



## Innovation, Aspiration and Excellence

### Attendance and Punctuality Policy

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## Contents

1. Values and Ethos	3
2. Key Facts	3
3. Aims and Objectives	4
4. Statutory Duty of Schools	4
5. Parental Responsibility and/or Day to Day Care	5
6. The Local Authority Responsibility	5
7. School Day / Punctuality	5
8. Safe and Well Visits	6
9. Authorising Absences	6
10. Leave of absence during term time	7
11. Medical Notes and supporting evidence	8
12. Roles and Responsibilities in Managing Attendance	8
Staff Responsibilities .....	8
13. School Interventions for Managing Persistent Absenteeism	10
14. Pupil Support in Long Term Absenteeism	10
15. Attendance Rewards	11
16. Government Guidance, Warwickshire Attendance Service and Fixed Penalty Notices	11
17. School Attendance Target	12
18. Relationship to other Policies	13

## 1. Values and Ethos

Houlton School will 'prepare pupils for the challenges and opportunities of their future lives through a world class curriculum, transformational learning experiences and the promotion of aspiration, innovation and excellence in all aspects of the school experience: once they have joined our Houlton family, pupils will enjoy the proud legacy of being members of our community for life'.

Our Houlton Family aims to be:

1. Excellent in our provision of **transformational learning experiences**;
2. Excellent in our **expectations for, and from, every pupil**;
3. Excellent in the **tending of our Houlton family relationships**;
4. Excellent in our **attention to detail** in all that we do; and
5. Excellent in our **recognition and celebration of all that our Houlton family does well**.

Houlton School aims to create an environment which enables and encourages all members of the school community to reach for excellence. For pupils to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and on time, every day. The school will work together with parents/carers to support this aim. It is intended that through this policy awareness of good attendance will be raised and a coherent and consistent approach to promoting and securing good attendance is established across the school. Absence whether it is long term, frequent or occasional leads to missed learning experiences and may cause fractured social friendships which encourage an increased pattern of non-attendance.

Houlton School expects its pupils to aim to achieve 100% attendance. Staff have a responsibility to monitor the attendance of pupils and challenge absence where appropriate. The school has a variety of strategies to support pupils whose attendance is giving cause for concern. In addition, a team of Tutors, Pupil Experience Leader, Attendance Officer, and the Vice Principal for Personal Development, Behaviour and Safety will work with pupils and families to ensure all pupils have good attendance records.

## 2. Key Facts

- There are 190 school days each year and 175 other days for shopping trips, birthday treats and non-urgent appointments and holidays.
- One day a week absence is the equivalent over a school career of 2.5 whole years of education missed.
- 10 days holiday leave a year is the equivalent of two whole terms of education missed.

- 15 minutes of lateness a day equals one whole year of education missed.
- Half a day a week missed during Years 10 and 11 can mean the loss of a grade for every GCSE taken.

Full attendance leads to the best educational outcomes – we therefore require parent/carers to give pupils the best chance of success by making their child is in school every day.

### **3. Aims and Objectives**

The aims and objectives and policy are to:

- To emphasise the importance of maximum attendance at school to enable pupils to take full advantage of their educational opportunities;
- To make explicit to all relevant parties the school's expectations over attendance levels;
- To promote a consistent approach across the school to all matters relating to attendance;
- To clarify the roles and responsibilities of all parties with respect to attendance;
- To communicate to all relevant parties (teachers, parents/carers, pupils) the legal position with respect to attendance and the categories of absence which are deemed "authorised";
- To stress the need for home and the school to work in close partnership to achieve high attendance.
- Record and monitor attendance and absenteeism and apply appropriate strategies to minimise absenteeism;
- Promote effective partnership with the Warwickshire Attendance Service (WAS) <https://apps.warwickshire.gov.uk/Wes/services/6511> and other services / agencies and follow their standard approaches in managing attendance issues.

