ATTENDANCE AND ABSENCE POLICY (PUPILS)

THIS POLICY APPLIES TO ALL TRUST SCHOOLS/ACADEMIES

Document Management	
Updated Policy Approved	May 2024
Next Review Date	May 2025
Version	3.0
Approving Committee	Distinctiveness and Personal Development Committee

Contents

Policy Updates

Date	Page	Policy Updates
October 2021	New policy	
December 2022	3	Expansion and re-wording of the Statement of Intent
December 2022	5	Changes in legislation/guidance: The Education Act 2011 updated (was 2002) DfE (2020) 'School Attendance' now withdrawn DfE (2021) 'Improving School Attendance: Support for Schools and Local Authorities' now withdrawn DfE (2022) 'Working together to improve school attendance' now implemented to replace the above DfE (2022) 'Keeping Children Safe in Education 2022' updated (was 2021)
December 2022	5	Changes in the name of Trust policy: Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy renamed 'Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy' Complaints Procedures and Policy renamed 'Complaints Policy and Procedure'
December 2022	5	Trust policy added to Legal Framework: Special Educational Needs and Disability Policy Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions and Administering Medication Policy Student Mental Health and Well-Being Policy
December 2022	6	Change of wording in LGC responsibilities: Handling complaints regarding this policy as outlined in the Complaints Procedure and Policy now renamed Complaints Policy and Procedure.
December 2022	6	Added LGC responsibilities: Promoting the importance of good/high attendance
December 2022	6	Added headteacher/principal responsibilities: Arranging attendance training
December 2022	12	Additions/amendments to PA
December 2022	13	Additions to absence procedures/parental responsibilities
December 2022	19	Changes/additions to Appointments and parental responsibilities
October 2023	Whole policy	Updated inline with the Trust Scheme of Delegation
January 2024	6	1 - Legal framework updated to reflect new legislation and applicable Trust policies
January 2024	12	7.2 - Point updated to reflect where absence procedures can be found (school/academy website)
April 2024	6	Our Trust Vision and Values added
April 2024	16	Appendix removed - attendance management procedures to be published as a stand-alone document moving forward

This policy has been approved by:			
Signed	*Chair of the Distinctiveness and Personal Development Committee*	**Date**	

Statement of Intent

Heartwood Learning Trust (HLT) is committed to a safe, welcoming and inclusive learning environment, in which all our pupils are supported to flourish and will thrive and to live life in all its fullness.

Our school/academy believes that in order to facilitate teaching and learning, good attendance is essential. Pupils cannot achieve their full potential if they do not regularly attend school.

The school/academy understands that barriers to attendance are complex, and that some pupils may find it harder than others to attend school. Reducing barriers to education, the school/academy will prioritise cultivating a safe and supportive environment for pupils, as well as strong and trusting relationships with pupils and parents.

The school/academy recognises how improvements in other areas – such as the curriculum, behaviour standards, bullying, SEND support, pastoral support, and the effective use of resources can have on improving pupil attendance.

We are committed to meeting our obligations with regard to school/academy attendance by:
- Ensuring the Trust's Attendance and Absence Policy is clear and can be easily understood by all staff, parents/carers and pupils.
- Promoting and modelling high attendance and its benefits.
- Recognising and rewarding regular attendance.
- Reducing significant and persistent absence.
- Regularly monitoring and analysing attendance and absence data to identify specific pupils or cohorts that may require additional support.
- Ensuring every pupil has equal rights to access to full-time education and is treated fairly.
- Building a good rapport with families to overcome barriers to attendance.
- Working collaboratively with other schools/academies in the area, as well as external agencies as appropriate.
- Using early intervention strategies and working alongside external agencies to ensure the health and safety of our pupils and to promote safeguarding.

Our Trust Vision

To provide environments where children and young people can thrive.
Life in all its fullness - a place to thrive

Our ambition as a fully inclusive Trust of Church of England schools/academies, including an ecumenical Anglican/Methodist school and community schools/academies, is for all our learners to flourish and to thrive in all aspects of their academic and personal development on their personal spiritual journey; to experience "life in all its fullness", through our Trust values of Respect, Teamwork and Kindness.

