



Hyde Community College

Attendance Policy

STUDENTS

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Section 1: Introduction & Vision

Every child at Hyde Community College matters. The most important factor contributing to a student's success at our school is regular attendance. The link between attendance and attainment is firmly established. Those students who attend more achieve better qualifications and are more able to access higher education, employment and training. Regular attendance is vital if students are to achieve their full potential.

- We believe that regular attendance is the key to enabling students to maximise the educational opportunities available to them and to become emotionally resilient, confident and competent adults who are able to realise their full potential and make a positive contribution to their community.
- We seek to ensure that all students receive a full-time education which maximises opportunities for all.
- We strive to provide a welcoming, caring environment, whereby each member of the school community feels safe and valued.
- We ensure that educational provision is stimulating, challenging and personalised to the individual.
- School staff work with students and their families to ensure each student attends regularly and punctually.
- We have effective systems which acknowledge the efforts that students make to maintain good attendance and timekeeping and which challenge those students and parents who give low priority to attendance and punctuality.

Hyde Community College recognises that attendance is a matter for the whole school community. Our Attendance Policy should not be viewed in isolation; it is a strand that runs through all aspects of school improvement, supported by our policies on safeguarding, bullying, behaviour and inclusive learning.

Section 2: Aims

- To improve the overall attendance of students.
- To reduce the number of students classified as persistent absentees and those students on track to become persistent absentees i.e. those students whose attendance falls below 90%, the equivalent to 19 days' absence in a school year.
- To make attendance and punctuality a priority for all those associated with the school including students, parents/carers, staff and governors.
- To develop a framework which defines agreed roles and responsibilities and promotes consistency in carrying out designated tasks.
- To provide support, advice and guidance to parents/carers and students.
- To develop a systematic approach to gathering and analysing attendance and punctuality related data.
- To further develop positive and consistent communication between home and school.
- To implement a system of rewards and sanctions.
- To promote effective partnerships with the Local Authority and other external agencies.
- To recognise the needs of individual students when planning reintegration following a significant period of absence.

Section 3: Legal Framework

- Parents have a legal obligation to ensure that their children attend school. Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 states that; children must attend full-time, regular education from the term after their fifth birthday to the last Friday in June of the school year in which they reach their sixteenth birthday.

**please note that young people leaving school from 2014 will be required to participate in education or training until they reach their eighteenth birthday.*

- The Children's Act 1989 devised the notion of parental responsibility, giving the role of a parent a formal legal status, however; in education law the term parent is much broader applying to any adult with day to day care and control of a child e.g. step-parents, grandparents who assume a parenting role etc.
- The Education Act 1996 defines a parent as,
 - ❖ all natural parents, whether they are married or not
 - ❖ any person who, although not a natural parent, has parental responsibility for a child or young person
 - ❖ any person who, although not a natural parent, has care of a child or young person (having care of a child or young person means that a person with whom the child lives and who looks after the child, irrespective of what their relationship is with the child, is considered to be a parent in education law).

- Under the Education Act 1996, parents who fail to secure regular school attendance are guilty of an offence under section 444(1) of The Education Act 1996. This carries a maximum £1000 fine.
- Where it can be proved that a parent knows their child is not attending school and does not try to bring about an improvement in school attendance, the parent is guilty of an offence under section 444(1a). This offence carries a potential custodial sentence of 3 months imprisonment or a £2500 fine.
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 require schools to take an attendance register twice each day; once in the morning and once in the afternoon.
The register must record whether the student was:
 - ❖ Present
 - ❖ Absent
 - ❖ Present at an approved educational activity
 - ❖ Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

Section 4: Attendance Protocols

Each day:

Registers will close 30 minutes after the start of the school day. Any student arriving late to school after 9.30am will receive an unauthorised 'U' code in the register. This means that the student was late after the register closed, but is also counted as an unauthorised absence for the morning session for attendance purposes.

Where a student arrives late after 9am, they will be marked with an 'L' code in the register.

Students who arrive late without a legitimate reason will receive a 30 minute detention on the same day. Parents/carers will be notified about their child's detention by text message.

When a student is absent:

- Parents/carers are contacted by automated text message issued by the attendance office and administered by Keep Kids Safe asking them to contact the school with a reason for their child's absence and the likely length of absence from school.
- If there is no response or a note is not provided when the student returns to school, the attendance office will send a letter/text message home at the end of the week to obtain a reason for absence.

Student Services produce a list of unexplained absences for each form tutor each week. These should be annotated and returned by form tutors to the attendance office where they have obtained a reason for absence from the student.

Half Termly:

As part of the school development plan, the school will set attendance targets each year. Attendance data is gathered by the Attendance Officer and monitored by the Pastoral Deputy Headteacher. Individual attendance targets are set each half-term between students and their form tutor. Pupils are able to monitor their attendance on a weekly basis and given appropriate support where necessary to improve their attendance.

Section 5: Categorising absence

Where students of compulsory school age are recorded as absent, the register must show whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised.

