

New Horizon Academy: Attendance Policy

Policy Statement

At New Horizon Academy we educate with purpose: to provide our pupils with the tools they need to become independent, achieve economic well-being, contribute to society, and always strive to do their best.

We provide a vibrant environment for the education of children with moderate and severe learning needs who are in the care of New Horizons Care Limited. We will be responsive enough in our teaching approach to consistently meet our pupils needs and prepare them for the ever-changing world.

Regular attendance is a pre-requisite to fulfilling this aim. Pupils need to attend school regularly to benefit from their education. Missing out on lessons leaves them vulnerable to falling behind. Those with poor attendance tend to achieve less.

Legal Framework

The legal framework governing attendance is set by the Education Acts and their associated regulations. 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 to his/her age, aptitude and ability and to any special educational needs he/she may have either by regular attendance at school or otherwise. Section 444 further states that: -
- “The parent of a child of compulsory school age registered at school and failing to attend regularly is guilty of an offence punishable in law. An offence is NOT committed if it can be demonstrated that: -
 - the pupil was absent with leave (authorised absence),
 - the pupil was ill or prevented from attending by unavoidable cause,
 - the absence occurred on a day set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil/parents belong,
 - the school is not within the prescribed walking distance of the child’s home and no suitable transport arrangements have been made by the LA. ‘Walking distance’ is defined as two miles for pupils under eight and three miles for all other pupils.
 - A limited defence is available to the parents of travelling children

The Act also places a legal obligation on: -

- Schools to register attendance and notify the Nominated Attendance Person within school of a child who is absent from school without authorisation for 10 or more days. The LA must be notified of any episodes of absence of 10 days or more under the ‘Child Missing Education/Children Not Receiving Education (CME/CNRE)’ protocol.

- The Headteacher and the governing body are to ensure that two school registers are kept, one for attendance and one for admissions (under the Pupil Regulations Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006)

Our Aims

- New Horizon Academy is committed to providing a full and efficient educational experience to all pupils. We believe that, if pupils are to benefit from education, punctuality and good attendance is crucial. As a school, we will organise and do all we can to ensure maximum attendance for all pupils. Any problems that impede punctuality and regular attendance will be identified and addressed as speedily as possible.
- It is the policy of our school to celebrate achievement. Attendance is a critical factor to a productive and successful school career. Our school will actively promote and encourage excellent attendance for all our pupils.
- Our school will give a high priority to conveying to parents, carers, and pupils the importance of regular and punctual attendance. We recognise that parents 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.
- If there are problems which affect a pupil's attendance we will investigate, identify, and work in partnership with parents and pupils to resolve those problems as quickly and efficiently as possible. We will adopt a clearly focused approach aimed at the pupil resuming full attendance and consistent punctuality.

Principles

New Horizon Academy will:

- ensure that all staff are aware of the registration procedures and receive in-service training on registration regulations and associated education law,
- complete registers accurately at the beginning of each morning and during the afternoon session, using the relevant absence and attendance codes outlined in the DfE's "School attendance - Guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities" – see appendix 1
- stress to parents/carers the importance of contacting staff early on the first day of absence,
- display attendance rates around the school and reward good and improved attendance of all pupils,
- promote positive staff attitudes and support to pupils returning after absence,
- consult with all members of the school community and the Attendance Support Team in developing and maintaining the whole-school attendance policy,
- ensure regular evaluation of attendance procedures by senior managers and the school governors,
- work towards ensuring that all pupils feel supported and valued. We will send a clear message that if a pupil is absent, she/he will be missed,

- have in place procedures which allow absentees to catch up on missed work without disrupting the learning of other class members, consider remote learning opportunities where necessary,
- take responsibility for Children not Receiving Education (CNRE), so that school are in regular contact with the pupil and parent, ensuring the pupils safety, working together so that the pupil can resume full time education, monitor, and regularly review those pupils subject to a modified timetable, ensuring it is a short-term intervention and have a clear plan for reintegration back into full time attendance at school.

