

Attendance Policy (Senior & Junior School)

Introduction

At Hereford Cathedral School, we see education as a partnership between the family and the School. We are committed to providing the highest quality of education for your child, and we look to you to support this objective.

Government guidance states that 'pupils need to attend school regularly to benefit from their education'.

Local Authorities have a legal responsibility to identify children of compulsory school age who are not in education. Upon leaving Hereford Cathedral School at a non-standard transition point, the local authority will be informed as a matter of routine and in line with good practice with regard to safeguarding.

We believe excellent attendance and punctuality are vital in helping pupils to achieve their best. They should be at school on time and ready to learn, every day the school is open, unless the reason for absence is unavoidable. All research shows that pupils who attend well, achieve well.

Absence results in lost learning time and, although students may endeavour to catch up missed work, it cannot replace the teacher-led learning that has taken place. Absentees also miss out on the rich programme of extra-curricular activities and events that make the school experience so enjoyable.

Aims

This policy aims to meet obligations with regards to school attendance, including those laid out in the Department for Education's (DfE's) statutory guidance on [working together to improve school attendance \(applies from 19 August 2024\)](#), through our whole-school culture and ethos that values good attendance, including:

- Setting high expectations for the attendance and punctuality of all pupils
- Promoting good attendance and the benefits of good attendance
- Reducing absence, including persistent and severe absence
- Ensuring every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled
- Acting early to address patterns of absence
- Building strong relationships with families to make sure pupils have the support in place to attend school

We will also promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

Legislation and guidance

This policy is based on the Department for Education's (DfE's) statutory guidance on [working together to improve school attendance \(applies from 19 August 2024\)](#) and [school attendance parental responsibility measures](#). The guidance is based on the following pieces of legislation, which set out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- Part 6 of the [Education Act 1996](#)
- Part 3 of the [Education Act 2002](#)
- Part 7 of the [Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006 \(and 2010, 2011, 2013, and 2016 amendments\)](#)
- [The School Attendance \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2024](#)
- <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2006/1751/contents>[The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013 and the 2024 amendment](#)

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2013/757/regulation/2/made> It also refers to:

- [School census guidance](#)
- [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#)
- [Mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance: guidance for schools](#)

Roles and responsibilities

The Governing Body

The governing body is responsible for:

- Promoting the importance of school attendance across the School's policies and ethos
- Making sure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties
- Reviewing and challenging attendance data
- Monitoring attendance figures for the whole school
- Making sure staff receive adequate training on attendance
- Holding the Headmaster and Head of Junior School to account for the implementation of this policy

The Headmaster is responsible for:

- The implementation of this policy at the School
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to Governors
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils
- Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies

The designated senior leaders responsible for attendance

The designated senior leaders are the Senior Deputy Head in the Senior School, and the Deputy Head in the Junior School (also known as the 'attendance champions'), together with the Heads of Year and Phase Leaders, are responsible for:

- Leading attendance across the School
- Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes
- Having an oversight of data analysis
- Regularly monitoring and evaluating progress in attendance

- Establishing and maintaining effective systems for tackling absence
- Liaising with pupils, parents/carers and external agencies, where needed
- Building close and productive relationships with parents to discuss and tackle attendance issues
- Creating intervention or reintegration plans in partnership with pupils and their parents/carers
- Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families
- Working with external agencies to tackle persistent absence

Class Teachers/Form Tutors

Form Tutors/Class Teachers are responsible for recording attendance for both morning and afternoon sessions, via ISAMS on a daily basis, using the correct codes (see Appendices).

Senior School Office staff

Senior School Office staff will:

- Take calls from parents/guardians about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the school system
- Monitor the absence phone line and email inbox, updating the register accordingly
- Transfer calls from parents/guardians to the Head of Year/class teacher where appropriate, in order to provide them with more detailed support on attendance
- Follow up absences recorded in the morning

Junior School Office staff will:

- Take calls from parents/carers about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the school system
- Monitor the Junior Office inbox and phone parents of absent children who have not contacted the school, updating the register accordingly
- Inform class teacher where appropriate, in order to provide them with more detailed support on attendance
- Follow up absences recorded in the morning

Parents are expected to:

- Make sure their child attends every day on time
- If a child is unfit for school, parents should contact the school, in person or by telephone or email on the first day of absence, and every day thereafter and advise when they are expected to return.
- Provide the school with more than one emergency contact number for their child
- Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day
- Seek support, where necessary, for maintaining good attendance, by contacting the Form Tutor/Class Teacher in the first instance.

Pupils are expected to:

- Attend school every day, on time
- Attend every lesson, on time
- Report to the School Nurse if they feel unwell during the school day. Only the School Nurses, or a Deputy Head can authorise a pupil's collection from School. Under these circumstances, they will let the office know to sign pupils out on their behalf.

Recording attendance

We will keep an electronic attendance register and place all pupils onto this register. We will take our attendance register at the start of each school day and once during the afternoon. It will mark, using the appropriate national attendance and absence codes from the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024, whether every pupil is:

- Present
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity
- Absent
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

See Appendices for the DfE attendance codes.

