



# Attendance Policy

Local

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Role Responsible: Head of School/Exec Head

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## Contents Page

Page no	Topic
2	Our Vision Policy Aims
3	The School Promotes Good Attendance The Start of the School Day
4	School Attendance and The Law Understanding Types of Absence
5	Leave of Absence During Term Time Leave for Exceptional Circumstances
6	Unauthorised Absence
7	Excluded Pupils Persistent Absenteeism (PA) Severely Absent Pupils (SA) The Partnership Between Parents and School
8	Absence Procedures
9	Lateness
10	Special Educational Needs/Medical Needs Penalty Notices

## **OUR VISION**

At Humberstone Infant and Junior Academies, we believe that all children should be challenged and encouraged to reach their full potential and have their achievements celebrated. We work in partnership as a learning community to create a learning environment where everyone is valued, cared for and happy. We believe that offering our children a creative and stimulating curriculum based on first hand learning experiences makes learning fun and challenging for all. By building confidence, independence and encouraging risk taking, we are developing important life skills, a lifelong love of learning, and success for all. We have the highest expectations of all our children.

Humberstone Infant and Junior Academies aim to work together with parents in order to ensure the achievement of high levels of attendance and punctuality for all pupils.

For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. It is a rule of these schools that pupils must attend every day, unless there are exceptional circumstances and it is the Head of School, not the parent, who can authorise the absence.

Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any pupil's absence or late arrival disrupts teaching routines and so may affect the learning of others in the same class. Ensuring a child's regular attendance at school is a parental responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

This policy seeks to ensure that all parties involved in the practicalities of school attendance are aware and informed of attendance matters in school and to outline the schools' commitment to attendance matters. It details the responsibilities of individuals and groups involved and the procedures in place to promote and monitor pupil attendance.

## **POLICY GUIDANCE**

This policy has been developed to reflect the statutory guidance set out in the DfE policy document: **Working Together to Improve School Attendance - Statutory Guidance for Schools, from August 19th 2024**

## **POLICY AIMS**

**Our policy aims to raise and maintain levels of attendance by:**

- Promoting a positive and welcoming atmosphere in which pupils feel safe, secure and valued.
- Raising awareness of the importance of good attendance and punctuality
- Ensuring that attendance is monitored effectively and reasons for absences are recorded promptly and consistently.

- Ensuring that all parents and carers are aware of the school's expectations (96% attendance) and protocols in relation to attendance

### **THE SCHOOL PROMOTES GOOD ATTENDANCE BY:**

- Keeping appropriate attendance records and monitoring patterns of absence
- Having clear procedures for attendance which are thorough and well publicised
- Being consistent and effective about the implementation of this policy
- Deciding on the most effective use of staff to implement the system and providing appropriate resources for the tasks to be undertaken effectively.
- Rigorously following up individual cases of unauthorised, prolonged or persistent absence.
- Establishing reasons for absences on the basis of discussions/information from parents/carers
- Consulting with other professionals such as the EWO as necessary
- Celebrating and rewarding excellent or improving attendance and punctuality, e.g. in celebration assemblies
- Publishing whole school/year group/class attendance to the school community.
- Informing Parents/carers of all children if their child's attendance drops below the school's target for attendance which is 96%
- Informing Parents/carers if their child's attendance drops below 96% in writing or if there are other attendance concerns
- Meeting with parents to discuss children's attendance where there are concerns
- Report to parents/carers annually on their child's attendance with the annual school report.
- Work in partnership with the local authority educational welfare office and other agencies to address concerns over attendance

### **THE START OF THE SCHOOL DAY**

**Parents should ensure that children arrive at school before 8:40 am.** Children are marked as Late after 8:50am. Persistent lateness after the register has closed of 10 instances in a 10-week period may result in a penalty notice being issued in accordance with the new DfE guidance on attendance.

- **8:30 am - school gates open** and children arrive in the playground
- **8:40 am - Classroom doors open** in the Infants and pupils go into school with their teacher in key stage 2
- **8:40 am - Registration begins**
- **8:50 am - Registration closes, gates and classroom doors close, pupils arriving after 8:50 am are considered late and will be coded as L**

- **9:00 am** - Pupils are marked as U which means a pupil has arrived in school after the register has closed.