Procedures

If no contact is received from the parents/carers of an absent pupil on the first morning of absence we will:

- follow 'first day contact' procedures and contact the parent/carer by telephone/text message, or if the parent is unavailable send a standard letter requesting information,
- consider sending a second letter if an explanation has still not been received after three days of unexplained absence or send a School Attendance Letter,
- the school administrator will contact the local authority's Education Welfare Officer to follow up absence if no response is received after 5 days of absence and refer to the family social worker if there are additional concerns regarding the family and no contact can be made with the parent,
- where there are safeguarding or similar concerns regarding the pupil/family additional services should be contacted immediately if the school is unable to contact the family. (e.g., social care, strengthening families)
- invite the parents/carer into school for an 'Attendance Concern Meeting' (ACM) after a maximum of 10 days absence unless other action is planned. This meeting should include a senior member of staff, parent, pupil, and the local authority's Education Welfare Officer. The aim of this meeting will be to identify and resolve the difficulties which are preventing the pupil from attending school. The parents/carers will be made aware of the legal requirements regarding school attendance,
- support the pupil's re-integration where a pupil is returning to school after an absence of longer than two weeks. In the event of a pupil returning after a long-term absence then a 'Reintegration Plan' can be implemented. The plan should include all members of the school staff and will be designed to be as supportive of the pupils needs as possible
- provide Early Help advice and support to the family, undertaking an Early Help Assessment if appropriate and make a referral to Strengthening Families if it is felt the family would benefit from additional support.

To ensure the success of this policy every member of the school staff will make attendance a priority and convey to the pupils the importance of their education.

Performance

When evaluating success, the school will consider the impact of the work on school attendance by whether or not:

- Overall and Individual attendance has improved

- Persistent absence has reduced
- Punctuality has improved
- Parent/carer response to absence has improved
- Re-integration plans, where implemented, have been successful
- There are specific key groups where a targeted approach is appropriate to raise attendance, e.g., children in receipt of pupil premium.
- The school has been successful in raising the profile of attendance both within the school, governing body and the local community
- Pupils are fully aware of the importance of punctuality and regular attendance and the attendance procedures operating within school
- Attendance issues have been included as topics in Personal and Social Education (PHSE) lessons, or as a theme for any other lessons

Practice

The school will recognise the importance of good practice by:

- Keeping and maintaining registers accurately
- Maintaining a consistent approach to marking registers
- Regularly analysing attendance data & comparing it against both the local and national average and considering the performance of key groups in comparison to the national data for that particular group.
- Ensuring prompt follow-up action in cases of non-school attendance
- Liaising closely with the school's local authority's Education Welfare Officer, if appropriate
- Recording (and retaining) carefully, all telephone messages/email or contact from parents
- A signed copy of any correspondence to parents is retained by the school
- A referral is made to AST (the Attendance Support Team) for intervention using the electronic ASTR form

Marking the Register

- The register is a legal document which can be maintained in paper or electronic format. Registers, attendance & absence codes must be recorded accurately, and any paper copies must be marked in ink. The register, or content recorded within it, may be requested in a Court of law as evidence in a prosecution for non-attendance. It may also contribute data to pupils' end-of-term reports, to records of achievement, and to leavers' references.
- No pupil will be marked present unless present in the room when the register is taken or unless he or she has been given permission to be absent by the registering teacher.
- Spaces must not be left in the register.
- The register will be closed 30 minutes after the beginning of the morning session.
- Pupils must not mark the register under any circumstances.
- Attendance data from registers should be monitored appropriately.

- The decision to authorise an absence should be made within a maximum of ten school days from the date of the absence. If no reason has been provided during this time the absence should be recorded as unauthorised.

At New Horizon Academy we will keep an electronic register. We will take the attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. On each occasion we will record whether every pupil is:

- Present;
- Attending an approved educational activity;
- Absent;
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances; or,
- Not attending in circumstances relating to coronavirus (COVID-19)¹¹
- This will be done using the absence and attendance codes outlined in the DfE’s “School attendance - Guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities” – see appendix 1

We will follow up any absences to:

- Ascertain the reason;
- Ensure the proper safeguarding action is taken;
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not; and,
- Identify the correct code to use before entering it on to the school’s electronic register, or management information system which is used to download data to the School Census.

The attendance register will be backed up every month either electronically or printed out in hard copy.

Appendix 1:

Below is an excerpt from “School attendance - Guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities”

Absence and Attendance Codes

The national codes enable schools to record and monitor attendance and absence in a consistent way which complies with the regulations. They are also used for collecting statistics through the School Census System. The data helps schools, local authorities and the Government to gain a greater understanding of the level of, and the reasons for, absence. The codes are:

Present at School

Pupils must not be marked present if they were not in school during registration. If a pupil were to leave the school premises after registration, they would still be counted as present for statistical purposes.

Registration Code / \: Present in school / = am \ = pm

Present in school during registration.

