



HALES VALLEY TRUST

Attendance Policy

September 2020

Coronavirus statement

Hales Valley Trust strongly believes that attendance and punctuality are vital for a child to maximise their potential and create a feeling of belonging in their class/school community. We ensure that our policy and procedures actively promotes attendance and punctuality amongst pupils and forms part of our commitment to respect the right of every child, under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, to a quality education ([Article 28](#)).

The coronavirus epidemic has had a major impact on the attendance of our pupils since the national lockdown in March 2020. During this period attendance has not been compulsory – although the Trust has made great efforts to encourage as many pupils as possible to return to school.

From September 2020 the government has stated that attendance is statutory. As such we will be following our procedures with regard to addressing poor attendance as set out in this policy.

However, as a Trust we recognise that some of our families may still be anxious about their children returning to school in September. We will continue to closely monitor attendance in in the new academic year but we will not be making any referrals to the EIS service during the first half term. Instead we will work with parents in a supportive capacity to ensure that all pupils attend school. Many of our pupils will have missed a significant amount of education this year and it is vital that they are back in school and learning so that we can address any gaps in knowledge and skills.

We WILL return to full implementation of the policy after autumn half term.

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1.0 Introduction

In promoting the belief that attendance and punctuality are important values we will be helping to equip our children for life and potentially impacting upon their futures as employees and employers. We believe that;

- ***Prolonged and consistent absence, in any year group, affects access to the curriculum ultimately impacting on progress.***
- ***Repeated and consistent lateness is an unsettling start to the school day for both the child and school.***

As a school we follow the Department for Education (DfE) documents *Children Missing Education* (September 2016) and *School Attendance: Departmental advice for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities* (July 2019). We expect children to maintain an attendance figure above 96% throughout the academic year.

Missing out on lessons leaves children vulnerable to falling behind. Children with poor attendance tend to achieve less in both primary and secondary school.

Good attendance is important because:

- Statistics show a direct link between under-achievement and absence below 95%
- Regular attenders make better progress, both socially and academically
- Regular attenders find school routines, school work and friendships easier to cope with
- Regular attenders find learning more satisfying
- Regular attenders are more successful in transferring between primary school, secondary school and higher education, employment or training.

Safeguarding

Your child may be at risk of harm if they do not attend school regularly. Safeguarding the interests of each child is everyone's responsibility and within the context of this school, we will adhere to "Working together to Safeguard Children" (2018) Keeping Children Safe in Education (2018) and the School's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy:

- Protecting children from maltreatment
- Preventing impairment of children's health or development
- Ensuring that children are growing up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care.
- Taking action to enable all children to have the best life chances
- Detecting early support through Early Help Assessment

Failing to attend this school on a regular basis will be considered as a safeguarding matter.

2.0 Roles and Responsibilities

A member of the Senior Leadership Team will oversee and co-ordinate the schools work in promoting regular and good attendance. The school is responsible for the accurate recording and monitoring of attendance and that the policy is consistently used. The Senior Leader in charge will ensure that issues are identified in an early stage and that support can be offered and put in place prior to attendance becoming an issue.

What the Law says about attendance

Parents have a legal obligation to ensure their children receives a full time education. This is achieved by regular attendance at school. Section 444 Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 states that 'the parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him / her to receive efficient full time education suitable:

- (a) to age, ability and aptitude and
 - (b) to any special educational needs he/ she may have
- Either by regular attendance at school or otherwise'

Section 175 of the Education Act 2002 places a duty on local authorities and governing bodies to have regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State with regard to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and students under the age of 18.

