



HEATHSIDE SCHOOL HAMPSTEAD

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Introduction

Regular and punctual school attendance is important. Pupils need to attend school regularly if they are to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them by law. Heathside School fully recognises its responsibilities to ensure pupils are in school and on time, therefore having access to learning for the maximum number of days and hours. We provide a nurturing, safe and secure environment for your child to learn in a positive and supported way, and we expect regular attendance.

We are aware that non-attendance can influence a child's social and educational development and even suggest Safeguarding and Child Protection issues. Please support the DSL by flagging any concerns you have about absence.

Aims

- This policy aims to clarify the expectations we have of our students and clarify the points and procedures involved in the reporting of absences and lateness.
- To maintain a high percentage of student attendance and punctuality at Heathside School.
- To provide support, advice and guidance to parents and students.
- To provide a systematic approach to gathering and analysing attendance-related data to promote timely and effective intervention at all levels within the school.
- To maintain positive and consistent communication between home and the school.
- To maintain effective partnerships with appropriate support services and agencies.
- To recognise and take into account the needs of individual students when planning reintegration following significant periods of absence.

Statutory Duties & Responsibilities

Any absence affects the pattern of a child's education and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any student's absence disrupts teaching routines so may affect the learning of others in the same class.

Ensuring regular attendance at Heathside School is the legal responsibility of parents in the first instance and condoning absence on the part of parents from the school without a good reason creates an offence in law.

Attendance Register

Our registers and Visitor logs are used for education purposes and emergency evacuation procedures, and therefore, must be accurate and accessible.

The registers indicate codes for Heathside School and DFE statistics indicating what type of absence is occurring, for our records, and for the purpose of ensuring the children in our care are benefiting in their educational development.

The following details are recorded in the attendance register at the commencement of each morning session and once during each afternoon session —

- Present
- Absent
- Attending an approved educational activity
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances
- In the case of any such pupil of compulsory school age who is absent, whether this absence is authorised.
 - *Authorised Absence:* is classified as authorised when a child has been away from school for a legitimate reason and the school has received notification from a parent or guardian. For example, if a child has been unwell and the parent calls, or sends an absence form to the school to explain the absence.
 - *Unauthorised Absence:* Only the school can make an absence authorised. Parents do not have this authority. Consequently not all absences supported by parents will be classified as authorised.

Procedure

The attendance register is taken once between 8:30am and 9:00am at the start of the school day and again between 12pm and 2:00pm after lunchtime. The register is filled in by the teachers electronically on iSAMS. If a child is unaccounted for and the teacher hasn't yet been contacted by the parent, the teacher marks the child as 'N' for Not Known. By 9:30AM or 2:30PM, the reception/admin staff start the process of contacting parents of any unaccounted children. The fire register is printed out each morning and updated where necessary in case a roll call is needed during an evacuation or fire drill. Please refer to Appendix B for a procedure checklist.

If the child hasn't been located within an hour, the Headteacher and safeguarding leads are consulted by the admin team and authorities will be informed if no information about the whereabouts of the child can be ascertained. Please refer to the Children Missing from Education Policy for further information.

Once the child has been accounted for, the 'N' register code is amended with the actual code. E.g. 'I' for illness, 'M' medical appointment, or 'O' absent without authorization etc. Please see appendix A for a full list of all the register codes used at Heathside. These codes will only be amended by the authorised people.

Periodically, the Deputy Head and the DSL and the Headteacher meet to review overall attendance and punctuality of all children and take steps to ensure there are no concerns which may be contributing towards poor attendance/punctuality. Depending on the concerns,

meetings are arranged with the parents/guardians and where appropriate, the local authorities are contacted for advice.

Types of Absence

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by the parents), as either authorised or unauthorised. Parents must call in to explain any absence by 9:00am on every day of absence but this does not authorise the absence. Authorisation is given by the deputy head / DSL and often requires medical evidence.

The Headteacher has the right to discuss and improve attendance for individual pupils if she feels that the absences are detrimental to the child's educational, social, emotional and welfare.

Any absences that suggest a matter of Safeguarding or Child Protection will be followed up by the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

Deputy Head & DSL - Zoë Humphrey

Authorised absences

These are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason such as illness, medical/dental appointments (which unavoidably fall in school time), emergencies or other unavoidable causes.

Authorised absences are still counted as an absence and will affect pupil attendance data. For authorised absences for medical or dental appointments, parents must provide the school with evidence. Evidence may be in the form of:

- Appointment card or letter
- Copy of a prescription that was prescribed on the date of absence
- A compliment slip from the surgery / hospital
- Packaging of prescribed medication with student name and date visible.

All religious and/or Cultural events are respected and will in the majority of circumstances be granted **by the Headteacher** without objection. However in order to ensure that all records kept are accurate, we request that these events are confirmed with the school in advance of the absence.

