



HIGHLEES PRIMARY SCHOOL

Bringing out the Best

Attendance Policy

Document Control

Date	Revised amendment details	By whom
October 2022	Approved by TEFAT	Trustees
23rd September 2022	Adopted and implemented by the school	Head of School
October 2025	Review date subject to any required statutory updates	Ops Group

Elliot Foundation Academies Trust Values

1. Put children first

- a. We trust and value your professionalism
- b. We share the responsibility for the learning and welfare of all of our children
- c. Our purpose is to improve the lives of children

2. Be safe

- a. Don't assume that someone else will do it
- b. Look after yourself, your colleagues and all children
- c. We are all responsible for each other's safety and well being
- d. Discuss any concerns with an appropriate member of staff

3. Be kind & respect all

- a. People are allowed to be different as are you
- b. Kindness creates the positive environment we all need to flourish
- c. This kindness should extend to ourselves as well as to others

4. Be open

- a. If you can see a better way, suggest it
- b. If someone else suggests a better way to you, consider it
- c. We exist to nurture innovators and support those who take informed risks in the interests of children

5. Forgive

- a. We all make mistakes
- b. Admit them, learn from them and move on

6. Make a difference

- a. Making the world a better place starts with you
- b. Model the behaviour that you would like to see from others

Related Policies and Documents

TEFAT Attendance Policy

TEFAT Safeguarding Policy and [local safeguarding arrangements documents]

TEFAT Supporting Pupils with Medical Needs Policy

School attendance parental responsibility measures

The Education Act 1996

The Education Act 2002

The Education and Inspections Act 2006

DfE Working together to improve school attendance Sept 2022

DfE Summary table of responsibilities for school attendance Sept 2022

1. Introduction

Promoting good school attendance and reducing absence is vital to: ensure children's day-to-day welfare and safeguarding; ensure that every pupil has access to full-time education; ensure that pupils make good progress academically and personally and to ensure that pupils leave us with the best possible opportunities for their future.

This policy aims to ensure that all pupils attend school regularly; consequently they will be able to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available.

The policy outlines the **responsibilities for the school and parents** in ensuring that pupils' attendance at Highlees Primary is the best it can be. It also describes the strategies used by the schools, alongside The Elliot Foundation Academies Trust and Peterborough LA to support and improve attendance.

2. The importance of culture and curriculum

Highlees Primary School is committed to providing an education of the highest quality for all of its pupils/students and recognises that this can only be achieved by supporting and promoting excellent school attendance for all. This is based upon the belief that only by attending school regularly and punctually will children and young people be able to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them. High attainment depends on good attendance.

The whole school community – pupils/students, parents and carers, teaching and support staff and school governors – have a responsibility for ensuring good school attendance and have important roles to play. The purpose of the policy is to clarify everyone's part in this.

Ours is a successful school and your child plays their part in making it so. We aim for an environment which enables and encourages all members of the community to achieve excellence. For children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and your child should be at school, on time, every day on which the school is open unless the reason for the absence is exceptional.

At Highlees Primary we recognise that school must be a place where children feel valued, safe, welcome, accepted and supported in order for them to want to attend. This culture is established and maintained through regular staff training, inductions for new staff and pupils, high expectations regarding conduct, and school systems such as behaviour recognition and rewards. This culture is supported by effective and regular communication



between staff teams, as well as between teachers and parents. Pupil voice is used to measure our success in maintaining such an ethos. All staff (teaching and support) at our school have a key role to play in supporting and promoting excellent school attendance and will work to provide an environment in which all of our pupils/students are eager to learn, feel valued members of the school community and look forward to coming to school every day.

The curriculum offered by the schools help children to maximise their academic success as well as developing their sense of self and their responsibilities to the wider community. We strive to broaden children's opportunities and experiences by introducing them to new and exciting topics through the taught curriculum, theatrical productions, off site visits, sporting competitions, public performances and opportunities to work alongside community leaders.

3. Attendance systems and procedures

3.1. Attendance Registers

Accurate and timely registers enable the school to safeguard children as well as to recognise and act upon any concerning attendance patterns. Staff follow the school Register Protocol which is reviewed and shared at least annually. Registers are taken at the start of every morning and afternoon session, specific registration times are, before 9am and before 1pm. Children arriving after registers close are recorded as 'Late'. Daily contact is made with off-site providers to ensure the register is accurate.

