

Upton-by-Chester High School

Attendance and Punctuality Policy



Policy Link	
SLT	K. McCarthy
Governor	Paul Ivison

To	Date
Pastoral Committee	08 February 2023
Full Governing Body	29 March 2023
Next Review	08 February 2024
Make available on:	Yes/ No
School website	Yes
Staff shared area	Yes
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'Learning to shape the future'

Introduction and Aim

Upton-by-Chester High School recognises the importance of good attendance and the impact it has on children's progress, attainment, enjoyment of learning and relationships within school. Good attendance helps a child to realise their potential and ensure they are motivated, confident and enjoy a diverse range of curricular opportunities and experiences. Our school policy and prospectus promote good attendance, which is recognised and rewarded as an achievement. The school monitors attendance and ensures quick and early intervention if a problem is identified. We recognise that whole school preventative and proactive approaches are key to promoting children's wellbeing and attendance. A child must attend school every day that they are required to do so unless an exceptional circumstance applies.

Our policy is accessible to leaders, staff, learners, and parents, and is published on our school website. It will be sent to parents with any initial information when learners join the school and reminded of it at the beginning of each school year and when it is updated. As the barriers to attendance evolve quickly, the policy should be reviewed and updated as necessary. In doing so, we will seek the views of learners and parents. The Attendance Policy is based on the premise of equal opportunities for all.

1. Legislation

Regular and punctual attendance at school is a legal requirement. Regular attendance is essential to enable children to maximise their educational attainment, opportunities and further development.

- 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 either by regular attendance at school or otherwise".
- Section 444 (1) of the Education Act 1996 states that "if a child of compulsory school age who is a registered learner at a school fails to attend regularly at the school his parent is guilty of an offence".
- Section 576 Education Act 1996 - Meaning of "parent"

For the purposes of Education Law, the definition of a 'parent' and who is responsible for ensuring regular attendance to school is:

- all biological parents, whether they are married or not
- any person who, although not a biological parent, has parental responsibility for a child or young person - this could be an adoptive parent, a step-parent, guardian or other relative
- any person who, although not a biological parent and does not have parental responsibility, has care of a child or young person. This could be one parent, both parents and/or carer/s.

2. Registers

Registers provide the daily record of attendance of all learners. They are legal documents and the register may be required in a court of law, for example as evidence in prosecutions for non-attendance in school.

'Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006' (section 6)

Schools must take the attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day, morning (a.m.) and once during the second session, afternoon (p.m.).

On each occasion they must record whether every learner is:

- Present
- Attending an approved educational activity
- Absent
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

The school should follow up any absences to:

- Ascertain the reason
- Ensure the proper safeguarding action is taken
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not; and,
- Identify the correct code to use before entering it on to the school's electronic register, or management information system as a priority and returned to the school office in a timely manner. This is used to download data to the School Census.
- Consider early identification, assessment, intervention and support processes that may need to be implemented.

The register should be marked using the codes as advised by the Department for Education (DfE) **'Working together to improve School Attendance Guidance' (for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities)**

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1073616/Working_together_to_improve_school_attendance.pdf (See appendix 3.)

3. Procedure

Children are expected to attend school regularly, unless there is good reason for absence.

There are two types of absence:

- Authorised (where the school approves a learner absence)
- Unauthorised (where school will not approve the absence)

The school has a duty to safeguard all its learners. If a child is absent, the parents/carers should inform the school on the **first day of absence** and **each following day of absence**, stating the reason.

Parents should contact the school office via telephone on: (01244) 259 800 to report non-attendance on a day to day basis

If you require any additional support on attendance please contact your child's Pastoral Manager or Head of Year.

The name and contact details of the senior leader responsible for the strategic approach to attendance in school is Mrs K McCarthy, Deputy Headteacher.

The school office will make contact with home when a child is absent, and the parent/carer has not notified the school of the absence. If no contact can be achieved or the reason for absence is not accepted the absence will be unauthorised.

4. What can parents/carers do to help and working in partnership with parents/ carers

Let the school know straight away why your child is absent. Home/school communication is extremely important in supporting your child to achieve and feel settled in school. Try to make any dental/GP appointments outside of school time.

It is pertinent that school and parents/ carers work together with a shared plan and outcomes when supporting a child/ young person's attendance and wellbeing. If despite persistent attempts to work with parents, there continues to be a lack of engagement, then legal procedures may be followed to secure engagement and school attendance.

As a school we recognise that building respectful relationships with families and working in collaboration is essential to ensuring the best outcomes for children / young people. We require all parents to actively support the work of the school, including promoting attendance and engagement. We are committed to ensuring that systems and processes are in place with regards to promoting attendance and would encourage parents to make contact if they have concerns about their child.

