



Attendance Policy

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1. Associated Policies and Guidance:

1.1. This policy has been created to reflect the guidance provided in the following documents:

- DFE School Attendance parental responsibility measures statutory guidance Jan 2015
- DFE School Attendance main guidance for schools August 2020
- DFE Addendum: recording attendance in relation to Coronavirus (Covid-19) during the 2020-2021 academic year Sept 2020
- DFE Improving school attendance support for schools and local authorities Sept 2020
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2016

1.2. This policy also links to Heathermount policies:

- Behaviour Policy – Sept 2020
- Heathermount Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy September 2020
- Mental Health and Well-being policy 2019
- Admissions Policy September 2020

2. Introduction

- 2.1. Heathermount School is a non-maintained specialist school, owned by The Disabilities Trust, for pupils aged 4-19 with a primary diagnosis of Autism Spectrum disorder (ASD). The School is challenged and supported by the Governing Body, the Disabilities Trust and extended partners.
- 2.2. Heathermount School are committed in partnership with parents, pupils, governors and local authorities to ensure that all its pupils receive a full-time education which maximises opportunities for each pupil to realise their potential.
- 2.3. Heathermount School recognises that attendance at school is essential for a pupil's education and establishes a positive working ethos early in life. There is a clear connection between regular attendance and achievement.
- 2.4. Pupils can arrive with previous poor attendance levels or even school refusal, due to their difficulties with their ASD. It is our aim to ensure that their attendance improves as soon as they are able, and we deploy a range of strategies to help them and their families manage this and improve resilience to attend school.

3. Aims of the policy

- 3.1. The policy has been written using reference to legislation and guidance as stated in Department for Education (Dfe) School Attendance Guidance August 2020.
- 3.2. This policy will be made available and accessible to the whole school community.
- 3.3. The key aims of this policy are:
 - To promote good attendance and reduce absence, including persistent absence;
 - To ensure every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled, regardless of age, aptitude, ability or SEN;
 - To act early to address patterns of absence;
 - To support and encourage parents to understand and perform their legal duty to ensure their children of compulsory school age who are registered at school attend regularly;
 - To promote punctuality by all students;
 - To ensure that school staff make sure that the school is welcoming and that pupils feel safe and secure in attending school;
 - To make clear all expectations relating to attendance and punctuality clear to all stakeholders affected by them;

- To ensure that attendance and punctuality is a high priority for all staff, families, pupils and governors;
- To provide clear procedures and guidelines for attendance.

4. Expectations

4.1. We expect all pupils will:

- Attend school every day;
- Attend school punctually;
- Attend school appropriately prepared for the day; and
- Talk to someone they trust at school if they have any problems that impact on their school attendance

4.2. We expect that parents/carers for pupils will:

- Encourage full time school attendance and be aware of their legal responsibilities;
- Ensure that their child arrives at school punctually and prepared for the school day;
- Contact the school promptly before 9am each day that their child is absent;
- Contact the school promptly and seek help, whenever any problem occurs that impacts on their child's school attendance.
- Provide emergency contact details for at least two people who would be reliable emergency contacts.

4.3. We expect that school staff will follow the tabled guidance of responsibility:

Attendance Task	Lead responsibility
1. Ensure that school registers are completed at least twice daily and promptly.	All class teachers/tutors
2. Class teachers must complete the register by 9.15am. The admin team will print up to date registers for Fire and health and safety reasons.	All class teachers Admin team
3. Provide a welcoming atmosphere for all pupils; providing a safe learning environment and provide a sympathetic response to any pupil's concerns	All school staff
4. Encourage all pupils attendance through assemblies, posters, awards, certificates, praise, and postcards home.	All school staff School attendance officer
5. Respond promptly and take action to a child or parent/carers concern about the school or other pupils	All school staff Senior Leadership Team Safeguarding Team
6. Monitor every pupil's attendance and notify senior leadership team of attendance statistics	School attendance officer
7. Contact parents as soon as possible when a pupil fails to attend and where no message has been received to explain the absence and ascertain the reason	School attendance officer
8. Follow up all unexplained absences to obtain notes authorising the absence, and ensure that any safeguarding action is taken where required	School attendance officer Safeguarding Team
9. Utilise statistical data on attendance to influence the school's response to behaviour, attendance and mental health and Wellbeing.	Senior Leadership Team
10. Identify whether the absence is approved or not and ensure the correct code is used on the school management information system (Bromcom) which is then used to download data to the school census	School attendance officer
11. Inform parents/carers in writing of concerns about attendance, arrange meetings with them to discuss further and to liaise with	School attendance officer Senior Leadership Team

external agencies to assist the improvement of school attendance for individual pupils	Safeguarding Team
12. If a pupil fails to attend school on the agreed or notified date for the expected first day of attendance the school must establish the reason and mark the attendance register accordingly.	School attendance officer
13. Recognise improvement in attendance figures and communicate with pupil/parents.	School attendance officer

