

# Attendance Policy

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Policy Author: Eve Bartlet – Director of Education

Ratified by: Anita Cameron – Executive Headteacher

Outcome: The purpose of the plan is to:

Promoting and modelling good attendance and reducing absence, including persistent absence.

Ensuring every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled.

Acting early to address patterns of absence.

Rewarding regular attendance.

Helm Academy

EMPOWERING MINDS, NAVIGATING FUTURES

This policy is one of a series of school policies that, taken together, are designed to form a comprehensive statement of the school's aspiration to provide an outstanding education for each of its students and of the mechanisms and procedures in place to achieve this. Accordingly, this policy should be read alongside these policies. In particular it should be read in conjunction with the policies covering equality and diversity, Health and Safety, safeguarding and child protection.

All of these policies have been written, not simply to meet statutory and other requirements, but to enable and evidence the work that the whole school is undertaking to ensure the implementation of its core values.

While this current policy document may be referred to elsewhere in Helm Academy Virtual School documentation, including particulars of employment, it is non-contractual.

**Policy Issues and Updates**

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# Helm Academy

EMPOWERING MINDS, NAVIGATING FUTURES

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## Aims

We are committed to meeting our obligations with regards to school attendance by:

- ✓ Promoting and modelling good attendance and reducing absence, including persistent absence.
- ✓ Ensuring every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled.
- ✓ Acting early to address patterns of absence.
- ✓ Rewarding regular attendance.

Through our Family Liaison Lead, we will also support parents to perform their legal duty to ensure their children of compulsory school age attend regularly and will promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

## Legislation and guidance

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)
- DfE (2024) 'Working together to improve school attendance'
- DfE (2016) 'Children missing education'
- DfE 'Keeping children safe in education (KCSiE)'
- DfE (2023) 'Providing remote education'

## Definitions

The school defines "absence" as:

- ✓ Not attending school for any reason.

The school defines an "authorised absence" as:

- ✓ 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 a family emergency.

The school defines an "unauthorised absence" as:

- ✓ Parents keeping children away from school unnecessarily or without reason.
- ✓ Truancy before or during the school day.
- ✓ Absences which have not been properly explained.
- ✓ Absence due to shopping, looking after other children or birthdays.
- ✓ Leaving school for no reason during the day.

The School defines "persistent absenteeism (PA)" as:

- ✓ Missing 15 percent or more of schooling across the academic year for any reason.

## Roles and responsibilities

### **The Governing Body**

- ✓ Promoting the importance of school attendance across the schools with the use and implementation of policies and ethos
- ✓ Making sure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties
- ✓ Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data
- ✓ Monitoring attendance figures for the whole group
- ✓ Making sure the schools are providing staff with adequate training on attendance
- ✓ Holding the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy

The Headteacher is responsible for monitoring attendance figures for the whole school. They also hold the Senior Leadership Team to account for the implementation of this policy.

### **The Deputy Head Teacher**

The is Deputy Head Teacher responsible for:

- ✓ Day to day implementation and management of this policy at the school.
- ✓ Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to wider SLT and Headteacher.
- ✓ Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary.

### **The Designated Safeguarding Lead/Deputy DSLs**

The DSL will:

- ✓ Monitor attendance data across the School and at an individual pupil level where there is a concern.
- ✓ Report concerns about attendance to the Headteacher.
- ✓ Work with the Deputy Head Teacher, Pupil Wellbeing Lead and Local Authority Attendance Team to tackle persistent absence.
- ✓ Arrange calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues.
- ✓ Advise the Headteacher when/whether to issue fixed-penalty notices.

### **Staff, including teachers, support staff and volunteers will be responsible for:**

- ✓ Following the attendance policy, and for ensuring pupils do so too. They will also be responsible for ensuring the policy is implemented fairly and consistently.
- ✓ 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.
- ✓ Designated members of staff will take the attendance register at the start of each school day and at the start of each afternoon session.

### **School office staff**

Recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes.

School office staff are expected to take calls from parents about absence and record it on the school system. Using their professional judgement and knowledge of individual pupils, to actively seek out on the day the DSL, Deputy DSL, Form Tutor or Headteacher if they believe there may be any welfare concerns.

## Recording attendance

### **Attendance register**

We will keep an attendance register and place all pupils onto this register. Pastoral Support staff (taxi duty) are responsible for taking the attendance register during morning arrival and tutors take the register during afternoon tutor time. Morning Pastoral Support staff pass information on to the reception team, to input on to our School MIS. Any unknown absences will be forwarded to our Family Liaison Lead to follow up. This will be completed by 9:30.

Staff will mark whether every pupil is:

- ✓ Present.
- ✓ Attending an approved off-site educational activity.
- ✓ Absent.
- ✓ Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

- ✓ The original entry.
- ✓ The amended entry.
- ✓ The reason for the amendment.
- ✓ The date on which the amendment was made.
- ✓ The name and position of the person who made the amendment.

