



Student Attendance Policy

Rationale

At Hodgson Academy we wish to maintain a high level of attendance and punctuality as we believe that these are both unequivocally linked to student progress. Our aim is for whole-school attendance to be at least 98%.

Punctuality and attendance are key tenets of **PAUSE**, our agreed Academy moral code.

Regular attendance and punctuality are essential prerequisites of successful learning. They are also an important training and preparation for the world of work. Ensuring good attendance must, therefore, be a high priority for both the Academy and parents/carers. This is already highlighted in the Home-Academy Agreement and in the Parents' Handbook, which can be found on the Academy website in the 'Parents' section. The efforts of students to achieve full attendance should be recognised and rewarded. There must also be identified procedures for responding to poor and irregular attendance and persistent lateness both to the Academy and to lessons. It is vital that everyone works together to achieve success.

Definitions

Hodgson Academy is required to classify any absence as either **authorised** or **unauthorised**. In order to classify absence parents/carers are always required to provide a reason or cause for an absence via telephone and the school Absence line, email or a note.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from the Academy for a good reason such as: illness, dental /medical appointments or other unavoidable cause.

Unauthorised absences are those which the Academy does not consider reasonable and for which no 'leave' has been given. This includes:

- Parents/Carers keeping their children off the Academy unnecessarily.
- Truancy before or during the academy day.
- Absences which have never been properly explained.

Leave of any kind may only be granted in exceptional circumstances and any absences cannot be authorised retrospectively. All absence requests should be submitted in writing by completing the 'Application for Leave of Absence' form. We strongly advise that you do not make any further arrangements for leave until the academy has responded to your request.

If the absence request is for a single day or less, such as for musical or sporting activities, this will be regarded as a short-term absence. In these circumstances, absence requests should be submitted at least 2 days before the date of the absence. The Academy reserves the right to refuse to authorise short-term absence requests received less than 2 days beforehand.

If the absence request is for longer than a single day, this will be regarded as a long-term absence. In these circumstances, absence requests should be submitted at least 14 days before the first day of the absence. The Academy reserves the right to refuse to authorise long-term absence requests received less than 14 days beforehand.

If a long-term absence request is for four or more days, this request will be considered at a meeting that parents/carers will be invited to attend in school with our Attendance Improvement Officer. The Academy will not authorise any such requests for absence if parents/carers fail to attend this meeting.

In addition, we ask that parents/carers refer to the School Calendar on the Academy website for up to date information regarding holiday dates and other school events, rather than relying on other websites which may be inaccurate.

Only exceptional circumstances warrant an authorised leave of absence. Hodgson Academy considers each request individually taking into account the circumstances, such as: the nature of the event for which leave is sought; the frequency of the request; whether the parent/carer gave advance notice; and the student's attainment, attendance and ability to catch up on missed schooling.

The Government amended key legislation relating specifically to the authorisation of leave in term time in September 2013. **Schools and Academies can no longer authorise holiday requests.** Parents/carers may request a leave of absence in term time but this may only be authorised by the Headteacher in exceptional circumstances. The Headteacher is unable to authorise any exceptional leave that is not requested in advance of the absence.

Students are sometimes reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best resolved between the school, parents/carers and the student. If a student is reluctant to attend, it is better not to cover up the absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and may make things worse. Support systems exist to help with such problems.

Persistent absence

'Persistent absence' refers to absence of more than 10%, whether authorised or unauthorised. Department for Education guidance states that students who are persistently absent from school are:

- Less likely to be academically successful at school
- Less likely to stay in education after the compulsory leaving age
- Significantly more likely to engage in anti-social behaviour and youth crime
- More at risk of other negative outcomes.

The Registration System

The Academy's Management Information System (Arbor) is its vehicle for:

- receiving and storing information and data.
- generating attendance records, producing statistical analyses and reports.

Attendance and Registration Procedures

Registration is a safeguarding and legal requirement. There are two registration sessions during a school day. The first registration takes place in the morning during form time or assembly and the second registration is usually taken after the lunch break, unless the school day is shortened due to school events or end of term arrangements, for example, the early finish for the Christmas holidays. If this is the case, then the second registration may be taken at an alternative appropriate time. In order for a student to receive a full day attendance mark, both sessions must be attended. If a student does not attend the afternoon session/ second registration, without prior authorisation, they will be recorded as absent for half a day.

The responsibility of Parents/Carers

It is important that the Academy works in partnership with parents/carers to ensure that good attendance is maintained. Parents are asked to support the Academy by:

- ensuring that their children attend regularly and arrive punctually.
- informing the Academy by telephoning the designated Absence Line, by fax or by email if their son/daughter is unable to attend due to illness. This should be done **on the first day and every day of absence** unless some indication can be given of the likely length of the absence.
- providing a dated note explaining the absence when the student returns to the Academy if the information has not been communicated by other means.