Code L: Late arrival before the register has closed

Schools should have a policy on how long registers should be kept open; this should be for a reasonable length of time but not that registers are to be kept open for the whole session. A pupil arriving after the register has closed should be marked absent with code U, or with another absence code if that is more appropriate.

Present at an Approved Off-Site Educational Activity

An approved educational activity is where a pupil is taking part in supervised educational activity such as field trips, educational visits, work experience or alternative provision. Pupils can only be recorded as receiving off-site educational activity if the activity meets the requirements prescribed in regulation 6(4) of the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006. The activity must be of an educational nature approved by the school and supervised by someone authorised by the school. The activity must take place during the session for which the mark is recorded.

Attendance codes for when pupils are present at approved off-site educational activity are as follows:

Code B: Off-site educational activity

This code should be used when pupils are present at an off-site educational activity that has been approved by the school. Ultimately schools are responsible for the safeguarding and welfare of pupils educated off-site. Therefore, by using code B, schools are certifying that the education is supervised, and measures have been taken to safeguard pupils. This code should not be used for any unsupervised educational activity or where a pupil is at home doing schoolwork. Schools should ensure that they have in place arrangements whereby the provider of the alternative activity notifies the school of any absences by individual pupils. The school should record the pupil's absence using the relevant absence code.

Code D: Dual Registered - at another educational establishment

This code is not counted as a possible attendance in the School Census. The law allows for dual registration of pupils at more than one school. This code is used to indicate that the pupil was not expected to attend the session in question because they were scheduled to attend the other school at which they are registered.

The main examples of dual registration are pupils who are attending a pupil referral unit, a hospital school or a special school on a temporary basis. It can also be used when the pupil is known to be registered at another school during the session in question.

Each school should only record the pupil's attendance and absence for those sessions that the pupil is scheduled to attend their school. Schools should ensure that they have in place arrangements whereby all unexplained and unexpected absence is followed up in a timely manner.

Code J: At an interview with prospective employers, or another educational establishment

This code should be used to record time spent in interviews with prospective employers or another educational establishment. Schools should be satisfied that the interview is linked to employment prospects, further education or transfer to another educational establishment.

Code P: Participating in a supervised sporting activity

This code should be used to record the sessions when a pupil is taking part in a sporting activity that has been approved by the school and supervised by someone authorised by the school.

Code V: Educational visit or trip

This code should be used for attendance at an organised trip or visit, including residential trips organised by the school, or attendance at a supervised trip of a strictly educational nature arranged by an organisation approved by the school.

Code W: Work experience

Work experience is for pupils in the final two years of compulsory education. Schools should ensure that they have in place arrangements whereby the work experience

placement provider notifies the school of any absences by individual pupils. Any absence should be recorded using the relevant code.

Authorised Absence from School

Authorised absence' means that the school has either given approval in advance for a pupil of compulsory school age to be away or has accepted an explanation offered afterwards as justification for absence.

Absence codes when pupils are not present in school are as follows:

Code C: Leave of absence authorised by the school

Only exceptional circumstances warrant an authorised leave of absence. Schools should consider each application individually taking into account the specific facts and circumstances and relevant background context behind the request.

Code E: Excluded but no alternative provision made

If no alternative provision is made for a pupil to continue their education whilst they are excluded but still on the admission register, they should be marked absent in the attendance register using Code E. Alternative provision must be arranged for each excluded pupil from the sixth consecutive day of any fixed period or permanent exclusion. Where alternative provision is made, they should be marked using the appropriate attendance code.

Code H: Holiday authorised by the school

Head teachers should not grant leave of absence unless there are exceptional circumstances. The application must be made in advance and the head teacher must be satisfied that there are exceptional circumstances based on the individual facts and circumstances of the case which warrant the leave. Where a leave of absence is granted, the head teacher will determine the number of days a pupil can be away from school. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the head teacher's discretion.

Code I: Illness (not medical or dental appointments)

Schools should advise parents to notify them on the first day the child is unable to attend due to illness. Schools should authorise absences due to illness unless they have genuine cause for concern about the veracity of an illness. If the authenticity of illness is in doubt, schools can request parents to provide medical evidence to support illness. Schools can record the absence as unauthorised if not satisfied of the authenticity of the illness but should advise parents of their intention. Schools are advised not to request medical evidence unnecessarily. Medical evidence can take the form of prescriptions, appointment cards, etc. rather than doctors' notes.

Code M: Medical or dental appointments

Missing registration for a medical or dental appointment is counted as an authorised absence. Schools should, however, encourage parents to make appointments out of school hours. Where this is not possible, the pupil should only be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary for the appointment.