3.2. Recording and responding to absence

During pupil inductions, parents are asked to contact school on the first day of a child's absence to explain the reason. If no reason is given, or further information is required, a phone call is made to parents. Once sufficient information has been gained, an absence code is determined by the appropriate member of staff in line with DfE guidance in Working together to improve school attendance (September 2022). This decision is based on the information provided by parents when a child's absence is reported and will influence whether an absence is authorised or not.

3.3. Home visits

Home visits are routinely carried out by Mrs Edwards and or a member of our office staff if no contact can be made by phone, further information is needed or to see how a child is. Home visits are not pre-arranged and can be made at any time, at the discretion of the school. Staff will always carry their school ID and will expect to see the child in question, if only briefly, in order to ascertain how they are.

3.4. Monitoring and improving irregular attendance

Sara Hamlet monitors cases where attendance is below 90% fortnightly. For children whose absence has increased, actions are taken which aim to prevent children becoming or remaining a 'Persistent Absentee' (<90%).

These actions may include but are not limited to:

- . Weekly monitoring of pupils whose attendance is below 90%
- . Phone calls home
- . Home visits
- . Attendance meetings



- . Letters sent home
- . Child Missing in Education documents
- . Local Authority Penalty Notices
- . Monitoring of Persistent Absent children
- . Monitoring of persistently LATE children

Absence Procedures:

If your child is absent you must contact us as soon as possible on the first day of absence and explain why they will not be in school. **Telephone numbers: School Office 01733 264294**

If your child is absent we will:

- Telephone, text or email you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you;
- Invite you in to discuss the situation with us;
- Carryout a door knock if we have not heard from parents/ carers after 2 days
- Take legal action if there are persistent absences, which may be in the form of Penalty Notices issued to each parent/carer for each child.

There are times when we need to contact parents/carers about lots of things, including absence, so we need to have your contact numbers at all times. So help us to help you and your child by making sure we always have an up to date number – if we don't then something important may be missed. There will be regular checks on telephone numbers throughout the year.

The School Attendance Officer:

Parents/Carers are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any problems together. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, the school may refer the child to the Local Authority Attendance Officer from Peterborough City Council, School Attendance Team. She will also try to resolve the situation by agreement but, if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed and unauthorised absences persist, these Officers can recommend that the Local Authority use sanctions such as Penalty Notices or prosecutions in the Magistrates Court.

Lateness:

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If your child misses the start of the day they can miss work and do not spend time with their class teacher/form tutor getting vital information and news for the day. Late arriving pupils also disrupt lessons, can be embarrassing for the child and can also encourage absence.

How we manage lateness:

The school day starts between **8.40am** and we expect your child to be in class at that time.

Registers are marked by **9.00am** and your child will receive a late mark if they are not in by that time.

At **9.00am** the registers will be closed. In accordance with the Regulations, if your child arrives after that time they will receive a mark that will indicate that your child is in the school building, but will be marked with a 'U' Code which is recorded as an **unauthorised absence**. This may mean that you could face the possibility of a Penalty Notice if the problem persists.

If your child has a persistent late record you will be asked to meet with us to resolve the problem, but you can approach us at any time if you are having problems getting your child to school on time.

Leave of Absence:

Taking leave of absence without exceptional circumstance in term time will affect your child's schooling as much as any other absence and we expect parents to help us by not taking children away in school time.

Remember that any savings you think you may make by taking a holiday in school time are offset by the cost to your child's education.

There is **no** automatic entitlement in law to time off during school time to go on holiday.

All applications for leave of absence **must** be made in advance. In making a decision about whether to authorise this leave, the school will consider the circumstances of each application individually.

It is important that you understand that we may **only** authorise such absences in **exceptional circumstances**.

Any period of leave taken without the agreement of the school (with at least four weeks' notice) and/or different from that agreed by the school will be classed as unauthorised and may attract sanctions such as a Penalty Notice per parent/carer per child.

Pupils who have been suspended or who are absent for long periods because of ill-health receive appropriate support to return to school, build confidence and bridge gaps in their learning. These plans are drawn up in collaboration with parents and the pupil (providing they are able to understand the process).