5. Absence Monitoring

School robustly monitor and analyse attendance data to promptly identify and address possible concerns and allow for early interventions to support the child/family's underlying needs. This will include:

- Weekly attendance code analysis
- Specific cohort and group monitoring – particularly for vulnerable groups i.e. children with a social worker
- Monitoring of lesson attendance across all subjects
- 'Welcome back' meeting for all learners that have been absent for 5 days – to check wellbeing and ensure there are no ongoing needs that will impact on attendance
- The school's strategy for using data to target attendance improvement efforts to the learners or learner cohorts who need it most
- The school's strategy for reducing persistent and severe absence, including how access to wider support services will be provided to remove the barriers to attendance and when support will be formalised in conjunction with the local authority.

6. Early Identification and Intervention: assess, plan, do and review

Every learner has a right to a full-time education and Upton-by-Chester High School sets high attendance expectations for all learners. Upton-by-Chester High School will consider the individual needs of learners and their families who have specific barriers to attendance and will consider our obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

For any child/ young person who is absent from school it is essential to fully understand the reasons for this so that targeted, evidence-based interventions and support can be put into place. All staff have a part to play in promoting attendance. We recognise the importance of ensuring that key members of staff from across the school, including Form Tutors, attendance, pastoral and SEND staff work in collaboration to consider and identify the holistic needs of the child/young person and to overcome barriers to attendance. In accordance with the principles of early intervention, a graduated approach of assess, plan, do and review will be followed utilising a range of school-based resources, evidence-based interventions and seeking advice and support from external services at an appropriate stage, when needed.

Appropriate assessments will be important to help understand the underlying reasons that may be contributing to attendance difficulties. This may be an assessment that focuses on the individual learner's needs such as an SDQ, SEND assessments and wellbeing assessments or may include the holistic needs of the family, such as a TAF assessment. Assessments will include the views of the

child/young person as well as parents/carers, and identify strengths (what is working well) and needs (what is working less well).

Assessments undertaken may identify that a child/young person is experiencing underlying emotional based needs that are contributing to non-attendance. Cheshire West and Chester Council has developed guidance for schools - ***Emotionally Based School Non-attendance: Good practice guidance for schools (revised November 2021)***. This is a whole school framework with a graduated approach to support the early identification and intervention of children/young people who may struggle to cope in school/attend school.

Information from assessments will inform a SMART action plan with focussed targets developed in partnership with families, and other services as appropriate. For example, Early Help and Prevention and Social Care may have a part to play in the delivery of support and intervention to promote engagement and attendance. SMART plans should be personalised to effectively meet a child / young person's needs and improve attendance and wellbeing outcomes.

Regular reviews of support and attendance plans are essential to monitor the impact of interventions and to adjust these accordingly. If, despite targeted support and intervention, attendance and wellbeing concerns persist, we may seek further advice and support from external services including mental health services, specialist teaching and education services.

7. Medical Absence

Absence due to sickness should be reported to the school by phone on the first day of absence. The school should be kept informed during longer periods of absence. School will contact parents during the first day if no satisfactory reason for absence has been received.

Any medical absences in excess of 5 days (10 sessions) per academic year will need to be supported by medical evidence. If no medical evidence is received, then the absence may be recorded as unauthorised. The school will work with all families on an individual basis if medical absences exceed the maximum threshold.

If a medical absence is likely to be ongoing or long term, then we will offer support in accordance with the school's policies and statutory guidance relating to learners with health needs.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/supporting-pupils-at-school-with-medical-conditions--3>.

School will plan how children can access Education and how and when the child will return to school. In accordance with the Equality Act 2010 the school must also demonstrate that reasonable adjustments are made to meet child's Educational Needs.

For children who have a medical condition and cannot attend school, the school will refer to the Cheshire West and Chester Council's Medical Needs Team.

<https://www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/documents/education-and-learning/medical-needs-service/medical-needs-policy-latest.pdf>

Their policy states that referrals must come directly from the child's school and must be supported by medical evidence from one of the following health professionals:

- consultant paediatrician or adolescent psychiatrist

- consultant child psychiatrist
- hospital consultant

Supporting evidence from a General Practitioner alone cannot be accepted.

8. Lateness and Punctuality

All learners should be on-site by 8.35 a.m. School begins at 8.40 a.m. and all learners are expected to be in their form room for registration at that time.

- Register taken at 8.40 a.m.
- Registers close at 9.15 a.m.

Any learner who arrives after the gates are closed must enter the school by the main entrance and report to the school office to sign in. If learners are not in class when the register is taken, they will be coded as 'L' and are required to sit a break referral on the day (15 minutes). Persistent lateness will be followed up with parents and carers. Any late arrivals after 9.15 a.m. will also be coded as 'U' which is an unauthorised absence for that session.