- completing the form requesting future leave of absence in good time. These forms can be obtained from the School Office.
- Parents/ Carers must inform immediately the Academy about any unexpected lateness.

The responsibility of Students

- **Students should accept responsibility for their own attendance and punctuality.**
- All students must attend registration and lessons on time and in the place indicated to them, for example, their designated form room or assembly.
- The school day begins at 8.35am. Students arriving late after this time and **before 9.00 am** must enter via the designated entrance and be recorded as late by staff. Students arriving late in this manner will receive a Standards log; 3 logs will result in an after school detention.
- Students arriving late between **9.00am** and **9.30am** must report to reception and be recorded as late. Students arriving late in this manner will also receive a Standards log; 3 logs will result in an after school detention.
- Students returning to the Academy following an absence should bring a note explaining the reason for the absence **on the day that they return to the Academy**, if the information has not been communicated previously by other means.
- Students who arrive at the Academy after **9.30 am** must also bring a note since, after this time, they are recorded as absent.

Parents/Carers must also be aware that the decision to authorise an absence from the Academy lies with the Academy. A note from home does not necessarily guarantee that the absence will be authorised. Any absence must be **unavoidable** to warrant authorisation (e.g. absence to go shopping is an **avoidable absence** in law). If absences are repeated or prolonged, the Academy will ask for medical evidence.

Alternative Provision

Parents/carers will be legally responsible for ensuring that their child attends any arranged alternative provision. A 'direction' will be issued by the Academy.

The direction:

- Must be given no less than two school days before the start date of the alternative provision.
- Will be issued by a member of the Senior Leadership Team.
- Must be communicated to the local authority if the student has an Education, Health and Care Plan

The direction must state:

- The address of the new provider(s).
- Contact name and details at the alternative provision.
- Number of days that the requirement is in place.
- The reasons for and objectives of imposing the requirement.
- Start and end times, including lunch time for the alternative provider.

Parents/carers are expected to make arrangements for the supervision of children who have been excluded from school on any day which is one of the first five school days to which any exclusion relates.

Parents/carers are expected to contact Hodgson Academy at an early stage and to work with the Attendance Improvement Officer, Pastoral Support Officer and/or Form Tutor and/or Head of House in resolving any attendance problems together, sometimes with the help of outside agencies.

Strategies for responding to persistently poor attendance

Excellent attendance leads to excellent achievement and progress. In addition to the strategies already outlined, other possible actions that might be taken are as follows:

- students whose poor attendance is linked to disaffection should receive prompt attention. Where appropriate, they will be placed on a Behaviour Management Plan.
- students will be referred to the Initial Assessment and Support Team (Children's Social Care) where appropriate, following any Safeguarding concerns.
- when appropriate, students should be referred to the Attendance Improvement Officer and/or School Medical officer and/or Governors' Attendance Support Panel for discussions about their attendance.
- the use of penalty notices (see information below).

Penalty Notices will be considered for the following:

- persistent** unauthorised late arrival at the Academy (** persistent lateness refers to students who arrive after the school register has closed)
- persistent unauthorised absence from the Academy (please see attached information sheet for further details Appendix 1)

Penalty notices will apply for unauthorised requests for leave of absence, including holidays.

- Penalty notices can now be applied for when a student has 10 sessions (5 days) of unauthorised absence in a term or 14 sessions (7 days) over two successive terms. Penalty notices can also be applied for when absences cross two academic years as per the trigger across two consecutive terms.
- Parents may now be issued with up to 3 penalty notices in a year.
- Penalty notices can be issued when students are located in a public place without justification during the first five days of any period of exclusion.

If attendance difficulties cannot be sorted out using any of the above strategies, Hodgson Academy will bring the student to the attention of a Court Officer of the Local Education Authority. Court proceedings can be used to prosecute parents where the maximum penalty on conviction is a fine of £2500 and/or three months imprisonment. Other disposals such as Parenting Orders or Community Sentences can be imposed depending upon the circumstances. Costs may also be imposed.

Reviewed by: Jeanette Bristow

Approved by: SLT

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Next Review Due: September 2023

APPENDIX 1
PENALTY NOTICES
Tackling Poor School Attendance
The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment)
Regulations 2013
The Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 and the Education Act 1996
Information for Parents and Carers

Introduction

The law gives powers to the Local Authority and other designated bodies to issue penalty notices where a parent/carer is considered able but unwilling to ensure their child's school attendance. Reducing absences from school is a key priority nationally and locally because missing school damages a pupil's attainment levels, disrupts school routines and the learning of others, and can leave a pupil vulnerable to anti-social behaviour and youth crime.

What is a Penalty Notice?

