

Attendance Policy 2025



Revised	-	September 2025
Signed	-	Executive Headteacher
Signed	-	Chair of governors
Next review	-	September 2026

The Horizon Attendance Policy

Introduction

Principles:

The governors, head teacher and staff of Horizon School believe that ensuring high levels of student's attendance and punctuality are essential in supporting their commitment to raising student achievement and improving life chances. For our students to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and every child should be at school, on time, every day unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. We recognise that parents/ carers have a vital role to play and there is a need to establish strong home/school links and communication systems that can be utilised whenever there is concern about attendance.

Why regular attendance is so important:

Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any child's absence disrupts teaching routines so may affect the learning of others in the same class. Ensuring a child's regular attendance at school is the legal responsibility of the parent/carer and permitting absence without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

Aim:

The school is committed to a positive policy of encouraging students to attend school regularly. The school will work with parents/carers and students to secure this aim.

Horizon School will:

- Work in partnership encouraging staff, parents/carers and children to attend school regularly in order to maximise the learning experience so that all students reach their full potential.
- Provide clear procedures for involving parents/carers relating to school attendance and enabling students to come to school regularly.
- Report to parent/carers on how each child is performing in school, what their attendance and punctuality rate is and how this relates to their attainments.
- Celebrate and reward good attendance and punctuality (eg attendance certificates, letters home, prizes).

Parents/carers will:

- Inform the school on the first day of absence.

- Make sure that any absence is clearly accounted for by telephone or text on the first and subsequent days of absence, or by letter if a phone is unavailable.
- Discuss with the school any planned absences well in advance.
- Avoid taking their child out of school for non-urgent or dental appointments.
- Only request a leave of absence if it is for an exceptional circumstance.

Class teachers will:

- Ensure that all students are registered accurately
- Promote and reward good attendance with students at all appropriate opportunities
- Communicate any concerns or underlying problems that may account for a student's absence.
- Support students with absence to engage with their learning once they are back in school.

Students will:

- Attend every day unless they are ill or have an authorised absence.
- Arrive in school on time.
- Go to all their required registrations and lessons on time.
- Take responsibility for registration with staff if they are late or are leaving during school hours.

Understanding Types of Absence:

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the Head of School (not by the parents/carers) as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason like illness, medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable cause.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been given. This type of absence can lead to the Authority using sanctions and/ or legal proceedings. This includes:

- Parents/carers keeping children off unnecessarily
- Truancy before or during the school day
- Absences which have never been properly explained
- Shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- Day trips and holidays in term time

The school can, if needed, change an authorised absence to an unauthorised absence and vice-versa if new information is presented. Any changes will be communicated to parents/carers. An example of this would be if a parent/carer states their child is unwell but on return there is evidence they have been on holiday.

Persistent Absenteeism (PA):

A student becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year (3 weeks/sessions) for whatever reason. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's education prospects and hence the school will seek to work with parents/carers to remedy the situation. Any case that is seen to be at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority and parents/carers will be informed and an attendance panel organised. PA students are tracked and monitored carefully through our year and attendance system and we also combine this with academic support where absence affects attainment. All our PA students and their parents/carers are subject to an Action Plan.

Absence Procedures:

First Day Absence

A child not attending school is considered a safeguarding matter. This is why information about the cause of the absence is always required.

If a child is absent parents/carers must:

- Contact us as soon as possible on the first day of absence;
- Send a note in on the first day they return with an explanation of the absence. You must do this even if you have already made contact with the school.

If a child is absent we will:

- Telephone, text parent/carers/ or home visit on the first day of absence if we have not heard from them – this is because we have a duty to ensure your child's safety as well as their regular school attendance.
- If no response is received by the third day of absence then a home visit will be undertaken.
- Invite parents/carers in to discuss the situation with us, if absences persist.

The school may request the Police Community Support Officer (PCSO) to make a home visit if applicable.

Third Day Absence

If your child is not seen and contact has not been established with any of the named parent/carers, after three days of absence the school is required to start "*Child Missing in Education*" procedures as set by Hartlepool Borough Council guidance.

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We will make reasonable enquiries to establish contact with parents/carers and the child, including making enquiries to known friends, wider family etc.

Ten Days' Absence

We have a legal duty to report the absence of any student who is absent without an explanation for 10 consecutive days. If the child is not seen and contact has not been established with the named parent/carer then Hartlepool Borough Council is notified that the child *is at risk of missing*. Children's services staff will visit the last known address and alert key services to locate the child. Consequently, it is vital that the school has the most up to date contact details for parent/carers.

