The Sacred Heart Language College

Attendance Policy

*"Confident in God's love for us,
we commit ourselves to His service"*

September 2023

Context

Our mission statement is encapsulated in our belief that 'Confident in God's Love for Us, we commit ourselves to his service'. At The Sacred Heart Language College we are committed to ensuring that all are of equal worth, secure in the knowledge that all are created in Christ's image. Our actions are governed by our living testament to the Gospel values of justice, fairness, respect and equality. These beliefs underpin our commitment to disability equality.

The Sacred Heart Language College believes that all students: should have the right to feel safe, secure and cared for, and should have access to appropriate support, care and education which includes the support to manage their emotions and their behaviour including taking account of, and for their responsibilities.

Policy Ratified by Governors: 30th September 2022

Signature:

Maria Barrett, Chair of Governors

Reviewed Autumn 2023:   29th September 2023

Signature: *Eva Fiorenzo*

Eva Fiorenzo, Chair of Governors

Contents

1. Aims

We are committed to meeting our obligation with regards to school attendance through our whole-school culture and ethos that values good attendance, including:

> Promoting 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 ensure pupils have the support in place to attend school

We will also promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

2. Legislation and guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the working together to improve school attendance from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on school attendance parental responsibility measures. These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting 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, 2016 amendments)

> The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013

This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the school census, which explains the persistent absence threshold.

3. Roles and responsibilities

3.1 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

> Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data

> Monitoring attendance figures for the whole school

> Making sure staff receive adequate training on attendance

> Holding the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy

The link governor for attendance is Maggie Pal.

3.2 The headteacher

The headteacher is responsible for:

> 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

> Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary

3.3 The designated senior leader responsible for attendance

The designated senior leader is responsible for:

> Leading attendance across the school

> Offering a clear vision for attendance improvement

> Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes

> Having an oversight of data analysis

> Devising specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data

> Arranging calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues

> Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families

The designated senior leader responsible for attendance is Mrs Susana Opoku-Gyamfi and can be contacted via the school telephone number: 020 8863 9922 or by email at SOpoku-Gyamfi@tshlc.harrow.sch.uk.

3.4 The attendance officer

The school attendance officer is responsible for:

> Monitoring and analysing attendance data (see section 7)

> Benchmarking attendance data to identify areas of focus for improvement while sorking with the designated senior leader

> Providing regular attendance reports to school staff and reporting concerns about attendance to the designated senior leader responsible for attendance and the headteacher

> Working with LEA officers to tackle persistent absence

> Advising the Directors of Study (authorised by the headteacher) when to issue fixed-penalty notices

The attendance officer is Mrs Deborah Kelleher and can be contacted via 020 8863 9922 or dkelleher@tshlc.harrow.sch.uk

3.5 Class teachers/form tutors

Class teachers/form tutors are responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis during PCT and all lessons, using the correct codes, and putting this information on to the Arbor registers – if possible fill in code on the same day and check to ensure that this is done within the required 3 days.

3.6 School admin/office staff

School admin/office staff will:

> Take calls from parents about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the school system

> Transfer calls from parents to the Directors of Studies in order to provide them with more detailed support on attendance

3.7 Parents/carers

Parents/carers are expected to:

> Make sure their child attends every day on time

> Call the school to report their child's absence before 9am on the day of the absence and each subsequent day of absence), and advise when they are expected to return. After 5 days of illness a medical certificate will be asked for

> Provide the school with more than 1 emergency contact number for their child

> Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day

> Please send in requests to attend appointments in advance so that they can be authorised

3.8 Pupils

Pupils are expected to:

> Attend school every day on time

> Attend every timetabled session on time

> Pupils must have permission to leave school for appointments from student services, where they need to report before going to the front of the school and signing out

4. Recording attendance

4.1 Attendance register

We will keep an attendance register, and place all pupils onto this register.

We will take our attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day before 9:00 a.m. and once during each session ideally during the first 10 minutes of the lesson. Period 5 will count as pupils' afternoon registration. It will mark whether every pupil is:

> Present

> Attending an approved off-site educational activity

> Absent

> Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

> The original entry

> The amended entry

> The reason for the amendment

> The date on which the amendment was made

> The name and position of the person who made the amendment

See appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes.

