The school's medical policy allows us to administer medicines, with written consent, which may result in there being no reason or necessity for any absence.

Unauthorised absence

Any half day Absence from school for which the parent/carer of the child has;

a) Not provided the Headteacher (in advance) with a reason for that Absence,

b) Provided a reason but that reason is not, or cannot be accepted for the purpose of Authorisation

c) The Headteacher is unable to agree that the pupil should not be in school for that half day session.

If no reason for an Absence has been provided and/or if the reason provided is not or cannot be accepted for the purposes of Authorisation further action can or will be taken.

Note: Late arrival in the classroom for registration, both in the morning and afternoon can be recorded as Late and/or Unauthorised Absence for that half day session.

The school will contact the parent or carer of any child who has an unauthorised absence. If a child has a repeated number of unauthorised absences, the parents or carers will be written to again informing them that a referral is being made to the LA support services, who will visit the home and seek to ensure that the parents or carers understand the seriousness of the situation.

The school will contact the parent or carer of any child who has had **5 days/10 sessions of absence**, in writing to make them aware of their child's current attendance and offer support. It also informs them if this absence continues and their child receives a further 10 sessions absence, they will have all further absence unauthorised unless evidence can be provided to support their view that their child is not well enough to attend school.

If a child then has a **further 5 days/10 sessions of absence (10 days/20 sessions in total)** a further letter, this time from the Headteacher, will be sent again offering support but also informing them that all further absence will be unauthorised unless evidence can be provided to support their view that their child is not well enough to attend school. The following are acceptable as evidence:

- Doctor's note or letter (but please do not incur charges by requesting a specifically written letter)
- Prescription medicine with name of child and date medication has been issued on it
- Appointment card

If the level of absence still does not improve a final letter will be sent advising parents / carers that attendance is at the point where school will consider making a referral to the ESS, (Education Support Service) and the likely outcome of this is the issue of a warning notice that any further unauthorised absence within the next 15 school days will result in the issue of a fixed penalty notice, (a fine of up to £120 in respect of each parent), non-payment of which could result in a prosecution under Section 444(1) or (1A) of the Education Act 1996.

The governors, supported by the LA, reserve the right to consider taking legal action against any parents or guardians who repeatedly fail to accept their responsibility for sending their children to school on a regular basis.

Registration and Registers

Registration happens IN THE CLASSROOM. That a child has arrived on school premises, is on their way to the classroom or has a sibling who has been marked present at registration cannot be accepted for the registration 'on time' of a child.

Registration for all children opens at 8.45am and closes at 9.05am. Pupils must be in the classroom between 8.45am and 8.55am to receive a '/' present mark, if they arrive after 8.55am they will be deemed late and may receive an unauthorised code.

Lateness

If a child is not IN THE CLASSROOM before 8.55am or promptly (within 10 minutes) at the end of lunch, they will be LATE for registration and the start of lessons. Arriving IN THE CLASSROOM after 8.55am but before 9.05am in the morning (or within 10mins after lunch in the afternoon) will result in the pupil being marked using an 'L' code (AUTHORISED LATE).

Registers close at 9.05am and 10mins after lunch, if a child arrives after this they will be marked using a 'U' code (UNAUTHORISED).

The 'U' mark counts the same as an 'O' mark and is an UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE on your child's registration/attendance record for that half day session.

Pupils arriving at school after 8.55am will enter via the main doors by the school office and be signed in by the adult accompanying them to school.

If your child arrives LATE more than 6 times in any school year the 'privilege' of school marking this using the code 'L' (AUTHORISED LATE) will be withdrawn and instead the 'U' code (UNAUTHORISED) will be used.

Unauthorised Lateness 'U' and/or Unauthorised Absence 'O' can lead to parents/carers being referred to the Education Investigation Service and parents/carers being liable to Penalty Notices (a fine of up to £120) and/or Magistrate Court proceedings against them (a fine of up to £2,500 plus costs and/or 3 months imprisonment.)

Definition of Children Missing from Education:

Children Missing from Education refers to all children of compulsory school age who:

- * Are on the roll of a school and have been absent for a period of 10 consecutive days and both the school and local authority, have after reasonable enquiry, been unable to establish where they are.
- * Children who are not on the roll of a school or educated otherwise than at school.
- * Children who have been out of any educational provision for a substantial period of time (10 days without a reasonable explanation.)
- * Children who fail to start a new school or appropriate education provision and the school have failed to place the child on their register.

These 'missing' children can be vulnerable. We have a safeguarding duty in respect of these pupils, and as part of this should investigate any unexplained absences. It is essential that all services work together to identify and reengage these children back into appropriate education provision.