In accordance with the '**Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006**', if your child arrives after the registers close, they will receive a mark, code U, 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 Fixed Penalty Notice or other legal action if the problem persists.

Learners who are consistently late for school are disrupting not only their own education, but also that of other learners. Where persistent lateness gives cause for concern, you will be invited to a meeting to resolve the issues. If there is no improvement following this meeting, further action will be taken which may include referral to external agencies.

You may approach the school at any time for support and advice if you are having difficulty getting your child to school on time or maintaining regular attendance.

9. Unauthorised Absence and Fixed Penalty Notice

An absence may be coded as 'unauthorised' if:

- no reason for absence has been given
- medical evidence is not received when requested
- a request for a leave of absence has been unauthorised
- a learner arrives at school after registration has closed at 9.15 a.m.

Parents/carers should be aware that Upton-by-Chester High School may contact the Local Authority if a learner has 10 or more unauthorised absences in the current term with a view to issuing a Fixed Penalty Notice or other legal action. The Fixed Penalty Notice is issued individually to each parent/carer who fails to ensure their child's regular attendance at school. The Penalty is £60 per parent/carer per child if paid within 21 days rising to £120 if paid within 28 days. Non-payment of the Fixed Penalty Notice may result in prosecution in the Magistrates court (*see appendix 1*).

10. Application for Exceptional Circumstances

In September 2013, amendments to the **'Education (Learner Registration) (England) Regulations 2006'**, make it clear that Headteachers may not grant any Leave of Absence (holiday) during term time unless there are **'exceptional circumstances.'**

The Headteacher and the Governing Body will determine what constitutes an exceptional circumstance on an individual basis. If parents/carers need to request Exceptional Leave of Absence, they must complete an 'Exceptional Leave of Absence Form' available from the school office or on the website.

It should be noted that if any application is declined and absence occurs of a consecutive 5 or more unauthorised days, then school may apply to the Local Authority for a Fixed Penalty Notice to be issued to each parent/carer.

The following will not be deemed to be exceptional circumstances:

- Family holiday
- Availability of less expensive holiday
- Availability of holiday accommodation
- Parent/carer's working commitments
- Holiday pre-booked by another family member

A child's absence during term time seriously disrupts their continuity of learning. Not only do they miss the teaching on the days they are away but are less prepared for the lessons building on that teaching when they return to school. There is a consequent risk of under achievement, which we must seek to avoid.

The Governing Body is responsible for ensuring any attendance issues are dealt with in line with school policy.

11. Religious Observance

We recognise that some learners may need to participate in days of religious observance. Where a day of religious observance.

- falls during school time and
- has been exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the learner belongs

We ask that parents/carers notify Upton-by-Chester High School in writing in advance where absence is required due to a religious observance.

12. Enforced School Closure

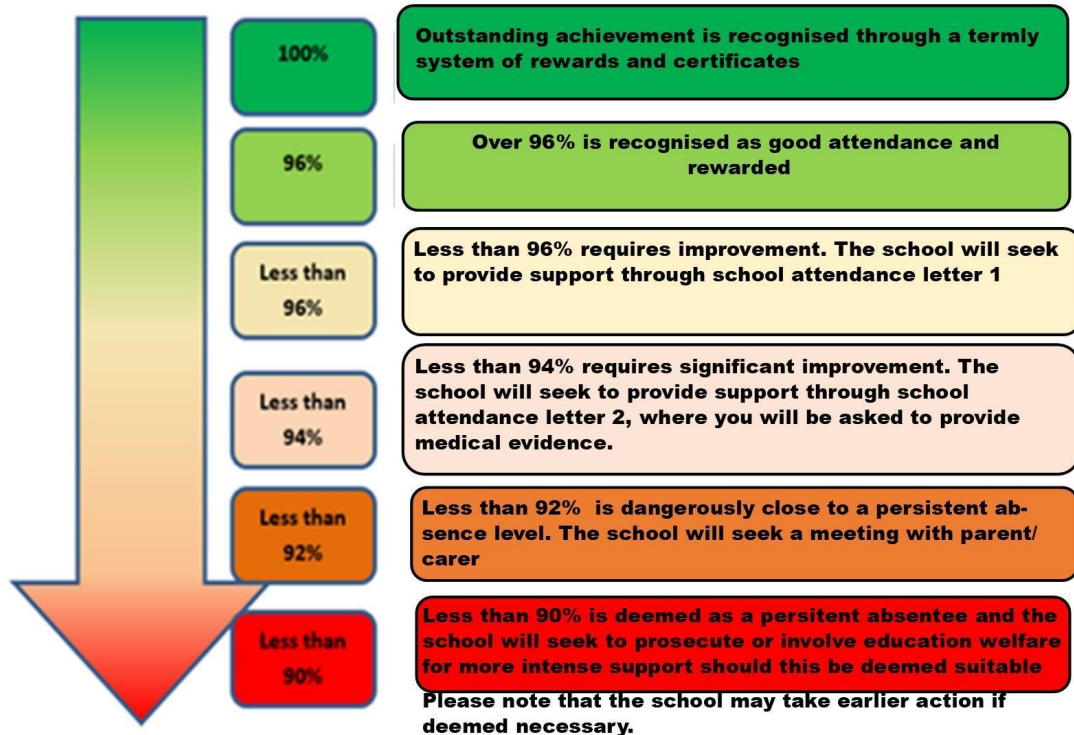
If Upton-by-Chester High School was forced to close for a period of time, we have the facility to operate an online virtual school. The expectation is learners will still engage with ALL activities when work is set. Procedures for online learning will be sent to parents as and when required.