Our Trust vision is closely aligned to the Church of England Vision for Education, of 'life in all its fullness' at its heart, for the common good of the whole community. We wish as a Trust to;

- Educate for wisdom, knowledge and skills: enabling our learners to build confidence and delight in seeking wisdom and knowledge and developing talents in all areas of life.
- Educate for hope and aspiration: to enable renewal, to support our learners to cope wisely when things go wrong, opening horizons and guiding learners to achieve their academic and personal goals.
- Educate for community and living well together: a core focus on positive respectful relationships in our schools, working in partnership in our communities and flourishing together.
- Educate for dignity and respect: for all our learners to respect the value and preciousness of each person, treating each person as a unique individual of inherent worth.

Our Trust vision is also aligned to the York Diocesan Board of Education (YDBE) vision of seeking to build flourishing communities in schools/academies, parishes and homes. We are part of the wider family of DIocesan schools/academies, churches and communities in the Diocese of York and enjoy working collaboratively together to further enhance the academic and personal development of young people.

Our Trust Values
Respect, Teamwork, Kindness

A respectful and inclusive community, with a culture of thankfulness and appreciation, where we celebrate equality and diversity.	High quality first teaching across all of our schools, in every learning session, without exception.	A broad and balanced educational offer which develops all pupils academically, practically, emotionally, socially and spiritually, leading to great outcomes.	Resilient, sustainable and ethical leadership at all levels of the organisation.

1.   Legal Framework

1.1   This policy has due regard to all relevant **legislation** and **statutory and non-statutory guidance** including, but not limited to, the following:

- Education Act 1996
- The Education and Inspections Act 2006
- Equality Act 2010
- The Education Act 2011
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (and 2010, 2011, 2013, 2016 amendments)
- DfE (2016) 'Children Missing Education'
- DfE (2023) 'Keeping Children Safe in Education 2023'
- DfE (2022) 'Working together to improve school attendance'
- DfE (2023) Summary of responsibilities where a mental health issue is affecting attendance

1.2   This policy operates in conjunction with the following **Trust** policies:

- Complaints Policy and Procedure
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Policy
- Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions and Administering Medication Policy
- Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) Policy
- Pupils with Health Needs who cannot attend School Policy

2.   Definitions

The following definitions apply for the purposes of this policy:

2.1   Absence:

- Arrival at the school/academy after the register has closed
- Not attending the registered school/academy for any reason

2.2   Authorised Absence

- An absence for sickness and/or illness (both physical and mental health related) for which the school/academy has granted leave
- Medical or dental appointment which inevitably fall during school time, for which the school/academy has granted leave
- Religious or cultural observances for which the school/academy has granted leave
- An absence due to a family emergency

2.3   Unauthorised Absence

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily or without reason
- Truancy before or during the school day
- Absences which have never been properly explained

- Arrival at the school/academy after the register has closed
- Absence due to shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- Absences due to day trips and holidays in term-time which have not been agreed
- Leaving the school/academy for no reason during the school day

2.4   Persistent Absenteeism:
- Missing 10% or more of schooling across the year for any reason

2.5   Missing Education
- Not registered at a school/academy and not receiving suitable education in a setting other than a school/academy

3.   Roles and Responsibilities

3.1   The Local Governing Committee (LGC) has overall responsibility for:
- Monitoring the implementation of this policy and all relevant procedures.
- Monitoring attendance figures for the whole school.
- Overseeing complaints regarding this policy as outlined in the Complaints Policy and Procedure.
- Having regard to 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' when making arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

3.2   The Headteacher/Principal is responsible for:
- The day to day implementation and management of this policy and all relevant procedures across the school/academy.
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to the LGC.
- Ensuring that all parents/carers are aware of the school/academy's attendance expectations and procedures.
- Working with parents/carers and providing support to parents/carers to improve attendance and reduce persistent absence.
- Ensuring that every pupil has access to full-time education acting as early as possible to address patterns of absence through support and intervention.
- Arranging attendance training for any staff as needed/appropriate to their role to ensure they are aware of the legal requirements and Trust policies concerning attendance.
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils.
- Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where appropriate and necessary.
- Promoting the importance of good/high attendance through the school/academy's ethos.