We will also record:

> Whether the absence is authorised or not

> The nature of the activity if a pupil is attending an approved educational activity

> The nature of circumstances where a pupil is unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

Pupils must arrive in school by 8:30 a.m. on each school day.

The register for the first session will be taken at 8:30 a.m. and will be kept open until 9:00 a.m. The register for all lessons will be taken at during the first 10 minutes of the lesson.

4.2 Unplanned absence

The pupil's parent/carer must notify the school of the reason for the absence on the first day of an unplanned absence by 8:00 a.m. or as soon as practically possible by calling the school admin/office staff (see also section 7).

We will mark absence due to illness as authorized if we have been informed by parents unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

Pupils whose absence is unplanned will receive a text to notify parents if no communication has come from the parent.

If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may ask the pupil's parent/carer to provide 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/carers will be notified of this in advance.

4.3 Planned absence

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the pupil's parent/carer notifies the school in advance of the appointment. This should be done by writing a note, sending in the appointment card/letter or phoning the school office.

However, we encourage parents/carers 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.

The pupil's parent/carer 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.

4.4 Lateness and punctuality

A pupil who arrives late:
- Before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code
- After the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code and will need to have signed in before this can be changed
- Registration by all staff at 8:30 a.m. prompt. Pupils arriving after 8:30 but before 8:40 must be marked as late (with an L).
- Pupils arriving after 8:40 and before 9:00 am must sign the late book and will be registered as late by an office administrator.
- Any pupil arriving after 9:00 will be registered as code '?', i.e. presumed absent. If the pupil arrives in later, they will sign in and a member of student services will update the code as late.
- If a pupil has a valid reason for lateness, e.g. a medical appointment, this will be reflected in their registration coding.
- Sanctions
    - Step 1 *(late that day)*:   to do 10-minute detention with Form Tutor
    - Step 2 *(2 lates in one week)*:   ½ hour detention with DOS Thursday night
    - Step 3 *(5 lates in half term)*:   parents invited in. Letter to support
    - Step 4 *(10 lates during that term)*: the pupil stays behind at the end of term. Loss of privileges. Letter to support parents

– Step 5 *(Persistently Late)*: Governor's meeting

– Step 6 – Panel and fining

Any attendance **or** punctuality concerns in their year group in terms of – individual cases – groups of pupils – unauthorised absences – patterns of absences / lateness in individuals and / or groups It should be noted that poor punctuality, like poor attendance, can lead to a court summons in extreme cases as explained in relation to Harrow's AIM policy.

4.5 Following up unexplained absence

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

> Text the pupil's parent/carer on the morning of the first day of unexplained absence to ascertain the reason. If the school cannot reach any of the pupil's emergency contacts, the school may send an email asking for confirmation and call parents if no response is given to first day

> Identify whether the absence is approved or not

> Identify the correct attendance code to use and input it as soon as the reason for absence is ascertained – this will be no later than 5 working days after the session

> Call the parent/carer on each day after the first day that the absence continues without explanation to ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary. If absence continues, the school will consider involving a CME (Child Missing in Education) referral and may contact the police.

4.6 Reporting to parents/carers

The school will regularly inform parents about their child's attendance and absence levels on school reports sent home.

5. Authorised and unauthorised absence

5.1 Approval for term-time absence

The headteacher will only grant a leave of absence to a pupil during term time if they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'. A leave of absence is granted at the headteacher's discretion, including the length of time the pupil is authorised to be absent for.

We define 'exceptional circumstances' as a specific incident which requires consideration by the school.

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 as soon as it is anticipated and, where possible, at least four weeks before the absence, and in accordance with any leave of absence request form, accessible via the school website. The headteacher may require evidence to support any request for leave of absence.

Valid reasons for authorised absence include:

> Illness and medical/dental appointments (see sections 4.2 and 4.3 for more detail)

> Family bereavements and funerals

> Requests to allow T.V. or performance work during term time

Other valid reasons for authorized absence can be found in the School Attendance Guidance

School Attendance guidance May 2022 (publishing.service.gov.uk)

5.2 Legal sanctions

The school or local authority can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age.