We will keep every entry on the attendance register for three years after the date on which the entry was made.

Pupils must arrive in school by 0830 on each school day. The school is open to all pupils at 0800 each morning.

The register for the first session will be taken at 08:30 and will be kept open until 08:45. The register for the second session will be taken at 13:10 and will be kept open until 13:30; on Friday afternoons between 13:00 and 13:10.

Our receptionist will follow up any unknown absence by 9:30 We will follow up any absences to:

- ✓ Ascertain the reason.
- ✓ Ensure the proper safeguarding action is taken.
- ✓ Identify whether the absence is approved or not; and,
- ✓ Identify the correct code to use before entering it on to the school's electronic register, or management information system which is used to download data to the School Census.

See Appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes.

### **Unplanned absence**

The pupil's parent/carer must notify the school by telephone on the first day of an unplanned absence by 08:45 or as soon as practically possible (see also Section 7). If the notification is by email the school office may confirm the absence by telephone.

We will mark absence due to illness as authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may ask the pupil's parent/carer to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

If the School is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised, and parents/carers will be notified of this in advance.

### **Planned absence**

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the pupil's parent/carer notifies the school in advance of the appointment prior to the appointment or before 08:45 on the morning of the appointment.

However, we encourage parents/carers to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

The pupil's parent/carer must also apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence. Go to Section 6 to find out which term-time absences the school can authorise.

### **Lateness and punctuality**

A pupil who arrives late:

- ✓ Before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code.
- ✓ After the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code.

### **Following up absence**

Where any child we expect to attend school does not attend, or stops attending, the Family Liaison Lead will:

- ✓ Contact the parent/carer to ascertain the reason and explore ways in which the parent/carer can be supported, if necessary.
- ✓ Ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary.
- ✓ Identify whether the absence is approved or not.
- ✓ Identify the correct attendance code to use.

### **Reporting to parents**

Parents/carers will be advised of the pupil's previous term's attendance data through a termly report. The report will identify trends of any periods of absence, if applicable, and record actions and strategies employed to support the improvement of the pupil's attendance if required.

## **Authorised and unauthorised absence**

### **Approval for term-time absence**

The Headteacher will only grant a leave of absence to pupils during term time if they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'. A leave of absence is granted at the Head Teacher's discretion.

The School considers each application for term-time absence individually, considering the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request.

For any request for leave of absence during term-time, we ask that parents complete a 'request for leave of absence' form and submit this in advance of the absence.

### **Valid reasons for authorised absence**

- ✓ Illness and medical/dental appointments (see Sections 5.2 and 5.3 for more detail).
- ✓ Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong. If necessary, the School will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart.
- ✓ Traveller pupils travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh Gypsies, Irish and Scottish Travelers, Showmen (fairground people) and Circus people, Bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and New Travelers. Absence may be authorised only when a Traveler family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the School, but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision.
- ✓ Possible approval of term time holiday.
- ✓ Study Leave.
- ✓ Flexi-Schooling requests to support pupils back into full time education, following a period(s) out of School.

### **Reducing persistent absence**

The Deputy Head, Pastoral Lead and form Tutor will monitor all pupil attendance on a weekly basis, and report back to the Headteacher any notable cases of unauthorised or persistent absences.

Concerns of regular absences, leading up to persistent absences will be addressed as soon as a pattern or trend is identified. The attendance management will initially involve a call home, a letter of support, a letter of concern followed by a home visit, then School visit with a member of the SLT/Head Teacher.

Persistent absences will be discussed, and working closely with the family and the pupil, the Family Liaison Lead will agree a programme of actions and strategies to support the pupil and the family to improved attendance. These strategies may include daily reviews, support pickups and drop offs, reward-based incentives, and positive reinforcement and encouragement.

### **Legal sanctions**

The School or Local Authority can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age.

In the unlikely event that the School's attendance support strategies have not been effective or not implemented, the School reserves the right to issue a fine, or penalty notice, each parent must pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the Local Authority. Penalty notices can be issued by the Headteacher, Local Authority officer or the Police.

The decision on whether to issue a penalty notice may take into account:

- ✓ The number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year.
- ✓ One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission.
- ✓ Where an excluded pupil is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason
- ✓ If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute or withdraw the notice.



## Strategies for promoting attendance

The promotion and benefits of regular attendance will be structured, planned, and delivered through tutor time, assemblies, Life Skills and PSHE learning.

- ✓ Pupils demonstrating regular attendance in excess of 98% over a half term will participate in an incentive reward scheme to motivate their continued high levels of attendance.
- ✓ Pupils who show improved attendance will also participate in an incentive reward scheme to motivate their continued increasing levels of attendance.
- ✓ According to the needs of the pupil, their attendance will be publicly or privately celebrated.