3.5. Attendance and safeguarding

Concerns about any extended or persistent absence are referred to the appropriate team or staff member. It is recognised that poor attendance may be a sign or symptom of a wider safeguarding issue that requires support (this includes but is not limited to domestic abuse, mental health difficulties, FGM, CCE, CSE or financial strain). Where there are concerns about a child's welfare, action will be taken in line with the Trust's Safeguarding Policy.

3.6. Children Missing from Education (CMfE) Referrals

Academies have safeguarding duties under section 175 of the Education Act 2002 in respect of their pupils, and as part of this should investigate any unexplained absences. If a child is absent and contact cannot be made with parents directly (by phone or home visit), and their whereabouts cannot be confirmed by any of the additional named contacts held by school, then the Local Authority's CMfE team is notified immediately and police are asked to carry out a safe and well check at the home address. The CMfE team is also notified if a child is known to have moved out of the area so is no longer attending, or if a parent enquiring about a school place states that their child is not currently attending a school.

3.7. Recognising and rewarding good attendance

To help children and their parents understand the importance of regular attendance and monitor their own and their class's attendance, it is discussed and celebrated in the following ways:

. We celebrate the classes with the highest attendance for KS1 and KS2 in a Celebration Assembly on a Friday.

4. Term-time leave of absence requests

A leave of absence request form **MUST** be completed in all circumstances, as far in advance as possible, and a minimum of 28 days before the requested absence starts. Forms must be requested from and returned to the school office. One form must be completed per family and incomplete forms will not be considered.

The Head of School will **only** authorise leave during term time in **exceptional circumstances, when absence during term time is absolutely unavoidable**. This decision is entirely at the Head of School's discretion, based on the information provided by parents in writing, at the time the request is made.

Where a period of absence is authorised in exceptional circumstances, the number of days will be determined by the Head of School. For this reason, it is strongly recommended that permission for leave is obtained *before* travel or accommodation are booked.

This is in line with DfE guidance which states that:

215. Parents should plan their holidays around school breaks and avoid seeking permission from schools to take their children out of school during term time unless it is absolutely unavoidable.

216. An application for leave of absence should (and from certain schools must) not be granted unless it is made in advance by a parent the pupil normally lives with and the school is satisfied that there are exceptional circumstances based on the individual facts and circumstance of the case which justify the leave. Where a leave of absence is granted, the school will determine the number of days a pupil can be absent from school. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the headteacher's discretion.

[Working together to improve school attendance](#) (DfE, September 2022)



After submitting a complete and timely request for term time leave to be authorised, parents will be informed of the Head of School's decision in writing within five school days.

Periods of unauthorised leave will not be tolerated.

Persistent Absence (PA):

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more schooling within an agreed period of time for whatever reason. Absence at this level may cause considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we need full parental support and co-operation to tackle this.

We monitor all absences thoroughly. Any case that is at risk of moving towards the PA level is given priority and you will be informed of this immediately.

PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully through our pastoral system and we may also combine this with academic mentoring where absence affects attainment.

Circumstances where a Penalty Notice may be requested from the LA by the School:

A Penalty Notice can be issued if one of the following criteria can be met

- Level of unauthorised absence leads to an unauthorised absence rate of 10% or more within a minimum period of any 8 school weeks (A maximum of 2 penalty notices may be issued in any academic year);
- A single unauthorised absence event of at least 2 consecutive school days (4 consecutive sessions);
- Persistent late arrival at school after the register has closed contributes to a level of unauthorised absence at 10% or above;
- Lack of adherence to the dates agreed for any authorised leave of absence without reasonable justification;
- Pupils identified in a public place whilst excluded from school (during the first five days of the exclusion period) without reasonable justification.

For further information regarding Penalty Notices please refer to the **Peterborough City Council Code of Conduct** which is available on the Peterborough City Council Website.

5. Formal and legal interventions

Highlees Primary will always seek to resolve any attendance concerns by working to support the family with improving a child's attendance. Where this is not successful, or when those with parental responsibility for the child do not engage with this support, then the academy will work with the Local Authority's School Attendance Support Service to address poor attendance.

The first step would be to set up a formal parenting contract between parents and the school.

