



Attendance Policy

Sourced from Somerset Council
Aligned to HEPS
Approved by SLT

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Attendance Policy

Policy Statement

HEPS is committed to providing an education of the highest quality for all its pupils and recognises this can only be achieved by supporting and promoting excellent school attendance for all.

This statement is based on the belief that by attending school regularly and punctually, children and young people will be able to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them. High attainment depends on good and regular attendance. It is the policy of our school to celebrate both.

Staff will work with pupils and their families to ensure each pupil attends school regularly and punctually.

We recognise that parents have a vital role and there is a need to establish strong home-school links and communication systems. We will provide effective and efficient communications with pupils, parents, and appropriate agencies to provide mutual information, advice and support to meet our objectives.

As a school, we will:

- develop and maintain a whole school culture that promotes the benefits of high attendance.
 - ensure all staff, pupils and parents understand our expectations for attendance which will be regularly communicated through the weekly HEPSNews, letters home, conversations and meetings.
 - accurately complete admission and attendance registers and have effective day to day processes in place to follow-up absence.
 - regularly monitor and analyse attendance and absence data to identify pupils or cohorts that require support with their attendance and put effective strategies in place.
 - build strong relationships with families, listen to, and understand barriers to attendance and work with families to remove them.
 - share information and work collaboratively with other schools in the area, local authorities, and other partners when absence is at risk of becoming persistent or severe.
- This policy is based on current government guidance:
[Working Together to Improve School Attendance](#)

Definitions

In this policy there are some key definitions which will be used. We have referenced the meaning of these terms below for ease of understanding:

Persistent Absence

When a pupil's attendance figure reaches 90% or below, they are deemed as 'persistently absent' from school. Children whose attendance is below 90% are likely to achieve lower educational outcomes and are at increased risk of harm and exploitation. A pupil with 90% attendance will be absent for the equivalent of: one session (either a morning or afternoon) per week, six sessions per six-week half term or 38 sessions per school year.

Severe Absence

When a pupil is absent from school with an attendance figure of 50% or below, they are deemed as 'severely absent'. Children in this group are at increased risk of exploitation and education outcomes are poor. A pupil with 50% attendance will be absent for the equivalent of: five sessions per week, 30 sessions per six-week half term or 190 sessions per school year.

Parent

Within this policy, a parent is defined as: all natural parents, whether they are married or not or any person who has parental responsibility for a child or young person and any person who has care of a child or young person (i.e., lives with and looks after the child).

Vulnerable pupils

Within this policy, vulnerable pupils are defined as those that: have a social worker or have previously had a social worker; are a Child Looked After (CLA); have an Educational, Health and Care Plan (EHC Plan); are severely absent, as defined above.

Local Authority

Within this policy the Local Authority refers to Somerset Council. From 1 April 2023, the Local Authority will refer to Somerset Council.

Session

Schools are required to take attendance registers twice a day for all pupils. Each of these attendance marks counts for one session. Each day is made up of two sessions; morning and afternoon. In a typical school year, a pupil will attend for a maximum of 190 days, or 380 sessions.

Statutory and Legal Guidance

The law entitles every child of compulsory school age to an efficient, full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude, and any special educational need they may have. It is the legal responsibility of every parent to make sure their child receives that education either by attendance at a school or by education otherwise than at a school.

When parents decide to have their child registered at school, they have an additional legal duty to ensure their child attends that school regularly. This means their child must attend every day that the school is open, except in a small number of allowable circumstances, such as being too ill to attend or being given permission for an absence in advance from the school.

This policy aligns with the following statutory guidance and regulations:

- [The Education Act 1996](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations \(Amended\) 2013](#)

- [Working Together to Improve School Attendance](#)

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 was amended by Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations in 2013 only allowing Headteachers to authorise leave of absence in exceptional circumstances.

In line with these regulations, requests for term-time leave will not be granted.

Additional legal requirements relating to school attendance can be found in The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006.

