Heathfield
Community College and Sixth Form

Attendance Policy

Reviewed by:	Ben Pollard
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At Heathfield Community College we demand the highest level of attendance from all our students so they may develop their full potential during their time at College. Excellent attendance at College improves student outcomes. Missing out on education has a significant effect on students' life opportunities. Everyone associated with the College – students, parents, all teaching and support staff and external agencies must do all in their power to ensure that excellent attendance and punctuality are an integral part of the College's work.

Our College staff ensure high levels of attendance for all students through the following processes:

(i) Daily identification of students who are absent with parent/carer contact by phone, or email, where we have not been informed of the absence;

(ii) Monitoring of punctuality and lateness to College and lessons with follow-up sanctions applied;

(iii) Daily monitoring and tracking of attendance data to identify trends and to initiate interventions to support excellent attendance.

iv) regular monitoring of patterns and trends by using analysis available from ESCC and DfE

This policy should be read in conjunction with Working together to Improve School Attendance (August 2024):
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/66bf300da44f1c4c23e5bd1b/Working_together_to_improve_school_attendance_-_August_2024.pdf

And also:
https://localoffer.eastsussex.gov.uk/assets/documents/TLP-Medical-Needs-Policy-(October-2024).pdf

https://www.eastsussex.gov.uk/education-learning/schools/attendance-behaviour/too-sick

Understanding types of absence

There are four broad classifications in attendance registers:

Present - the student is on the premises at the time of registration.

Approved Educational Activity - the student is engaged in an approved, supervised activity off site, for example field trip, educational visit, sporting activity or work experience.

Authorised Absence - an absence authorised by the College which includes illness, medical appointments, bereavement or other circumstances where the College deems absence to be appropriate. There is no entitlement for students to be guaranteed leave of absence for holidays with parents/carers during term time. A decision will be made at the Head Teacher's discretion with regard to authorising absence in 'exceptional' circumstances. Authorised absence may also be granted to

students who are on a part time timetable. These must be agreed by both the College and Parents/Carers with the best interests of the student in mind, and regularly reviewed with the aim of the student moving back to full time as soon as possible.

Unauthorised Absence – an absence where the student does not have good cause to be missing from College. Unauthorised absence can be defined in the following ways:
Truancy – this is when students fail to attend College when they should, including leaving the College premises after registration. It also includes action by parents/carers, who initiate unauthorised absence by students or who collude with it. Shopping trips, day trips or absence to look after someone else would all constitute examples of unauthorised absence.
This is distinct from internal truancy which is recorded as when students are in college but not attending the activities they are timetabled to attend, without permission or alternative in place.

College refusal – this is chronic non-attendance over a period of time, usually an indicator of wider family, psychological or behavioural problems.

The College will aim to highlight and resolve any difficulties regarding a student's attendance as early as possible, using our rigorous monitoring and intervention procedures and pastoral support programmes to help solve any problems. If necessary, the local authority will become involved in more complex cases.

Parents are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any problems together. If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, the school may refer the child to the Attendance Support Team (AST) as part of wider Team around the School & Setting (TASS), from the Local Authority. The Practitioner will also try to resolve the situation by agreement but, if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed, these Officers can use Legal Interventions on parents or to seek an Education Supervision Order on the child. The maximum penalty on conviction is a fine of £2500 and/or 3 months imprisonment.

Rewards and Incentives

Good attendance is acknowledged in form tutor periods, assemblies and via contact with home. The College's rewards system recognises weekly and termly 100% attendance, the systems also recognise improved attendance.

We are also keen to acknowledge the support of parents/carers in working with us to maximise outcomes for our young people.

Attendance Procedures

Late arrivals

Morning registers officially close at the end of lesson 1. Students who arrive after the morning registration period but before the official close of registration will be coded as a Late (L). Students with persistent late marks will, after a conversation with a parent by the Head of Year, be marked as unauthorised. Students arriving

and signing in after this time will be recorded as an unauthorised morning absence (U).

Students who arrive at College once the registration period has closed must report to the Student Services Office before going to their lesson. A student who arrives after the morning registration period will be issued with a break time Head of Year detention.

All these procedures are very important as in the event of a fire drill it is vital there is an accurate record of who is on the College site.