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5. Levels of attendance guide and actions to improve attendance

Attendance %	Level of Concern	Action by the school
96% and above	None – on track attendance	Letter of recognition
90-96%	Concern as below school target	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Monitoring and support over a short period of time by school to see if improvement occurs as part of low attendance review meeting each half term.
Below 90% initial	Frequent absence	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Letter home to offer further supportMedical evidence required for all absencesMeeting with parentsAction plan which may include support from other school services such as pastoral team.
Below 90% next steps	Continued persistent absence	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Letter home to remind parent of legal responsibility.Further meeting with parentsUpdate action planInvolve EWO or other agenciesPossible safeguarding referral

Repeated absence will require us to request medical evidence from your GP, Paediatrician, Hospital or other Health professional.

6. Admissions and Attendance Register

6.1. The school will keep an **admissions register** which records the personal details of every pupil at the school using the school's management information system – BROMCOM.

6.2. The **admissions register** will include the following information for every pupil:

- The full name, gender, date of birth, date the pupil was admitted to the school and the name of the school the pupil last attended.
- The name and details of those with parental responsibility for every pupil in the school
- At least two emergency contacts for each pupil in the school.

6.3. The school will keep an attendance register which records every pupil's attendance at both morning and afternoon sessions that the school is open to pupils.

7. Children at Risk of Missing Education

7.1. We have a strong commitment to the safeguarding of any children who are missing in education. We will inform the local authority of any pupil who fails to attend school regularly, or has been absent without the school's permission for a continuous period of 10 days or more.

8. Registration process

8.1. School starts at 9am each day Monday to Friday and finishes at 3:30pm.

8.2. All pupils are expected to be in attendance and registered between 09:00 and 09:15am when the morning register will close.

- 8.3. Parents have a duty to notify school before 9am each morning of absence if their child is not able to attend school with a descriptor of the reason for nonattendance.
- 8.4. Class teachers are responsible for ensuring that all registers are completed by 09:15 each morning.
- 8.5. Pupils who arrive in school after the 09:15am deadline are required to register with the school office and sign in their attendance before going to their lesson. The school office will notify the attendance officer of the late arrival and the attendance officer will amend the attendance code for that day, recording the actual minutes late.
- 8.6. There are two main categories of absence that are recorded:
- 8.7. **Authorised absence (AA)** – an accepted explanation with justified reasons for the absence. Authorised absence is granted under the following circumstances:
- Exclusion
 - Days of religious observance
 - Medical/dental appointments that cannot take place out of school hours
 - Illness – with written parental consent or medical note.
 - Prevention from attending by an unavoidable cause, agreed beforehand.
 - Attending a family funeral (this must not, however, exceed an agreed period of absence)
- 8.8. **Un-authorised absence (UA)** – when school has not received an accepted reason and/or school has not approved a pupil's absence

9. Absence Requests

- 9.1. Parents should note that it is not a parental-right to prevent children from attending school.
- 9.2. At Heathermount School, it is policy that absence for holidays in term time is generally not authorised.
- 9.3. Parents are reminded that term time absence should only be requested in exceptional circumstances (this means being of unique and significant emotional, educational or spiritual value to the child, which outweighs the loss of teaching time).
- 9.4. Only in very exceptional circumstances will leave be granted and only authorised by the Head Teacher in writing.
- 9.5. Occasionally pupils will be required to be absent from school due to medical appointments or with regards to an urgent family situation such as a family bereavement.
- 9.6. Parents/Carers are required to complete in advance an absence request form for all medical appointments and time required away from school during Term time. This form must be forwarded to the school and reviewed and signed by the Head Teacher for approval.
- 9.7. Leave of absence should, where possible, be requested at least 2 weeks in advance of the period of absence. A copy of this will be kept in school and parents notified if the absence request has been agreed.
- 9.8. Absence request forms are available in either hard copy or from the school website.

Appendix A.