The Headteacher/Principal is responsible for informing the Local Authority of any pupil being removed from the admission and attendance registers if they:
- Are being educated from home (Elective Home Education - EHE).
- No longer live within a reasonable distance of the registered school.
- Have an authorised medical note.
- Are in custody for a period of more than four months and the Headteacher/Principal does not reasonably believe that they will be returning.

- Have been permanently excluded.

3.3 Staff are responsible for:
- Following the policy and supporting pupils to do so.
- Ensuring this 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.
- Where designated, taking the attendance register at the relevant times during the school/academy day.
- Promoting the importance of good/high attendance through the school/academy's ethos.

3.4 Parents/carers are responsible for:
- Treating staff with respect.
- Providing accurate and up-to-date contact details.
- Providing the school/academy with more than one emergency contact number.
- Updating the school/academy if their details change.
- The attendance of their children at the school/academy.
- Promoting good attendance with their children.
- Communicating with the school/academy about possible circumstances which may affect their child's attendance or require support.
- Engaging with support that the school/academy has put in place to improve attendance.

3.5 Pupils are responsible for:
- Attending their school/academy every day they are required to.
- Arriving punctually at the school/academy.
- Attending all of their lessons and any agreed activities when at the school/academy.

4. Recording Attendance

4.1 Attendance and Admissions Register

The school/academy has high expectations for pupils' attendance and punctuality, and ensures that these expectations are communicated regularly to parents/carers and pupils.

Pupils are expected to attend school every day they are required to be at school, for the duration of the school day and to attend every timetabled lesson.

The school/academy will keep an attendance register and an admissions register, and place all pupils onto both registers. The Headteacher/Principal will be responsible for the management of this administration across the school/academy.

The attendance register will be taken at the beginning of each morning session and once during each afternoon session.

The attendance register 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

Only DfE approved attendance codes should be used and DFE guidance followed.

4.2 Unplanned Absence

The pupil's parent/carer must notify the school/academy on the first day of an unplanned absence as soon as practicable.

The school/academy will mark absence due to illness as authorised unless the school/academy has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness. In such cases where the pupil's level of attendance is less than 90%, medical evidence may be requested at the discretion of the school/academy.

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

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

4.3 Planned Absence

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the pupil's parent/carer notifies the school/academy in advance of the appointment.

The school/academy, however, encourages 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. Section 5 outlines which term-time absences the school can authorise.

4.4 Lateness and Punctuality

The school/academy will regard punctuality as of the utmost importance and lateness will not be tolerated.

4.5 Truancy

Truancy will be considered as any absence of part, or all, of one or more days from the school/academy, during which the school/academy has not been notified of the cause behind such absence.

All staff will be actively engaged in supporting the regular attendance of pupils, and understand the importance of continuity in each pupil's learning.

All pupils are expected to be in their classes on time. Any pupil with permission to leave the school/academy during the day must sign out at reception and sign back in again on their return.

Immediate action will be taken when there are any concerns that a pupil might be truanting. If truancy is suspected, the Headteacher/Principal is notified and they will contact the parent/carer in order to assess the reasons behind the pupil not attending school; alternatively this may be delegated to another senior member of staff.

The following procedures will be taken in the event of a truancy:
- In the first instance, a letter of warning will be sent to the parents/carers of the pupil, informing them of the truancy and stating that any future occurrences could result in further action being taken.
- If any further truancy occurs, then the school/academy will consider issuing a penalty notice.
- A penalty notice will be issued where there is overt truancy, inappropriate parentally-condoned absence, excessive holidays in term-time and persistent late arrival at school.

4.6 Following Up Absence

Where any child we expect to attend school does not attend, or stops attending, the school/academy will:
- Follow up on their absence with their parent/carer to ascertain the reason (see section 7 for absence procedures).
- Ensure safeguarding actions are taken where necessary, including reporting any concerns to the DSL or Deputy and recording these concerns following the school/academy's safeguarding procedures, for example, on the CPOMS system or equivalent system.
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not.
- Identify the correct attendance code to use before entering it on to the school/academy's electronic register, or management information systems which is used to download data to the school/academy census.

4.7 Reporting to parents/carers

The school/academy will report regularly to parents on the attendance of their child, detailing a breakdown of absence categories. The school/academy will enable parents/carers to have up to date information on the attendance of their child(ren) as well as summative information.