Medical appointments during the College day
If students need to leave during the College day, contact must be made beforehand to attendance@heathfieldcc.co.uk to confirm an appointment. Students must sign out through Student Services and should sign back in in the same way when they return. **We would encourage all appointments to be made out of College hours, so as not to impact on your child's learning. If this is unavoidable students should return to College following their appointment.**

Attendance Concerns

- The Pastoral Team meet regularly to discuss attendance and punctuality. Heads of Year track the attendance of all students within their cohort and use the College's Attendance Protocol to ensure consistency between year groups. The protocol is built around early intervention and constant communication with parents in order to maximise and maintain excellent attendance.

- **Long term absence** – students who are long term absentees for whatever reason, often find the return to College problematic. There are both academic and social difficulties which students may need time to overcome. For some students this may involve a personalised re-integration programme. The programme will be devised by the appropriate Head of Year in conjunction with the Pastoral Manager. Parents/carers will be involved throughout the reintegration process and staff will be informed.

Leave of absence – although some parents may find themselves in difficult circumstances which lead them to organise holidays in term time, Heathfield Community College believes students should not miss College for this reason. Whilst we understand the difficulties parents/carers may have in organising holidays during the College holidays and the benefits to be had from cheaper term-time holidays, this type of absence is detrimental to a child's education. There is a common misconception that any child is allowed to take 10 days holiday per year. This is not true. From September 2013, government guidelines advise that **no absence should be authorised** in advance except when due to 'exceptional circumstances'. Bereavement and life-threatening illness are considered to be exceptional circumstances. Please note that the cost or availability of holidays does not constitute 'exceptional circumstances'.

Leave of absence forms can be downloaded from the College website by clicking here or obtained from Student Services. Where a parental request has been refused, and parents/carers continue to take their child out of College, this absence will be recorded as unauthorised.

Please be mindful that unauthorised absence can result in a Fixed Penalty Notice being issued by East Sussex County Council. Further guidance can be found here

National Framework for Penalty Notices

There is now a single consistent national threshold for when a penalty notice must be considered by all schools in England, of 10 sessions (usually equivalent to 5 school days) of unauthorised absence within a rolling 10 school week period. The 10 sessions of absence do not have to be consecutive and can be made up of a combination of any type of unauthorised absence (G, O and/or U coded within the school's registers). The 10 school week period can span different terms, school years or education settings.

Sanctions may include issuing each parent (for each child) with a Penalty Notice for £160, reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days (for the first offence). A second Penalty Notice issued within a three year period will result in a fine of £160 per parent, per child. If a third offence is committed the matter may be referred to the local authority for consideration of prosecution via the Magistrates Court. If prosecution is instigated for irregular school attendance, each parent may receive a fine of up to £2500 and/or up to 3 months in prison. If a parent is found guilty in court, they will receive a criminal conviction.

Please note that this option will only be considered when the College feels that every reasonable adjustment to support the student has been offered, and appropriate engagement from the family to improve attendance is not evident.

Duties and Responsibilities

Parents/Carers

Parents have the prime responsibility for ensuring that their child attends regularly.

Whilst any child may be off College because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend College. Any problems with regular attendance are best resolved between the College, the parents and the child in the first instance, and we remain committed to providing support. If the child is reluctant to attend, parents/carers should not try to cover up his or her absence or to give in to pressure to excuse him or her from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and usually makes things worse.

Parents/Carers are asked to:

- Actively promote and support the value of high attendance to school.
- Contact the College on the first day of their child's absence with an explanation as to why the child cannot attend. Our preferred method of contact is email attendance@heathfieldcc.co.uk. Alternatively, please ring the attendance line 01435 866066 dialling 3 for student absence.

- Inform the College in writing in advance of any planned appointments that cannot take place outside of College hours. Such absence may or may not be authorised (see leave of absence above).
- Refrain from requesting any authorised absence except under exceptional circumstances. Leave for a family holiday is rarely classified as an exceptional circumstance and may result in a fine should it be taken unauthorised.

Form Tutor will:

- Take the register in morning tutor time.
- Encourage all students in their form to maintain excellent attendance and punctuality. Utilise structures to praise and reward regular and high attendance.
- Have conversations with all students regarding their attendance if it starts to fall.
- Direct any correspondence from parents/carers with regard to absences to Student Services.
- Keep an overview of students' attendance.
- Liaise with the Pastoral Manager or Heads of Year to pass on concerns about individual students.
- Inform students of the need to complete a leave of absence form prior to a planned absence.

Subject Teachers will:

- Promote the value of attendance in developing understanding and learning.
- Take an electronic register at the start of each lesson. (Within the first 10 minutes)
- Pass on any concerns about absentees from lessons to Student Services as soon as possible.
- Use Arbor to record any issues with punctuality and pass on any concerns to the appropriate Pastoral Manager.

