Horizon Academy Trust

Where anything is possible

Attendance Policy

1.1



Version History 1.1

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1. RATIONALE

The purpose of this document is to inform staff, governors, parents, carers and visitors

to the schools within the Trust of how we ensure that current statutory regulations on pupil attendance and registration are met. This policy statement also outlines how the school will try to encourage regular attendance and punctuality and secure the support of parents and carers.

Creating a strong sense of belonging is central to our approach; pupils attend well when they feel safe, valued and included, and this underpins all attendance improvement strategies.

2. INTRODUCTION

Central to raising standards in education and ensuring all pupils can fulfil their potential is an assumption so widely understood that it is insufficiently stated – pupils need to attend school regularly to benefit from their education. Missing out on lessons leaves children vulnerable to falling behind. Children with poor attendance tend to achieve less in both primary and secondary school.

The Government expects schools and Local Authorities to:

- Promote good attendance and reduce absence, including persistent absence
- Ensure every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled
- Act early to address patterns of absence
- Parents to perform their legal duty by ensuring their children of compulsory school age who are registered at school attend regularly
- All pupils to be punctual to their lessons.

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

- Education Act 1996
- Equality Act 2010
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (As amended)
- The Children (Performances and Activities) (England) Regulations 2014
- Children and Young Persons Act 1963
- DfE (2024) 'Working together to improve school attendance'
- DfE (2024) 'Keeping children safe in education (KCSIE) 2024'
- DfE (2024) 'Children missing education'
- DfE (2024) 'Providing remote education'
- DfE (2024) 'Summary table of responsibilities for school attendance'

The schools within the Trust adopt a support-first approach to attendance, working in partnership with families to understand and remove barriers to attendance. Legal intervention will only be considered where support has not been engaged with or has

not been successful.
Promoting good attendance is a shared responsibility across the whole school community, including staff, pupils, parents, governors and trust leaders.

3. AIMS

One of the most important issues facing schools in Hull and the East Riding of Yorkshire is the level of pupil absence. We know that children who are not in school cannot learn. Consequently, at Horizon Academy Trust we aim to:

- aspire towards and then maintain an attendance rate of a minimum of 96.5%
- continue to raise and maintain parents' and pupils' awareness of the importance of regular attendance
- challenge all absences that do not meet the criteria for being authorised.

Good attendance is important because:

- statistics show a direct link between under-achievement and poor attendance
- regular attenders make better progress, both socially and academically
- regular attenders find school routines and school work easier to cope with
- regular attenders find learning more satisfying
- regular attenders have an easier transfer to secondary school.

4. REASONS FOR WHICH ABSENCE WILL BE AUTHORISED

At Horizon Academy Trust, the following reasons are acceptable for a child to be absent:

- sickness/illness, (confirmation may be required for a prolonged period of absence e.g. More than one week)
- medical appointments that have to be made during school hours as no other appointments are available
- approved religious observance
- Exceptional family circumstances. (Authorised by the headteacher/head of school)

5. REASONS FOR WHICH ABSENCE WILL NOT BE AUTHORISED

Any other reasons, such as those listed below, are unacceptable reasons for absence from school:

- term-time holidays
- getting up late
- looking after brothers or sisters or relatives
- shopping
- birthdays
- visiting friends and family
- if a child's attendance falls below 90% and medical evidence cannot be produced.

There may be some other exceptional circumstances when an absence might be authorised but these would be at the Headteacher's/Head of School's discretion. Penalty Notice Fines will be considered when there have been 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a 10-week period.

6. ABSENCE FROM SCHOOL FOR EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES (Inc HOLIDAYS)

Parents will be required to request certain types of absence in advance. All requests for absence will be handled by the Headteacher/Head of School – the decision to grant or refuse the request will be at the sole discretion of the Headteacher/Head of School, taking the best interests of the pupil and the impact on the pupil's education into account. The headteacher's decision is not subject to appeal.

