



The Heys School

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1. INTRODUCTION

At The Heys School, we strive to raise achievement and enjoyment for all. Our Aim is that all students have the opportunity to maximise their potential and become equipped for their next stage of education, training or employment.

If a student does not attend school regularly, the potential to access a bright and purposeful future significantly diminishes. Government legislation states that both Schools and Parents have a Legal responsibility to ensure that all students attend school regularly, and punctually and are able to access full-time education.

All staff at The Heys School are responsible for attendance.

2. WHY REGULAR ATTENDANCE IS SO IMPORTANT?

Excellent attendance ensures that students have access to the widest range of opportunities when they leave school. For our students to gain the greatest benefits from their education it is vital they attend school regularly and arrive at school on time every day.

It is our aim to support students to achieve 100% attendance and for it to remain higher than 96%. **Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning and can affect their social and emotional well-being.** Any student absence can also disrupt teaching routines and therefore can also affect the learning of others in the same classroom.

There is a clear link between attendance and attainment in GCSE exams. Research shows:

- 6 out of 10 students with over 95% attendance gain 5 or more GCSE 9-4 Grades.
- Only 1 in 10 students who have attendance under 95% gain 5 GCSE 9-4 grades.
- 2 in every 10 students with poor attendance leave school with no qualifications.

If a student misses on average half a day over each two-week period, they will fall below 95% attendance.

3. SAFEGUARDING AND ATTENDANCE

Attending school every day reduces the chances of children and young people becoming vulnerable to anti-social behaviour, youth crime and harm. Students who have a low percentage of attendance can begin to lack confidence and feel isolated in a school environment.

Safeguarding the interests of each child is everyone's responsibility. As a school, we safeguard your children, and we promote their welfare and future life opportunities for them by:

- Expecting regular attendance at school
- Having a clear behaviour policy
- Ensuring health and safety within the school
- Allowing them access to a broad and balanced curriculum ☑ Having a clear anti-bullying policy ☑ Having a robust safeguarding policy
- Being inclusive of all students to ensure that every child can feel a sense of belonging.
- Teaching children how to be safe.

The school reserves the right to invite parents into the school to discuss attendance issues and any potential safeguarding concerns. We do this to add a support package in place for the child and their family. In addition, if the school suspect that a student may be at potential risk, these concerns will be passed on to the appropriate external agencies such as Children's services or the police. Where appropriate parents/carers will be informed if any referral needs to be made.

Failure to attend school on a regular basis is considered a safeguarding concern.

4. PARENTS AND CARERS

Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 places a legal duty on parents to ensure their children of compulsory school age receive sufficient full-time education.

If a pupil fails to attend school regularly the local authority can issue a penalty notice fine or prosecute the parents to address this.

To make sure parents are fully informed with regard to their child's attendance we will:

- Employ a dedicated Education Welfare Officer to support students and parents in maintaining high levels of attendance.
- Send regular attendance letters if a student's attendance drops below 96%
- Send regular letters if a student's punctuality is consistently poor.
- Send regular letters if attendance is a cause for concern and if medical evidence is required to authorise any future absences.
- Identify students with attendance concerns and put appropriate intervention or support into place.
- Present attendance certificates and prizes during rewards assemblies to celebrate excellent attendance.
- Report attendance as part of the student school reports

5. ABSENCES FROM SCHOOL

School is legally required to record each student's attendance twice daily during term time. The school calendar each year is posted on the website. Any absence from school will be recorded as **Unauthorised** or **Authorised**. Once a parent or carer has informed the school of the reason for absence it is the schools' responsibility (**not the parent**) to classify the absence.

6. INFORMING OF ABSENCE FROM SCHOOL

If a child is absent from school, parents/carers are expected to:

- Telephone the school and speak to the attendance team on the attendance line.

This should take place as early as possible on the first day and on each subsequent day of absence. School withholds the right to request evidence to support absence reported by a parent/carers. This may be requested verbally or in writing. It is the parent's responsibility to provide this within a 2-week period, if not the absence may not be authorised.

Whilst any child may be absent from school because they are genuinely ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance need to be resolved as soon as possible by the school, parents, and the child. If parents have concerns that their child is reluctant to attend and may be trying to give reasons to not attend, speak to the child and school straight away. If a child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and usually makes things worse.

The school and parents/ carers should work together to support the increase in attendance for the child concerned.

If a student is absent from school and no contact has been made by a parent/carers school will:

- Send out a text message/email to inform the parents/carers that their child has not attended registration and to contact the school.
- In most instances call parents/carers or other contact for the student.
- If no contact is made a member of the pastoral team may conduct a home visit to carry out a welfare check on the same day.
- By the third day of absence, any child will have received a home visit from a member of the pastoral team.
- Where the absence becomes a safeguarding concern school will contact the appropriate outside agencies such as children's services, police, and Child Missing in Education Team and the Early Intervention Team.
- Send letters requesting reasons for absences.