Coronavirus (Covid-19) Addendum

This addendum explains changes made to regulations governing school attendance registers in relation to coronavirus (COVID-19) and are effective from 24 August 2020 to the end of 2020-2021 academic year. Although school attendance is mandatory from the start of the autumn term, there are some circumstances where pupils cannot attend school due 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)' and should be recorded using code X. Code X may also be used for non-compulsory aged pupils who are not expected to attend a session, as used before the outbreak. This category must only be used where a pupil does not attend because their travel to, or attendance at school would be either:

- Contrary to guidance relating to the incidence or transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19) from Public Health England (PHE) and /or the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC).
- Prohibited by any legislation (or instruments such as statutory directions) relating to the incidence or transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19).

In line with the Secretary of State's expectation that no parent will be penalised for following official public health advice for their child not to attend a given session, this new category of non-attendance will not count as an absence (authorised or unauthorised) for statistical purposes.

In line with current legislation and guidance from PHE and DHSC, examples in which "not attending in circumstances related to coronavirus (COVID-19) could apply are as follows:

- Pupils who are required to self-isolate as they, or a member of their household, has symptoms or confirmed coronavirus (COVID-19)
- Pupils who are required to self-isolate because they are a close contact of someone who has symptoms or confirmed coronavirus (COVID-19)
- Pupils who are required by legislation to self-isolate as part of a period of quarantine
- Pupils who are clinically extremely vulnerable in a future local lockdown scenario only

Where a child is not attending school due to circumstances related to coronavirus (COVID-19) remote home learning will be implemented. Contact with the family will be maintained to ensure all parties are kept up to date with schoolwork and other school communications, as well as ensuring safeguarding measures and protocols are being followed as identified in Keeping Children Safe in Education September 2020.

We may need to prevent some pupils attending school in certain circumstances.

We will follow PHE or DHSC guidance on what measures are necessary in the event of local lockdown, or other coronavirus related circumstances. Where attendance is to be limited to certain groups, 'not attending in circumstances related to coronavirus (COVID-19)' - code X - should be used for pupils who are asked not to attend.

In order to categorise this code further in our management information system, Heathermount will use the following codes in Bromcom, which will be mapped back to an X or I for the DfE purposes:

- 8 (X) Pupil – self-isolating due to contact with confirmed case of Covid-19 from inside the educational setting.

- 7 (X) Pupil – self-isolating due to contact with a case of Covid-19 from outside the educational setting.
- 9 (X) Pupil – suspected case of Covid-19
- 0 (I) Pupil – confirmed case of covid-19

Additionally, from 1 September 2020 all education settings are required to fill in the educational settings status form and submit to the Dfe on a daily basis. The attendance officer will collate the pupil absence data and record in Excel, along with teacher absence data. This is then used to submit the information to the Dfe by the school office admin team or family partnership team each day before 12 o'clock.

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Appendix B
Attendance codes

Mark	Description	Example	Attendance category
/	Present (AM)	Student in class, arrived on time	Present
\	Present (PM)	Student in class, arrived on time	Present
#	Planned whole or partial school closure	Inset	Not counted in attendance
0	Confirmed case of Covid-19	Pupil has had a positive test result	Authorised Absence
7	Pupils self-isolating due to potential contact with a case of Covid-19 from outside the educational setting.	Pupil not showing symptoms themselves	Not counted in attendance
8	Pupils self-isolating due to potential contact with a case of Covid-19 from inside the educational setting.	Pupil not showing symptoms themselves	Not counted in attendance
9	Suspected case of Covid-19	Pupils awaiting test results	Not counted in attendance
B	Educated off site (NOT dual registration)	Student attending college course or other educational setting	Educational Activity
C	Other authorised circumstance		Authorised Absence
G	Unauthorised family holiday		Unauthorised Absence
H	Authorised family holiday		Authorised Absence
I	Illness	Student unwell	Authorised Absence
L	Late before register closed - do not use until student has arrived	Student in class but arrived late	Present
M	Medical/dental appointment	Appointment at doctor, dentist, CAMHS, etc	Authorised Absence
N	No reason yet provided - use this code if unsure about which code to use	Student not in school/lesson, reason yet not known	Unauthorised Absence
O	Unauthorised absence		Unauthorised Absence
Q	Other planned authorised onsite meeting or activity	Authorised onsite meeting/activity, e.g. annual review, transition planning, exam	Present
V	Educational visit	Offsite trip, visiting a college	Educational Activity
X	Non-compulsory school age absence		Not counted in attendance
Y	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances	No transport available	Not counted in attendance