



# **HUNTERHOUSE COLLEGE**

## **WHOLE COLLEGE ATTENDANCE POLICY**

**Date/date Reviewed: 2020**

**Date Ratified: 15<sup>th</sup> June 2020**

**Previous: 2017**

**Next Review due: 2022**

This policy is available in pdf format from the College website

[www.hunterhousecollege.org.uk](http://www.hunterhousecollege.org.uk)

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## **Inclusion & Diversity**

The College aims to establish an inclusive community where all students and staff are treated with dignity and respect, regardless of individual differences including, but not limited to, culture, race, religion, beliefs, sexual or gender orientation, appearance and ability.

## **Rationale**

Regular school attendance is crucial in raising standards in education and ensuring that every child can have full access to the school curriculum and reach their potential. Hunterhouse College will strive to promote an ethos and culture which encourages excellent attendance and where each student will feel valued and secure.

The College recognises both the pastoral and academic benefits of students achieving the highest levels of attendance and is committed to ensuring that all students and parents/carers understand the absolute importance of this. The strong link between attendance and academic attainment underpins the College's policy on attendance and all students and parents/carers are informed about this link regularly.

In order for each student to achieve the highest possible attendance, all members of the College community have an important contribution to make and a strong partnership between home and school is vital. It is also understood that the strategies outlined in this policy and the accompanying documentation are only part of the College's approach to improving attendance. Whole-college issues such as providing effective pastoral support, the provision of relevant and appropriate curricula and effective and stimulating teaching and learning will also have a direct impact on attendance levels.

## **Aims**

- Continue to seek the highest possible attendance at an individual student and whole College level
- Continue to seek the lowest possible level of persistent absenteeism (attendance below 85%)
- Set an annual attendance target – 97%
- Continue to develop and embed a programme for rewarding good and improved attendance at an individual, Form Group, Year Group and whole school level
- Raise the profile of attendance and make it a priority for all staff, students and parents/carers
- Ensure that all students, parents/carers and staff are aware of the strong link between attendance and academic achievement
- Ensure the provision of appropriate guidance and support for all
- Develop clear procedures for maintaining accurate attendance data and for the monitoring of individual and group attendance and the setting of associated targets
- Develop a framework within which all staff can work to provide a consistent approach to raising levels of attendance throughout the school

## **Rewarding Attendance**

The College recognises the value of rewarding good and improved attendance as a means of incentivising and motivating students and has taken on board the advice to schools issued in Circular 2019/14:

*31. 'While there is no Departmental requirement to reward school attendance, schools may wish to consider:*

- \* *Incentives for pupils such as Breakfast Club and or/after school programmes;*
- \* *Celebrating regular attendance at school through pupil certificates, year group awards, school outings, parental and community events; and*
- \* *Reminding parents/carers of their legal responsibilities for ensuring their children's regular and punctual attendance.'*

As such, the College operates an attendance rewards programme, designed to celebrate and reward the good and improved attendance of as many students as possible. It includes monthly achievement points for meeting the 97% attendance target; certificates awarded termly for 100% attendance; rewards in November and February for the best attending Form Groups in each year; spot prizes throughout the year and three attendance reward trips each year for students who have either met the 97% attendance target in that date range or who are among the top 10 most improved attenders in their year group.

Circular 2019/14 allows school discretion in applying its rewards programme as follows:

*32. 'If a school wishes to acknowledge attendance they may use discretion regarding how they use data recorded on C2k. In the case of an individual school's award scheme which does not fully correspond to the data input to C2k e.g. for 100% attendance record, it may be prudent to have this included in the school's pupil attendance policy.'*

The College, therefore, reserves the right to apply discretion when applying the attendance rewards programme. This will **only** be applied for absence due to:

- bereavement
- identified Special Educational Needs (SEN)
- diagnosed long-term/lifelong medical conditions such as Type 1 Diabetes
- significant family circumstances

The College will apply this discretion on an individual basis. Any queries relating to this should be directed to the student's Head of Year in the first instance.

## **Roles & Responsibilities**

### **Subject Teachers**

Ensure that the Schools Information Management System (SIMS) Lesson Monitor registration of **all** students is completed accurately in **every** lesson **using the codes /, L or N only**. Inform Pupil Reception immediately if there is a problem with the system. If for any reason Lesson Monitor cannot be completed, a note should be sent to Pupil Reception listing those students who are absent from the lesson. If Pupil Reception is closed, then information should be passed to the Office.