Unauthorised absences

These are absences which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been given. This type of absence can lead to the Local Authority using sanctions and/or legal proceedings. This includes:

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily (this includes due to unresolved issues within the school)
- Truancy before or during the school day

- Absences which have never been properly explained
- Children who arrive at school too late to be registered as present for the session in question
- Shopping, including for items of school uniform, looking after other children or birthdays
- Day trips and holidays (exceptional leave) in term time which have not been agreed with the Headteacher.
- Excessive illness without medical evidence
- Children acting as carers

Parents **must** contact the school on every day of student absence. If this does not happen, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised.

Absence Monitoring and Support

Where a child is absent from school and we have not received any verbal or written communication from the parent, then we initiate a first day contact process. Office staff check all of the registers from 9.00am to 9.30am (when the register closes) on a daily basis, to identify those pupils who are absent. There are occasions when we are unaware why the child is absent and we will contact the parent to check the reasons for the child's absence.

Where a student is regularly late or absent, parents will be invited in for a meeting to discuss strategies. If a student continues to arrive late then Early Help intervention may be offered to parents. For students in the New End building, staff will work with students themselves as well as parents to help with punctuality issues. Where a student is at risk of becoming a persistent absentee, parents will attend meetings with the Deputy Head (and SENDCo if appropriate) and Early Help intervention may be offered. Persistent absentees will be marked as unauthorised absence unless medical evidence is supplied. A student is classed as a persistent absentee if their absence equates to 10% or more of the possible attendance sessions.

Illness

When children have an illness that means they will be away from school long term, the school will do all it can to send material home, or provide work via the online platform, Google Classroom, so that they can keep up with their school work.

If the absence is likely to continue for an extended period, or be a repetitive absence, the school will contact the parents and any relevant support services to see if arrangements can be made for the child to be given some tuition outside school.

Where, over the course of an academic year, a child has repeated periods of illness, the school will write to parents to ask them to provide medical evidence for each future period of

illness related absence. This evidence could be a Doctor's note, appointment card or copy of a prescription. We may seek written permission from parents for the school to make their own enquiries.

Parental Request for Absence from School for Holiday

Taking holidays (exceptional leave) in term time is illegal and will significantly affect a child's schooling and progress. The Headteacher will not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances as the September 2013 amendments to Registration regulations stipulate.

It is, however, acknowledged that there may be special circumstances where a parent feels that their child needs to be taken out of school. In these circumstances, parents should contact the Headteacher to request the exceptional leave of absence at least 2 weeks prior to the requested date. The Headteacher will then consider the circumstances and write in response with reference to national recommendations.

Summary

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures and its Attendance Policy to parents and to promote attendance. School attendance data must be available to the Local Authority and the DFE. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend school regularly. All school staff are committed to working with parents and students to ensure the highest possible level of attendance.

In 2024, Working Together to Improve School Attendance, came into law and further clarifies attendance expectations and procedures. See:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-improve-school-attendance>

Appendix A – Register Codes used at Heathside

i:	Illness (not medical or dental appointment)
M:	Medical or dental appointment
B:	Off-site approved educational activity
J1:	Interview with an educational establishment
P:	Participating in supervised Sport activity
V:	Educational Visit or trip
R:	Religious observance
C:	Authorised Leave of absence (exceptional circumstances)
E:	Suspended/Excluded but no alternative provision made
C1:	Participating in an authorised performance
K:	Attending education provision arranged by the Local Authority
G:	Family holiday NOT authorised by the school
N:	Reason for absence not yet established (not known)
O:	Absent from school without authorisation
U:	Late - after register closes (arrival after 9:30am without medical / illness reason)
X:	Not expected to be at school (part time under 5's)
C2:	School age child subject to an approved part time timetable
Y2:	Widespread travel disruption
Y6:	Unable to attend due to public health guidance
Y7:	Unable to attend due to any other unavoidable cause

Appendix B – Attendance Procedure

- The attendance register is taken once between 8:30am and 9:00am at the start of the school day and again between 12:00pm - 2:00pm after lunchtime.
 - The register is filled in by the teachers electronically via iSAMS.
 - If a child is unaccounted for and the teacher hasn't yet been contacted by the parent, the teacher marks the child as 'N' for Not Known.
 - By 9:30 AM or 2:30 PM the reception/admin staff at that particular section of the school start the process of contacting first the Headteacher and / or Deputy Headteacher and then the parents of any unaccounted children.
 - If the child hasn't been located within an hour, the Headteacher and the Designated Safeguarding Lead are consulted and authorities informed if no information about the whereabouts of the child can be ascertained.
 - Once the child has been accounted for, the 'N' register code is amended with the actual code. Eg. 'I' for illness (where parents have let the school know that the child is ill), 'M' medical appointment (if evidence has been shown), or 'O' absent without authorisation etc. This code (N) must be amended within one hour of the record first being made.
 - The register is printed out once a day by 9:30am in case a roll call is needed during an evacuation or fire drill. Any students leaving / arriving during the day will be noted on iSAMS as well as manually added / taken off the printed fire register.
 - Also, whenever children are taken off premises or on coach trips a printout of the day's attendance register is taken by a member of staff and a copy of the completed register is emailed or given to reception at the school as soon as possible.
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