NEW HEIGHTS SCHOOL
Focus · Learn · Achieve

Attendance Policy (Students)

Status	**Statutory**
Responsible Governors' Committee	**Full Governing Body**
Date last approved by GB	**November 2025**
Responsible Person	**Co-Headteachers**
Review Date	**November 2026**
Last Amended Date	**November 2025**

Introduction:

New Heights School recognises the clear link between the attendance and attainment of students. The aim of this policy is to encourage the highest possible levels of attendance and punctuality for students at New Heights School to support learning and achievement.

The importance of attendance and punctuality is underpinned by an awareness of safeguarding issues. It is important to see our young people every day and provide an educationally safe and secure environment.

To gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that all students attend regularly and on time. Students should aim to attend every day that the school is open. We set a target for all students to aim for 100% attendance with the expectation all students achieve at least 97%. ***As a school we define regular attendance as 97% or above.***

New Heights School believes Teachers, Parents, Carers, Students and all members of the New Heights School community have an important contribution in improving attendance and punctuality ensuring students attend to achieve. This Policy sets out how we will achieve this together.

Aims:

- Maximise the overall percentage of student attendance and punctuality at New Heights School.
- Reduce the number of students who are persistently absent and raise the profile of attendance and punctuality amongst the school community.
- Provide support advice and guidance for parents, students and staff.
- Develop clear procedures for the maintenance of accurate registration for students.
- Ensure a systematic approach to gathering, analysing and acting upon attendance data.
- Ensure a whole school approach to ensure consistency of intervention strategies.
- Continue to promote effective partnerships with the Local Authority, Children's Services, Health and other partner agencies.

Promoting regular Attendance at New Heights School:

This is everyone's responsibility, all members of staff, parent/carers and students. To help us all focus on this, New Heights School will ensure:

- Appropriate interventions are in place to deter poor punctuality
- An appropriate curriculum is provided and will be reviewed regularly.
- The need for high quality teaching and learning throughout the school is recognised as being essential to the promotion of attendance.
- Students are provided with appropriate support to minimise disaffection from school.
- Special Educational Needs, disadvantaged and Looked After students and other vulnerable groups are given appropriate support, and attendance is monitored rigorously.
- Effective partnerships with parents/carers are encouraged through regular contact and support provided.
- Parents/carers are kept informed of students' attendance and punctuality through first day contact, termly progress reports, individual letters and meetings when required.
- Good attendance and punctuality is rewarded through regular individual student incentives.
- Attendance and punctuality is regularly discussed with students in Relationships for Learning and at assemblies.
- Staff attendance roles and responsibilities are clearly defined and all staff should ensure these are followed.

Attendance Expectations and Absence Procedures

A child not attending school is considered to be a safeguarding matter. This is why information about the cause of any absence is required.

Expectations of Students

- Ensure you arrive at New Heights School by 8:25 am
- Always attend every lesson.
- Never leave the school site without permission.
- Always inform a member of staff, who will alert the Main Office, when late or leaving school for appointments.

- Following any absence, complete any missed work that may be provided by New Heights School.

Expectations of Parents

- Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is a parent/carer's legal responsibility (Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act) and permitting absence from school that is not authorised by the school creates an offence in law.
- Ensure your child leaves for school on time.
- Telephone school if your child is to be late or has missed their taxi/bus
- For routine non-emergency medical and dental appointments please ensure they are made outside of school hours.
- Contact school preferably by 7:45 am on the first day of absence if your child is unable to attend through illness, giving an indication of the expected duration and return date to school.
- If a text message is received as a result of your child's absence it is important that you respond to this text to ensure your child is appropriately safeguarded.
- Contact the Family Engagement Team if the reason for absence requires a more personal contact.
- **In case of emergency** we need up to date contact numbers at all times so please ensure you inform us of any changes especially to mobile telephone numbers. (As a school we request a minimum of two emergency contact details be provided at admission to the school)
- Requests for exceptional circumstances leave of absence must be in writing to the Headteacher. Reasons such as a close family bereavement or taking part in a significant religious event would be acceptable for short absences. Unacceptable reasons for missing school include general holidays, weddings, shopping, concerts and birthdays. Absence Forms can be requested from the school reception.
- The Government takes attendance in school very seriously and **it is the responsibility of the parent/carer to make sure that their children attend the school**. Not to do so is a criminal offence.

