



# **Promoting Good Attendance: A Guide for Parents and Carers**

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## Introduction

Horsforth is a successful school and your child plays their part in making it so. We aim for an environment which enables and encourages all members of the community to reach out for excellence. For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and your child should be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

It is very important therefore that you make sure that your child attends regularly and this booklet sets out how we will achieve this together.

## Why Regular Attendance and Punctuality is so important:

### Learning

Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any student's absence or lateness disrupts teaching routines so may affect the learning of others in the same class. Ensuring your child's regular attendance and punctuality at school is your legal responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason is an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

### Safeguarding

Your child may be at risk of harm if they do not attend school regularly. Safeguarding the interests of each child is everyone's responsibility and within the context of this school, promoting the welfare and life opportunities for your child encompasses:-

Attendance

Punctuality

Behaviour Management

Health and Safety

Access to the Curriculum

Anti-bullying

Failing to attend school on a regular basis will be considered as a safeguarding matter.

## Promoting Regular Attendance

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility - parents/carers, students and all members of school staff.

## To help us all to focus on this we will:

- Give you access to attendance data via 'SIMS Parental Gateway';
- Report to you formally, once a year on your child's attendance;
- Reward good or improving individual and form attendance.

## **The Law Relating to Attendance:**

Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 states that 'the parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him / her to receive efficient full time education suitable:-

- (a) to age, ability and aptitude and
  - (b) to any special educational needs he/ she may have
- Either by regular attendance at school or otherwise'

## **The Law relating to safeguarding:**

Keeping Children Safe in Education, March 2015 and preceding legislation places a duty on local authorities and governing bodies to have regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State with regard to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and students under the age of 18.

## **Understanding types of absence**

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by parents/carers), as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required.

***Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason like illness, medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable cause.***

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been given. This type of absence can lead to legal proceedings, and include:

- parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily
- truancy before or during the school day
- absences which have never been properly explained
- children who arrive at school too late to get a mark
- looking after other children, shopping or birthdays
- day trips and holidays in term time

Whilst any child may be off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents/carers and the child. If your child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and usually makes things worse.

## **Persistent Absenteeism (PA)**

A student becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 15% or more time across the school year for whatever reason. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we need the fullest support and co-operation of parents / carers to tackle this.

We monitor all absence thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority and you will be informed of this immediately.

PA students are tracked and monitored carefully and we also combine this with academic mentoring where absence affects attainment.

All our PA students and their parents/carers are subject to an Attendance Action Plan.

## **Absence Procedures**

### **If your child is absent you must:**

- Contact us as soon as possible on the first day of absence and each subsequent day;
- Send a note in on the first day they return with an explanation of the absence – you must do this even if you have already telephoned us; or
- You can call into school and report to reception.

### **If your child is absent we will:**

- Telephone or text you every day of absence if we have not heard from you;
- Invite you in to discuss the situation with the relevant Pastoral Leader or Attendance Strategy Leader if absences persist;
- If there are concerns regarding your child's attendance, absence may not be authorised without relevant or medical evidence. (For example: a medical appointment card or information from your medical practitioner.) You will be informed of this decision by letter.
- Formally categorise your situation as one of Persistent Absenteeism if attendance moves below 85%.

## **Telephone numbers**

There are times when we need to contact parents about lots of things, including absence, so we need to have your correct contact numbers at all times. It is important that you ensure we always have an up to date number – if we don't, then we may be unable to contact you if there is an emergency.

## **Onset of Student Illness or Emergencies During the School Day**

Please see Appendix 7

## **The School Attendance Strategy Leader**

Parents / carers are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any problems together. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, the school may refer the child to the School's Attendance Strategy Leader. He/she will also try to resolve the situation by agreement but, if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed and unauthorised absences persist, will work with Leeds City Council and may use sanctions such as Penalty Notices or prosecutions in the Magistrates Court.

## **Lateness**

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If your child misses the start of the day they can miss work and do not spend time with their class teacher getting vital information and news for the day. Students arriving late disrupt lessons, may be embarrassed and this may encourage absence. Lateness will be sanctioned in line with school procedures.

## **How we manage lateness**

The school day starts at **8:20am** and we expect your child to be in school and moving to their first class at that time. The school building is opened at **8.00am** for students and most are on site by **8:10am**.

Registers are marked by **8.25am** and your child will receive a late mark if they are not in class by that time.