Leave of absence

The school will only grant a pupil a leave of absence in exceptional circumstances. In order to have requests for a leave of absence considered, the school will expect parents to contact the Headteacher/Head of School **in writing** at least **two weeks** prior to the proposed start date of the leave of absence, providing the reason for the proposed absence and the dates during which the absence would be expected to occur. (See Appendix 1)

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. Where the absence is granted, the headteacher will determine the length of time that the pupil can be away from school. Leave of absence will only be granted in exceptional circumstances and will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Family holidays will not be considered exceptional. 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. The school cannot grant leaves of absence retrospectively; therefore, any absences that were not approved by the school in advance will be marked as unauthorised.

The Government have encouraged Local Authorities and schools to make it clear to parents that holidays during term time are not an acceptable reason for absence from

school. At Horizon Academy Trust we adopt the approach that states:

- holidays should be taken during the 13 weeks allocated each year as school holidays.
- statutory government guidance recommends that schools should not agree to parents taking their children on holiday during term-time.
- schools are advised to inform parents that they are unable to agree to a term-time holiday leave of absence. Any absence, for this reason, will be unauthorised. Those taking holidays in term time will be issued a Penalty Notice, the amount will be £160 per parent per child paid within 28 days. Reduced to £80 per parent per child if paid within 21 days.
- If a second Education Penalty Notice is issued to the same parent for the same child, within three years of the first Fixed Penalty Notice, the second Fixed Penalty Notice is charged at a flat rate of £160 if paid within 28 days.
- Once two Education Penalty Notices have been issued, if a third unauthorised leave of absence occurs within a three-year period, the Local Authority is able to move to prosecution immediately.
- Each case will always be individually considered by the Headteacher/Head of School and it is at their discretion whether a penalty is issued.
- in a rare, specific emergency, or an exceptional situation, the Headteacher/Head of School has the power to authorise a short, limited period of absence. The **only** reasons for which this can be considered are: service personnel who are prevented from taking holidays outside term time; an acute crisis within the family, where the family needs to spend time together to support each other; court order/formal agreement where parents have separated.

Appendix 2 sets out the procedures the school is required to follow following an absence from school in exceptional circumstances/holiday request.

7. PARENT/CARER RESPONSIBILITIES

We encourage all parents and carers to work in partnership with the school by making sure that their child arrives punctually and undertaking the following if their child is not to attend:

- ringing the school on the first morning of all absences with the reason and saying when the child will return. A failure to do this will result in a phone call and home visit.
- arranging dental and doctor's appointments out of school hours or during school breaks
- sending in a note explaining the reason for absence on the child's return to school after an illness
- provide evidence for the absence (medical note, surgery card etc)
- keeping the school updated by telephone, email or letter if the child has an extended period of absence due to illness

- inform the school at the earliest opportunity of any intention to transfer a child to another setting, providing full details as soon as is practicable.

8. SCHOOL RESPONSIBILITIES

At Horizon Academy Trust we will:

- Identify a named Senior Attendance Champion responsible for leading attendance strategy, monitoring data and driving improvement. Findings and analysis will be shared with SLT on a regular basis
- operate robust daily attendance procedures, including first-day absence response and timely follow-up of all unexplained absences
- follow up on unexplained absences by a phone call to the parents/carers on the first morning of a child's absence
- perform welfare checks on the 3rd day of absence unless Head decides against it based on nature of illness and contact with parents/carers
- visit the home of absentee children whose parents/carers cannot be contacted by phone and who have not indicated why their child is absent
- Teachers and staff will be alert to emerging patterns of absence or lateness and will act promptly to raise concerns and support early intervention.
- inform parents/carers of any concerns regarding the attendance of their child at school, including lateness
- where concerns go unheeded, the Educational Welfare Officer or Attendance Officer, will start the relevant process
- support the fining of parents/carers who exceed Penalty Notice Fines will be considered when there have been 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a 10-week period.
- remind parents of the importance of regular attendance and punctuality in newsletters/website
- publish our attendance rate on the school website and in the Headteacher's/Head of School's Report to Governors
- publish children's attendance rates with their annual reports
- send out termly letters to parents/carers informing them of their children's current attendance
- acknowledge and reward good attendance.
- Give particular consideration to pupils with SEND, medical needs or mental health barriers, ensuring appropriate support is in place