5. Authorised and Unauthorised Absence

5.1 Approval for term-time absence

The Headteacher/Principal 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 Headteacher/Principal's discretion.

The school/academy considers each application for a term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request.

Valid reasons for authorised absence include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments (see sections 4.2 and 4.3 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/carers belong. If necessary, the school/academy will seek advice from the parents/carers' 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 Travellers, Showmen (fairground people) and Circus people, Bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and New Travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a Traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school/academy but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision.

5.2 Legal Sanctions

The school/academy or local authority can fine parents/carers for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age.

If issued with a fine, or penalty notice, each parent/carer 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/Principal, local authority officer or the police.

The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice may take into account:

- The number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling 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.

6. Persistent Absence (PA)

6.1 The school/academy will ensure it provides support to pupils at risk of persistent absence (PA), in conjunction with all relevant external authorities where necessary.

6.2 Where a pupil becomes at risk of PA, the school/academy will:

- Welcome the pupil back following any absence and provide catch up support to build confidence and bridge gaps in learning.
- Meet with the pupil and parent/carers to discuss absence, patterns, barriers and problems
- Establish plans to remove barriers and provide additional support.
- Make regular contact with the pupil's parent/carer to discuss progress.
- Consider what support for re-engagement might be needed, including with regard to additional vulnerability.

6.3 Where a pupil at risk of PA is also at increased risk of harm, the school/academy will work in conjunction with all relevant authorities, e.g. social services, to support the pupil in line with the school/academy's duty of care and the Trust's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and procedures.

6.4 The school/academy's attendance system will be used to give an accurate and informative view of attendance.

7.   Absence Procedures

7.1 Parents/carers will be required to contact the school/academy office via telephone as soon as possible on the first day of their child's absence, stating a reason for the absence. Parents/carers will be expected to provide an explanation for the absence and an estimate of how long they expect the absence to last (e.g. one school day).

7.2 Attendance information for pupils and parents/carers will be available on the school/academy website, including absence reporting procedures and a link to this policy.

7.3 If a parent/carer does not contact the school/academy to report an absence, the school/academy should take all reasonable steps to contact parents/carers to ascertain the whereabouts of the child.

7.4 Where a pupil has not returned to school for 10 days after an authorised absence, or is absent from the school/academy without authorisation for 20 consecutive schools days, the pupil can be removed from the admission register when the school/academy and the local authority have failed, after jointly making reasonable enquiries, to establish the whereabouts of the child. This only applies if the school/academy does not have reasonable grounds to believe that the pupil is unable to attend because of sickness or unavoidable cause.

8.   Missing Children

8.1 Pupils will not be permitted to leave the school/academy premises during the school day unless they have permission from the school/academy for an authorised absence.

8.2 The following procedures will be taken in the event of a pupil going missing whilst at the school/academy:
- The member of staff who has noticed the missing pupil will inform the Headteacher/Principal immediately.
- The office staff will also be informed as they will act as a point of contact for receiving information regarding the search.
- A member of staff will stay with the rest of the class, and all other available members of staff will conduct a thorough search of the school/academy premises as directed by the Headteacher/Principal.
- The following areas will be systematically searched:
  - All classrooms
  - All toilets
  - Changing rooms
  - The library
  - Any outbuildings

- ○ The school/academy grounds
- Available staff begin a search of the area immediately outside of the school/academy premises, and will take a mobile phone/radio with them so that they can be contacted.
- If the pupil has not been found after 10 minutes, then the parents/carers of the pupil will be notified.
- The school/academy will attempt to contact parents/carers using the emergency contact number provided.
- If the parents/carers have had no contact from the pupil, and the emergency contacts list has been exhausted, the police will be contacted.
- The absent pupil's teacher will fill in the incident form, describing all circumstances leading up to the pupil going missing.
- If the absent pupil has an allocated social worker, is a looked-after child, or has any SEND, then the appropriate staff members will be informed.
- When the pupil has been located, members of staff will care for and talk to the pupil to ensure that they are safe and well.
- Parents/carers and any other agencies will be informed immediately when the pupil has been located.

8.3   The Headteacher/Principal will take the appropriate action to ensure that pupils understand that they must not leave the premises, and sanctions will be issued if deemed necessary. Appropriate disciplinary procedures will be followed in accordance with the Trust's Behaviour Policy.