### **4. Statutory Duty of Schools**

Schools are responsible for recording pupils' attendance twice a day; once at the start of the morning session and once during the afternoon session. An entry must be made on the attendance register for all pupils of compulsory school age who are on the school's admission roll.

## **5. Parental Responsibility and/or Day to Day Care**

The Education Act 1996 section 7 defines the Duty of parents to secure education of children of compulsory school age. (7) The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him to receive efficient full-time education suitable: (a) to his age, ability and aptitude, and (b) to any special educational needs he may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

The Education Act 1996 section 576 defines the meaning of "parent". (1) In this Act, unless the context of otherwise requires, "parent", in relation to a child or young person, includes any person- (a) who is not a parent of his but who has parental responsibility for him, or Page 3 (b) who has care of him, except that in section 499(8) it only includes such a person if he is an individual

## **6. The Local Authority Responsibility**

If a child of compulsory school age fails to regularly attend the school which he/she is registered at, then the parent/guardian is guilty of an offence under section 444 of the Education Act 1996. Since March 2001 there has been a further offence where a parent/carer, knowing that their child is failing to attend regularly at schools, fails without reasonable justification to cause him/her to attend can be prosecuted under Education Act 1996, section 444 1A (as amended by the Criminal Justice and Court Service Act 2000).

Section 23 of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 introduced new powers in relation to issuing penalty notices for unauthorised absence from school. The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2004 came into force on 27 February 2004. Penalty notices must be issued in a manner which conforms to all requirements of the Human Rights Act and all relevant Equal Opportunities Legislation. To this aim each Local Authority has a Code of Conduct in relation to issuing Penalty Notices. The School subscribes to the Local Authorities Attendance Service (WAS). This service offers support to schools, families and young people in attendance matters.

## **7. School Day / Punctuality**

The School day starts at 8.40am when the registration bell sounds. Pupils are expected to be on site by 8.30am. All pupils are expected to be in their designated area for registration. Pupils arriving after 8.50am are expected to enter through the main reception where they will be signed in. Pupils arriving after 8.50 am will be marked as Late (L code) onto the SIMS system. Pupils are expected to arrive on time for lessons throughout the day. Any pupil arriving later than these timings will be marked as late. Pupils who arrive after 8.50am will go directly to their Period 1 lesson. We recognise that pupils arriving by school transport may on occasion arrive late and this is out of the control of parents/carers. Reporting an Absence/First Day Absence. Pupils will

receive a consequences (“C” points) if they are late / persistently late, in line with the Positive Behaviour Policy unless a valid reason, in writing, for absence are supplied by parents.

If a child is too unwell to come to school, parent/carers should contact the school office as early as possible on the first day of absence. Parents are requested to keep the school informed and also to supply a short note or medical evidence when the child returns to school. If the school does not receive any information, the absence will count as unauthorised and could trigger a letter from the school Attendance Officer. Once a child has recovered, parent/carers will be made aware that it is important their child returns to school as soon as possible to ensure they do not miss too much teaching – even if this means returning to school on the last day of the week or term.

## **8. Safe and Well Visits**

The school may in certain situations conduct safe and well visits in order to fulfil the school’s statutory duty to safeguard children. Where a well-being visit is required, two members of staff will visit the child’s home address in order to check in and ensure they are safe and well and to deliver a Houlton School well-being card. Well-being visits will always be conducted during school hours by two or more members of staff who will have their identity badges available for inspection. Staff are required to see a child whom the school have concerns about and may check in with neighbours or conduct any other reasonable checks to establish the whereabouts of a child. Well-being visits may be conducted in the following circumstances:

- In a situation where a pupil does not attend school and parents/carers have not given a valid reason for absence.
- Where a child has been absent from school for a period of three days or more.
- Where the school has reason to believe there may be safeguarding concerns for the child.
- Where the school have reason to believe the child may not be at home or that parents/carers may have not declared a holiday being taken during term time.