9. TRUST RESPONSIBILITIES

At Horizon Academy Trust we will:

- Monitor attendance in all settings. Tracking of attendance will be shared with the Strategic Trust Lead for Attendance who will in turn report to the CEO/Trust Board
- Support implementation of policy, process and procedures across all settings within the trust

- Provide relevant training for staff and governors to support the implementation of attendance strategies and guidance on how to challenge and interpret data.

10. START AND END OF THE SCHOOL DAY

Children arriving after the published school start time should sign in at the school office. If it is within 30 minutes of this time children will be given a late mark on the register. Continual late marks will trigger concerns which will be discussed with parents/carers, and if no improvement is made, a meeting with the Attendance Officer and/or Senior Management Team will be arranged. Any child arriving **after** 30 minutes is marked with a U and this is an unauthorised absence.

Any children who are usually collected from school at the end of the day and who are not collected will remain under the supervision of a member of staff. Every attempt to make contact with the named relatives will be made so that the child can be collected before the close of the school site. If the child remains uncollected by the close of school, then Children's Services, Social Care or the Police, will be informed, and arrangements made for the child to be collected.

11. LATENESS

It is essential that children arrive at school on time so that their education is not affected. Schools will publish their start and end times via their websites and other printed materials such as newsletters and information booklets. Parents can ensure that their child gets the most out of their education by ensuring children are in school on time.

12. PROCEDURE FOLLOWING PUPIL ABSENCE

On the first day of absence, the school will seek to establish the reason for absence through first-day contact with parents/carers. This will typically include a telephone call and/or message.

Where a reason for absence is provided, the absence will be recorded appropriately and attendance will continue to be monitored. If the pupil is considered vulnerable then a home visit/welfare check may be appropriate following consultation with the DSL.

Where no contact is made:

• The school will make repeated attempts to contact parents/carers using all available contact details

• This may include telephone calls, text messages and emails

• Failing contact then the emergency contacts will be contacted

• If no contact is made a home visit will be made as soon as possible (same day). The DSL will be informed immediately.

Third day of absence

On the third consecutive day of absence, the school will take further action regardless of whether contact has been made with parents/carers.

This will include:

• A home/welfare visit if deemed necessary by the Headteacher.

This may include:

• A formal review of the pupil's attendance

• Consideration of safeguarding concerns and referral where appropriate

• Contact with external agencies, including the Local Authority, where the pupil is considered at risk

• Arranging a meeting with parents/carers to discuss attendance and any support required

• Considering early help or multi-agency support where appropriate

The school will ensure that appropriate action is taken to establish the pupil's safety and to support a return to regular attendance as quickly as possible.

13. PUPILS LEAVING THE SCHOOL SITE

Pupils will not be permitted to leave the school premises during the school day unless they have permission from the school. The following procedures will be taken in the event of a pupil going missing whilst at school:

- The member of staff who has noticed the absent pupil will inform the Headteacher/Head of School 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 premises as directed by the Headteacher/Head of School
- available staff will begin a search of the area immediately outside of the school premises, and will take a mobile phone with them so they can be contacted.
- If the pupil has not been found after 10 minutes, then the parents of the pupil will be notified
- The school will attempt to contact parents using the emergency contact numbers provided
- If the parents 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 log the incident via CPOMS, 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 personnel will be informed
- When the pupil has been located, members of staff will care for and talk to the pupil to ensure they are safe and well
- Parents and any other agencies will be informed immediately when the pupil has been located

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

The Headteacher/Head of School will carry out a full investigation and will draw a conclusion as to how the incident occurred. Policies and procedures will be reviewed in accordance with the outcome where necessary.