Key Staff and Contacts

Role	Name
Attendance administrator	Mrs Katy Pimblett
School Absence reporting line	01458 250673
Headteacher	Miss Jen Chadbourne
Designated Safeguarding Lead	
Attendance Officer	
Nominated Attendance link Governor	Miss Melissa Taylor
Somerset Council attendance information	https://www.somerset.gov.uk/children-families-and-education/school-life/school-attendance-and-children-missing-education/

Safeguarding

Knowing where children are during school hours is an extremely important aspect of safeguarding. Absence can be an indicator of abuse and neglect and may also raise concerns about other safeguarding issues, including the criminal exploitation of children.

We monitor attendance carefully and address poor or irregular attendance without delay. We will contact parents when pupils are not at school to ensure their whereabouts are known. It is essential that we have at least two up-to-date contact numbers for each pupil with three being preferable.

Parents should remember to inform the school as soon as possible if their contact details change. This includes home addresses, email addresses and phone numbers.

HEPS recognises that inappropriate authorisation of absence can be as damaging to a child's education as unauthorised absence as it will potentially send a message to parents that any reason for absence is acceptable and can render children extremely vulnerable to harm.

Where necessary, HEPS will challenge parents about the reasons for their child's absence and will always encourage them to keep absences to a minimum. A note or explanation from a parent does not guarantee that the absence will be authorised.

The decision to authorise absences rests with the Headteacher and will be made depending on the reasons given. In some cases, evidence may be requested to support this decision, particularly when attendance has fallen below 90% or is declining rapidly. If no reason is given for an absence, it cannot be authorised.

Children Missing Education

In line with the statutory guidance Keeping Children Safe in Education (2022), school leaders have ensured that:

- all members of staff are aware of attendance guidance and expectations
- all members of school staff understand what to do when a child's attendance becomes a concern
- the school has in place required and appropriate policies, and robust procedures and responses for pupils who go missing from education (especially on repeat occasions)
- all staff are aware of the risks of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and the legal requirement to take immediate action if there is reason to believe a child is at risk or that it has taken place.

Removing Pupils from the School Roll

Schools are required to inform their local authority when a pupil is removed from roll.

Procedures are in place to ensure this information is shared in a timely manner when we plan to take pupils off-roll, or when they:

- leave the school to be home educated
- move beyond a reasonable distance from the school
- remain medically unfit beyond compulsory school age
- are in custody for four months or more (and will not return to school afterwards)
- are expelled (permanently excluded).

Pupils who are expected to start attending HEPS but fail to take up the place will be referred to the Local Authority.

When a pupil leaves HEPS, the pupil's new address, school, and expected started date will be recorded. This information will be passed to the Local Authority.

The School's Responsibilities

All pupil attendance and absence levels are monitored on a regular basis. When a pupil's attendance becomes a concern, a graduated and supportive response will be put in place, to support improved attendance. In some cases, this may result in multi-agency support being requested, including the Education Safeguarding Service, who uphold the Local Authority's statutory duty to improve school attendance.

Vulnerable Pupils

HEPS routinely monitors the attendance of vulnerable pupils. If we have concerns about a pupil, we work closely across our staff and with support services to ensure parents understand the importance of good attendance and attendance procedures.

Additional measures are in place to monitor the attendance of vulnerable pupils.

- Vulnerable pupils will be prioritised for all attendance matters. This will include contacting parents and carers after the register closes for children who are not in school and no message has been received.
- Daily school contact with parents (and any external professionals such as social workers) in relation to absences of vulnerable pupils or those at risk of persistent or severe absence.
- Pupils with complex needs (including those with medical needs) will be supported to ensure their attendance is maximised and its improvement is planned for. The attendance of pupils in this group will be monitored daily.
- When a pupil is dual registered or accessing learning off-site, their attendance at that provision will be monitored daily. HEPS holds the legal responsibility for dual registered pupils when they are attending this school.
- Pupils with Special Education Needs or Disabilities (SEND), whose attendance is poor, are monitored through the internal school processes.

The leadership and staff supporting attendance at school will hold regular meetings, where attendance is discussed and tracked, so that suitable support and interventions are put in place as quickly as possible.

Pupils whose attendance becomes a cause for concern will be supported by dedicated members of staff who will make regular contact with them. This will support them to identify and remove any barriers, improve their attendance and to re-engage with learning. This work is robustly recorded and the impact of it is monitored regularly.