Parents/Carer

- To ensure their child attends school regularly and is properly equipped and in a fit state to learn every day that school is open
- Ensure that their children are punctual, registration takes place between 8:50am and 9:00am
- To notify the school **every day** of absence by 9.30am. All absences will be recorded as 'O' unauthorised until an explanation or evidence is provided. The onus is on the parent to inform the school and provided appropriate evidence;
- As in the work environment medical and dental appointments should be booked outside of the school day whenever possible;
- To provide the school with up to date contact details and telephone numbers for every adult with parental responsibility. The school should be provided with at least two emergency contact numbers. If contact details change then we must be informed of new details within 24 hours;
- If a 'Leave of Absence' is required for exceptional circumstances, it should be made in writing (using the application form available from the school office) to the Headteacher 15 days in advance of the proposed start date of the absence. The circumstances you consider 'exceptional' must be detailed
- Collecting their children on time to avoid incurring a fine.
- Avoiding taking holidays in term time
- Avoiding requesting non-urgent leave of absence;
- Working with the school to improve matters if attendance becomes a problem;
- Keeping school fully informed on all matters that might affect attendance and their child in school;
- Supporting the Home and School Agreement and guidance necessary to ensure smooth running of the school;
- To ensure they will not collect their children until the end of the school day.

Pupils

- To attend school regularly and promptly;
- Arriving at school on time, registration is at 9:00am;
- To attend morning and afternoon registration promptly;
- Knowing the value of good attendance;
- Supporting the school Home and School Agreement and guidance necessary to ensure the smooth running of the school.

Teachers

- Set an example of punctuality and good attendance;
- Ensure that registers are taken at the appropriate times and are accurate and up to date;
- To take appropriate action when pupils are late;
- To have an awareness of class and individual attendance patterns and report to SLT;
- To inform SLT/Deputy of any concerns about attendance or where attendance is impacting on a pupil's achievements;
- Discuss individual pupil attendance at parent-teacher consultations;
- Praise pupils for good punctuality and good attendance.

SLT

- To have a named member of SLT responsible for attendance;
- To set clear and challenging attendance targets as part of school self-review;
- To ensure that all school personnel, pupils and parents are aware of and comply with this policy;
- Monitor trends and arrange for letters to be sent when triggers are hit;
- Target intervention and support to those children that have been highlighted as poor attendees;
- Develop a multi-agency response to the attendance agenda;
- Utilise the support of available specialists in relation to the attendance agenda;
- Have a system in place for parents to report a child's absence;
- Report to the Governing body the attendance figures and progress to achieving the set targets;
- Promote the importance of good attendance through assemblies;
- Publicise good attendance during assemblies and newsletters;
- Reward good attendance;
- Responsible for Authorising Absence by adhering to DfE guidelines. When it becomes necessary making a referral to Dudley Council, Education Investigation Service (EIS).
- To schedule a home visit from a representative of the school if no contact has been received
- Where we feel there is a safeguarding issue a multi-agency referral would be completed.

Administrative staff

- First day calling for children absent without explanation,
- Call all numbers on the contact list in order until receive an answer.
- Leave a voice message, if there is a voicemail option.
- Send a text message
- Overseas ring tone – and no leave of absence requested - school will unauthorise this absence. SLT to be contacted which may result in EIS being contacted in line with Local Authority Children Missing Education policy and procedures
- Call the contact list at least twice.
- To issue first day contact methods i.e., letter, text message, visit, if no other response.
- To monitor late entrants into school and adjust Integris accordingly along with the time of arrival;

- To forward phone messages to class teachers regarding absences;
- To monitor individual and class attendance;
- Contact parents when a school have not been provided with a reason for absence;
- Record reasons for absence on Integris;
- Record medical appointments on Integris and state whether medical evidence has been seen;
- To monitor register coding and alert staff of inconsistencies;
- To produce reports as requested by EIS
- To produce attendance figures for end of term/year reports (Letter 5 – optional)
- To undertake reporting and update SLT.

3.0 Attendance Celebration

Children receive a badge and certificate each half term for 96-100%. Children with 100% attendance and **no late mark** at the end of each term receive a certificate and bear/medal.