In cases where attendance is affected by a high level of sickness school will refer the student to the school nursing team or the nurse practitioner for further advice.

7. AUTHORISED ABSENCES

An absence will be authorised if it is deemed to be unavoidable.

Illness will be authorised if a parent/carer follows the procedure to report the illness, and the school deems it an appropriate reason to remain off school. Depending on the illness type and length of absence school may request evidence to support them in authorising the absence such as an appointment card, a copy of a prescription, medication packaging or a doctor's note. All medical evidence should have the full name of the student and the date it was given/prescribed. If the evidence does not support the absence the pastoral year lead will make a phone call to write to parents.

All routine medical and dental appointments should be made outside of school hours. Parents must try to book appointments during school holidays. Where this is unavoidable parents must provide evidence of the appointment or it will not be authorised. Medical appointments can only be authorised for half a day period, and it is recommended that students attend school before and after their appointment. This will ensure minimum impact on their education and not affect their attendance record.

Term-time holidays will not be authorised unless under exceptional circumstances. A 'leave of absence in term time' form must be filled out with a full explanation outlining why the child needs to take time out of school. This must be handed in to the pastoral year lead, 6 weeks in advance of the request. The school will send a written response to this request. **It is up to the school to determine if a leave of absence will be authorised.** If a leave of absence isn't authorised and is still taken this could trigger a Warning Penalty Notice or a fine from the Local Authority.

If there are other reasons for a child's absence and a parent feels it is classed as unavoidable and exceptional circumstance, they must contact the school in advance to discuss. For example, work-related interviews, supervised sporting activities, performing arts performances and religious worship.

The Heys School acknowledges and embraces the multi-faith nature of our school. We recognise that religious festivals may fall outside school holidays, and this necessitates consideration for authorised absence. **Please note only 1-day religious observance will be authorised.**

8. UNAUTHORISED ABSENCES

It is important for parents and carers to know that the school will not authorise ANY absences unless the absence is deemed unavoidable.

An unauthorised absence is where the school is not satisfied with the reason for absences such as:

- Unauthorised holiday
- Truancy
- Looking after family members
- Accompanying family members to a medical appointment
- Illness that would not stop them from attending school.
- Taking a full day off for a medical appointment.
- No contact to explain the reason for absence within 1 week.

Attendance and absence are closely monitored by the school. If a student reaches an unacceptable level of attendance/absence the school will send a warning penalty notice letter to parents/carers. If there is no improvement after this, the school will inform the local authority who will issue a fixed penalty notice.

9. PERSISTENT ABSENCE

A student becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year **for any reason**. Absence at this level causes considerable damage to a student's education and prospects therefore, we need parent's full support and cooperation to tackle this.

The school has a responsibility to reduce the number of persistent absentees to ensure the best possible outcomes and futures for their students. Attendance is monitored closely by the school and any student who reaches persistent absence will be offered interventions by the school, for example:

- Mentoring by form tutors or a member of the pastoral team
- Parental meetings with the attendance team or relevant Year team
- Attendance contracts done with students and parents
- Early help forms may be completed to refer to outside agencies such as the early intervention team.

If unauthorised absence continues despite the school's attempts to resolve the matter, the local authority may take further legal action and prosecute parents for the offence of failing to ensure regular attendance at school (section 444 of the Education Act 1996). **A person found guilty of such an offence can receive a fine of up to £2,500 and or up to three months imprisonment.**

10. PUNCTUALITY

Poor punctuality is not acceptable.

Students are expected to arrive at school and be in their form rooms by 8:35 a.m. Any student who arrives after 8:55 a.m. must sign in at student services and will be marked on the register as late and receive an appropriate sanction as per the Behaviour Policy.

If a student arrives after the register has closed (**9:05 a.m.**) the student will be marked with the letter 'U'. This stands for unauthorised late. Arriving after the register closes counts as a half-day absence.

If there is an unavoidable reason why your child is late for school, contact the school as soon as possible.

Students who are persistently late will not be eligible for reward trips or activities throughout the school year.

11. SUPPORT SYSTEMS

We recognise that poor attendance is often an indication of difficulties in the child's life. This may be related to problems at home and or in school. Parents and carers should make the school aware of any difficulties or changes in circumstances that may affect their child's attendance and/or behaviour in school. For example, bereavement, divorce or separation and incidents of domestic abuse.

This will help the school identify any additional support that may be required. We also recognise that some students are more likely to require additional support to attain good attendance for example those students with special educational needs those with physical or mental health needs migrant and refugee students and looked after children.

The school will implement a range of strategies to support improved attendance. Strategies used may include:

- Reward systems
- Discussions with parents and students
- Attendance panels with governors and senior leaders
- Parenting contracts
- Attendance report cards
- Referrals to support agencies
- Behaviour support