We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 6 years after the date on which the entry was made.

The register for the first session will be taken at 8.40am. The register for the second session will be taken at 1.00pm for Junior School and 2.00pm for Senior School.

Absence due to physical or mental illness

We will mark absence due to physical or mental illness as authorised, unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

Where the absence is longer than 3 days, or there are doubts about the authenticity of the illness, the school may ask for medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents will be notified of this in advance.

Planned absence

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the pupil's parent notifies the School in advance of the appointment. Requesting leave of absence for appointments should be communicated to the School Office.

We do encourage parents to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary and return to school after their appointment or attend school in advance of being collected for their appointment.

The pupil's parent must also apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence. Go to section 5 to find out which term-time absences the school can authorise.

Lateness and punctuality

A pupil who arrives late:

- If a pupil is late, the number of minutes will be entered into the register

- Parents are expected to ensure that children are present at morning registration on time. Using 'traffic' on anything other than an occasional basis does not count as a good reason and is likely to result in disciplinary action in the Senior School and marked as late in the Junior School. Parents of pupils marked as persistently late will be contacted by a member of staff to establish ways in which the school can offer support to ensure that the child is in school on time.
- Senior School pupils who arrive after morning registration must sign in outside the Head of Sixth Form's Office. If Junior School pupils are late, they should report to the Junior School Office, where they will be escorted or sent to the appropriate lesson on their timetable.
- Punctuality issues will initially be addressed by the child's Form Tutor/Class Teacher which will help to identify barriers to getting into school on time which can be addressed at this level. Ongoing issues will be picked up by the Head of Year/Phase Leader and may involve communication with parents and/or appropriate sanctions.

Following up unexplained absence

Where any pupil we expect to attend school does not attend, or stops attending, without reason, the School will:

- Mark the pupil in the register with an 'N' – No reason provided for absence
- Office staff will firstly try and establish whether the pupil is present. If this is not established, the School will follow the Missing Child Policy.
- Identify the correct attendance code to use and input it as soon as the reason for absence is ascertained – so far as is practicable, this will be no later than 5 working days after the session(s) for which the pupil was absent
- Contact the parent on each day that the absence continues without explanation, to make sure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary. If absence continues, the School will consider involving external agencies
- Where appropriate, offer support to the pupil and/or their parents to improve attendance
- Identify whether the pupil needs support from wider partners, as quickly as possible, and make the necessary referrals

When a pupil is absent, it is the School that decides if an absence is authorised or unauthorised.

Authorised and unauthorised absence

Approval for term-time absence

The School will allow pupils to be absent from the school site for certain educational activities, or to attend other schools or settings.

The School will only grant a leave of absence to a pupil during term time if the request meets the specific circumstances set out in the [2024 school attendance regulations](#).

These circumstances are:

- Taking part in a regulated performance, or regulated employment abroad
- Attending an interview
- Study leave (not permitted for Year 11 GCSE mock examinations)
- A temporary, time-limited part-time timetable
- Exceptional circumstances

A leave of absence is granted at the School's discretion, including the length of time the pupil is authorised to be absent for. The School will only grant a leave of absence to a student during term time if they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'. It is not possible to provide an exhaustive list of 'exceptional circumstances'; however, these might include death or terminal illness of a close relative, out of school programmes such as music, arts, and sports performance of a high standard. Documentary evidence will be required to support consideration for out of school programmes. The School considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request.

Any request should be submitted, in writing to the Headmaster or Head of Junior School as soon as it is anticipated and, where possible, at least two weeks before the absence. Parents may be required to provide evidence to support any request for leave of absence.

Other valid reasons for authorised absence include (but are not limited to):

- Illness (including mental-health illness) and medical/dental appointments
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parent(s) belong(s). If necessary, the School will seek advice from the parent's religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart
- If the pupil is currently temporarily excluded or excluded from school (and no alternative provision has been made)

Other reasons the School may allow a pupil to be absent from the school site, which are not classified as absences, include (but are not limited to):

- Attending an offsite approved educational activity, sporting activity or visit or trip arranged by the school
- Attending another school at which the pupil is also registered (dual registration)
- Attending provision arranged by the local authority
- Attending work experience
- If there is any other unavoidable cause for the pupil not to attend school, such as disruption to travel caused by an emergency, a lack of access arrangements, or because the school premises are closed

Sanctions

The School will make use of the full range of potential sanctions to tackle poor attendance. Decisions will be made on an individual, case-by-case basis.

Strategies for promoting attendance

The very large majority of students at Hereford Cathedral School have excellent attendance and understand the benefit of attending school regularly. Where we have concerns about a pupil's attendance, we will work closely with parents/guardians and the student concerned to understand any barriers to achieving high rates of attendance. As a school, where there have been previous concerns about attendance, we recognise and celebrate improvements that are made.

Supporting pupils with complex needs (physical and mental health challenges) who are absent or returning to school

Regular Communication: We maintain consistent contact with families to understand the pupil's health condition and to provide updates on their academic progress and well-being.