4.0 Procedures

Late to school in the morning and afternoon

- Registration happens in the classroom and not when a child arrives at school
- Registration starts at 8.50am and finishes at 9.00am.
- If a child arrives for registration in the classroom before 8.50am they will be marked as present code (/)
- If a child arrives in school before 9.00am but does not get to the classroom for registration before 9.00am, then they will receive the late code (L). If a child arrives at school after the main doors have closed they will need to enter via the office by a parent/carer, or adult, and a reason for the lateness given. This will be marked as late (L). Children in Years 5 and 6 can bring a note from home with a reason, as they may not be accompanied by an adult.
- If a child arrives after 9.30am, this will be marked as (U) code. This will go against a pupil's attendance % also.
- If a child is late due to doctors/medical appointment, please make the school aware of this.
- The school will monitor late marks for individual pupils and will contact and support parents/carers in ensuring that the child/ren arrive to school on time to minimise learning time lost.

Late collection at the end of the school day or after school events

- The school day ends at 3.15pm. Sometimes we receive messages at the end of the day to say that parents will be late collecting their children due to traffic or other unforeseen circumstances and we accept that sometimes this happens. However, some parents regularly collect their children beyond 3.15pm and sometimes beyond 3.30pm. It is not the duty of the school to provide childcare beyond the end of the school day, unless there are unforeseen circumstances, and contact with the school has been made.
- In order to prevent children being left at the school office, at the end of the school day, each family has 3 opportunities, per academic year, whereby a child can be collected late due to unforeseen circumstances. After these 3 opportunities the school will be issuing a charge for the childcare we are providing.
- For every 15 minute block a child/children are left at school at the end of the school day there will be a £5 charge per child e.g. if one child is collected at 3.31pm there will be a

charge for the 15 minutes child care provided 3.15-3.30pm. If a child is collected at 3.45pm there will be a £10 charge for the childcare 3.15-3.45pm and so on.

- **Please note this is per child not per family.** (Letters 9 and 10)
- For clarity if a child is collected at 3.25pm there will be no charge but it will be noted as making a late collection and one of your opportunities to collect late will be lost. If a child is persistently being collected between 3.15 and 3.30pm to avoid the late collection charge then we can administer penalty charges on an individual basis.

Attendance and Illness

- If your child is ill your first action is to call the school as early as possible (and before 9.30am) and let the School Office know your child will not be in school – 01384 816845. The school has a dedicated answer phone system for registering your child's absence option 1.
- This needs to be done every day of absence (unless your child is admitted to hospital, or has a long term illness-related absence for a period of time – in this instance you do not need to ring every day).
- If your child is not in school and we have not had a phone call by 9.30am one of our Office Staff will contact you to find out why your child is not in school.
- The school also has a Medical Policy that contains information about time allowed for certain illnesses e.g. 48 hours for sickness bugs in line with the Public Health guidelines.

Leave of Absence Request

It is now necessary for all parents to seek 'Leave of Absence' at least 15 school days before they are intending to take their child out of school. This can be done by completing and returning to the Headteacher a 'leave of absence' form. In order for the leave of absence to be authorised it would have to meet the following criteria;

- A parent/primary carer has a life limiting illness
- Other circumstances which are considered to be exceptional (This does not include examples such as: Holiday of a lifetime, Special family birthdays, Cheaper holiday deal or visiting relatives abroad)

A leave of absence request must be made by the parent/primary carer with whom the child normally resides.

Note: All holidays/leave of absence, of 5 days (10 continuous sessions) or more, will be referred to Dudley Council, Educational Investigation Service, who may issue a Fixed Penalty Notice fine and/or consider legal action.

School Closures and Number of School Days

The academic year is 190 days. These are recorded as 380 sessions, an am and pm session per day. Schools are also required to have an additional 5 days that are used for staff training. These are often called INSET (In Service Training) Days. These days are not part of the 190 days, which is every child's free entitlement and schools endeavour to schedule these to minimise inconvenience to parents and carers.