- If taking students out of College for any reason, supply Student Services with a list of names and inform the appropriate Pastoral Manager, Head of Year and teaching staff in advance of the trip. The trip leader, having taken the register, must leave a copy with Student Services.
- Inform colleagues of any students taking part in events in or out of College that require students to be off timetable via staff briefings or the staff noticeboard.

The attendance team will:

- Promote and recognise high attendance
- Compile all attendance data and information for relevant staff.
- Make contact with parents/carers on the first day of absence for all students where the reason for absence is unknown. This will involve telephoning or emailing all parents/carers when contact has not been made. Until contact is made, absence will remain as an 'N' code (unauthorised).
- Make contact with parents/carers via email on subsequent absent days confirming absence. Phone contact will be made again on the 4th day of absence.
- Inform the Pastoral Manager should any student leave site without permission.
- Work closely with the Pastoral Manager and Heads of Year to monitor students, who present concerns.
- Monitor the absence of vulnerable students and arrange contact to be made at the soonest possible time

Pastoral Manager / Heads of Year will:

- Promote and recognise high attendance
- Oversee and monitor attendance and punctuality for their year groups.
- Liaise with form tutors and highlight problems that require action.
- Confirm which absences should be coded as unauthorised
- Liaise with the Assistant Head re concerns about individual students.
- Act on information from staff concerning student absences or habitual lateness.
- Collect student and parent voice to inform understanding of any prevailing issues that are impacting attendance.
- Inform parents of any students whose attendance and/or punctuality are a cause for concern by following the College's attendance and monitoring procedure.
- Intervene early to arrange and attend meetings with parents and relevant staff where there are attendance issues.
- Work collaboratively with parents and relevant staff/agencies to develop appropriate support scaffolds to encourage and promote attendance where required (as per intervention for long term absence: see page 4)
- Promote excellent attendance through assemblies, rewards and or certificates.
- Offer support and work closely with the parents/carers of students who are persistent absentees or at risk of becoming so.

Assistant Headteacher will:

- Stay ahead of research and emerging best practice in ensuring and promoting high attendance.
- Use available data to inform comparable benchmarks and identify areas of focus.
- Oversee and monitor whole College attendance and punctuality, initiating whole College policies as required. This will be achieved by liaison with the Senior Leadership Team and other relevant members of the Pastoral, Inclusion and Learning Support Teams.
- Support the Heads of Year, Form Tutors and teaching staff in promoting excellent attendance and punctuality. Work with Colleagues overseeing the termly rewards process to celebrate above average attendance.
- Liaise with external agencies and Heads of Year to devise any necessary re-integration programmes for students who are persistent absentees (PA) or at risk of long-term absence.
- In consultation with the Headteacher, consider the 'exceptional leave requests'.

The Headteacher will:

- Utilise structures to promote the value and impact of high attendance
- Monitor the policy and ensure that strategies are in place to promote and implement the policy throughout the College.
- Ensure that an annual report with statistics is presented to governing body.
- Set attendance targets as part of the College Improvement Plan and target setting process.

Governing Body will:

Approve the policy and any proposed changes.

- Receive reports from the Head.
- Review the working of the policy in light of the Head's report.
- Support the promotion and implementation of the policy throughout the College, making it known to parents.

APPENDIX A

The below table is an exemplar of the approach to be used by the pastoral lead as a gradual process to support with and improve attendance, adaptable to individual need. It is not exhaustive and is not always sequential.

A check should be completed to ensure that any appropriate step has been taken before moving on to the next level of intervention, if attendance has not improved.

Strategy/intervention	**/**
Tutor conversation with student (recorded on communication log on Arbor)	
HOY or Pastoral manager call to **check in** with parents/ carers and identify any barriers	
Attendance **letter 1** sent	
Has pupil/parent voice been collected via link in letter 1?	
Attendance **letter 2** sent	
Has pupil/parent voice been collected via link in letter 2?	
Attendance panel meeting completed? (*The below may be discussed & offered as part of a wider attendance support plan/ANP – this is not an exhaustive list and other methods may be applied on a case-by-case basis)*	
• Trusted adult identified to check in with	
• Classroom adaptations	
• Wave 1 interventions shared with staff over identified learning needs	
• Safe space for learning identified	
• Peer mentor/buddy programme	
• Adapted timetable (RAG lessons) and use of hub in appropriate	
• Internal intervention programme (EBSA, Self-image, controlling emotions etc)	
Early Help Keywork **Level 2 referral**	
Contact Attendance Support Team (TASS)	