Parents/carers commit an offence if a child fails to attend school regularly and those absences are classed as unauthorised. Depending on the circumstances, such cases may result in prosecution under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996.

A penalty notice is an alternative to prosecution, which does not require an appearance in Court unless the fine is unpaid after 28 days. Full payment of the penalty means that parents/carers can avoid being prosecuted and convicted.

What is the cost?

Penalty notices are issued at £120 however, if paid within 21 days of being issued the cost is £60.

How are they issued?

Penalty notices will always be issued by post to your home and are issued to each parent individually in respect of each child.

When are they issued?

Lancashire County Council considers that regular attendance at school is of such importance that penalty notices may be used in a range of situations where unauthorised absence occurs, such as:

- unauthorised absence
- truancy (including pupils found during truancy sweeps);
- parentally condoned absence without good reason;
- persistent late arrival at school;
- unauthorised holidays in term time
- delayed return from an extended holiday without prior school permission;
- relating to the whereabouts of excluded students (see rationale below)

Rationale – penalty notices for whereabouts of excluded pupils

- Parents are expected to make arrangements for the supervision of children who have been excluded from the academy on any day which is one of the first five academy days to which any exclusion relates. Where the LA is notified that a parent is believed to be failing in their statutory duty to ensure such children are not in a public place, an investigation will be undertaken to establish the basic facts of the case in each instance in order to determine whether an offence is likely to have been committed.
- It is expected that in the first instance parents would be reminded of their duty under this legislation and warned as to future behaviour, but subsequently a penalty notice could be issued where the criteria set out in the relevant code of conduct have been met. However, where a child is reported on more than one occasion during any single episode of exclusion, the LA will only consider a penalty notice for any one offence.
- Where there is evidence of repeat episodes which suggest parenting is a significant contributory factor to the pupil's continuing behaviour concerns, schools will be expected to have considered/offered a parenting contract for behaviour before the LA will consider more than three requests for penalty notices in any one academic year.

In every case a pupil must have had a minimum of five school days lost to unauthorised absence during the current term or 7 school days lost to unauthorised absence over two consecutive terms before a Penalty Notice is considered. The Authority never takes such action lightly, and would far rather work with parents/carers to improve attendance without having to resort to any enforcement action. However, school attendance is of such importance to all of us that the Authority will use these powers if it is felt that it can secure a child's schooling.

Is a warning given?

In cases of unauthorised absence and persistent lateness**, you will receive a written warning of the possibility of a Notice being issued. This will tell you the extent of your child's absences and give you 15 school days in which to bring about an improvement. In that time, your child should have no unauthorised absences from school.

In cases of an unauthorised holiday, warnings will be issued where sufficient notice of the intended absence has been given. This means that in some cases, Penalty Notices may be issued without a warning.

Is there an appeal process?

There is no statutory right of appeal once a Penalty Notice has been issued, but on receipt of a warning, you can make representations should you wish.

How do I pay?

Details of payment arrangements will be included on the Penalty Notice. You need to be aware that payment in part or by instalment is not an option with Penalty Notices. No reminders will be sent.

Can I be prosecuted if I pay the Penalty but my child is still missing school?

Not for the period stated in the Penalty Notice, since payment of the penalty discharges your liability for that period. However, it could be the case that a prosecution might be considered for further periods of poor attendance not covered by the Notice, depending on the circumstances. If this is an issue, it is vital that you work closely with your child's school.

What happens if I do not pay?

You have up to 28 days from receipt to pay the Penalty in full, after which the Authority is required in most instances to commence proceedings in the local Magistrates' Court for the original offence of failing to ensure your child attends school regularly.

If proven, this can attract a range of sentences including fines up to £2,500 and/or up to three months imprisonment. Other disposals such as Parenting Orders or Community Sentences can be imposed depending upon the circumstances. Costs may also be imposed.

Can I get help if my child is not attending school regularly?

Yes, Lancashire Children's Services Authority and your child's school will give you advice and support if you need help to secure an improvement in your child's attendance. It is very important that you speak with the school or with Lancashire County Council at the earliest opportunity if you have any worries at all about securing your child's school attendance.

Appendix 2

Attendance to Remote Learning due to Covid-19 restrictions

Parents/carers will be legally responsible for ensuring that their child attends remote learning provision. Students are expected to attend all online lessons and to participate/ engage in the online lessons. If students struggle to access online lessons due to technical issues, parents/carers are invited to contact the Academy for support.

- Students who do not attend online lessons will receive a notification via Arbor stating that they have not attended.
- Students who fail to participate/engage in online lessons will receive a notification via Arbor stating that they have not participated/ engaged.
- Regular lack of attendance or participation/engagement in online lessons, will result in the Academy contacting parents/ carers.
- If this persists, the Academy may perform a home visit.