## **9. Authorising Absences**

Only the Principal / Vice Principal for Behaviour and Safety have the authority to authorise absences. The School will code all absences in line with the Department for Education School Attendance Coding Guidance. There are two types of absence:

- authorised - where the School approves pupil absence;
- unauthorised - where the School will not approve the absence.

Authorised absences are those which the school deem to be acceptable, such as genuine illness, attendance at an interview, religious observance or other legitimate off-site events and these are coded accordingly in the School's attendance records and for monitoring purposes.

An unauthorised absence is when a pupil is absent without prior authorisation from the School and/or when no justifiable reason for absence is provided by the parent/carer. The school may request medical evidence in order to authorise a period of absence where a parent/carer has advised a child is unwell.

## **10. Leave of absence during term time**

The Government issued new regulations in September 2013 regarding Leave of Absence; The Education (Pupil Regulations) (England) Regulations 2006 as amended by Education (Pupil Regulations) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013:

- Head Teachers **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 Head Teacher must be satisfied that the circumstances warrant the granting of leave.
- Head Teachers will determine how many school days a child may be absent from school if the leave is granted.
- The school can only consider applications for Leave of Absence which are made by the resident parent or carer. i.e the parent or carer with whom the child normally resides.
- Applications for Leave of Absence must be made in advance and failure to do so will result in the absence being recorded as "unauthorised". This may result in legal action against the parent, by way of a Fixed Penalty Notice.
- Applications for Leave of Absence which are made in advance and refused will result in the absence being recorded as "unauthorised". This may result in legal action against the parent, by way of a Fixed Penalty Notice, if the child is absent from school during that period.
- All matters of unauthorised absence relating to a Leave of Absence will be referred to the Warwickshire Attendance Service of Warwickshire County Council.

**Each application for a Leave of Absence will be considered on a case by case basis and on its own merits.**

**Leave of absence request forms will be available on the school website and newsletter.**

## **11. Medical Notes and supporting evidence**

The school fully supports pupil's welfare and medical conditions and if a child has a chronic, persistent or recurrent health issue, the Year 7 Pupils Experience Leader can arrange for a meeting with parents/carers to discuss what additional support can be offered to help a child access school. If a child's attendance falls to a level that is likely to adversely affect their long-term educational success the school will arrange to discuss this with parents /carer and may ask for medical evidence for any future absences. This will enable the school to provide suitable care in school and support our coding process.

Pupils with medical conditions should attend school as per normal and the school will make any reasonable adjustments required to meet their needs (depending on need / resource), however the school attendance officer cannot simply accept parental information without the correct medical evidence. The school policy is that parents/carers making medical appointments for their child should book them outside of school hours, early or late in the day, so pupils can be in school for at least half the day.

## **12. Roles and Responsibilities in Managing Attendance**

### **Staff Responsibilities**

- Marking the register accurately (a legal requirement).
- All staff will use the correct absence codes in line with DfE guidance.
- Tutors will arrive at their tutor rooms in time for the start of the registration period. Tutors will ensure tutor time is used in an informative/constructive way following the Houlton School Tutor Time Programme.
- Tutors will build a welcoming atmosphere within the group to encourage pupils to return after an absence.
- Tutors will monitor their group's attendance.
- The Pupil Experience Leader / Attendance Officer has a responsibility to track absences and then to liaise with parents/carers.
- Tutors and subject teachers will monitor attendance absence patterns of friendship groups and all other pupil groups such as PP and SEND.
- Tutors in their base rooms should display the Houlton School attendance target.
- The Attendance Officer will check pupil absences daily and a call will be made home if no reason has been provided for absence.