Absence can only be authorised by the school and cannot be authorised by parents. All absences will be treated as unauthorised unless a satisfactory explanation for the student's absence has been received.

Parents should advise school by telephone before 9.30am on the **first day of absence** and provide the school with an expected date of return. This should be followed up in the form of a written note from the parent/carer, though verbal explanations may be acceptable where this is deemed appropriate. Alternative arrangements will be agreed with non-English speaking parents/carers.

Where a student is absent for a period of three days and no contact has been made with the parent/carer, the Attendance Officer and/or Head of Year may carry out a home visit to ascertain a reason for absence.

Absence will be categorised as follows:

No reason yet given (N) Until a reason is obtained a student's absence is temporarily recorded as (N). The Attendance Officer works to ensure that these N codes are reconciled after a maximum period of two weeks. Those that remain un-reconciled are converted to (O) – unauthorised absence.

Illness (I) In most cases a telephone call or a note from the parent informing the school that their child is ill will be acceptable. Parents may be asked to provide medical evidence where there is an unusually long absence or where there are repeated absences due to reported illness. This will usually be in the form of an appointment card, prescription etc. Absences due to minor ailments such as a headache, cough or runny nose are not typically accepted and may be marked as unauthorised. If a student's attendance has been highlighted as cause for concern by the attendance team then medical evidence may be asked for.

Medical/Dental Appointments (M) Parents are advised where possible to make medical and dental appointments outside of the school day. Where this is not possible, students should attend school for part of the day. Parents should show the appointment card/letter to school. If a student's attendance has been highlighted as cause for concern by the attendance team and evidence is not provided, medical absences may be recorded as unauthorised e.g. where a student arrives late from an appointment without an appointment card.

Other authorised circumstances (C) This relates to occasions where there is cause for absence due to exceptional circumstances, for example family bereavement, visiting a parent in prison or part-time timetable agreed as part of a reintegration package.

Excluded (no alternative provision made) (E) Exclusion from attending school is counted as an authorised absence. The child's Head of Year will make arrangements for work to be sent home.

Family Holiday (agreed{H}) & Family Holiday (not agreed {G})

Parents are advised that holidays during term time will only be authorised by Hyde Community College under exceptional circumstances. Parents do not have an automatic right to remove their child from school during term time for the purpose of a holiday and should be made aware that if

their child is absent for 10 school days, they will miss 5% of their education during that school year.

If a student fails to return and contact with the parent has been unsuccessful, school may take the student off the school's roll in compliance with the Education (Student Registration)(England) Regulations 2006. This means that the child will lose their place at the school.

Where parents believe that exceptional circumstances exist, then they must make a written request to the Attendance Officer for authorisation of the period of absence as far in advance of the leave as possible. Exceptional circumstances will not be considered after the leave has been taken and the student has returned to school. Failure to receive a response from school does not constitute authorisation of the absence. If the permission to take leave is not granted and the student still goes on holiday, the absence will be unauthorised (G). In such cases the school may issue a penalty notice.

The school operates a strict leave of absence protocol. Where a student is thought to be on holiday without authorisation having been sought, the Attendance Officer and/or Head of Year may carry out a visit to the child's home address to confirm the reason for absence.

Religious Observance (R) Hyde Community College acknowledges the diversity of its school community and recognises that on some occasions, religious festivals may fall within term time and this necessitates a consideration of authorised absence or special leave for religious observance.

It is reasonable for a parent to allow their child to be absent on any day of religious observance if recognised by the parent's religious body.

Parents are requested to give advance notice to the school if they intend their child to be absent.

In the interests of fulfilling academic requirements of the school and limiting the authorised absence rate of the school, the school will authorise no more than one day for any individual occasion of religious observance/festival and no more than two days in total in any academic year. Any further absence will be categorised as unauthorised.

Late Arrival: Students are expected to be on site before 9am to ensure that they arrive at registration on time. Registration begins at 9am, students arriving after this time will be marked as present but arriving late (L). The register will close at 9.30am. Students arriving after the close of the register will be recorded as late after registration has closed (U). This will not be authorised and will count as an absence for the morning session.

On arrival after the close of register, students must sign in at Student Services to ensure that we can be responsible for their health and safety whilst they are in school.

- ❖ Lateness will only be authorised if a satisfactory explanation for the late arrival can be provided, for example attendance at a medical appointment.
- ❖ The absence will be recorded as unauthorised if the student has arrived late without a justifiable cause.

Unauthorised absence (O) Absence will not be authorised unless parents have provided a satisfactory explanation and that it has been accepted as such by the school.

**use of code (G) or (U) is also classified as unauthorised absence.*

Examples of unsatisfactory explanations include:

A student/family member's birthday
Shopping for uniform
Having their hair cut
Closure of a sibling's school for INSET (or other) purposes
'Couldn't get up'
Illness where a child is considered well enough to attend school
Holidays taken without the authorisation of the school
Looking after siblings

Persistent Absence (PA)

A pupil becomes a "Persistent Absentee" when they miss 10%, the equivalent of missing approximately one day per fortnight or more of school throughout the school year, regardless of the reason for absence.