14. CHILDREN MISSING EDUCATION

A Children Missing Education form is used and passed onto the Local Authority Education Welfare Service when all possible enquiries have been made to establish the whereabouts of pupils who have:

- Moved out of the area or within the area
- With no destination school
- Where the school has been approached for a place directly by a parent/carer
- For agencies other than schools who have knowledge of children not on a school roll.

15. ALTERNATIVE PROVISION

Where pupils attend alternative provision, the school will establish clear arrangements with the provider to ensure that attendance information is shared on a daily basis. Any unexplained or unexpected absence will be followed up promptly by the school in line with its attendance procedures.

The school will record attendance using the appropriate code to reflect that the pupil is attending approved alternative provision, ensuring that the provision is supervised and that suitable safeguarding arrangements are in place.

16. PERSISTENT ABSENCE

The concept of persistent absence (PA) as a key measure for school absence was first introduced in the 2005/2006 academic year. Since 2015/16, the threshold for persistent

absence is when a pupil's overall absence is 10% or more of their possible sessions. A pupil's absences may be authorised, unauthorised or a combination of both.

As a Trust we believe:

- Tracking and monitoring are crucial to identifying the risk of persistent absence
- There are different reasons why pupils are frequently absent from school and these are important to recognise. Give particular consideration to pupils with SEND, medical needs or mental health barriers, ensuring appropriate support is in place
- Relationship between school, parents and pupils is paramount. Support will be at the forefront of the school's approach to persistent absence.

Consistent tracking and monitoring

The first stage in successfully reducing levels of persistent absence is identifying pupils or groups of pupils who are at risk of becoming, or who are, persistently absent.
At Horizon Academy Trust we have a system that will:

- include all children and their attendance
- include attendance in the previous academic year
- highlight those pupils who were PA at the end of the previous academic year.

This can be used as a starting point for identifying concerns during the first half term and provides some historical context for considering concerns. Where the pupil is new to the school, attendance information from previous schools should be requested and included. Our tracking system will allow us to record any actions undertaken, review the impact of these actions and prevent any drift between interventions and decision-making. Attendance data will be analysed regularly to identify patterns, trends, and vulnerable groups, including those at risk of persistent or severe absence.

Understanding the reasons for persistent absence

The reasons for persistent absence are varied and may be complex. Some children who are persistent absentees will be so for reasons that are unavoidable and justifiable, such as an operation or medical treatment. Their attendance may not improve above persistent absence for the current academic year. The focus for these persistent absentee pupils should be on meeting the needs of these children academically and pastorally. However, this attendance pattern will still need tracking in line with the Persistent Absence flowchart. See Appendix 13 (Persistent Absence Flowchart)

For other persistent absentee pupils, there may be a clear, single reason for their absences, such as periods of exclusion from school or due to unauthorised leave of absence. This attendance pattern will still need tracking in line with the Persistent Absence flowchart. See Appendix 13 (Persistent Absence Flowchart)

For cases where there is no clear, single reason for poor attendance, there should be an assessment of the issues impacting on a child's absence so that the appropriate interventions can be put into place. This attendance pattern will still need tracking in line with the Persistent Absence flowchart. See Appendix 13 (Persistent Absence Flowchart)

This assessment should consider what is known about:

- the reasons for the child's absence
- the pattern of absence, including the length and frequency of absence, and the volume of authorised and unauthorised absence
- the levels of parent and pupil engagement, communication and co-operation
- any actions undertaken and the impact of these.

Strategies to address persistent absence

The focus on persistent absence is part of an escalating process that is embedded in school policy and procedure, led by senior leaders and understood by the whole school community: staff, pupils, governors and parents.