- The Attendance Officer will record attendance concerns on the pupils SIMs file and liaise with the Pupil Experience leader regarding concerns as well as Stage 1 and 2 letters going home.
- The Pupil Experience Leader will use the SIMS reports to bring to the tutors' attention the names of pupils with unauthorised absences and to ensure attendance issues are a standing item in all pastoral meetings. Data from pupil groups will be reported to form tutors as will attendance summaries by form group.
- Vulnerable pupils will have their attendance communicated to teaching colleagues daily by the Pupil Experience Leader so that catch up support can be provided immediately by email or directly on return to school/the lesson.
- The Attendance Officer will contact parents of pupils with attendance concerns at the earliest opportunity.
- The Pupil Experience Leader will circulate information about individual pupil needs to appropriate staff.
- The Vice Principal for Personal Development, Behaviour and Safety will monitor % attendance of each Year group and set targets for the group.
- The Pupil Experience Leader will monitor pupil's attendance, the improvements and efforts made by individuals and reward appropriately. Annually high attendance will be recognised as part of the Houlton Excellence Award as well as in Rewards Assemblies.
- The Attendance Officer will contact parents/carers by letter when a pupil is continually late for school or where attendance falls below 96%.
- The Attendance Officer after discussion with the Pupil Experience Leader and or Vice Principal will contact parents/carers by letter when a pupil becomes a Persistently Absent pupil and/or pupils identified under Ofsted's' bottom 10% of school population.
- The Attendance Officer will collate attendance for pupil groups; SEND; Tutor Groups; Whole School; Defined categories e.g. below 93%, 90%, WAS Case Worker caseload, Pupil Premium eligibility; Pupils referred to Pre Legal meetings; Persistent Absence group.
- The Pupil Experience Leader / Vice Principal will instigate the Early Help Programme, involving outside agencies where and when appropriate.
- The school will ensure that parents/carers are fully aware of the importance of good attendance through regular communication.

- The Vice Principal will analyse attendance data and compare to national averages and devise strategies to rectify concerns. Commencing/ directing commencement of stage1 – 5 Interventions as appropriate.
- The Pupil Experience Leader / Vice Principal will Attend Pre-Legal Meetings with the WAS Casework Officer. (Stage 4) At this stage a 10 week target is set.
- Pastoral staff will build good systems of communication with other agencies working within the school and a confidential form of exchanging information to support pupils.

### **13. School Interventions for Managing Persistent Absenteeism**

A pupil becomes a ‘persistent absentee’ (PA) when their attendance falls below expectations. All pupils whose attendance have fallen below expectations are at risk and will be closely monitored through the School’s tracking procedure, and regular contact made with their parents/carers. Parents/carers will be given opportunities to work with the School in improving their child’s attendance. The Attendance Officer will regularly monitor pupil absence and look for patterns of absence and take swift action where there is an attendance concern. Parents of pupils who have a series of medical notes and phone calls for medical reasons will be asked to provide medical evidence. The school Attendance Officer will write to parents/carers with a Stage 1 letter and Stage 2 letter, which details the procedures. If a parent/carer of a pupil does not provide medical evidence, the absence will be coded as unauthorised. Pupils whose percentage of attendance does not improve will be reviewed. If appropriate, an internal school attendance target will be set (Stage 3): parents/carers will be advised by letter and invited to a panel meeting with the Pupil Experience Leader and or Vice Principal. If there is a failure to make an acceptable improvement during the target period or if there is an immediate concern, further interventions will be considered. This will include a Stage 4 Meeting with WAS (Warwickshire Attendance Service).

A referral to WAS for casework intervention or through to a pre-legal meeting, inviting parents/carers/pupil to discuss their attendance issues. A legal attendance target may then be set. Failure to achieve this target may result in some cases leading to penalty notices/prosecution. (Stage 5).

### **14. Pupil Support in Long Term Absenteeism**

There are of course, good reasons (especially illness), which make attendance at school sometimes difficult. Nevertheless, lessons missed cannot be repeated and “catching up” on work

is never as good as the original learning experience. The School recognises the need to support pupils during and after long term absence of any kind and will:

- Endeavour to provide work for pupils to be completed off-site where appropriate and medical evidence has been received.
- Consider all strategies in partnership with WAS and other agencies, to encourage the return of pupils to the School. This may include negotiated timetables and/or gradual re-integration.
- Ensure that there is a positive atmosphere within tutor groups and lessons in which pupils are welcomed back to the School.
- Encourage parents/carers to be actively involved in re-entry programmes.