13. Impact

All learners will achieve well by developing knowledge and skills on their journey through school. Due to robust monitoring of attendance, all learners, including vulnerable children and children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), will have fair and equitable access to school in

order to achieve the best possible outcomes. Learners will leave Upton-by-Chester High School ready for a successful transition to further education or employment.

The table below sets out the attendance targets and at what stage parents/carers will be contacted about their child's attendance.



See appendix 2 for further breakdown of missed sessions.

Appendix 1

Cheshire West & Chester

Code of Conduct for Education Fixed Penalty Notice (Unauthorised Leave of Absence & Irregular Attendance)

1. A Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN) can only be issued in cases of unauthorised absence.
2. A maximum of two FPNs may be issued in an academic year and these FPNs may be issued against each parent/carer of a child. Once two FPNs have been issued, should there be further unauthorised absences, the Local Authority are able to move to prosecution immediately.
3. A FPN may be issued per parent per child.
4. Penalty Notices may be considered appropriate if:
 - Unauthorised absences of at least 10 consecutive school sessions (five school days)
 - Sessions either side of a weekend or school holiday will be counted as consecutive school days
 - For poorly attending learners, at least 10 sessions (five school days) lost due to unauthorised absence during a school term (these do not need to be consecutive)
 - For poorly attending learners, persistent late arrive at school in a term. Persistent means at least 10 sessions of late arrival
 - The presence of an excluded child in a public place in the child's first five days of exclusion.
5. The school must notify parents of the Attendance Policy and clearly state that parents may receive an FPN for an unauthorised leave of absence relating to holiday in term time.
6. Schools and the Education Welfare Services will take into account any exceptional circumstances when determining whether to issue a FPN.

Appendix 2

What does 'percentage attendance' mean?

Learners who have attendance of 90% and below are classed as 'persistent absence' learners (P.A)

Heads of Year will be specifically targeting this cohort of learners, in an effort to improve their attendance in the future.

The table below shows the learning time lost against percentage attendance figures.

Attendance during one school year	Equivalent Days	Equivalent Sessions	Equivalent Weeks	Equivalent Lessons Missed
95%	9 Days	18 Sessions	1.4 Weeks	45 Lessons
90%	19 Days	38 Sessions	3.4 Weeks	95 Lessons
85%	29 Days	58 Sessions	5.4 Weeks	145 Lessons
80%	36 Days	72 Sessions	7.1 Weeks	180 Lessons
75%	48 Days	96 Sessions	9.3 Weeks	240 Lessons

Appendix 3

Absence Codes:

According to the DfE guidance the following codes are used on the register.

Code I	Illness	Schools can request medical evidence from parents/carers if they feel the authenticity of an illness is in doubt.
Code M	Medical or dental appointments	Parents/Carers are encouraged to arrange appointments out of school hours but the school will authorise if confirmation of the appointment is provided.
Code C	Other circumstances	This code will be used for any authorised non-medical reasons for a child's absence from school, i.e. – family funeral.
Code D	Dual Registered	This code will be used if a learner is registered at two schools.
Code J	Interview	This code will be used when it has been agreed that the learner can miss school to attend an interview or entrance exam
Code P	Approved sporting activity	This code will be used in times of approved sporting activities in school times, i.e. – training sessions, trials and sporting events.
Code R	Religious Observation	This code is used to cover major religious festivals during term-time. The school will only authorise one day absence for religious events.
Code V	Educational visits and trips	
Code W	Work Experience	
Code G	Family holiday not authorised by the school or in excess of agreed period	
Code U	Arrived late to school after 9.30am	
Code N	Reason for absence not yet provided	
Code O	Absent from school without authorisation	
Code X	Not required to be in school (not compulsory school age)	