



HEBBURN COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Approved by Governors: November 2009

Review Date: December 2010

RATIONALE

Hebburn Comprehensive believes that regular attendance and good punctuality are essential to the furtherance of the school vision and aims, by ensuring that all pupils have the opportunity, through challenge, partnership and support, to reach their full academic potential and derive maximum benefit from the wide range of educational experiences open to them in and through school.

The link between high levels of attendance and maximising learning is undeniable. Pupils reaching the school targets for attendance and punctuality will have some measure of preparation for responsibilities and experiences of adult and working life. Attendance is a whole school issue.

STATUTORY FRAMEWORK

Under Section 199 of the 1993 Education Act, a pupil is required to regularly attend the school where he/she is a registered pupil. The school is obliged by law to differentiate between **authorised and unauthorised** absence. A letter or telephone message from a Parent/Carer does not in itself necessarily authorise an absence. Only if the school is satisfied as to the validity of the explanation offered by letter/message will the absence be authorised.

RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Improving attendance at Hebburn Comprehensive School is the responsibility of everyone in the school community, including pupils, Parents/Carers and staff.

Pupils

All pupils are expected to attend school and all of their lessons regularly and punctually. Pupils who experience attendance difficulties will be offered prompt and sympathetic support, from their Form Tutor and from members of the Pastoral Leadership team: their Head/Assistant Head of Learning, Head of Key Stage and Pastoral Co-ordinator for Attendance. At the end of each term, pupils whose attendance is either very good or improved will be presented with awards.

Parents/Carers

Parents/Carers are responsible for ensuring that their child attends school regularly, punctually, properly, and ready to learn. If a child is prevented, for any reason, from attending, or is late, Parents/Carers are requested to notify the school as soon as possible, either in writing, or by telephone call.

A pupil's absence from school must be considered as unauthorised until a satisfactory explanation is forthcoming from the Parents/Carers. Parents/Carers will be informed promptly of any concerns that may arise over a child's attendance. If possible, Parents/Carers should avoid making medical/dental appointments for their child during school hours.

School

Staff will endeavour to encourage good attendance and punctuality through personal example. The school will employ a range of strategies to encourage good attendance and, liaising closely with Parents/Carers, will promptly investigate all absenteeism. Staff will respond to absenteeism firmly and consistently.

Benefits of Good Attendance

Improved chance of good exam results

Awards and rewards

The building of high self-esteem

Good habits for life

Good references, increasing the chances of access to Further Education/Employment

Poor Attendance

Exam results which do not reflect potential

Problems may arise outside of school, including exposure to danger
Difficulty in keeping up with school work

Bad habits

Poor references, reducing the chances of access to Further Education/Employment

Legal action by the Education Welfare Service

PRINCIPLES

- Hebburn Comprehensive recognises the importance of the register as a legal document and will develop procedures to ensure that class registers are maintained to a high standard (for further information refer to document on registration procedure).
- Parents/Carers have a legal duty to ensure their children attend school on a regular and full-time basis.
- The school will ensure that Parents/Carers and pupils are made fully aware of all matters involving attendance and punctuality.
- All pupils will be set sensible, achievable targets to encourage continual improvement, but also taking into account the school target of 95% for attendance and punctuality.
- The school will have clearly-defined strategies to give due recognition to good attendance and punctuality, whilst also having strategies to address problems of poor attendance in the short, medium and longer-term.
- The Governors of the school will be kept fully informed of all developments involving attendance and punctuality and of the progress of the school towards its targets.
- A close liaison will be maintained by both teaching staff and learning mentors with feeder schools to ensure year 6 pupils are integrated with the necessary help, understanding and encouragement to make the transition from junior to secondary school as smooth as possible.
- There will be a close liaison with outside agencies, especially the Education Welfare Service.
- The school will maintain accurate records of attendance and punctuality information about all pupils.

PROCEDURES

Strategies for encouraging good Attendance

- Encouragement and praise by form tutor and pastoral leaders.
- Information to Parents/Carers – diaries, letters, interim and final reports.
- Assemblies.
- Certificates 100% term and year.
- Certificates 95% term and year.
- Merits.
- School reference.
- Awards Evening.
- Gifts- vouchers + cinema tickets in draw for >95%; a more substantial prize for 100% draw.
- League Tables and graphs.

Strategies for improving Attendance.