If a student is absent we will

- Telephone and text Parent/Carer on the first day of absence if we have not heard from them by 9:00 am.
- If no response is received, a member of school staff will conduct a home visit. If there are safeguarding concerns contact will be made with the family as soon as possible.
- If a student's absences are increasing and we are not aware of a good reason the parent/carer will be invited to meet the Family Engagement Team and / or Attendance Officer in the first instance.
- If absences persist the Family Engagement Team and / or Attendance Officer will discuss and implement actions with the Education Welfare Officer.

Understanding types of Absence

New Heights School has to record every absence that a student takes from school and this is why it is important that parents/carers advise school about the cause of any absence, preferably by text or phone on the first day of absence and in writing on the student's return.

Authorised Absence

Authorised absence: is when the school has accepted the explanation offered as satisfactory justification for the absence or given approval in advance for such an absence. If no explanation is received, absences cannot be authorised. It is the Headteacher, not parents who make the decision to authorise absence from school.

Unauthorised Absence

Unauthorised absence: is when the school has not received a reason for absence or has not approved a child's leave of absence from school after a parent / carer's request.

This includes but is not exclusive to:

- Parents giving their children permission to be off school unnecessarily, such as for shopping, birthdays, to look after siblings
- Truancy before or during the school day
- Absences which have not been explained.
- Students who arrive at school too late to get their mark

This type of absence may lead to the use of Penalty Notices or other sanctions from the Local Authority. From September 2018 New Heights School will issue warning letters (in accordance with the Local Authority Code of Conduct) to parents / carers where their child has accrued 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in any one term. The warning period will cover a period of 20 schools days. If the child has any unauthorised absence during this time the school will refer the case to the local authority requesting a Penalty Notice be issued.

Persistent Absence

- Students are defined as persistent absentees by the Department for Education (DFE) if their attendance falls below 90%. This is for any absence whether authorised or unauthorised. The DFE expects Schools to intervene well before students reach a level of persistent absence.
- Whilst we understand that students can be absent from school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend. If a student is reluctant to attend or a parent/carer has concerns, it is important that contact is made with the school as soon as possible to gain support and to work together to gain a resolution
- Parents/Carers are asked to contact the Family Engagement Team in the first instance.

Why Regular Attendance is very important

Any absence affects education and regular absence will seriously affect students' learning.

Students who have time off often find it difficult to catch up and do well.

- 90% attendance is equivalent to a student missing one half day of lessons per week or approximately 118 lessons per year

The DfE has published a strong link between poor school attendance and low levels of achievement:

Students attendance	Chance of achieving 5 good pass grades at GCSE
100% - 96%	73% of Students achieve 5 good pass grades.
96% - 94%	64% of Students achieve 5 good pass grades.
93% - 90%	55% of Students achieve 5 good pass grades
80% to 70%	Only 20% chance of achieving 5 good pass grades
50% and below	Only 6% of Students achieve 5 good pass grades

Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is your legal responsibility and permitting your child to have any absence without a good reason from school is an offence in law (The Education Act 1996) and may result in legal action.

The Education Welfare Officer (EWO)

- The Education Welfare Officer – provides support for parents/carer and advice on problems relating to attendance, and encourages good communications between home and school.
- The EWO will always try to resolve the situation by agreement with the family but, if a resolution cannot be achieved to improve the student's attendance and where unauthorised absence persists the EWO will be required to give consideration to the instigation of legal proceedings which include; Penalty Notices, Parental Prosecution and Education Supervision Orders. Details regarding attendance law, penalty fines and legal interventions are available from the Local Authority.

Leave of Absence in Term Time

The Law does not give any entitlement to parents / carers to take their child on holiday during term time. Any application for leave must be in truly exceptional circumstances and the Headteacher must be satisfied that the circumstances warrant the granting of leave.

Parents/carers can receive a Penalty Notice fine for taking their child on holiday during term time without prior consent from school. Consent cannot be given retrospectively.

The Headteacher cannot grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. The Headteacher will determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted.

Holidays in Term Time:

Taking holidays in term time will affect your child's schooling as much as any other absence and we expect parents / carers to help us by not taking children away in school time.