5.1. Parenting contracts

- A formal written agreement between a parent and either the school or Local Authority to address irregular attendance at school.
- Are not legally binding but allow a more formal route to secure engagement with support where a voluntary early help plan has not worked or is not deemed appropriate.
- Are not a punitive tool, they are intended to provide support and offer an alternative to prosecution.
- Parents cannot be compelled to enter a contract, and they cannot be agreed in a parent's absence.
- Aim for the parent(s), and the pupil where they are old enough, the school and the Local Authority to work in partnership.
- Parenting contracts contain:
 - Details of the requirements the parent(s) is expected to comply with.
 - A statement from the school and/or Local Authority agreeing to provide support to the parent(s) to meet the requirements and setting out details of the support.
 - A statement by the parent that they agree to comply with the requirements for the period of time specified by the contract.
 - The period it will be in place for (most are for between 3 and 12 months but can be longer if needed).

If a parenting contract is not effective at improving a child's attendance, or is deemed not appropriate, the Local Authority has the option to progress as far as needed through the following, hierarchical legal interventions;

- **Education Supervision Orders (ESO)** - non compliance can lead to prosecution and a fine of up to £1000
- **Attendance prosecutions** - if found guilty, depending on the circumstances parents can be sentenced to a community order, a parenting order, a fine of up to £2500 or imprisonment of up to 3 months.
- **Parenting orders** - breaches can lead to a fine of up to £1000

Where safeguarding concerns exist, the school's designated safeguarding lead and children's social care services may decide that either a s.17 (Children in Need) or s.47 (Child Protection) plan is a more appropriate form of support.

5.2. Fixed Penalty Notices

Penalty notices are an alternative to the prosecution of parents for failing to ensure that their child of compulsory school age regularly attends the school where they are registered. Penalty notices are used when parenting contracts are not appropriate, such as when a parent(s) takes a child out of school for term time leave that has not been authorised.

- fines of £60 (if paid within 21 days)/£120 (if paid after 21 days but before 28 days) imposed on parents
- can only be issued by a head teacher or someone authorised by them (a deputy or assistant head), a Local Authority officer or the police
- can be issued to each parent liable for the attendance offence or offences
- can be used where the pupil's absence has not been authorised by the school
- there is no right of appeal by parents against a fixed penalty notice

- Peterborough's Fixed Penalty Notice Code of Conduct can be found **here**

<https://www.peterborough.gov.uk/residents/schools-and-education/attendance#:~:text=Once%20your%20child%20is%20registered,or%20being%20prosecuted%20in%20court.>

For full details of the school attendance parental responsibility measures available to schools and Local Authorities see School attendance parental responsibility measures (DfE, January 2015) or Section 6 of Working together to improve school attendance (DfE September 2022)

6. Roles and responsibilities

6.1. Parents and carers are responsible for:

- Ensuring that their child attends school regularly and on time.
- Informing the academy on the first day of non-attendance by telephoning the school office.
- Ensuring that medical appointments are booked outside school time wherever possible.
- Speak to the Head of School or Family Support Worker to seek support for any issues that may be preventing their child from wanting to attend school.
- Understanding and accepting that absences for family holidays or visits and special occasions will not normally be permitted. Approval will only be granted in truly exceptional circumstances, at the discretion of the Principal.
- Working alongside the school to address and improve any patterns of poor attendance.
- Complying with the DfE statutory guidance on School attendance parental responsibility measures (January 2015).

6.2. Pupils, when developmentally ready to take some responsibility for their learning, are expected to:

- Attend school every day.
- Arrive on time, ready to learn.
- Tell a trusted adult if there is a problem that might lead to absence.

6.3. All staff are responsible for promoting good attendance. Those with specific responsibilities include:

- The member of SLT appointed as **Attendance Lead** is responsible for the strategic approach to attendance taken by the school.
- Mrs Hamlet checks absence after each register period and carries out first day calling and home visits and supports parents with improving their child's attendance. The ASP also monitors attendance data for individuals and groups and works with the attendance lead to decide on and implement actions in response to patterns shown in data.
- **Class teachers and LSAs** discuss attendance daily, refer concerns to the ASP and award weekly 100% stickers.
- The **Head of School** decides whether term time leave applications are approved or not (see 'Term time leave of absence requests', above).
- The **Family Support Worker and SENDCo** work with children who face attendance barriers and families who need support.



Our schools is supported to improving pupil attendance by the following partners:

- Local Authority School Attendance Team
- Attendance Officer for Peterborough
- **The Elliot Foundation Academies Trust** Regional Director, DSL for the Trust and Legal, SEND and Governance Director