When a pupil's attendance continues to decline despite the support that is put in place, additional support may be requested from several support services. This may include the use of multi-agency work and support being discussed at a Team Around the School meeting. These discussions can lead to additional support being identified and support from the Education Safeguarding Service being agreed.

The Education Safeguarding Service (ESS) forms part of the Local Authority's Early Help Framework. It supports schools and families to improve attendance and fulfils the Local Authority's statutory duties to improve and promote school attendance. The ESS may consider legal action against parents in line with Section 444 of the Education Act 1996.

How we monitor attendance and the support that is offered is determined on a case-by-case basis. These decisions are regularly reviewed by the Headteacher and staff with a specific attendance role. Support from Team Around the School or Education Safeguarding Service may also be requested and implemented.

Celebrating Good Attendance

Children who attend regularly will benefit from the full school offer of an inspirational curriculum which includes educational visits, visitor experiences, excellent sporting provision with the opportunity to represent the school for fixtures and having the opportunity to be nominated as a School Councillor and other roles.

Informing Parents about Attendance

School reports are sent home to parents and carers once a term. These detail the attendance figure for the year to date.

Daily Attendance Procedures

Schools are required to take a register twice a day for every pupil. This happens at the beginning of our morning and afternoon sessions. These sessions form the basis of each pupil's attendance record. Our registration periods are as follows:

	Registers open	Registers close
Morning session	08:50	09:10
Afternoon session	13:15	13:35

Absence reports are run following each registration period so parents can be contacted if necessary. Following our morning registration, if a pupil is absent and a reason for that absence has not been provided, the following action will be taken:

- The first contact will be called.
- Subsequent contacts will be called.
- If it is not possible to get a response, a home visit may be actioned.
- Other contacts, not on the designated contact list supplied by the parents, may be called or contacted.
- Social workers may be contacted and a welfare visit requested for children under this service.

Absence and Punctuality

Parents are required to inform the school as soon as possible if their child is absent or due to be absent. This should be done for every day of absence.

Parents are asked to inform us of any absences as follows:

By phone	01458 250673
By email	office@HEPS.ppat365.org

Each school day is split into two sessions: morning and afternoon. Registers are opened at the beginning of each session and closed 30 minutes later, as shown in the table below:

Morning session	Afternoon session
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Pupils are expected to arrive at school by 08:50. Registers open at 08:50. Pupils that arrive after 09:10 will be recorded as late (L code). Registers close at 09:10. Pupils that arrive after 09:10 will be marked as late after registers have closed (U code). This counts as an unauthorised absence.	Pupils are expected to attend registration by 13.15. Registers open at 13:15 Pupils that arrive after 13:35 will be recorded as late (L code). Registers close at 13:35 pm. Pupils that arrive after 13:35 pm will be marked as late after registers have closed (U code). This counts as an unauthorised absence.
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Pupils' punctuality will be regularly monitored. Parents will be contacted to discuss persistent lateness and lateness after the close of the registers. These discussions could result in a request for support from the Education Safeguarding Service.

Recording

When parents make daily contact regarding their child's absence, that contact and the reasons for absence will be recorded. Absences will be coded on the child's register in line with the reason for that absence.

The decision about how absences are coded rests with the Headteacher and in some cases absences may not be authorised even when a reason is provided.

Additional information or evidence may be requested before an absence is authorised. This may occur when there are concerns about a pupil's attendance, even if it is related to illness, or when the reason provided is believed to be false.

Unexplained absences, or when the child discloses an alternative version for absence, this may result in contact being made with parents and coding for absence being changed.

Authorisation of Absence

In line with legislation and Local Authority guidance, pupil absences can only be authorised when:

- a pupil is too unwell to attend school (evidence may be requested)
- a pupil is attending a medical appointment that is unavoidable (evidence will be requested)

Absences may also be authorised at the discretion of the Headteacher when:

- term-time leave is requested, and its circumstances are exceptional such as the wedding of a parent.
- a pupil has one or more medical appointments.
- other exceptional circumstances (e.g. a close family bereavement).