**It is vital that accurate attendance records are kept so that the Student Progress Team can manage issues effectively. In particular, AM and PM registrations are legal documents and must be accurately and promptly completed.**

Identify, within each lesson, any students on the SRAL who clearly should be present in the lesson but are not. Inform Pupil Reception either by e-mail, by telephone or by note within the first ten minutes. Pupil Reception/Office staff will then notify Student Progress staff as appropriate.

Ensure that appropriate catch-up work is provided for students who are absent for more than 5 days so that the return to College is made as easy as possible.

Ensure that those who return from long-term absence are provided with appropriate support to enable them to access learning and catch up on work which they have missed.

### **Head of Department**

Monitor, alongside the teachers within their department, the attendance of students within their subject area. Identify those students for whom poor attendance is impacting on academic attainment.

Liaise with Form Tutors and/or Head of Year as appropriate to ensure that contact with home either by phone call or letter is made if required.

Ensure that catch-up work is provided for students who are absent for more than 5 days and that work is set regularly for long term absentees.

### **Form Tutors**

Ensure that registers are completed for form time using SIMS Lesson Monitor. If for any reason Lesson Monitor cannot be completed, a note should be sent to Pupil Reception listing those students who are absent from the lesson. If Pupil Reception is closed, then information should be passed to the Office.

Ensure that absence notes are collected from returning students and those named on the lists provided. Pass all absence notes to the Head of Year for signing and then return using the Form Folder, ensuring that reasons for absence are provided in writing within 5 days of the student's return to the College.

Undertake absence phone calls for students in the form on or before the third day of absence or as directed by the Head of Year.

Meet with students returning from absences of up to five days on their return and ensure that there is a plan in place to enable the student to catch up on missed work.

Use the weekly attendance data provided to praise and reward good and improved attendance and to identify students with attendance below 97% as directed by the Head of Year.

Use form time as directed by the Head of Year to act on and monitor attendance and punctuality issues with their form group.

### **Head of Year**

Monitor carefully the attendance of students within the year group(s), taking note of any patterns amongst students from particular groups, particular times of the week or particular subject areas. Liaise with the appropriate Senior Manager for Student Progress through link meetings.

Where a student's attendance is below 97%, the Head of Year will review the student's attendance pattern and may trigger a letter home to the parent/carer informing them of the College's concerns as appropriate. The Head of Year may also contact the parent/carer and request a meeting to discuss their child's attendance, if appropriate. Further action will be identified as appropriate aimed at improving the student's attendance rate.

Where a student's attendance is below 90%, the Head of Year will refer to the appropriate Senior Manager for Student Progress who will review the student's attendance pattern and advise the Head of Year to request a meeting with parents/carers and the student to discuss attendance and agree actions for improving it through an Attendance Action Plan, if appropriate. Any further action will be identified as appropriate. The student may be referred to the Educational Welfare Service at this stage.

Ensure that there is a clear message given to all students and parents/carers about the link between attendance and academic attainment through phone calls, meetings, letters home, parent/carer evenings and community events within the College.

Ensure that a positive attitude to attendance is embedded within the year group through assemblies and constant reinforcement with students. Encourage a spirit of healthy competition between forms and individuals and ensure that good and improved attendance are regularly rewarded.

Meet with students returning from absences of more than five days on their return and ensure that there is a plan in place to enable the student to catch up on missed work.

Liaise with subject teachers and HODs to ensure that appropriate work is provided for long-term absentees and that there is regular contact between home and school.

Analyse weekly attendance reports provided by Pupil Reception for 100% attendance and attendance under 97% and direct Form Tutors as appropriate, ensuring that good and improved attendance are regularly rewarded.

Ensure that there is a monitoring and evaluation process in place of reasons for student absence through the monitoring of student absence notes via the Form Tutor.

Work with the appropriate Senior Manager for Student Progress to identify and develop a range of strategies through which long-term absentees can be reintegrated, to ensure that there is a robust system for recognising and rewarding excellent and improved attendance and that there is a consistent approach to contacting parents/carers with regards to attendance in all year groups.