Code R: Religious observance

Schools must treat absence as authorised when it is due to religious observance. The day must be exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the parents belong. Where necessary, schools should seek advice from the parents' religious body about whether it has set the day apart for religious observance.

Code S: Study leave

Schools must record study leave as authorised absence. Study leave should be used sparingly and only granted to Year 11 pupils during public examinations. Provision should still be made available for those pupils who want to continue to come into school to revise.

Code T: Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence

A number of different groups are covered by the generic term Traveller – Roma, English and Welsh Gypsies, Irish and Scottish Travellers, Showmen (fairground people) and Circus people, Bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and New Travellers.

This code should be used when Traveller families are known to be travelling for occupational purposes and have agreed this with the school, but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision. It should not be used for any other types of absence by these groups.

To help ensure continuity of education for Traveller children it is expected that the child should attend school elsewhere when their family is travelling and be dual registered at that school and the main school. Children from these groups whose families do not travel are expected to register at a school and attend as normal. They are subject to the same rules as other children in terms of the requirement to attend school regularly once registered at a school.

Unauthorised Absence from School

Unauthorised absence is where a school is not satisfied with the reasons given for the absence. Absence codes are as follows:

Code G: Holiday not authorised by the school or in excess of the period determined by the head teacher.

If a school does not authorise a leave of absence for the purpose of a holiday but the parents still take the child out of school, or the child is kept away for longer than was agreed, the absence is unauthorised. The regulations do not allow schools to give retrospective approval. If the parents did not apply for leave of absence in advance, the absence must be recorded as unauthorised.

Code N: Reason for absence not yet provided

Schools should follow up all unexplained and unexpected absences in a timely manner. Every effort should be made to establish the reason for a pupil's absence. When the reason for the pupil's absence has been established the register should be amended. This code should not be left on a pupil's attendance record indefinitely; if no reason for absence is provided after a reasonable amount of time it should be replaced with code O (absent from school without authorisation).

Code O: Absent from school without authorisation

If the school is not satisfied with the reason given for absence, they should record it as unauthorised.

Code U: Arrived in school after registration closed

Schools should actively discourage late arrival, be alert to patterns of late arrival and seek an explanation from the parent.

Not attending in circumstances relating to coronavirus (COVID-19)

For the school year 2020 to 2021, a new category has been added to record instances when a pupil is 'not attending in circumstances relating to coronavirus (COVID-19)'. See [this addendum](#) for further information, including advice on the application of code X.

Code X: not attending in circumstances relating to coronavirus (COVID-19)

(This code is not counted as an absence in the school census)

This code is used to record sessions where the pupil's travel to or presence at school would conflict with:

- guidance relating to the incidence or transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19) from Public Health England or the Department of Health and Social Care¹² or
- any legislation (or instruments such as statutory directions) relating to the incidence or transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19).

Schools should also continue to use code X to record when a pupil not of compulsory school age is not expected to attend as detailed below.

Administrative Codes

The following codes are not counted as a possible attendance in the School Census.

Code X: Not required to be in school

This code is used to record sessions that non-compulsory school age children are not expected to attend.

Code Y: Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

This code can be used where a pupil is unable to attend because:

- The school site, or part of it, is closed due to an unavoidable cause; or
 - The transport provided by the school or a local authority is not available and where the pupil's home is not within walking distance; or
 - A local or national emergency has resulted in widespread disruption to travel which has prevented the pupil from attending school.
- This code can also be used where a pupil is unable to attend because:
- The pupil is in custody; detained for a period of less than four months. If the school has evidence from the place of custody that the pupil is attending educational activities, then they can record those sessions as code B (present at approved educational activity).

This code is collected in the School Census for statistical purposes.

Code Z: Pupil not on admission register

This code is available to enable schools to set up registers in advance of pupils joining the school to ease administration burdens. Schools must put pupils on the admission register from the first day that the school has agreed, or been notified, that the pupil will attend the school.

Code #: Planned whole or partial school closure

This code should be used for whole or partial school closures that are known or planned in advance such as: between terms; half terms; occasional days (for example, bank holidays); weekends (where it is required by the management information system); up to five non-educational days to be used for curriculum planning/training; and use of schools as polling stations.

Different Term Dates for Different Pupils

Schools and local authorities can agree to set different term dates for different year groups – e.g., for 'staggered starts' or 'induction days. Code # can be used to record the year group(s) that is not due to attend. This is only acceptable where the school ensures that those pupils not attending on that day are still offered a full education over the school year.