Remember that any savings you think you may make by taking a holiday in school time are offset by the cost to your child's education.

There is **no** automatic entitlement in law to time off in school to go on holiday.

Lateness

Poor punctuality is not acceptable**.** If a student misses the start of the day they can miss work and late arriving students disrupt lessons, it can be embarrassing for the student arriving late and can encourage future absence. A range of support and sanctions apply to students who arrive late.

How we manage lateness

The school day starts at **8:25 am** and we expect your child to be in at that time.

Registers are marked by **9:00 am** and your child will receive a late mark if they are not in by that time.

If your child **arrives after the close of the register**, he/she will get a 'U' mark in the register, which counts as an **unauthorised absence and is reportable to the Education Welfare Service as such.**

If your child has a persistent late record you will be contacted by the Parent Engagement Officer to resolve the problem but you can approach us at any time if you are having problems getting your child to the school on time.

School targets, projects and special initiatives:

The school has targets to improve attendance and your child has an important part to play in meeting these targets.

Through the school year we monitor absences and punctuality to show us where improvements need to be made.

People Responsible for Attendance Matters at New Heights School

All school staff, parents/carers and students need to work as a team to support the attendance and attainment of students. This continued support therefore is vital in making every student's journey through school a success. The Senior Leadership Team and the Family Engagement Team decide on the classification of absence and work together with the EWO to support parents / carers and students to ensure attendance for each pupil meets the schools expectations.

Removal from Roll

From the 1st September 2016 changes were introduced to the Pupil Registration Regulations 2016. These amendments affect all non-standard transitions; this is whenever a child of compulsory school age leaves a school before completing the school's final year.

As a school we are now required to:

- Inform the LA in ***every*** circumstance when deleting a pupil's name from the admission register
- Inform the LA of the pupil's destination school and home address if the pupil is moving to a new school.
- Provide information to the LA when registering new students, including the pupil's address and previous school.

If your child is leaving our school *due to a move out of the area,* parents are asked to:

- Give the Family Engagement Team and / or Attendance Officer comprehensive information about their plans, including any date of a move and your new address and telephone numbers, your child's new school and the start date when known. This should be submitted to our school in writing.

- If students leave and we do not have the above information, then your child is considered to be a *child missing in education*. This requires schools and local authorities to then carry out investigations to try and locate your child, which includes liaising with Children's Services, the Police and other agencies. By giving us the above information, these investigations can be avoided.

Strategies for Promoting Attendance

1. Parents / carers and students will be reminded regularly (via newsletters, assemblies, parents' evenings etc.) of the importance and value of good attendance.

2. Attendance data will be regularly collected and analysed in order to help identify patterns, set targets, correlate attendance with achievement, and support and inform policy/practice.

3. New Heights School employs the services of a Local Authority Education Welfare Officer (EWO) to support the school in meeting its legal obligations with regard to school attendance. The EWO, in collaboration with the school's Family Liaison Officer, will investigate all arising attendance issues in accordance with current government guidance and legislation.

4. Parents / Carers of students whose attendance falls below 95% may be invited to agree an Attendance Action Plan OR an agreement with the EWO and the Headteacher to help improve their child's attendance; this may include supportive referrals to the school nurse or a parenting course.

5. A pupil with an attendance of 90% or below is categorised by the government as a Persistent Absentee (PA). All PA's will be targeted for improvement by the EWO and the school's Senior Management Team. Parents / Carers of PA's with a high incidence of unauthorised absence may be the subjects of legal sanctions including Penalty Notices OR prosecutions in the Magistrates Court.

6. New Heights School will support students who are absent through long term chronic or life threatening illness by adhering to current government guidance for children with medical needs. This may involve a plan of support with home tuition and a re- integration plan back into school.

7. Teachers and support staff who become aware of issues, which may lead to attendance difficulties, will report the issues in a timely manner to the Attendance Officer and Family Engagement Team.

8. When appropriate, the school will liaise with other agencies – Educational Welfare Service, Educational Psychology Service, Social Services, the School Nurse Service and other agencies to support and help students with attendance difficulties.

9. The Headteacher will report to the New Heights Governing body termly on attendance matters

Summary:

New Heights School has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents / carers and to promote attendance. Equally, parents / carers have a duty to make sure that their children attend. All School staff are committed to working with parents as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible.