Personalised Support Plans: In collaboration with families, we develop Individualised Plans that outline the specific needs of the pupil and the strategies the school will employ to meet those needs.

Home Visits and Meetings: Where appropriate, we arrange home visits or virtual meetings to discuss the pupil's progress and any adjustments needed to better support their learning.

Adjustments and Flexibility: When absolutely necessary and to ensure that all pupils have access to education, we can make adjustments tailored to individual needs, including part-time attendance and a Modified Curriculum: For pupils with prolonged absences, we may modify the curriculum to focus on key learning objectives, ensuring they continue to progress academically.

Classroom Adaptations: Physical adjustments in the classroom, such as seating arrangements and accessibility aids are made to support pupils' physical and mental health needs.

Access Arrangements: For external examinations, such as extended time, breaks, or alternative formats, to ensure pupils can demonstrate their understanding without being disadvantaged by their health challenges.

Reintegration and Ongoing Monitoring

When a pupil is ready to return to school, we ensure a smooth transition by:

Gradual Reintegration: we may implement a phased return to school, allowing pupils to gradually increase their attendance as they feel comfortable.

Ongoing Monitoring: we closely monitor the pupil's progress and well-being, making adjustments as needed.

Supportive Environment: teachers and staff are made aware to be sensitive to the needs of returning pupils, providing a supportive and welcoming environment.

Attendance monitoring

Form Tutors/class teachers will monitor attendance of their tutees and will refer any concerns to their Head of Year, Phase Leader or a Deputy Head.

Monitoring and analysing attendance

The School will monitor and analyse attendance and absence data (including punctuality) half-termly.

Pupils whose absences may be a cause for concern, especially those who demonstrate patterns of persistent or severe absence, will be supported. The School will share information and work collaboratively with local authorities and other partners where a pupil's absence is at risk of becoming persistent or severe, including keeping them informed regarding specific pupils, where appropriate.

Specific pupil information will be shared with the DfE on request.

Reducing persistent and severe absence

Persistent absence is where a pupil misses 10% or more of school, and severe absence is where a pupil misses 50% or more of school. The School will:

- Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence
- Consider potential safeguarding issues and, where suspected or present, address them in line with Keeping Children Safe in Education
- Hold regular meetings with the parents of pupils who the school considers to be vulnerable or at risk of persistent or severe absence, or who are persistently or severely absent, to:
 - Discuss attendance and engagement at school
 - Listen, and understand barriers to attendance
 - Explain the help that is available
 - Explain the potential consequences of, and sanctions for, persistent and severe absence
 - Review any existing actions or interventions
- Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance, in conjunction with the local authority, where relevant
- Consider alternative support that could be put in place to remove any barriers to attendance and re-engage these pupils. In doing so, the School will sensitively consider some of the reasons for absence
- Implement sanctions, where necessary

Improving attendance: What parents can do:

- Try to make all medical appointments (doctors, dentist and hospital) out of school time. This will not always be possible, but in such cases, try to minimise the disruption to the day by getting an early morning appointment a late afternoon appointment so that they can complete most of their timetable that day.
- Encourage your child to take responsibility for being on time for school – a reliable alarm clock (not on their phone), a realistic bedtime, bags, books and other equipment should be prepared the night before.
- Discourage your child from staying overnight with friends during the week. This sometimes leads to them both being late (or not attending at all) the next day.
- Encourage your child to come to school when they are feeling slightly unwell. Many aches and pains are forgotten when they are with friends and the School will contact you if it becomes necessary.

- Talk positively about going to school – “What was good about school today?” “Did anything funny happen?”
- Monitor your child’s internet, gaming and social media use to ensure they are not experiencing any difficulties that may prevent them from wanting to attend school.
- Take any worries seriously but do not show that you are unduly concerned. Believe that they will be sorted out. Contact your child’s Form Tutor/Class Teacher before the concerns escalate.

Children absent from education and children missing education:

We recognise that when a child goes missing from school, it is a potential indicator of a safeguarding concern; therefore, we follow Herefordshire’s safeguarding procedures.

Missing pupil procedure

In addition to morning and afternoon registration, staff are requested to take a register at the beginning of every lesson in the Senior School. On occasions when a member of staff identifies that a pupil is missing from their expected location, immediate action is required. The School Office will be contacted and they will follow the School’s Missing Child protocol.

Reviewed by BGB/HH

August 2024

Updated 20 January 2025

Appendix 1: Attendance Codes

The following codes are taken from the DfE's [guidance on school attendance](#).

The main codes that are used by Hereford Cathedral School are as follows:

/	Present (AM)
\	Present (PM)
L or number of minutes	Late arrival
C	Other authorised/exceptional circumstances
E	Temporary or Permanent Exclusion
G	Family Holiday (not agreed)
I	Illness
LS	Learning Skills
M	Medical or dental appointment
MU	Participating in a music activity
N	No reason yet provided for absence
O	Unauthorised absence
P	Participating in a sporting activity
R	Religious observance
S	Study Leave
SP	Participating in a speech & drama activity
MC	School Nurse
V	Attending an educational visit or trip
W	Attending work experience
#	School closed to pupils