Lateness:

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. Learning begins at school with the first lesson of the day. If a child arrives late they will miss work and disrupt lessons. This can be embarrassing for the child and can also encourage absence. Students should be in school for 9:00 am.

How we manage lateness:

The school day starts at **9:00 am**. Students are expected to be at the classroom for 9:15 am. Registers close at **9:30 am**.

All lateness is recorded daily. This information is required by the courts, should prosecution for non-attendance or lateness be necessary.

Arrival after the close of registration will be marked as an unauthorised absence and coded **U** in line with the DFE Guidance. This marks shows them to be on site, but is legally recorded as an absence.

If a student is late due to a medical appointment, they will receive an authorised absence, coded **M**. Please be advised that, where possible, doctors and dentist appointments are to be made out of school hours or during school holidays.

If lateness persists, parents/carers will be invited to attend a meeting to discuss the problem and what support may be offered. If support is not appropriate or declined and a student has 10 or more sessions of unauthorised absence due to lateness recorded in any 10-week period, the school will be required to issue parents/carers with a Penalty Notice in accordance with Hartlepool Borough Council's documentation regarding Penalty Notices.

Telephone Numbers:

There are times when we need to contact parents/carers. It is the responsibility of parents/carers to inform the school of contact details. However there will, in addition,

be regular checks on telephone contact numbers throughout the year to ensure that the school has up to date information.

Monitoring Attendance

Any absence adversely affects learning and ultimately progress and success. Consequently school staff monitor the attendance of each student closely.

- A register is taken am and pm
- Lateness and poor attendance is monitored by the lead professional for vulnerable pupils
- Attendance is analysed weekly, monthly, termly and annually
- The attendance policy is highlighted with students, parents/carers at the initial interview
- Performance indicators are set relevant to each student's attendance history
- Recognition and rewards are given to those who attend and whose attendance is improving
- Personal attendance registers may be used to heighten individual student awareness of patterns of attendance

Class Teacher

- Ensure that all students are registered accurately during tutor time.
- Follow up cases of unaccounted for absence.
- Inform Behaviour and Attendance Manager of any possible underlying problems which might account for absences.
- Keeps each student aware of their attendance.
- Will assist students to re-integrate following a prolonged absence.

Lead professional for vulnerable pupils

- Lead professional for vulnerable pupils and the inclusion coordinator are responsible for daily attendance and punctuality issues, including the contacting of parent/carers.
- Lead professional for vulnerable pupils is responsible for the monitoring of students with an attendance of 95% - 85%.
- Attendance Panels will be convened with parents as appropriate, involving Behaviour and Attendance Officer and LA School Attendance Officer.
- Co-ordinate reports and statistics and attendance rewards within the school.
- Regularly update the SLT on year group matters including attendance and punctuality.
- Lead professional for vulnerable pupils will refer to LA Attendance Officer when attendance drops below an acceptable level (90%).

Attendance Officer

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- Is responsible for students with an attendance close to or below 90% as the legal threshold for action and with specific focus on those 85% and below. Every available tool will be used to challenge and support parents/carers to resolve attendance issues including penalty notices, fast track, court, CAF etc.

Head of School:

- Is responsible for overseeing all matters relating to attendance and punctuality.
- Is responsible for keeping SLT and Governing body informed of attendance and punctuality figures and trends.
- Sets attendance targets as part of the school's Development Plan.
- Monitors progress against these targets.
- Devises and implements strategies to promote and implement the policy throughout the school.

The Governing Body will:

- Approve the policy and any proposed changes.
- Receive reports from the Head of school on a termly basis.
- Review the effectiveness of the policy in the light of the Head of school's report
- Ensure that the policy is promoted and implemented throughout the school, and is known by all parents/carers and students via text messages, newsletters and the school website.

Request for leave of absence

Amendments to school attendance regulations were updated and enforced from September 2013. The Education (Pupil Registration) England) Regulations state that headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. It is important to note that headteachers can determine the length of authorised absence, as well as whether absence is authorised at all.

- All holiday requests in term time will be unauthorised, unless exceptional circumstances are proved. Exceptional circumstances are those considered exceptional by the Head of school.
- For the parent/carers taking children on unauthorised term time holidays, the school will check the child's attendance for the previous 39 school weeks on the day prior to the holiday and will refer to the School Attendance Team for Penalty Notice(s) where attendance is below 90%.