- Automated telephone system/text system for first day contact (Truancy Call).
- Computerised system used to record/monitor attendance and prompt intervention.
- Identification of poor attendance – use of identified Persistent Absentee thresholds, with concomitant intervention.
- Use of diaries to give regular information.
- Interim and final reports.
- Input by Form tutor, Subject Teacher.
- Sensible, achievable targets.
- Interview with Assistant HoL for those pupils whose attendance falls below 90%.
- Interview with Pastoral Support Co-ordinator responsible for Attendance for those pupils whose attendance falls below 85%.
- Telephone and written contact with Parents/Carers.
- Attendance Monitoring Forms.
- Interview with EWO.
- Referral to the GLC.
- Learning Mentors' "wake-up" calls.
- School/Education Welfare Service targeting of whole school/year group attendance issues.
- Involvement of Governor Panel.
- In KS4, work placements or appropriate off-site provision.

Statistics

- Pupils will be given information regarding their group's attendance at the end of each week, term and year.
- Parents/Carers will be given information regarding their child's attendance weekly in the school diary, at the end of each term and in school reports, issued twice yearly.
- Pupils will be given information weekly via computerised system.
- Assemblies will be scheduled to focus on attendance/punctuality.

Post-registration truancy

Staff should note those who are absent from their lesson and inform the Attendance Officer, Mrs S McKay, where they have concerns.

Education Welfare Service

- Referral to the Education Welfare Service will be made by the appropriate referral criteria and will normally take place after the school has initially dealt with the matter and it is considered further support is necessary.
- The EWO will meet the Pastoral Support Co-ordinator and Assistant HoL every two weeks for referral, consultation and feedback.
- Referral will be made by the Pastoral Support Co-ordinator after consultation with Assistant HoL.
- The EWO will normally become involved when a pupil's attendance drops to 80%.
- All information from the EWO will be recorded and copies will be given to the Pastoral Co-ordinator, and staff having a specific pastoral responsibility to the relevant pupils.
- The Education Welfare Service, in consultation with the school, will have strategies to help, encourage and improve attendance.
- The decision to prosecute parents/carers will be taken by the EWS; a designated member of the EWS team will pursue this action.

Learning Mentors

- Pupils will be identified who it is felt would benefit from mentoring to help improve attendance.
- One Learning Mentor will work closely with feeder schools to identify and work with pupils who have attendance problems.
- Information and statistics will be produced for all new pupils.

- Learning Mentors will ensure the arrival of all KS4 pupils for external examinations, taking remedial action where a pupil fails to arrive.

Guidance and Learning Centre

The GLC will be used as a strategy to improve individual attendance.

Amber Zone

- Used as a strategy to deal with persistent post-registration or internal truants.

Purple Zone

- Used to integrate pupils back into school after long-term absence.

First-day contact

- This is regarded as an essential procedure to ensure pupils are safe, as well as to improve attendance.
- Parents/Carers of pupils who are going to be absent are asked to contact the school by telephone, on the first morning of absence, giving details of the child, reason for absence and expected date of return.
- When no contact is received, the school will ring/text the Parent/Carer via the automated telephone system (Truancy Call). In order for first day contact to be effective, it is essential that staff keep pupil contact information up to date and that parents/carers inform school of any changes in contact details.
- In the event of telephone contact not being made, a pupil should produce a note explaining his/her absence immediately upon their return to school.
- If there is no explanation for absence received within one week, a letter will be sent to the Parents/Carers explaining that if no contact is made with school within five school days, then the absence will be recorded as “unauthorised”.
- If the problem persists, the Parent/Carer will be invited into school or the EWO will be asked to visit. The Governors’ Attendance Panel will, at that stage, be convened.

Authorised/Unauthorised absence

Absence from school will normally be due to pupil illness. In some circumstances the school may authorise absence for other reasons. Under the guidelines from the DCSF, it is for the school to decide whether an explanation for absence is acceptable.

Examples may include:

- The pupil was absent with leave (defined as 'leave granted by any person authorised to do so by the governing body of the school')
- The pupil was ill or prevented from attending by any unavoidable cause.
- The absence occurred on a day exclusively set aside for religious observance by the religious group to which the pupil's Parent/Carer belongs
- There is a family bereavement.
- The pupil is attending an interview with either a prospective employer or in connection with an application for a place at an institute of further education or for a place at another school.
- The pupil is attending a Pupil Referral Unit.
- The pupil is participating in an approved public performance.
- The pupil is involved in an exceptional special occasion (e.g. if pupil is attending the graduation of an older sibling).

Absence should be unauthorised if:

- No explanation is forthcoming, following reasonable efforts on the part of the school to elicit one.
- The school is dissatisfied with the explanation.
- The pupil stays at home to mind the house or to look after siblings (the guidance suggests that absence in such cases should only be granted in exceptional circumstances).
- The pupil is shopping during school hours.
- The pupil is absent for unexceptional special occasions (e.g. a birthday)
- The pupil is away from school on a family holiday for a period of time longer than that negotiated with the school (normally a maximum of two weeks).
- The pupil is on a family holiday without permission, or if the Parents/Carers have failed to apply for permission in advance of the holiday and instead seek retrospective approval on their return.

