

Ref: 10

Thursday 26th October 2023

Dear Parents and Carers

As we joined the Enhance Multi Academy Trust on 1st September 2023, we are writing to remind you of the government's school attendance policy.

We would also like to reiterate the key areas of Highburton CE First Academy's expectations regarding school attendance.

Lateness

Pupils are expected to **arrive into school at 8.55 a.m.** and classroom doors will close at **9.00 a.m.** Any children arriving after 9.00 a.m. will need to enter school via the main office to explain the reason for their lateness. Arrivals between 9.00 a.m. and 9.20 a.m. (the time when registers close) will be marked with an L code ('late before registers close') and any arrivals after 9.20 a.m., without a viable reason previously communicated to the school, will be marked using a U code ('unauthorised absence, after registers close'). Both of these codes impact a pupil's individual attendance score.

Lateness is disruptive to teaching and learning, so it is **vital that parents ensure their child arrives at school on time.**

Government Attendance Legislation

In line with attendance policies and procedures set out by the Department of Education, U codes are classed as unauthorised absence. Once a pupil has accrued **10 U codes per half term**, further action will be taken in the form of a Fixed Penalty Notice (*see DfE Attendance Legislation and Kirklees Council's Penalty Notice Code of Conduct, available on school website*).

Five U codes	Letter issued, followed by an opportunity to come into school to discuss how we, as a school, can offer support to avoid a Fixed Penalty Notice being issued to the parent(s).
Ten U codes (per half term)	'Intent to fine' letter will be issued, followed by a Fixed Penalty Notice issued by Kirklees Council.

Exceptional circumstances

The Headteacher may authorise exceptional circumstances for lateness. However, the reason must be communicated with school at the earliest opportunity and will be reviewed on a case by-case basis. Medical appointments must be booked outside school hours where possible – we appreciate this can be difficult, but thorough communication with school is paramount.

Absence In the case of absence, **PARENT'S MUST LEAVE A VOICEMAIL ON THE ABSENCE LINE BEFORE 9.00 A.M.** Please clearly state your child's name, class and reason for absence. This must be done **EVERY DAY** of absence.

Highburton CE First Academy and the local authority take safeguarding and the welfare of our pupils very seriously and unexplained absence is the first sign of a potential safeguarding issue. Therefore, when absence is not communicated, school has a **legal responsibility** to carry out **First Day Response**, as follows:

1. **Call will be made to parent/carer** contact 1 & 2 to establish reason for absence.
2. **If we are unable to reach parent** contact 1 or 2, a text will be sent.
3. **If school has still not been notified in the morning**, staff will conduct a home visit to ensure there have been no emergencies putting a child at risk.

Home Visits

As part of the Trust policy on attendance, schools have a responsibility to conduct home visits when **a child has not been seen on school premises – despite reported illness – for 5 consecutive days (including weekends).**

*“The School has the right to conduct home visits on the grounds of non-attendance”
– see Trust attendance policy, available on school website).*

In such a case, two members of staff will visit the child to say ‘hello’ and offer support if required. Such procedures have been put into place following well known serious case reviews investigating deaths of children – for instance, Baby P (2007) and Star Hobson (2020). The outcomes of these investigations have found that, had wider agencies – such as schools – followed safeguarding procedures correctly, those deaths could have been prevented. Whilst these cases are incredibly rare, schools and local authorities across the country have a duty of care to check in at home with **ANY CHILD** – regardless of background and circumstances – who has not been seen on school premises for 5 consecutive days. Please also take this into account if considering notifying school of an illness when you are taking a family holiday.

Following covid research has shown, maintaining strong links between school and home eases transition back into school following absence and supports positive mental health in children.

Term Time Holidays

In accordance with Department of Education legislation from 2013, schools cannot authorise term-time holidays. *“Headteachers shall not grant any Leave of Absence during term time unless they consider there are exceptional circumstances relating to the application” (specific criteria) (see Trust attendance policy and D of E government legislation, available on school website).* Ultimately, it is the decision of the parent whether they wish to take their child out of school for a term-time holiday. However, in such instances, the local authority has a legal obligation to issue a Fixed Penalty Notice when the child returns to school.

1. Applications for a term time holiday must be done in advance and sent via email, or in writing clearly stating dates of absence.
2. Unauthorised term-time holidays are marked on the register with a G code.
 3. After 10 sessions of unauthorised absence (5 days), parents will receive a letter notifying the intent to fine.
 4. Fixed Penalty Notice is issued by the local authority

“Payment of Penalty Notice is £60 per child, per parent if paid within 21 days, rising to £120 if paid within 28 days. If parent fails to make payment, the matter will be progressed to court by the Education Welfare Service” – (see Trust attendance policy, DfE government legislation and Kirklees Council’s Penalty Notice Code of Conduct, available on school website).

Discussions can take place with the Headteacher if you feel your circumstances are exceptional. However, **please note that these ‘exceptional circumstances’ are very specifically outlined by the government.**

The school’s attendance policy, together with the legislation from Kirklees Council and the Department of Education, is available on our website for you to refer to at any time.

We appreciate your continued support.

Yours faithfully

Graham Booth
Head of School