- 39 school weeks prior to the holiday should be used as a measure of attendance in all cases, to ensure a fair and consistent approach across the school.
- Penalty Notices should only be issued to parent/carers where the child is in irregular attendance at school (prior to the holiday), since further time away from school will be significantly detrimental to the child's education. Irregular attendance is considered as anything below 90% in the 39 weeks prior to the holiday. Anything above 90% would not be considered as 'irregular' in court.
- Where term time holidays are unauthorised, a letter will be sent from the school to the parent/carer to advise that the absence from school will not be authorised and that where attendance is below 90% in the 39 school weeks prior to the start of the holiday, a Penalty Notice will be issued. It is important that a copy of this letter is kept as it may be required as an exhibit in court, in cases where a Penalty Notice is issued and payment is not received.
- Parent/Carers are encouraged to inform the school as soon as possible of any planned holidays and where possible the school will invite parent/carers into school or send a letter to express concerns at the earliest opportunity. A completed 'Leave of Absence' request form is required in order to progress to the issuing of a Penalty Notice, if it becomes necessary.
- The Penalty Notices issued are £60 per parent, per child, if paid within 21 days, and double if paid between 22 and 28 days. As an example, a 2 parent family with 2 children receive 4 x £60 notices, as each parent would receive one notice per child. This family would need to pay £240 if paid within 21 days or £480 if paid between 22 and 28 days. Where payment is not received within 28 days, the case is forwarded to court.

Leavers

If your child is leaving our school (other than when referring to the primary/secondary school or leaving at the end of Year 11 parents/carers are asked to:

- Submit in writing information about your planned move, including the date of the move; your new address and telephone numbers, your child's new school and the start date when known.

If pupils leave and we do not have the above information, then your child is considered to be a *child missing in education*. This requires schools and local authorities to then carry out investigations to try and locate your child, which includes liaising with Children's Services, the Police and other agencies. By giving us information, these investigations can be avoided.

Absence through child participation in public performances, including theatre, film or television work and modelling

Parents/carers of a child performer can seek leave of absence from the school for their child to take part in a performance. They must contact the headteacher to discuss the nature and frequency of the work, whether the child has a valid performance licence and whether education can be provided by the employer during any future leave of absence. It is, however, down to the headteacher's discretion as to whether to authorise this and they will wish to discuss with you the nature and frequency of the absence and how the learning will continue if absence occurs. Any absence recorded as part of a child's participation in public performance is recorded as a **C**, an authorised absence.

Absence through competing at regional, county or national level for sport

Parents/carers of able sportsmen and women can seek leave of absence from the school for their child to take part in regional, county, national and international events and competitions. It is, however, down to the headteacher's discretion as to whether to authorise this and they will wish to discuss with you the nature and frequency of absence and if learning will continue if absence occurs. Permission for your child to leave early or arrive late to attend coaching and training sessions is also at the discretion of the headteacher and is not likely to be approved if it is a regular event, unless the sports club or association is providing an education tutor as part of their coaching.

Gypsy, Roma, Traveller and Showman families

Absence of a child from a Traveller family that has left the area may be authorised if the absence is for work purposes and it is believed that the family intends to return. To ensure the continuity of learning for Traveller children, dual registration is allowed. This means that the school cannot remove a Traveller child from the school roll while they are travelling. When the Traveller is away, the home school will hold the place open and records the absence as authorised through the **T** code. Distance learning packs for Traveller children are not an alternative to attendance at school.

Study leave

We believe that pupils' needs are best met if they attend school every day in the period leading up to examinations. No study leave will be granted during this period, therefore, and pupils will be expected to attend school in the usual way. Study leave will only be granted to Year 11 pupils during the time of the GCSE examination period. Should any pupils wish to attend school (or should their parents/carers wish them to) on the days and at times they are not sitting examinations, arrangements will be made for them to do so. The school will work within the legal requirements, i.e.:

- Study leave should only be granted to Year 11 pupils and never to those in

any other year groups

- It should never exceed 15 school days in a year and is most appropriately granted during the examination period itself, i.e. not before the beginning of that period
- It should always be granted sparingly, taking account of an individual pupil's ability to manage and benefit from supervised study
- Any pupil has the right to attend school during study leave and a parent has the right to insist he/she does so
- Any session given to pupils as study leave has a statistical meaning of authorised absence (it is not an approved educational activity, as it is not supervised) and should be recorded and reported on by the school as such.

Teenage pregnancy

Support will be directed to keeping a pupil in school, and wherever possible, her return to full-time education as soon as possible after the birth. A pupil who becomes pregnant should be allowed no more than 16 weeks' authorised absence to cover the time immediately before and after the birth. After that time, any absence should be treated as unauthorised.

The Key People Responsible for Attendance Matters in this school are:

Miss Nevison	Head of school and Designated Safeguarding Lead
Mr Holmes	Lead professional for vulnerable pupils
Miss Attle	Inclusion coordinator
Mrs Peterson	School Business Manager