## **15. Attendance Rewards**

Pupils who achieve 100% attendance each term will receive certificates and awards. Pupils who achieve high levels of attendance or improving attendance will be given reward points which can be used as 'currency' towards the Houlton Excellence Award.

## **16. Government Guidance, Warwickshire Attendance Service and Fixed Penalty Notices**

The Government issued new regulations in September 2013 regarding Leave of Absence; The Education (Pupil Regulations) (England) Regulations 2006 as amended by Education (Pupil Regulations) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013. The responsibilities of the school and Principal are summarised in Section 9 of this policy.

Applications for Leave of Absence must be made in advance and failure to do so will result in the absence being recorded as "unauthorised". This may result in legal action against the parent/carer, by way of a Fixed Penalty Notice.

Applications for Leave of Absence which are made in advance and refused will result in the absence being recorded as "unauthorised". This may result in legal action against the parent/carer, by way of a Fixed Penalty Notice, if the child is absent from school during that period.

All matters of unauthorised absence relating to a Leave of Absence will be referred to the Warwickshire Attendance Service of Warwickshire County Council.

The Warwickshire Attendance Service have the authority to consider issuing Fixed Penalty Notices for Leave of Absence in line with the Warwickshire County Council's Non-School Attendance and Penalty Notices Code of Conduct. (A copy of which can be found at <https://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/pupilnonattendance>).

If a Fixed Penalty Notice is issued and is not paid within the timeframe set out in that Notice, the matter will be referred to Warwickshire County Council's Legal Services to consider instigating criminal prosecution proceedings under S444 of Education Act 1996. Each application for a Leave of Absence will be considered on a case by case basis and on its own merits.

Deletions from the Register In accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, pupils will only be deleted from the register when one of the following circumstances applies:

- The school is replaced by another school on a School Attendance Order
- The School Attendance Order is revoked by the local authority
- The pupil has ceased to be of compulsory school age
- Permanent exclusion has occurred and procedures have been completed
- Death of a pupil
- Transfer between schools
- Pupil withdrawn to be educated outside the school system
- Failure to return from an leave of absence after both the school and the local authority have tried to locate the pupil
- A medical condition prevents their attendance and return to the school before ending compulsory school-age
- In custody for more than four months (in discussion with The Youth Offending Team)
- 20 days continuous unauthorised absence and both the school and local authority have tried to locate the pupil
- Left the school but not known where he/she has gone after both the school and the local authority have tried to locate the pupil Houlton School will follow Warwickshire County Council Children Missing Education Protocol when a pupil's whereabouts is unknown.

## **17. School Attendance Target**

Houlton School's attendance target is 96% and PA target is to achieve below 10%.

In September 2015 the DfE increased the PA levels from 85% to 90%. The methodology used to calculate PA pupils has also been altered. In previous years a pupil would not be identified as a PA until they had amassed a set number of absences (e.g. 57 sessions in 2014/15). In September 2015 the threshold has been removed and a pupil is identified as PA once they miss 10% of their own individual sessions, this will mean all pupils below 90% will be PA.

Pupils within the bottom 10% attendance to be monitored and for schools to be aware of the reasons for their absence.

Monitoring and Review Achievement against Schools attendance targets will be reported upon to the AIM Board. The Vice Principal with overarching responsibility for attendance will monitor the effectiveness of this policy and procedures and where necessary make recommendations to the AIM Board for improvement. The school will keep accurate records on file for a minimum period of three years. The school absence rates will be reported on the Schools website.

## **18. Relationship to other Policies**

The Attendance policy should be read in conjunction with:

- Guidance on admissions
- Equality Statement
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (otherwise known as safeguarding)
- The Behaviour Policy
- Positive Behaviour Policy