8.4   The Headteacher/Principal will carry out a full investigation and will draw a conclusion as to how the incident occurred. A written report will be produced, policies and procedures will be reviewed in accordance with the outcome where necessary.

9.   Children Missing in Education (CME)

9.1   A child going missing from school is a potential indicator of abuse and neglect. Where a child is repeatedly absent from school, especially for long periods, it could indicate potential safeguarding issues such as travelling to conflict zones, female genital mutilation and forced marriage.

9.2   Schools/academies have a duty to monitor children that go missing, particularly on repeat occasions, and report them to their designated safeguarding lead – following their normal safeguarding procedures.

9.3   Pupils who are most at risk of going missing from education:
- Are at risk of harm or neglect
- Come from Gypsy, Roma or Traveller families
- Come from the families of service personnel
- Go missing or run away from home or care
- Are supervised by the youth justice system
- Cease to attend a school/academy
- Come from new migrant families

9.4   If a pupil has a social worker, this should inform your LA's decision about them missing education where there are known safeguarding risks. This is set out in paragraph 111 of Keeping Children Safe in Education.

9.5   The school/academy must make 'reasonable enquiries' for pupils who are not attending. This applies to pupils who:
- Have not returned to school for 10 days after an authorised absence, or
- Have been absent without authorisation for 20 consecutive days

9.6   Making 'reasonable enquiries' includes one or more of the following:
- Contacting parents/carer, relatives and neighbours using known contact details
- Following local information sharing arrangements, making enquiries to:
  - other local databases and agencies
  - agencies known to be involved with the family
- Checking with UK Visas and Immigration and/or the Border Force
- Checking with the LA and the school/academy from which your pupil moved from originally, or any past LAs or schools that have educated your pupil
- Checking with the LA where your pupil lives, if it is different from the one where your school/academy is.
- In the case of children of service personnel, checking with the Ministry of Defence Children's Education Advisory Service
- Conducting a home visit, following your own policies and risk assessment procedures. If appropriate, making enquiries with neighbours and relatives

9.7   If the school/academy are still not able to locate the pupil (and neither can your LA), they can remove them from the register.

9.8   The school/academy must inform the LA of any pupil who fails to attend school regularly or has been absent without the school/academy's permission for a continuous period of 10 school days or more.

10.   Term-Time Leave

10.1   The school/academy will require parents/carers to observe the school/academy holidays as prescribed. Leave during term time will only be authorised in exceptional circumstances, for example bereavement or serious illness.

10.2   Any requests for leave during term time will be considered on an individual basis and the pupil's previous attendance record will be taken into account. Requests for leave will not be granted in the following circumstances:
- During Year 7 when a pupil is settling into the school/academy, unless exceptional circumstances apply, e.g. the death of a family member
- Immediately before and during assessment periods
- When a pupil's attendance record shows any unauthorised absence
- Where a pupil's authorised absence record is already above 10% for any reason

10.3   If term-time leave is not granted, taking a pupil out of school will be recorded as an unauthorised absence and may result in sanctions, such as a penalty notice.

11.   Religious Observances

11.1   Parents/carers must inform the school/academy at least 7 days in advance if absences are required for days of religious observance.

11.2   The day(s) of absence must be exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents/carers belong.

12.   Appointments

12.1   As far as possible, parents/carers will be encouraged to book medical and dental appointments outside of school hours.

12.2   If the appointment requires the pupil to leave during the school day, they will be signed out at the school/academy office by a parent/carer. Pupils will be expected to attend school before and after the appointment wherever possible.

13.   Young Carers

13.1   The school/academy understands the difficulties young carers face, and will endeavour to identify young carers at the earliest opportunity, as well as throughout their time at the school/academy.

13.2   The school/academy will take a caring and flexible approach to the needs of young carers and each situation will be examined on a case-by-case basis, involving other agencies if appropriate.

14.   Monitoring and Review

14.1   This policy will be reviewed on an annual basis, or as guidance from the local authority or DfE is updated.

14.2   This policy will be reviewed by the Trust Associate Principal(s) and approved by the Distinctiveness and Personal Development Committee.

14.3   The next scheduled review date can be found on the cover page of this policy.