## **SCHOOL ATTENDANCE AND THE LAW**

**“When a parent registers their child at school, they have a legal duty to ensure their child attends school regularly. This means their child must attend school every day that the school is open, except in a small number of allowable circumstances.”**

**DfE - Working Together to Improve School Attendance - Statutory Guidance for Schools, from August 19th 2024**

## **UNDERSTANDING TYPES OF ABSENCE**

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by the parent/carer), as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required. Each half-day is known as a ‘session’

**Authorised absences** are morning or afternoon sessions away from school for a genuine reason such as illness of no more than three days (you will be asked to provide medical evidence for your child if this lasts longer than three days), medical or dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time (you will be asked for evidence of the appointment), emergencies or other unavoidable cause.

**Unauthorised absences** are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no ‘exceptional leave’ has been granted. This type of absence will be referred to the Educational Welfare Officer (EWO) and can lead to legal proceedings which may include issuing each parent with a Penalty Notice for £160, reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days or referring the matter to the Magistrates Court whereby each parent may receive a fine up to £2500 and/or up to 3 months in prison. If you are found guilty in court you will receive a criminal conviction.

***Unauthorised absence Includes:*** However, is not an exhaustive list:

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily e.g. because they had a late night, non-infectious illness or injury that would not affect their ability to learn.
- Absences which have never been properly explained
- Shopping trips
- Looking after other children or children accompanying siblings or parents to medical appointments
- Their own or family birthdays
- Holidays taken during term time without leave, not deemed ‘for exceptional purposes’ by the Head of School- may result in school issuing a penalty notice or if you have previously been issued a Penalty Notice, the school will refer this to the EWO
- Any other leave of absence in term time which has not been agreed

## **LEAVE OF ABSENCE DURING TERM TIME**

There is no entitlement in law for pupils to take time off during the term to go on holiday.

A leave of absence shall not be granted in term time unless there are reasons considered to be exceptional by the Head of School, or Executive Headteacher irrespective of the child's overall attendance. Only the Head of School or Executive Head Teacher may authorise such a request and all applications for leave of absence must be made in writing. Where a parent removes a child when the application for leave was refused or where no application was made to the school, a penalty notice will be issued by the school.

All schools are expected to restrict leave of absence to specific circumstances set out in the school attendance Regulations 2024 which include

- Taking part in a regulated and licensed performance or employment
- Attending an interview for entry to another school
- Study leaves for public examinations
- A temporary timetable change agreed by parents and school

## **LEAVE FOR EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES**

**“Schools can grant a leave of absence for other exceptional circumstances at their discretion. It is for the school to determine the length of time the pupil can be away from school.”**

**DfE - Working Together to Improve School Attendance - Statutory Guidance for Schools, from August 19th 2024**

Leave of absence is granted entirely at the school's discretion. Exceptional circumstances are those considered to be unique and significant and are defined as rare, significant and unavoidable. By unavoidable we mean an event that could not be scheduled at another time during the year. Applications for exceptional leave MUST be made 2 weeks in advance unless there are specific and unavoidable circumstances which prevent this.

**There will be no holiday leave granted during term time.** This is in keeping with the recommendations from the DfE Attendance Guidance for 2024.

**There will be no leave granted for extended holidays, periods of travel during term time, visits to family abroad or to attend weddings etc.** Where pupils fail to return to school after 10 days, following an agreed period of absence or when they fail to provide evidence of when they will return or when pupils no longer live a reasonable distance from school and the school does not have grounds to believe that they will return to school, they may be removed from the school register.

**Leave Granted for religious observance** is considered under exceptional

circumstances. It is expected that this is a day set apart for religious observance by the religious body the parent belongs to. The schools will authorise one day per year for a child to take part in a day set aside for religious observance. This applies equally to pupils of all religious backgrounds. Parents are expected to request this day in advance in writing.