Safeguarding-In some cases of absence and/or lack of contact with parents/carers we may need to contact other Agencies (i.e. Social Care, the Police, etc.) to meet our 'Safeguarding Children' responsibilities.

Requests for leave of absence

A leave of absence form can be obtained from the school office. Regular school attendance is essential if children are to maximise their educational opportunities. Interruptions in school attendance disrupt continuity of learning and have a negative impact on attainment.

It is the school's responsibility to provide the best education possible. We can only do this if child/ren attend regularly. There is a direct correlation between achievement and attendance, well before GCSE.

It is a rule of this school that a leave of absence shall not be granted in term time unless there are exceptional reasons, irrespective of the child's overall attendance. Only the head teacher (not the local authority) or his/her designate may authorise such a request and all applications for a leave of absence must be made in writing/on a form provided by the school. Where a parent takes a leave of absence to which the application was refused or takes a leave of absence where no application was made to the school, the issue of a penalty fine (upon a return from such leave) by the local authority may be requested. When requesting a penalty fine the school may calculate the period of days taken within a 12month period.

Section 444(A) of the Education Act 1996 empowers the local authority to issue Penalty Notices for failure to ensure regular school attendance. Parents or carers who take their children on holiday in term time without school's permission or are late returning from an extended holiday, may receive a Penalty Notice fine of £60 per parent per child, which must be paid within 28 days. If payment is made after 21 days but within 28 days, the penalty is increased to £120. Where a fine remains unpaid after 28 days, the matter will be referred to the Borough Solicitor, who will consider instigating criminal proceedings.

As a group of schools in Halesowen we have agreed to abide by the following statement:

In Halesowen we are proud of the work we do with our pupils. We want all of our pupils to learn in a high quality, happy and secure environment. We recognise that attendance and punctuality is paramount in raising standards and pupil attainment.

Halesowen schools cannot grant leave of absence for family holidays, unless is it deemed truly exceptional circumstance. This applies to siblings who attend different Halesowen schools.

School Closures

The academic year is 190 days. Schools also have to have an additional 5 days that they can use for staff training; often called INSET (In Service Training) Days. These days are not part of the 190 days which is every child's free entitlement.

The Headteacher will make every effort to ensure that the school remains open for 190 days. However, in some circumstances, the school may have to close. The Headteacher must always consider the health, safety and welfare of every person who uses the school site, pupils, staff, parents, volunteers and visitors. If at any point, to use the school building would be detrimental to a person or persons' health, safety and welfare, then the Headteacher must close part or all of the school. Such events may be:

- Not enough staff to safely supervise the pupils and ensure the safe running of the school
- Lack of fresh running water and/or toilet facilities
- Lack of appropriate lighting and/or heating
- Damage to the structure of the building e.g. fire, water or weather damage.
- Instruction to close due to a local emergency incident / COVID-19 restriction
- Severe weather - In the event that severe weather is forecast, or is developing, the Headteacher, will consider either closing the school in advance of the school day, closing the school early, or opening the school later than usual. The action taken will always result from consideration of pupils, parents and staff facing 'significant risk of serious injury' in school or whilst travelling to or from school.

Once a decision is made, the Headteacher will endeavour to inform parents of that decision and the details of any arrangements that have been put in place. Parents should always assume that the school will remain open during term time unless they hear otherwise. If the Headteacher decides to close the school, then the register is closed for the day and coded as an enforced school closure. This does not affect a child's attendance record.

Removal of a Child from the School Roll

Parents need to be aware that their child can be removed from the school register. This may occur:

- Following a permanent exclusion
- If, following a period of agreed absence, the child fails to return to school within 10 school days of the agreed return date.
- Have been taken out of school by their parents and are being 'home-educated'
- Have ceased to attend school and no longer live within reasonable distance of the school to which they have been registered.

Monitoring and Review

It is the responsibility of the governors to monitor overall attendance. They will regularly review attendance data and help school leaders focus support on the pupils who need it. The governing body also has the responsibility for this policy, and for seeing that it is carried out. The governors will therefore examine closely the information provided to them, and seek to ensure that our attendance figures are as high as they should be. They will take an active role in attendance improvement, support us to prioritise attendance, and work together with leaders to set our whole school culture.

Class teachers along with the school office will be responsible for monitoring attendance in their class, and for following up absences in the appropriate way. If there is concern about a child's absence, they will contact the school office immediately. If there is a longer-term general worry about the attendance of a particular child, this will be reported to the Deputy Headteacher, who will contact the parents or Carers.

This policy will be reviewed by the governing body every two years, or earlier if considered necessary.

Date of review October 2023

Date of next review September 2025