The Headteacher will make every effort to ensure that the school remains open for 190 days. However, in some circumstances, e.g. severe weather, the school may have to close. The Headteacher must always consider the health, safety and welfare of every person, who uses the school site, pupils, staff, parents, volunteers and visitors. If at any point, use of the school building would be detrimental to a person or persons' health, safety and welfare, then the Headteacher must close part or all of the school.

If a decision is made to close part or all of the school, the Headteacher will endeavour to inform parents of that decision and the details of any arrangements that have been put in place. If the Headteacher decides to close part or all of the school, then the register for those pupils affected is closed for the day and coded as an enforced school closure. This does not affect a child's attendance record.

Parents should always assume that the school will remain open during term time unless they hear otherwise.

5.0 Dudley Council, Education Investigation Service (EIS)

The Education Investigation Service (EIS) is responsible for ensuring that parents meet their legal obligations in respect of their child's education and in doing so they may issue penalty fines or take legal proceedings to ensure that parents do so.

A parent has a responsibility to ensure their child's regular attendance at school and if a child's attendance becomes a matter of concern, school may make a referral to the EIS and support them in the actions that they may take.

Poor Attendance Referrals

Please note for a referral for poor attendance you will have had to have sent at least 2 of the letters (if possible both of them sent within the 6 week period that is subject to the referral) to satisfy the criteria.

Between 12 to 24 sessions/6 to 12 days of unauthorised absence within a 6 week period Letters 3

School is responsible for making a referral to the Education Investigation Service (EIS) when a child has been absent from school for at least 12 sessions of unauthorised absence within a 6 week period. There are two sessions per school day, a session is a morning (am) or an afternoon (pm), so 12 sessions is the equivalent to 6 days off school.

In excess of 24 sessions/ 12 days of unauthorised absence over 12 weeks Letter 4

School is responsible for making a referral to the Education Investigation Service (EIS) when a child has been absent from school in excess of 24 sessions of unauthorised absence within a 12-week period. There are two sessions per school day, a session is a morning (am) or an afternoon (pm), so more than 24 sessions is the equivalent to more than 12 days off school.

A child is defined as a persistent absentee if they miss 10% or more of their possible sessions.

Prior to the referral to Dudley Council, Education Investigation Services:

1. School will inform parents of their child's attendance progress in writing, offering them to contact the school to discuss reasons impacting on their attendance.
2. If there has been no improvement, the school will write to parents informing them that a referral to Dudley Council, EIS which may result in a Fixed Penalty Fine or legal action if unauthorised absence continues to occur.

3. A member of school staff or School's Attendance Support Officer may undertake a home visit or invite parent/s to an attendance clinic to speak to them when there are ongoing attendance concerns or school have failed to establish a response relating to the child/children's absence. A document of this conversation will be recorded on an attendance clinic form which will be signed by the parent and agreed actions noted.

Exclusion

Parents and carers can be issued with Penalty Notices if a pupil, who has been excluded, contravenes the details set out in the Exclusion Letter as to their whereabouts during the first 6 days of exclusion.

Section 103 Education And Inspections Act 2006 places a duty on parents in relation to an excluded pupil; a parent has to ensure that their child is not present in a public place during school hours without reasonable justification during the first **five** days of each and **every fixed period or permanent exclusion**.

Deletion from the school roll

Parents need to be aware that their child's name may be deleted from the school roll if your child does not return to school within 10 school days of the agreed return date for an AGREED Leave of Absence.

This action will be taken in consultation with the local authority who may agree to the removal, upon any return you will have to reapply for admission to a school within the borough. A place at your previous school cannot be guaranteed.

Child Missing in Education

Dudley Council, Educational Investigation Service will also accept a child missing from education/removal from school roll referral from school when a child has had 20 sessions (10 days) of continuous unauthorised absence and school are unable to locate the child or they have not registered at another school.

The Headteacher and Governing Body of each school have a responsibility to inform Dudley Council, EIS if parents choose to elective home educate their child/ren or if there is a concern that a child is missing in education.

