



HEDINGHAM SCHOOL
ACHIEVEMENT & EXCELLENCE

ATTENDANCE POLICY

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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.

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 tutor. Morning registration starts at 8.40am and closes at 9.00am. Any arrivals after this time will be classified as late (code L). Arrivals after 9.00am may be recorded as unauthorised absence (code U). Students who arrive after 9.00am must sign in using the late book at the school office. Afternoon registration takes place at the beginning of period 4 (12.20pm) and is recorded by the class teacher.
- School may implement a detention when a student arrives late to registration, after registers have closed or if students arrive late to lessons during the day.
- 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).
- 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 tutor time and assemblies emphasising that there is a clear link between excellent attendance and higher academic achievement. Students will be recognised and praised for their attendance throughout the academic year. Full attendance or their best possible attendance in light of individual circumstances (e.g. bereavement or medical needs) will be recognised at the annual Awards Evening.

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 9am.

- 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. Morning registration begins at 8.40am and afternoon registration is taken at 12.20pm. The last lesson starts at 2.10pm.
- Any student who arrives after registration has closed must sign in using the late book at the school office providing evidence as to why they are late. A detention may be set for students that arrive after 8.40am.
- 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.

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.