Implement consequences where there have been instances of truancy, whether from individual lessons or whole days.

Keep Form Tutors informed of action taken in relation to particular students.

Ensure that parents/carers who wish to take students out of school during term-time are contacted and the potential consequences explained, e.g. negative impact on learning/examination preparation and that holidays taken in term time will be recorded as unauthorised absence.

### **Senior Managers for Student Progress**

Support the work of all Form Tutors and Heads of Year in maintaining high levels of attendance and working towards the College's attendance target of 97%.

Trigger attendance concern letters at the end of each half term for students whose attendance is below 95%.

Ensure that referrals to outside agencies are made as appropriate.

Ensure that Heads of Year are provided with weekly attendance reports for their year group, detailing 100% attendance and attendance below 97% and that monthly missing notes, punctuality and individual attendance reports are provided to Heads of Year.

Ensure that attendance, and in particular students with attendance below 85%, is a standing item at fortnightly link meetings with Heads of Year.

Ensure that there is a consistent approach to attendance across all year groups.

Where a student's attendance in Y8-12 is below 85%, or there is a concern about a pattern of absence, ensure that a referral to the EWS is made.

Ensure that Social Services are informed of the absence of any student on the Child Protection register by the second day.

Liaise with the Vice-Principal on all relevant attendance issues and contribute to the reviewing of the Attendance Policy as required.

#### **Office – Attendance Administrator/Pupil Reception**

Check that all lesson registers have been completed in Lesson Monitor, that absence codes have been used correctly and that missing records are followed up as appropriate.

Produce the daily SRAL and circulate it to the Student Progress Team by 10:30am each day.

Add information from parental phone calls and notes to the Comments section of Lesson Monitor regarding absence and students leaving during the school day.

Produce for Heads of Year and Form Tutors, at the end of each calendar month, a list showing outstanding absence notes.

Produce for Heads of Years and Form Tutors, at the end of each calendar month, a list showing the number of lates for each student.

Produce for Senior Managers for Student Progress, Heads of Year and Form Tutors weekly reports for each year group detailing 100% attendance and attendance below 97%.

Send out attendance concern letters as requested by the Heads of Year and Senior Managers for Student Progress.

Produce additional data and information for Form Tutors, HoYs and Senior Team as required.

#### **Recording and Monitoring Attendance and Punctuality**

##### **Recording Attendance**

Classroom Teachers and Form Tutors **must** register attendance for their classes on SIMS Lesson Monitor **using the codes /, N or L only**, within the first 30 minutes of every lesson.

**In particular, AM and PM registrations are legal documents and must be accurately and promptly completed.**

All students who arrive to the College after 8:45am should sign in at Pupil Reception before going to their lesson. Once a student has arrived to that lesson, the class teacher should alter the register code from N to L and enter the number of minutes late. Pupil Reception will enter the reason for lateness.

### **Monitoring attendance**

Attendance will be formally monitored by Form Group weekly via the production of reports for the Senior Managers for Student Progress, Heads of Year and Form Tutors detailing students with 100% attendance and students with attendance below 97%.

At the end of each month, figures will be provided to the Heads of Year via the Office/Pupil Reception for outstanding absence letters and lateness which will be actioned by the Heads of Years and Form Tutors.

At the end of each half term, attendance will be reviewed by the Senior Managers for Student Progress and attendance concern letters sent out for students with attendance below 95%.

The monitoring process will involve the celebration of good and improved attendance as well as the development of strategies to enable all students to attend as often as possible and to achieve their potential.

Student attendance will be monitored as follows:

97-100%	by the Form Tutor
90-96%	by the Head of Year
85-89%	by the Senior Manager for Student Progress
Below 85%	by the Senior Manager for Student Progress, EWS and other agencies as appropriate

All parents/carers will be informed of their child's attendance formally through the reports process. In addition, where there are concerns about attendance, parents/carers will be contacted by the Student Progress team as detailed above.

### **Recording Punctuality**

All students who sign in late automatically receive a concern point for lateness. If there are exceptional circumstances, the concern point may be waived at the discretion of the Head of Year if the student provides a note from their parent/carer explaining the circumstances.

Students who arrive to the College after 8:45am **MUST** sign in at Pupil Reception before going to their lesson.