Leave of Absence

Letter 7 (leave requested) OR Letter 8 (no request provided but you have information to indicate leave has been taken)

The Education Investigation Service will instigate statutory intervention on behalf of the Local Authority, when notified that a pupil has a relevant level of unauthorised absence. This may result in a Penalty Notice being issued to a child's parents or carers and the penalty charge will be per child, per parent.

When a child has had at least **5 days/10 continuous sessions** of unauthorised absence coded on registers as "G" then school will make a referral to Dudley Council, EIS.

Dudley Council Education Investigation Service may issue a Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN) Leave of Absence (Holidays 5 days or more)

Absence during term time for holidays is therefore not considered an exceptional circumstance. For more information on EIS and when penalty fines may be issued please [contact the Education Investigation Service on 01384 814317](#)

What the Law States

A Penalty Notice is £60 (per parent, per child), if paid within 21 days of receipt, rising to £120, if paid after 21 days but within 28 days of receipt. The payment must be paid directly to the Local Authority as indicated on the Penalty Fine, the school does not receive the money. Parents can only be prosecuted if 28 days has expired and full payment has not been made.

Where a child of compulsory school age fails to attend school regularly, the parent could be guilty of an offence under

1. **Section 444(1) Education Act 1996** – If the child is absent without authorisation then the parent is guilty of an offence. This is a strict liability offence i.e. all that needs to be shown is a lack of regular attendance. Sanctions can include a fine of up to £1,000.
2. **Section 444(1A) Education Act 1996** – an aggravated offence. If the child is absent without authorisation and the parent knew about the child's absence and failed to act then the parent is guilty of an offence. Sanctions can include a fine of up to £2,500 and a prison sentence of up to 3 months.

Other reasons for extended absence and requests for leave in term time

All staff are trained and made aware about possible reasons for extended absence from school. One of these could be female genital mutilation (FGM), which is a form of child abuse common to some African, Asian and Middle Eastern communities in the UK. The age at which girls are subject to FGM varies greatly from shortly after birth to any time up to adulthood. Victims are usually aged between four and ten, primary school age. It is illegal in the UK to subject a child to female genital mutilation (FGM) or to take a child abroad to undergo the procedure – Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003.

Any information or concern that a child is at immediate risk of or has undergone FGM or forced marriage will result in a child protection referral under school procedures to the Designated Senior Person in the first instance and then to Children's Social Care Services and/or the Child Protection Team, West Midlands Police Service. Records of all incidents will be kept following the same procedure as for all other child protection concerns in school in line with current policy.

Please note that teachers and members of staff with teaching responsibilities have a specific legal duty to act with regards to concerns about female genital mutilation and must personally report to the police a disclosure that FGM has been carried out, in addition to liaising with the DSL/Children's social care.

6.0 Attendance Monitoring

Every school has a duty to monitor all pupils' attendance and punctuality which falls below the expected national average. The Trust regularly monitors attendance and has set the below guidelines:

What happens when 5 days/10 sessions or more of school are missed? (Letter 1)

If your child has more than 5 days out of school, at any time over an academic year due to illness and/or holiday, then every time your child is absent after this you will be required to provide further information, detail or evidence so we can consider whether the absence can be authorised.

What happens when 10 days/20 sessions or more of school are missed? (Letter 2)

If your child has more than 10 days out of school, at any time over an academic year due to illness and/or holiday, you will be invited to an attendance clinic to discuss how we can support improved attendance of your child. This may include additional support from outside agencies. A document of this conversation will be recorded on an attendance clinic form which will be signed by the parent and agreed actions noted.

You may also receive a home visit from a representative of the school, you will be aware of this taking place as a note/letter from the school will be left at the property stating the date and time of the visit. The next steps will be that your child's absence will then be scrutinised on a weekly basis.

What happens if your child is late 5 times and above (Letter 6)

If your child is late more than 5 times we will write to you and you may be invited to an attendance clinic to discuss ways to improve punctuality.

Long Term Sickness Absence

If a child needs to be hospitalised for 3 days or more we can contact the Hospital Teaching Service so that they work with your child whilst they are not in school. This would be coded as 'B' which means that your child is being educated off site and would not affect their overall attendance percentage.