### **UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE INCLUDES, but is not exhaustive:**

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily e.g. because they had a late night or for non-infectious illness or injury that would not affect their ability to learn.
- Absences which have never been properly explained or reported
- Shopping trips or other social or leisure events
- Looking after other children or children accompanying siblings or parents to appointments
- Their own or family birthdays, or other events where leave has not been agreed in advance
- Holidays taken during term time, which may result in school issuing a penalty notice or if you have previously been issued a Penalty Notice, the school will refer this to the EWO
- Periods of travel to visit family, attend weddings or for other purposes. **Parents wishing to travel with their children should do out of term time during the 12-week holiday period available to all pupils.** Parents taking their children out of school for extended periods of time without permission will be subject to a penalty notice and may have their child removed from the school register.
- Any other leave of absence in term time which has not been agreed by the school IN ADVANCE

### **EXCLUDED PUPILS**

Where a pupil is given a fixed term exclusion, this will be recorded as authorised absence.

### **PERSISTENT ABSENTEEISM (PA)**

**Persistent absence is defined as attendance which has fallen below 90%.** The target for all pupils is to achieve attendance above 96% for the school year. Where pupil attendance falls below 96%, parents will be informed in writing that their child's attendance is falling below good levels and will be monitored more closely. Parents will be invited to share any attendance barriers or concerns they are experiencing.

A pupil is defined by the DfE as a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more school sessions across the year for whatever reason. Absence at this level causes considerable damage to a child's education and we need a parent/carer's fullest support and cooperation to tackle this. School will work together with the L.A and parents in order to put support in place to remove any barriers to attendance.

All absences are carefully monitored each day including the reasons that are given for

each absence. If a child has reached the PA mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark we will inform the parent/carer that their child's attendance has fallen into the persistent absence category. PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully. If the pupil's attendance does not improve after the initial letter, the parents/carers will be called to attend a school-based meeting with the school attendance staff to discuss ways to improve attendance. This may include: allocation of additional support or signposting to the School Nurse, Family Support Worker or Social Care.

### **SEVERELY ABSENT PUPILS (SA)**

**Pupils whose attendance falls below or near to 50% are severely absent.** These pupils are likely to need more intensive support from a range of services and a concerted effort will be made by the school to prioritise improving their attendance. This may include referral to specialist agencies, social care or an alternative provision. Where support has been offered but severe absence continues, it is likely to constitute neglect and a referral to social care may be made.

### **THE PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN PARENTS AND SCHOOL**

Parents are legally responsible for ensuring that their children attend school every day. Parental responsibility extends beyond securing regular school attendance. Parents should ensure that their children arrive at school on time, appropriately dressed in school uniform and ready to learn.

Where there are ongoing or emerging concerns regarding a child's attendance, the school will work in partnership with families to ensure the best possible personal and academic outcomes for all its pupils. Where there are issues affecting a child's ability to attend school regularly or on time the school will make early contact with parents and carers and offer support and guidance where appropriate.

This may include:

- Communicating regularly with parents and informing them in writing when their child's attendance falls below the expected standard of 96%
- Addressing barriers to good attendance through the work of the attendance team, pastoral team, mental health first aiders, school safeguarding team, the school counsellor or the SENDCO where appropriate.
- Where attendance levels do not improve after initial contact and offers of support, parents will be offered an attendance meeting with members of the school attendance team and senior leadership team. The purpose of this meeting is to understand and address barriers to good attendance and to set clear expectations and targets for improvement through a school action plan that is agreed between parents and the school
- Where barriers to attendance are outside of the school's remit or control, the school will signpost parents and work in partnership with relevant external agencies and services. This may include Early Help, Social Care, the school nurse, or other more specialist agencies.

- Where attendance does not improve following a parent meeting in school and or support is not engaged with, the school will work with the Education Welfare Officer to decide on an appropriate plan of action.
- This may include parents receiving more formal communication for the EWO service, attendance at a panel meeting and more targeted caseload work.
- Where attendance is persistently below expected standards and not improving despite support and guidance, parents may be referred to the Educational Welfare Officer and can lead to legal proceedings which may include issuing each parent with a Penalty Notice for £160, reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days or referring the matter to the Magistrates Court whereby each parent may receive a fine up to £2500 and/or up to 3 months in prison. If you are found guilty in court you will receive a criminal conviction.