At **8.45 am** the registers will be closed. If your child arrives after that time they will receive a mark that shows them to be on site, but this will **not** count as a present mark and it will mean they have an unauthorised absence. This may mean that you could face the possibility of a Penalty Notice if the problem persists.

If your child has a persistent late record you will be asked to meet with the appropriate Student Pastoral Leader or Attendance Strategy Leader to resolve the problem. You may approach us at any time if you are having problems getting your child to school or issues with punctuality.

### **Leave of Absence in Term Time**

We expect parents / carers not to knowingly affect their child's progress by taking them out of school during term time. Please 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 time to go on holiday / visit.

In a situation where taking your child out of school during term time is unavoidable, you must apply for Leave of Absence. All applications must be made in advance, using a standard form which can be obtained from Student Reception. At our discretion, leave of absence may be authorised in exceptional circumstances. In making these decisions, the school will consider the circumstances of each application individually, including any previous pattern of leave in term time.

It is important that you understand the circumstances when leave in term time will **not** be agreed by us:

- any time in September, when students are just starting the school or just starting in a new year group. This is very important as your child needs to settle into their new environment as quickly as possible
- immediately before and during any assessment period
- when a student's attendance record already includes any level of unauthorised absence
- where a student's attendance rate is already below (96%) or will fall to or below that level as a result of taking leave

Any period of leave taken without the agreement of the school, or in excess of that agreed, will be classed as unauthorised and will attract sanctions such as a Penalty Notice.

If you have any questions about attendance or punctuality, please contact:

- Relevant Student Pastoral Leader
- Attendance Strategy Leader

### **Summary**

Horsforth 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 our staff are committed to working with parents/carers and students as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible and that every student's welfare and life opportunities are promoted.

# APPENDIX 6: Application for Exceptional Leave of Absence During Term-Time

If you would like to apply for permission for your child to be absent from school you must complete this form and return it to the school for authorisation **AT LEAST 10 DAYS IN ADVANCE** of the proposed leave.

Parents / carers do not have the right to take their child out of school during term-time. By law, you must ask permission for exceptional leave of absence during term-time. If you take your child out of school without authorisation you risk receiving a fixed penalty fine. **The penalty is £60 If paid within 21 days, doubling to £120 if paid between 22 – 28 days and applies per parent per child for which permission has been refused or was not sought. If the fine is not paid, parents will be reported for prosecution.** All schools in the north-west of Leeds have agreed to follow a common policy on absence during term time. Good attendance leads to improved outcomes for your child.

TO BE COMPLETED BY PARENT / CARER					
Surname of child:		First name:			
Year Group:		D.O.B.:			
Surname of parent / carer:		First name of parent / carer:			
Address of child:		Telephone number(s):			
Postcode:					
Please state the <b><u>exceptional circumstances</u></b> that require you to apply to take your child out of school during term-time instead of making arrangements for the proposed activity to take place during the school holidays. The cost, convenience or availability of a particular holiday will not be taken into consideration.					
<u>Reason:</u>				Information provided by parent / carer will be checked by school	
Would (s)he miss any national tests of examinations?				Yes	No
Is her / his attendance already below 96%?				Yes	No
Is the requested absence during the month of September?				Yes	No
Would (s)he be absent for more than 10 school days?				Yes	No
Has (s)he already had leave during term-time this academic year?				Yes	No
Has your son/daughter already had a leave of absence request authorised this academic year?				Yes	No
Does your child have any siblings at Horsforth School for which you are requesting leave of absence?				Yes	No
Does your child have any siblings at another school for which you are requesting leave of absence?				Yes	No
If you have answered 'yes' to the previous question, please state which school(s) your other children attend;.					
If this request is approved will his / her absence exceed 10 days in this school year?				Yes	No
Is the request for a religious observance?				Yes	No
Length of absence (school days):		From (date):		To (date):	
Parent / carer signature:					
TO BE COMPLETED BY SCHOOL					
Further information required:				Yes	No
Headteacher's comment:					
Signed:	Name:	Designation:	Absence Approved:	Yes	No

# APPENDIX 7: ONSET OF STUDENT ILLNESS OR EMERGENCIES DURING THE SCHOOL DAY

## Procedures for staff

**IMPORTANT:** THIS PROCEDURE IS NOT FOR MEDICAL EMERGENCIES OR FOR STUDENTS WITH KNOWN ILLNESS WHO HAVE A MEDICAL PLAN IN PLACE. IN THESE INSTANCES, PROCEDURE AS OUTLINED IN THE STUDENT'S 'INDIVIDUAL CARE PLAN' WILL APPLY.