## Attendance monitoring

The Headteacher at our school monitors pupil absence on a weekly basis. A pupil's parent/carer is expected to call the School in the morning if their child is going to be absent due to ill health (see Section 5.2).

If a pupil's absence over a six-week period goes above three days, the School will contact the parent/carer of the pupil to discuss the reasons for this, if a particular cause is not known/recorded, or a pattern is emerging.

If a pupil's absence continues to rise after contacting their parent/carer, we will consider involving the Local Authority Attendance Team.

The persistent absence threshold is 15%. If a pupil's individual overall absence rate is greater than or equal to 15%, the pupil will be classified as a persistent absentee.

Pupil-level absence data will be collected each term and published at national and Local Authority level through the DfE's School Absence National Statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. The School will compare attendance data to the national average and share this with the Board of Directors.

## Review of implementation

The implementation of this Policy is reviewed annually by the school's Senior Leadership Team in consultation with staff and a report is made to the Governance Body.

The school may submit to The Helm Academy Board proposals for amendments to this Policy.

## Links with other policies

This policy links to the following policies:

Child protection and safeguarding policy

Positive behaviour support policy

## Appendix 1: Attendance codes

The following codes are taken from the DfE's guidance on school attendance.

Code	SIMS Description	DfE Description / Explanation
/	Present (AM)	Present for school morning session
\	Present (PM)	Present for school afternoon session
B	Attending any other Approved Education Activity	Attending any other approved educational activity. Not to be used for Virtual learning
C	Other authorised circumstances	Leave absence for exceptional circumstance
C1	Leave of absence – regulated performance	Leave of absence for the purpose of participating in a regulated performance or undertaking regulated employment abroad.
C2	Leave of absence – Temporary part-time timetable	Leave of absence for a compulsory school age pupil subject to a part-time timetable
D	Dual registered	Dual registered to another school
E	Suspended or excluded without alternative provision	Suspended or permanently excluded and no alternative provision
G	Family holiday (not agreed)	Unauthorised absence as pupil on a family holiday, not agreed, or is taking days more than an agreed family holiday
I	Illness	Illness (not medical or dental appointment)
J1	Leave of absence – Interview for employment or transfer to another educational institution	Leave of absence for the purpose of attending an interview for employment or for admission to another educational institution
K	Alternative provision provided by LA	Attending education provision arranged by the local authority
L	Late (before registers closed)	Late arrival before the register closed
M	Medical or dental appointment	Leave of absence for the purpose of attending a medical or dental appointment
N	No reason yet provided for absence	Reason absence not yet established
O	Absence in other or unknown circumstance	Absence in other or unknown circumstance
P	Participating in sports activity	Participating in sports activity
Q	Unable to attend – lack of access arrangements	Unable to attend the school because of lack of access arrangements
R	Religious observance	Religious observance
S	Study leave for public examination	Study leave for public examination
T	Traveling with parent for occupational purposes	Traveling with parent for occupational purposes
U	Late (after registers closed)	Late (after registers closed)
V	Attending an educational visit or trip	Attending an educational visit or trip
W	Attending work experience	Attending work experience

X	Not required to attend non-compulsory school age pupil	Not required to attend non-compulsory school age pupil
Y1	Unable to attend – Transport not available	Unable to attend due to transport normally provided not being provided
Y2	Unable to attend – widespread travel emergency	Unable to attend due to widespread disruption to travel
Y3	Unable to attend – unavoidable partial closure	Unable to attend due to part of the school premises being closed.
Y4	Unable to attend – unavoidable full closure	Unable to attend due to the whole schools' site being unexpectedly closed
Y5	Unable to attend – criminal justice detention	Unable to attend as pupil is in criminal justice detention
Y6	Unable to attend – Public Health Guidance / Law	Unable to attend in accordance with public health guidance or law
Y7	Unable to attend – Unavoidable other than Y1-Y6	Unable to attend because of any other unavoidable cause.
Z	Pupil not on roll	Prospective pupil not on admission requester
#	Planned whole school closure	Planned whole school closure

This is a list of codes where a reason will be required with the attendance code:

Code	SIMS Description	DfE Description / Explanation
B	Educated off-site (not Dual-Reg)	Attending any other approved educational facility.
K	Alternative provision provided by the LA	Attending education provision arranged by the local authority
Y7	Unable to attend – Unavoidable other than Y1-Y6	Unable to attend because of any other unavoidable cause.

Retired Codes no longer in use after 19<sup>th</sup> August 2024

Code	SIMS Description	DfE Description / Explanation
H	Family Holiday (agreed)	Authorised absence due to agreed family holiday.
J	Interview	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances – not counted in possible attendance
Y	Unable to attend due to an exceptional circumstance	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances – not counted in possible attendance