### **ABSENCE PROCEDURES**

If a child is absent from school the parent/carer **must** follow the following procedures:

- Contact the school on the first day of absence before 9.00 am by ParentMail or phone.
- Contact the school on every further day of absence, again before 9.00am
- If your child is not well enough to return to school on the fourth day, provide medical evidence

Ensure that your child returns to school as soon as possible

#### ***If your child is absent we will:***

- Contact you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you (however it is your responsibility to contact us)
- Contact you on the first day of absence to investigate the reason given if school need more information on the nature of the absence
- Inform parents if the absence is authorised or unauthorised
- Contact parents/carers on the third day of absence requesting medical evidence if your child will not be returning to school the next day

### **LATENESS**

Poor punctuality is not acceptable and is disruptive to the school day. If a child misses the start of the day they often miss valuable learning time and also miss out on morning routines which help settle children for the day and provide consistency. Late arriving pupils also disrupt lessons, it can be uncomfortable for the child and can also encourage absence. Good time-keeping is a vital life skill which will help our children as they progress through their school life and out into the wider world.

Registration is carried out electronically after the start of the day which is at 8:40am by class teachers and at the beginning of the afternoon session at 1:00pm. Registers will close at 8.50am and 1:10 pm respectively. After such times, a child will be classed as late and marked as L in the register.

The school will take account of the individual circumstances for each case, but persistent failure to arrive on time without a valid reason will result in a letter to the parents and if necessary a meeting with the Head of School teacher and/or EWO

- Lateness before closure (8.50 am/1:10pm) will be coded L
- Lateness after closure will be coded U and marked as unauthorised absence
- Children returning to school after medical/dental appointments will be coded M.

Children arriving after 8.50am when the school gates are locked, are required to come into school via the School Office accompanied by a parent or carer, the parent/carer will sign them in and provide a reason for their lateness which is recorded.

### **SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS/MEDICAL NEEDS**

Some children face complex barriers to school attendance which involve long term medical conditions, special educational needs or disabilities. The attendance ambitions for these pupils remains as high as it does for all pupils although we recognise that additional support may need to be provided to help children achieve this.

Where pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities, the school will

- Work in partnership with parents to identify the specific barriers to attendance their child is experiencing
- Where applicable, EHCP's to reflect any aspects of provision that support good attendance and identify any further support for attendance that should be included within the recommendations
- Signpost families to further support with establishing school routines
- Consider reasonable adjustments that can be made in school such as, meet and greets, collection by the school minibus, mental health first aid support, access to wellbeing interventions
- Refer to other appropriate agencies such as the school nurse, Early Help and specialist mental health services.
- Work together with other agencies to ensure a joined-up approach that delivers the aims of the intervention within the resources that the school has available
- Where appropriate, the school may seek medical evidence in order to better understand the impact of a child's additional needs on their attendance and how this can be supported.

### **PENALTY NOTICES**

Penalty notices are issued to parents as an alternative to prosecution where they have failed to ensure that their child regularly attends the school they are registered at. The new National Framework for Penalty Notices comes into effect on the 19th August 2024.

- Parents need to be aware that fines may be issued for unauthorised term time leave of 5 or more consecutive days or fewer days where this has happened before
- Penalty notices will be considered where there are 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a 10-week period. (equivalent to 5 school days) These sessions DO NOT have to be consecutive
- The first time a penalty notice is issued the amount will be a fine of £160 per parent, per child, (reduced to £80 per parent per child if paid within 28 days) For example two parents take their two children out of school for 2 weeks during term time without permission. The fine will be £320 for each parent.
- The second time within 3 years that a penalty notice is issued there will be no option for early payment and the reduced £80 fine,
- The third time within 3 years that an offence is committed for taking unauthorised leave, the case will be taken to magistrates' court and the fine can be up to £2500 per parent, per child.