Medical Appointments

Where possible, medical appointments should be made outside school hours or in school holidays. However, we realise this is sometimes not possible. Pupils should come into school before and after appointments to ensure they miss as little lesson time as possible. Pupils should be signed out before leaving for appointments and signed in when they return.

Term-Time Leave

Arranging holidays or planned absence during term time causes issues for many reasons:

- the pupil's education suffers; lessons and extra-curricular activities are missed.
- there is no opportunity for teachers to set additional work or to assist a child in catching up on their return from holiday.
- parents may be in breach of their legal obligation to send their child to school.

The government issued new regulations in September 2013 that placed greater restrictions on families and schools in relation to planned term-time leave.

The Education (Pupil Regulations) (England) Regulations 2006 as amended by Education (Pupil Regulations) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 state:

Headteachers shall not grant any Leave of Absence during term time unless they consider there are exceptional circumstances relating to the application.

Parents do not have any entitlement to take their children on holiday during term time. Any application for leave must establish that there are exceptional circumstances, and the Headteacher must be satisfied that the circumstances warrant the granting of leave.

Requests for term-time leave will be considered on a case-by-case.

If term time absence is necessary, please contact the School Office by email: office@HEPS.ppat365.org.

The Headteacher will determine how many sessions may be authorised in cases where term-time leave is agreed.

The school can only consider applications for Leave of Absence which are made by the resident parent (the parent with whom the child normally resides).

Applications for term-time leave must be made in advance and in writing. Failure to do so will result in the absence being unauthorised and the strong possibility of penalty fines being issued.

When an application for term-time leave is declined, any resulting absences will be unauthorised.

Unauthorised absence relating to term-time leave being taken will be sent to the Local Authority for consideration of a Penalty Notice when 10 or more sessions (half days) are unauthorised.

Unauthorised absences resulting from term-time leave being taken is likely to result in the Local Authority issuing each parent with a Penalty Notice for each child absent from school. The Education Safeguarding Service issues penalty notices on behalf of the Local Authority in line with the Somerset Penalty Notice Code of Conduct, which is available at: www.somerset.gov.uk.

If a Penalty Notice is issued and not paid, the Local Authority will consider prosecuting parents in line with Section 444(1) of the Education Act 1996. This can result in a fine of up to £1,000 for each offence.

In exceptional cases, the Local Authority may seek to prosecute parents in line with Section 444(1) of the Education Act 1996 without issuing a Penalty Notice.

Attendance Support and Intervention

HEPS monitors the attendance of all pupils regularly and will support children, parents and carers with varying levels of support and intervention, as outlined below.

The strategies, support and interventions put in place and offered will vary depending on each pupil's attendance and the circumstances resulting in their absences.

Through regular attendance monitoring and scrutiny, HEPS is able to identify pupils that require support in relation to their attendance at the earliest possible stage.

Attendance Stage	Possible Strategies, Support and Interventions
Stage 1 98% to 100%	Attendance monitored by class or form teacher Absences will be discussed upon return to school
Stage 2 96% to 98%	Stage 2 letter sent In-school support considered and offered Support requests made to other services Parenting contract discussed and offered Penalty Notice Warning for unauthorised absences
Stage 3 90% to 95%	Stage 3 letter sent Support and interventions as laid out in Stage 2 Medical evidence requested, where appropriate Request for support at Team Around the School Attendance support request submitted to the ESS Attendance Improvement Plan Penalty Notice for unauthorised absence
Stage 4 50% to 90% Persistent Absence	Stage 4 letter sent Support and interventions as laid out in Stage 3 Multi-agency support Attendance Casework from the ESS Possible legal interventions for unauthorised absences

Stage 5 Below 50% Severe Absence	Support and interventions as laid out in Stage 4 Continued statutory intervention High risk of legal intervention for unauthorised absence
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The process outlined above is for guidance purposes only. The strategies used to support attendance will vary depending on a child's circumstances, the reasons for their absence and their needs.

Early intervention and support is the most effective approach to improving attendance. Parents are strongly encouraged to engage with any support offered, as this may improve attendance quickly and prevent the need for requests for support from statutory services.

While the use of statutory and legal interventions is always a last resort, they may be put in place by the Education Safeguarding Service on behalf of the Local Authority.