Having assessed the reasons for the persistent absence and analysed its profile, it is important to identify strategies that can be used to address it. In more complex and longer-term cases of poor attendance and persistent absence, interventions may include:

- multi-agency meetings and actions plans
- requests for medical information or information from other services
- use of local authority enforcement processes and procedures
- home visiting
- direct work with children and parents to address root causes of absences
- engaging specialist services
- considering options for provision.

- Schools to use the Attend framework to help identify and overcome barriers to attendance.

Each case is different and getting to know the family and the individual circumstances is crucial.

Absence due to illness

One group of children who may be persistently absent are those with a long-term illness. In these cases, it is important to maintain a home-school link with parents and carers and to seek consent to liaise directly with medical professionals to ensure that you are able to offer appropriate support, access to education and reduce absence where appropriate. Ensuring that we have key information is vital. Some best practice includes:

- explaining to parents and pupils why you need their consent to access medical information and the appropriate support and services
- using a form to record consent
- ensuring you have the details of the relevant medical professionals involved
- writing clear letters requesting information and explaining why you need this information and enclosing a copy of the consent form
- ensuring that information received is scrutinised and validated
- keeping in regular contact with parents and pupils.

Where possible, we will use existing protocols for care plans and links with school medical services such as the school nurse, as a mechanism for sharing information. It is beneficial to then arrange multi-agency meetings, which include medical professionals.

17.Part-time timetables

All children of compulsory school age are entitled to a full-time education appropriate to their age, aptitude and any special educational needs. A part-time timetable will only be considered in exceptional circumstances, where it is in the best interests of the pupil. It will not be used as a strategy to manage behaviour.

Where a part-time timetable is agreed, this will form part of a planned intervention, with clear objectives and a defined pathway for reintegration to full-time education. The school will notify the Trust's Safeguarding Lead and the relevant Local Authority.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead will be consulted prior to implementation, and a written risk assessment will be completed to ensure that appropriate safeguarding arrangements are in place for any period the pupil is not in school. Any absence during this time will be recorded using the appropriate authorised attendance code in line with current guidance.

All part-time timetables will be time-limited, subject to regular review, and recorded and monitored in line with Local Authority expectations. The school will work in partnership with parents/carers and, where appropriate, external agencies, to support the pupil's successful return to full-time education.

18.School refusal

Another group of children who may be persistently absent are those who refuse to attend school. 'School refusal' is a broad term that is often used to encapsulate a range of issues that cause long- term non-attendance.

This can include children affected by transitions, anxiety, separation or attachment issues, as well as children who are masking underlying issues inside of school such as bullying or issues outside of school such as being a young carer or witnessing domestic abuse.

Some best-practice suggestions for addressing school refusal include:

- being alert to early warning signs and patterns
- Attend framework used to identify potential barriers
- identifying a key person to work with the child and parent.

It is important to arrange to meet with parents and the pupil to agree on an action plan (see Appendix 8/9) This will include small steps with regular reviews and clear timescales. There will be clear expectations and measures of engagement.

19.Early interventions

The most successful interventions will be those that identify the issue before it becomes a problem for the child, family and school. It is essential to promote good routines and positive attitudes to attendance as soon as children access any school provision. To do this we will inform new starters of our targets and expectations, monitoring and developing good routines for all children including non-statutory age children.

At the first signs that there could be a persistent absence issue emerging, we will consider:

- use of attendance-targeting letters (See Appendix 3) that make parents aware that pupils have become PA, or are at risk of becoming PA and what is expected
- early meetings with parents and pupils when concerns first emerge to discuss these and agree on actions to improve attendance. Attend Framework to be used.
- documented conversations with parents and pupils that agree on actions
- use of formal attendance panels, including members of senior leadership and trust representation
- home visits
- targeted support e.g. walking bus, alarm, health referrals etc

Where agreed plans to improve attendance are failing, this should be communicated to pupils and parents as early as possible. To effectively tackle persistent absence, it is crucial that lines of communication are preserved and built upon.