### **Monitoring Punctuality:**

Heads of Year will monitor student punctuality through the monitoring of the concern points system.

Form Tutors should discuss punctuality with their tutor group as soon as there is cause for concern and as directed by the Head of Year.

Students who are persistently late without good reason will be referred to the Head of Year who will work with them in developing strategies to improve their punctuality.

### **Procedures for Addressing Low Levels of Attendance and Punctuality**

#### **Attendance**

##### **Attendance 97 - 100%**

- Form Tutor should review the attendance figures and pattern and discuss any concerns/issues arising with the student as directed by the Head of Year.
- If there is a pattern to the absences the Form Tutor should inform the Head of Year who may interview the student and/or send a letter home

##### **Attendance <97%**

- Head of Year will review the student's attendance pattern and send a letter home informing them of current percentage of attendance and stating the potential impact this might have on the student if it continues to fall. Parents/carers will be informed that if attendance continues to fall their child will be referred to the EWS.
- The Head of Year may also contact the parent/carer by phone and request a meeting to discuss their child's attendance, if appropriate.
- The Head of Year will meet with the student to establish reasons for absence and to ascertain if there any concerns or support that can be provided to raise attendance.
- Further action will be identified by Head of Year as appropriate aimed at improving the student's attendance rate.

##### **Attendance <90%**

- The appropriate Senior Manager for Student Progress will review the student's attendance pattern with the Head of Year and invite the parent/carer to a meeting to discuss their child's attendance.
- The appropriate Senior Manager for Student Progress will inform any other agencies involved with the student of attendance concerns
- Further action will be identified as appropriate aimed at improving the student's attendance.
- Students in Y8-12 will be referred to the Educational Welfare Service for all attendance below 85%. Parents/carers will be notified of this in all instances

#### **Procedure for reporting to parents/carers on attendance/contacting parents regarding unsatisfactory attendance:**

Letters home regarding attendance which is a cause for concern will be triggered by Senior Managers for Student Progress at the end of each half term.

Attendance will also be formally reported as part of students' short and full reports.

#### **Communication with Parents/Carers**

The College recognises the guidance from DENI (2019/14) which states that:

- 'parents/guardians have a legal duty to ensure their child of compulsory school age shall receive efficient full time education...by regular school attendance. If a child is registered in school, their parent/guardian has a legal duty to ensure that they regularly attend that school.'



- 'It is a parent/guardian's responsibility to inform the school of the reason for a pupil's absence on the first day of absence. This should be confirmed with a written note when the pupil returns to school. If the absence is likely to be prolonged, this information should be provided to enable the school to assist with homework or any other necessary arrangements which may be required.'
- 'missing school at any time is detrimental to a child's education therefore family holidays or other appointments e.g. doctor or dentist should be arranged, where possible, outside school hours'
- 'holidays...during term time...can have a significant impact on pupils' learning. Family holidays taken during term time...will be categorised as an unauthorised absence'

The home-school relationship is vital in ensuring that all students are able to achieve their potential. Attendance and academic achievement are inextricably linked and we would urge parents/carers to contact the College if they are aware of any concerns their child may have about attending school so that support measures can be put in place as appropriate.

Parents/carers are expected to contact the College on the first day of all student absence. Lines of communication are:

- Telephone call to the College Office leaving a message stating reason for absence and anticipated return date
- Leaving a message on the College answering machine if outside hours (8.30 am – 4.30 pm)
- Email via [info@hunterhouse.belfast.ni.sch.uk](mailto:info@hunterhouse.belfast.ni.sch.uk), entering attendance as the subject
- Via parentmail

Parents/carers are expected to contact the College again after three days of absence, otherwise the Form Tutor or Head of Year will make contact to enquire about the student and find out if it is appropriate to send work home.