Appendices

Attendance and Punctuality Roles and Responsibilities Guidance

New Heights Whole School Approach

When	Whom	Actions Expected
DAILY	**Students**	• Arrive on school site by 8:25 am • Be on time for lessons throughout the day
	Form Tutors / Teachers / LSA's	• Set an example by arriving on time to meet and greet students by 8:25 am • Ensure attendance has a high profile in class. • Discuss absence with students returning to school. • Welcoming long-term absentees back into the class • Discuss any concerns relating to a student absence with the Family Engagement Team and / or Attendance Officer initiating follow up procedures.
	Family Engagement Team / Attendance Officer	• Ensuring Attendance Officer has completed register upon students arrival to school • Ensuring input of accurate attendance marks in the register via Arbor • Identify students who are absent from school without reason (before 9:30 am) • Attendance Officer to provide Family Engagement Team with Daily attendance report including list of absent students • Log on Arbor (using red flag system) - parental voicemails, text messages and emails regarding student absences • Ensure all Late arriving students are spoken to and searched and their attendance is entered on to Arbor • First day absence phone contact with parents/carers, following up unexplained absences where no text message has been returned. • First day absence home visit are completed where allocated by Attendance Officer and or Headteacher • Logging attendance of all students going out / in of school for medical and dental appointments or visits • Daily liaison with alternative curriculum providers for students off site to ensure AM and PM registers are provided within set time parameters and students who fail to attend with reasons unknown are followed up through the First Day contact systems. • Communicate with parents of students who are experiencing attendance difficulties and conversations logged on Arbor • Communicate with EWO regarding appropriate further action with students and/or families. • Liaison with EWO and external agencies, eg,, school family support service, regarding support work with identified students

	EWO	• Safeguarding home visits as required. • Focused casework interventions with persistent absent students and families. • Text and phone call contact with students/parent/carers • Home visits • Review pre legal action plan/parent contract and arrange meetings as required • Strategic legal interventions with identified students • Tracking of actions and interventions supporting FEW / Attendance Officer with up actions with other members of staff

When	Whom	Actions Expected
WEEKLY	**Form Tutors / LSA's**	• Ensure all members of the Tutor Group know the school target and their current attendance • Monitor/follow up identified student non-attendance by making contact with parent/carers where appropriate, record of conversation sent logged on Arbor • Update information on attendance boards
	FEW / Attendance Officer	• Liaison with EWO, Pastoral Coordinators and Achievement Leaders regarding support work with identified students • Informing EWO of student patterns of absence and request EWO follow up • Provide weekly student attendance figures for Form Tutors and student rewards • Discuss punctuality issues with identified students and parent/carers • Student Rewards

When	Whom	Actions Expected
HALF TERMLY	**Subject Teachers / Form Tutors**	• Maintain a high profile of attendance as a significant contributor to student achievement and attainment within subject areas by regular inclusion of attendance in meetings with LSA's • Use attendance data and learning cycle data, to identify and take action to improve the attendance of vulnerable students • Ensure that all teaching staff focus on attendance in planning and pedagogy • Students regularly missing from lessons are followed up
TERMLY	**SLT Member responsible for Attendance**	• The importance of attendance is underpinned by awareness of safeguarding issues for all students both in School and those at off site provision • School Attendance Review alongside the EWO • Ensure that attendance is given a high profile as a key driver of school improvement and provide support and guidance to SLT and Teachers for plans to raise attendance • Ensure that the attendance policy is implemented across the school and that systems are operating effectively. • Report to SLT on attendance matters • Ensure school website, parent/carers welcome booklet and school newsletters promote Attendance • Monitor and track attendance/PA Action Plans • Liaise with EWO to share information and agree joint actions re action plans or other students causing concern
	EWO	• School Attendance Review alongside the SLT Member responsible for Attendance • Report attendance data – key Performance Indicators • Strategic Interventions - Persistent Absence letters and Action plans throughout the academic year to ensure students with Persistent Absence are intervened with through a range of measures including LA actions were agreed • Legal Interventions (if required)

	Headteacher	• Ensure that attendance maintains a high profile as a key driver of school improvement through close monitoring and scrutiny of attendance data in conjunction with SLT and Governors