Absence at this level does considerable damage to a child's educational prospects and we require full parental support and co-operation to tackle this.

We monitor all absence thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA threshold or to be at risk of moving towards PA status is given priority and parents will be informed of this. PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully through our pastoral system and we combine this with academic mentoring where absence affects attainment. Where students are at risk of becoming persistent absentees, medical evidence may be required in the event of any absences from school.

Section 6: Deletions from the register

In accordance with the Education (Student Registration)(England) Regulations 2006, students will only be deleted from the register when one of the following circumstances applies:

- The student has ceased to be of compulsory school age
- Permanent exclusion has occurred and subsequent appeals procedures have been completed
- Death of a student
- Transfer between schools
- Student withdrawn to be educated outside the school system
- Failure to return from an extended holiday after both the school and the local authority have tried to locate the student
- A medical condition prevents their attendance and return to school before the ending compulsory school-age
- In custody for more than four months (in discussion with the Youth Offending Team)
- 20 days continuous unauthorised absence where both the school and local authority have tried to locate the student

The school will follow Thameside MBC's guidance on deleting/removing a pupil from the attendance register and children missing in education.

Section 7: Support Systems

Hyde Community College recognises that poor attendance is often an indication of difficulties in a child's life. This may be related to problems at home and/or in school. Parents should make school aware of any difficulties or changes in circumstances that affect their child's attendance and/or behaviour in school, for example, bereavement, divorce/separation, incidents of domestic abuse. This will help the school to identify any additional support that may be required.

Hyde Community College also recognises that some students are more likely to require additional support to attain good attendance, for example, those students with special educational needs, those with physical or mental health needs, migrant and refugee students and students in the care of the local authority.

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

- Discussion/meetings with parents and students
- Attendance panels
- Attendance improvement agreements
- The Common Assessment Framework (CAF)
- Attendance Report Cards
- Referrals to external support agencies
- Learning Mentor support
- Student Voice Activities
- Friendship Groups
- Rewards systems
- Time limited part-time timetables
- Additional learning support
- Behaviour support
- Detentions
- Seclusion unit

Support offered to families will be child-centred and planned in discussion and agreement with both parents and students.

Where parents fail or refuse to engage with the support offered and further unauthorised absence occurs, Hyde Community College will consider the use of legal sanctions (see section 8).

Section 8: Legal Sanctions

Prosecution

Where intervention fails to bring about an improvement in attendance, the Local Authority will be notified and legal action in the Magistrates' Court may be taken. The school will provide the Local Authority with evidence required for a prosecution under section 444 of the Education Act 1996 and will appear as a prosecution witness if required by the court. This is to ensure that parents realise their own responsibilities in ensuring attendance at school and most importantly about returning children to regular education.

Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 states that if a parent fails to ensure the regular school attendance of their child if he/she is a registered student as a school and is of compulsory school age, then they are guilty of an offence.

A parent found guilty of this offence can be fined up to £2500 and/or be imprisoned for a period of three months.

Alternatives to section 444 are: Parenting Contracts, Penalty Notices or an Education Supervision Order.

Parenting Contracts (Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003)

A parenting contract is a voluntary agreement between school and the parent. It can also be extended to include the child and any other agencies offering support to resolve any difficulties leading to improved attendance.

The contract will outline attendance targets and will detail agreed actions that will help to achieve the target. The contract will be reviewed regularly.

The contract can be used as evidence in a prosecution should parents fail to carry out agreed actions.

Penalty Notices (Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003)

Penalty Notices will be considered when:

- a student is absent from school for the purpose of a holiday in term time and the absence has not been authorised by the school
- or
- a student has accumulated at least ten sessions/half days of unauthorised absence within a term and further unauthorised absence has occurred following written warning to improve

A Penalty Notice gives the parents the opportunity to discharge themselves of their legal responsibility if a £60 fine is paid within 21 days or £120 if paid within 28 days of the date the notice was issued.

Failure to pay the Penalty Notice may result in a prosecution under section 444 of the Education Act 1996.

Penalty Notices will be used in accordance with Tameside Council's Penalty Notice guidance.

Section 9: Promoting Good Attendance

Parents are advised to promote good attendance by:

- Letting children know that attendance is important. Showing interest in their school work and activities and wanting them to do well in school.
- Communicating with school staff. Letting us know in advance if their child is going to be absent or if they have any concerns about their child's attendance or school progress.
- Observing the school calendar and arranging family holidays during the published school breaks. The term dates are available at least twelve months in advance from the school website and from school on request.
- Trying to make medical appointments outside of school hours. Where this is not possible, sending their child into school before and/or after the appointment where possible.
- Establishing a routine. Making sure that their child completes their homework, sorts out their school equipment and uniform and gets enough sleep to ensure they are well-rested and organised to start the school day on time.
- Praising their child when they exhibit good attendance and punctuality. Any child's success depends on having a solid educational background, one that can only be gained through regular attendance.