Students should provide their Form Tutor with a written explanation confirming the reason for their absence on the first day of their return to school either via an absence letter or using the form in the student planner. **This can also be done via parentmail.**

The table below illustrates the impact on learning at different levels of absence and the grading that the College will use when formally reporting to parents/carers on attendance:

100% attendance	0 days missed	Excellent
97% attendance	5 days of absence 1 week of learning missed	Good
95% attendance	9 days of absence 1 week and 4 days of learning missed	Satisfactory
90% attendance	19 days of absence 3 weeks and 4 days of learning missed	Poor
85% attendance	28 days of absence 5 weeks and 3 days of learning missed	Very Poor
Below 85% attendance	More than one month of	Unsatisfactory

	absence	
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**Links to Other Policies**

Pastoral Care Policy

Positive Behaviour Policy

Educational Maintenance Allowance (EMA) Policy

Safeguarding Policy

Anti-Bullying Policy

Pregnancy & Parenthood Policy

Young Carers Policy

## Appendix 1: Extract from Circular 2019/14

### Miss School. Miss Out. Improving Pupil Attendance Strategy – Roles and Responsibilities

36. DE's Attendance Strategy was published in December 2016 and outlines the support for improving pupil attendance under four key themes:

1. School Leadership;
2. Early intervention;
3. Tailored support; and
4. Collaboration and Engagement.

37. For each of the four themes the strategic key roles and responsibilities are as follows:

#### 1. School Leadership - Roles and Responsibilities

##### Parents/Pupils

- ✓ Parents/carers should be aware of their legal responsibilities for ensuring their child's regular and punctual attendance.
- ✓ Parents/carers should read and adhere to the school's Pupil Attendance Policy and procedures and support their children to understand and follow the rules.
- ✓ Parents/carers should support the efforts of school leaders to prioritise school attendance.
- ✓ Parents/carers should co-operate with and support school leaders if they recommend actions to address their child's poor attendance.
- ✓ Parents/carers should be aware of the link between pupil attendance levels and their subsequent academic attainment.

##### Schools

- ✓ Schools should ensure a Pupil Attendance Policy is in place, approved by their Board of Governors.
- ✓ Schools should ensure that all pupils and parents/carers are aware of and understand their school's Pupil Attendance Policy and what it means to them.
- ✓ Schools should include school attendance targets in the school development plan and ensure pupil attendance is on the agenda at all Board of Governors' meetings.
- ✓ Schools should promote the importance of school attendance and its link with attainment.
- ✓ Schools should engage with pupils in relation to potential barriers to attending such as the appropriateness of the curriculum.
- ✓ Schools should enhance the capacity of teachers and support staff to understand and support pupils with attendance problems.

## 2. Early Intervention - Roles and Responsibilities

### Parents/Pupils

- ✓ Parents/carers should be aware of the aim of schools in preventing the establishment of long-term patterns of poor attendance through early intervention.
- ✓ Parents/carers should let the school know of any issues that may impact upon attendance as early as possible.
- ✓ Parents/carers of young children should recognise the role that can be played in helping their children to shape a constructive attitude towards school attendance.
- ✓ Parents/carers should be supportive of the school's efforts to develop positive patterns of attendance amongst pupils from an early age.
- ✓ Parents/carers should understand the need for a positive mind-set on attendance to be developed in pupils from an early age.

### Schools

- ✓ Schools should robustly follow up on all pupil absences and lateness. Monitor post-registration pupil absence and advise parents/carers of issues by, for example, a phone call or text message.
- ✓ Schools should ensure there are systems in place to monitor and analyse attendance patterns at an individual pupil, pupil group and whole school level prior to their entrenchment.
- ✓ Schools should have an attendance policy that documents how the school will apply the principles of early intervention into their work to promote and support the maximisation of pupil attendance.
- ✓ Schools should have flexible processes in place to enable support to be provided to pupils with poor levels of attendance at an early enough stage.
- ✓ Schools should proactively promote the value of school attendance to pupils in their earliest years, particularly in order to establish good attendance practices.
- ✓ Schools should take action to react, where appropriate, to changes in a pupil's circumstances that may impact upon their attendance such as a domestic crisis.

### 3. Tailored Support - Roles and Responsibilities

#### Parents/Pupils

- ✓ Parents/carers should be aware of their legal responsibilities in respect of their child attending school regularly.
- ✓ Parents/carers and pupils should engage openly and constructively with the school and/or the EWS as they provide support and advice to improve attendance.
- ✓ Parents/carers should understand that the EA will take legal action, where appropriate, to ensure that a child receives an appropriate education.