If issued with a fine, or penalty notice, each parent must pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the local authority.

Penalty notices can be issued by a headteacher, local authority officer or the police.

The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice may take into account:

> The number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year

> One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission

> Where an excluded pupil is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason

If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute or withdraw the notice.

Information regarding penalty notices can be found on Harrow Council's website Education Penalty Notices – Harrow Council

6. Strategies for promoting attendance

Our designated attendance lead and attendance officer work with parents and pupils with regard to this

Our school mentor, counsellor or social worker may be used to promote attendance

Awards for attendance

7. Attendance monitoring

7.1 Monitoring attendance

The school will:

> Ensure all staff regularly monitor attendance

> Monitor attendance and absence data half-termly, termly and yearly across the school and at an individual pupil level

> Identify whether or not there are particular groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern and keep specific information on identified pupils

Pupil-level absence data will be collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. The school will compare attendance data to the national average, and share this with the governing body.

7.2 Analysing attendance

The school will:

> Analyse attendance and absence data regularly to identify pupils or cohorts that need additional support with their attendance, and use this analysis to provide targeted support to these pupils and their families

> Look at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence, and then develop strategies to address these patterns

7.3 Using data to improve attendance

The school will:

> Provide regular attendance reports to DoS (weekly) and form tutors (fortnightly)], and other school leaders, to facilitate discussions with pupils and families

> Use data to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place in order to modify them and inform future strategies

7.4 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

> Hold regular meetings with the parents of pupils who the school (and/or local authority) considers to be vulnerable, or are persistently or severely absent, to discuss attendance and engagement at school

> Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance

> Work closely with Harrow LA, using their attendance policy and following procedures

We have a set pattern of letters to go out, triggered at specific times.   Absence for more than 10 days will lead to a CME (Child Missing in Education Referral).

8. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the local authority or DfE is updated, and as a minimum annually by Rose-Marie Sorohan, Head of School. At every review, the policy will be approved by the full governing body.

8. Monitoring Arrangements

This policy will be reviewed if guidance from the local authority or DfE is updated, and as a minimum annually by the senior leader responsible for attendance. At every review, the policy will be approved by the full governing board.

9. Links with other policies

This policy links to the following policies:

> Child protection and safeguarding policy

Appendix 1: attendance codes

The following codes are taken from the DfE's guidance on school attendance.

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	Pupil is present at morning registration
****	Present (pm)	Pupil is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Pupil arrives late before register has closed
B	Off-site educational activity	Pupil is at a supervised off-site educational activity approved by the school
D	Dual registered	Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
J	Interview	Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
P	Sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
V	Educational trip or visit	Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised, or approved, by the school
W	Work experience	Pupil is on a work experience placement

Code	Definition	Scenario
Authorised absence		
C	Authorised leave of absence	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
E	Excluded	Pupil has been excluded but no alternative provision has been made
H	Authorised holiday	Pupil has been allowed to go on holiday due to exceptional circumstances
I	Illness	School has been notified that a pupil will be absent due to illness
M	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment
R	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance
S	Study leave	Year 11 pupil is on study leave during their public examinations
T	Gypsy, Roma and traveller absence	Pupil from a traveller community is travelling, as agreed with the school
Unauthorised absence		
G	Unauthorised holiday	Pupil is on a holiday that was not approved by the school
N	Reason not provided	Pupil is absent for an unknown reason (this code should be amended when the reason emerges, or replaced with code O if no reason for absence has been provided after a reasonable amount of time)
O	Unauthorised absence	School is not satisfied with reason for pupil's absence
U	Arrival after registration	Pupil arrived at school after the register closed

Code	Definition	Scenario
X	Not required to be in school	Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
Y	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances	School site is closed, there is disruption to travel as a result of a local/national emergency, or pupil is in custody
Z	Pupil not on admission register	Register set up but pupil has not yet joined the school
#	Planned school closure	Whole or partial school closure due to half-term/bank holiday/INSET day