If a child leaves hospital and following this, is at home for 2 weeks, then we can contact Cherry Tree Pupil Referral Unit and they will support the child at home. This would use the 'D' code meaning the child is dual registered with ourselves and Cherry Tree. It is school's responsibility to liaise with Cherry Tree and ensure that a suitable education is being provided.

Can a school place a pupil on a part-time timetable? DfE School Attendance November 2016

As a rule, no. All pupils of compulsory school age are entitled to a full-time education. In very exceptional circumstances there may be a need for a temporary part-time timetable to meet a pupil's individual needs. For example, where a medical condition prevents a pupil from attending full-time education and a part-time timetable is considered as part of a re-integration package. A part-time timetable must not be treated as a long-term solution. Any pastoral support programme or other agreement must have a time limit by which point the pupil is expected to attend full-time or be provided with alternative provision. In agreeing to a part-time timetable a school has agreed to a pupil being absent from school for part of the week or day and therefore must record it as authorised absence.

Unacceptable reasons for absence

It is not acceptable to assume your child can have days out of school for the following events;

- Moving House
- Funerals
- New babies
- Other child in family is sick and parent cannot get other child to school
- Parent on holiday and child staying with a relative – relative cannot bring child to school– it is expected that other arrangements are made with family members/neighbours/friends to bring your child to school
- Parent sick on a long term basis and cannot get child to school – it is expected that other arrangements are made with family members/neighbours/friends to bring your child to school
- Inclement weather i.e. severe snow – if you live within a 1 mile radius of the school, unless there is a babe in arms in the household, or you live in a remote setting, you are expected to get your child to school.

Other unauthorised reasons are:

- Buying new school shoes/summer uniform because parents forgot to do it in the holidays
- Going to the caravan to avoid traffic
- Waiting in for the builder's/Gas man/delivery driver to arrive
- 'Only Year 6 matters'
- Withdrawing your child from school when alternative arrangements have been made to address the reasons they are unable to attend or take part in a specific lesson or event e.g. Carol Service
- 'Holidays are cheaper'
- Parent/Carer/sibling being sick/illness

Dealing with Truancy

If a pupil is thought to be playing truant, then the school will inform:

- The parent/carer;
- The police

All truants will receive:

- Sanctions;
- Support;
- Discussions to understand the seriousness of the matter;
- A programme of monitoring and support.

The Police must be informed **immediately** if a pupil leaves school without prior permission.

Code	Description	Meaning
/	Present (AM)	Present
\	Present (PM)	Present
B	Educated off site (not dual registration)	Approved Education Activity
C	Other Authorised Circumstance (not covered by another appropriate code/description)	Authorised Absence
D	Dual Registration (i.e. pupil attending other establishment)	Approved Education Activity
E	Excluded (no alternative provision made)	Authorised Absence
G	Family Holiday (not agreed or days in excess of agreement)	Unauthorised Absence
H	Family Holiday (agreed)	Authorised Absence
I	Illness (not medical or dental appointment)	Authorised Absence
J	Interview	Approved Educational Activity
L	Late (before register closes)	Present
M	Medical/Dental Appointment	Authorised Absence
N	No reason yet provided for absence	Unauthorised Absence
O	Unauthorised absence (not covered by any other code/description)	Unauthorised Absence
P	Approved Sporting Activity	Approved Education Activity
R	Religious Observation	Authorised Absence
S	Study Leave	Authorised Absence
T	Traveller Absence	Authorised Absence
U	Late (after registers close)	Unauthorised Absence
V	Educational visit or trip	Approved Education Activity
W	Work Experience	Approved Education Activity
X	Non-compulsory school age absence	Not counted in possible attendances

Y	Enforced Closure	Not counted in possible attendances
Z	Pupil Not yet on roll	Not counted in possible attendances
#	School Closed to Pupils	Not counted in possible attendances