Liaison with Primary School

- Discussion with Primary School staff on pupil transfer by transition team.
- Information on school expectations and systems will be given to future pupils and their Parents/Carers.

Information

All written information will be recorded and kept in the Pastoral Co-ordinator's room. Other information is held on the school's SIMS system.

Relevant information will be given to the Form Teacher and Assistant Head of Learning.

Holidays in Term Time

Parents/Carers are strongly urged to avoid taking family holidays during term time. Indeed, Parents/Carers do not have an automatic right to take their child out of school for such a holiday. If, however, Parents/Carers apply to school in advance the school **may** authorise up to two weeks of term-time absence in any school year (September-July) for a family holiday.

- In advance of the holiday, a 'holiday form' is expected to be completed and returned to school.
- The decision on all holidays will be taken by the Pastoral Co-ordinator responsible for Attendance who will contact the Parent/Carer.
- Any decision made for such time off will take into account the pupil's attendance or if it interferes with important aspects of school life such as examinations.
- Due to heavy work commitments and GCSE examinations, the school does not expect pupils in years 10 or 11 to have time off for holidays; this also applies to those pupils in Year 9 entered for any external examination.

RAISING THE STATUS OF ATTENDANCE

Good school attendance is the concern and responsibility of all teachers and support staff. Tutors can help raise their tutor group's awareness of the importance of good attendance by discussing with them: -

- a) The previous week's attendance figures for the group.
 - b) Ways of making the attendance figures better.
 - c) Setting targets that are appropriate and challenging.
- On a one-to-one basis, Form Tutors can discuss an individual's attendance.
- Parents/Carers and pupils will be made aware at induction of the importance of regular attendance.
 - Individual pupils will be rewarded in assemblies and at Awards Evening for excellent attendance.
 - Attendance will be made competitive between individual tutor groups through the use of competitive League Tables.
 - When pupils return to school after an absence it is important that staff give positive encouragement by: -
 - a) Giving assistance with work that has been missed.
 - b) Not making negative comments.
 - The school will seek to identify pupils at risk through liaison with Primary School before they transfer to Hebburn Comprehensive. The school will then plan ways to support them in Year 7.
 - The school will discuss with non-attendees any problems or difficulties they may have in an attempt to solve their particular problems.

Targets for attendance 2009-2010

Whole-school Attendance: 92.31%

PA figure: 5.5%

PUNCTUALITY

- Hebburn Comprehensive expects pupils to arrive in school on time regularly. They will be regarded as late if they are not on school premises by the 8.50am or 1.00pm entry bells.
- Pupils are expected to arrive promptly for lessons and out of school activities.

Strategies for encouraging and rewarding good punctuality;

- Verbal encouragement from teachers
- 100% certificates
- Assemblies

Strategies for improving poor punctuality:

- Spoken to by Form Tutor, subject teacher
- Parent/Carer contact through automated telephone/text system (Truancy Call)
- Diaries – information to Parents/Carers
- Detention
- Punctuality report
- Interview with Pastoral Co-ordinator
- Interview with Parents/Carers and pupils
- EWO contact

Appendix 1

ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

PARENTS/CARERS

- To ensure their child attends school punctually and every day, unless too ill to attend;
- To notify the School if their child cannot attend for any reason – this is for the child's security as well as administrative reasons;
- To ensure they obtain 'leave of absence' for their child if required during term time.

PUPILS

- To attend school and individual lessons punctually every day, ready to learn.
- To pass on absence notes from Parents/Carers to their tutor and to pass school correspondence to their Parents/Carers.
- To follow school procedures in relation to attendance and punctuality at all times

EDUCATIONAL WELFARE SERVICE

- To assist the school in reviewing and revising its policy and procedures in line with most recent guidance.
- To meet regularly with staff having responsibility for Attendance: the Pastoral Co-ordinator for Attendance, the Attendance Officer, the Assistant Heads of Learning.
- To respond to referrals from the school, making visits and working with individual families in order to improve attendance.
- To support the school in its reduction of Persistent Absenteeism.
- To institute legal proceedings against parents/carers who fail to ensure the regular attendance of their children: where absence is unauthorised and no improvement in attendance has been effected.

THE GOVERNING BODY

- To require termly reports from the Head Teacher on overall attendance figures, Persistent Absenteeism and progress towards targets.
- To convene a Governor Panel to meet with parents/carers and pupils, in a further attempt to secure improved attendance.