#### Schools

- ✓ Schools should ensure that their pupil attendance policy includes timely supports to be made available to target attendance issues either on an individual pupil or group basis.
- ✓ Schools should take account of the challenges or barriers to learning that may affect a pupil's attendance and offer appropriate support that takes account of their individual circumstances.
- ✓ Schools should be sensitive to personal issues that may impact upon a pupil's attendance, and offer effective pastoral support.
- ✓ Schools should refer a pupil to the EWS in line with the guidelines in the Department's Attendance Circular.
- ✓ Schools should co-operate with the EA support services in their working with referred pupils

#### 4. Collaboration and engagement - Roles and Responsibilities

##### Parents/Pupils

- ✓ Pupils should talk to a teacher or trusted adult about any worries they have about school which may affect their attendance in order that the school can take action if necessary.
- ✓ Parents/carers should provide a reason immediately each time their child does not attend school and advise the school on issues such as medical appointments.
- ✓ Parents/carers should attend all parent/teacher interviews and be willing to address poor attendance patterns.
- ✓ Parents/carers should take an active interest in their child's education, the life of the school and promote the benefits of regular attendance.
- ✓ Parents/carers should support school staff in their efforts to manage difficult or challenging behaviour.

##### Schools

- ✓ Schools should work to build positive relationships with the local community that will help to promote closer engagement with the education system.
- ✓ Schools should try to promote closer parental engagement in their child's education by maximising their involvement in the life of the school.
- ✓ Schools should seek to share good practice through co-operation with local schools, with the EA and the ETI.
- ✓ Schools should consult with their pupils about the appropriateness of the curriculum and the effectiveness of the teaching in engaging the learner.
- ✓ Schools should have in place forms of pupil participation to help pupils be involved in making decisions that affect them such as curriculum choices.
- ✓ Schools should ensure all parents/carers are aware of what information is required in respect of their child's non-attendance and when it should be provided.
- ✓ Schools should seek to explore the opportunities for sharing of good practice offered through C2k and ESaGS.tv

<b>ABSENCE CODES:</b>	<b>DESCRIPTION</b>	<b>MEANING</b>
/\	Present: / = (AM): \ = (PM)	Present
<b>A*</b>	Artistic Endeavour	Authorised Absence
<b>B*</b>	Bereavement	Authorised Absence
<b>C</b>	Suspended	Authorised Absence
<b>D</b>	No reason provided for absence	Unauthorised Absence
<b>F*</b>	Family Holiday (agreed)	Authorised Absence
<b>G*</b>	Family Holiday (not agreed)	Unauthorised Absence
<b>H*</b>	Other Absence	Unauthorised Absence
<b>I</b>	Illness (not medical or dental appointments)	Authorised Absence
<b>J*</b>	Extended Leave	Attendance not required
<b>L*</b>	Late (before registration closed)	Present
<b>M</b>	Medical/Dental Appointments	Authorised Absence
<b>N</b>	No reason yet provided for absence (temporary code only)	Unauthorised Absence
<b>O*</b>	Other Exceptional Circumstances	Authorised Absence
<b>P*</b>	Approved Activity	Approved Educational Activity
<b>R*</b>	Religious Observance	Authorised Absence
<b>S*</b>	Study Leave	Approved Educational Activity
<b>U*</b>	Late (after registration closed)	Unauthorised Absence
<b>V*</b>	Educational Visit/Examination	Approved Educational Activity
<b>W*</b>	Work Experience	Approved Educational Activity
<b>X</b>	Only staff should attend	Attendance not required
<b>Y*</b>	Exceptional Closure	Attendance not required
<b>#</b>	Holiday for all	Attendance not required
<b>!*</b>	No attendance required	Attendance not required
<b>1</b>	Community Providers / EOTAS (organised by the EA)	Approved Educational Activity
<b>2</b>	Exceptional Teaching Arrangement/hospital tuition (organised by the EA)	Approved Educational Activity
<b>3</b>	Elective Home Education	Attendance not Required
<b>4</b>	Pupil Referral Unit	Approved Educational Activity
<b>5</b>	Another mainstream school (under Entitlement Framework – EF)	Approved Educational Activity
<b>6</b>	Training Organisation (under EF)	Approved Educational Activity
<b>7</b>	FE College (under EF)	Approved Educational Activity
<b>8</b>	Intensive Support Learning Unit	Approved Educational Activity
<b>9</b>	CAMHS / Mental Health Support	Approved Educational Activity