FORM TUTOR

The form tutor is responsible for:

1. Completing the register and monitoring pupils' attendance in an attempt to identify irregular patterns of attendance, e.g.
 - where a pupil's attendance is falling to level indicating cause for concern (Towards 90%)
 - where a pupil's attendance shows regular patterns of absence
 - where a pupil is arriving late for registration on a regular basis
2. Discussing with pupils any unexplained incidence of absence or lateness
3. Issuing to individual pupils any reward earned as part of the school's attendance policy, e.g. 100% monthly or termly certificates
4. Informing the Assistant Head of Learning of concerns, so that Parents/Carers are contacted.

ASSISTANT HEAD OF LEARNING

The Learning Co-ordinator/AHOL is responsible for:

1. Providing Form Tutors with support in relation to the process of completing the register.
2. Where a regular pattern of poor attendance has been identified (e.g. down to 90 %)
 - monitoring, along with the Form Tutor, the pupil's attendance and contacting the pupil's Parents/Carers and, where appropriate, issuing an attendance report
 - discussing with pupils any increasing incidence of absence, truancy or regular lateness
 - following up any reported truancy or pattern of regular lateness by contacting the pupil's Parents/Carers
 - taking such remedial action as is necessary to correct the identified attendance problem
 - organising support for pupils where long-term absence is authorised
3. Where no improvement occurs in the identified attendance problem:
 - informing the Parent/Carer of the possible future involvement of the school's Pastoral Co-ordinator for Attendance, with a view to involvement of the school's EWO.
 - discussing future action with the Pastoral Co-ordinator for Attendance.
4. Issuing to individual pupils any reward earned as part of the school's attendance policy, e.g. 100% monthly or termly certificates.

PASTORAL CO-ORDINATOR FOR ATTENDANCE

The Pastoral Co-ordinator for Attendance is generally responsible for much of the day- to-day implementation of this policy and specifically:

1. Having general oversight of the attendance statistics and monitoring these statistics on a regular basis, including comparing them to any locally-agreed and national attendance targets.
2. Setting attendance targets and producing attendance data for reports to the Governors.
3. Monitoring the smooth operation of the school's registration system and bringing about any necessary changes to ensure its smooth and efficient operation.
4. Conducting unscheduled attendance checks as an effective way of monitoring post registration truancy.
5. Introducing remedial action to correct any identified problems of general school attendance.
6. Monitoring attendance figures below 90% closely, with a view to identifying pupils whose attendance is decreasing, and taking remedial action.
7. Overseeing the School's reward system as it relates to attendance.
8. Meeting with pupils whose attendance is falling below 90% and discussing the causes of falling attendance.
9. Meeting regularly with the EWO to discuss the school's general attendance statistics and individual pupils attendance when:
 - a pupil's attendance is slipping (towards 80%) and so giving concern which might warrant EWO involvement
 - a pupil has been referred to the EWO
 - a pupil is officially on the school role but transfer to the school has not taken place
10. Contacting medical services or an Educational Psychologist where medical reasons or phobias, respectively, are possible reasons for poor attendance, having liaised with SEN staff.
11. Contacting Parents/Carers of pupils to:
 - inform them that their child's attendance continues to slip (towards 80%) and inform them of pending EWO involvement
 - inform them that their child's attendance has slipped below 90%
 - arrange a meeting with the school's EWO to discuss attendance or to secure support where attendance is falling due to family illness
12. Liaising with the LA and local police regarding any local or national truancy initiatives.
13. Liaising with the Form Tutors/Assistant Heads of Learning regarding pupil attendance.
14. Administering applications for holidays, attendance at public performances, etc. during school term time and deciding if authorisation should be given.

ATTENDANCE OFFICER

Specific duties include:

- Completion of the attendance register with the appropriate attendance codes
- Report to the Pastoral Co-ordinator for Attendance any inconsistency of register-taking by staff
- Follow procedures for First-day Absence
- Inform Form Tutors of reasons for absence via a note in SIMS
- Amend registers on receipt of authorisation of absence
- Alert the Assistant Head of Learning or Pastoral Co-ordinator for Attendance of any case of suspected truancy, internal or external
- Produce reports, graphs, letters and certificates, as directed by Assistant Heads of Learning or the Pastoral Co-ordinator for Attendance
- Liaise, through regular meetings with Assistant Heads of Learning, the Pastoral Co-ordinator for Attendance and the EWO
- Liaise with parents, as required
- Conduct pupil and parental interviews, in conjunction with Assistant Heads of Learning, the Pastoral Co-ordinator for Attendance and the EWO