

The Holmesdale School

Attendance Policy

PERSON RESPONSIBLE	Mrs Emma Beal
DATE LAST REVIEWED	November 2022
DATE NEXT REVIEW	November 2023
DATE LAST APPROVED BY LGB	7th December 2022

In our Trust we work to ensure that there is equality of opportunity for all members of our community who hold a range of protected characteristics as defined by the Equality Act 2010, as well as having regard to other factors which have the potential to cause inequality, such as socio-economic factors. For further information, please see our Equalities Policy.

The Holmesdale School Attendance Policy

The Holmesdale School is committed to the continuous raising of achievement of all our pupils. Regular attendance is critical if our pupils are to be successful and benefit from the opportunities presented to them.

One of our basic principles is to celebrate success. We actively promote 100% attendance for all our students, and we use a variety of weekly, termly, and annual rewards to promote good attendance and punctuality.

The Governors, Headteacher and Staff, in partnership with parents, have a duty to promote full attendance. We also want to promote good punctuality.

Table of Contents

1. Aims.....	4
2. Legislation and guidance.....	4
3. Roles and responsibilities.....	4
6. Strategies for promoting attendance	11
7. Attendance monitoring	11
8. Monitoring arrangements	12
9. Links with other policies	12

1. Aims

We are committed to meeting our obligations with regards to school attendance by:

- Promoting good attendance and reducing absence, including persistent absence
- Ensuring every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled
- Acting early to address patterns of absence

We will also support parents to perform their legal duty to ensure their children of compulsory school age attend regularly and will promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

2. Legislation and guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the [school attendance guidance](#) from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on [school attendance parental responsibility measures](#). These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- Part 6 of [The Education Act 1996](#)
- Part 3 of [The Education Act 2002](#)
- Part 7 of [The Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006 \(and 2010, 2011, 2013, 2016 amendments\)](#)
- [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)

This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the [school census](#), which explains the persistent absence threshold.

3. Roles and responsibilities

3.1 The governing board

The governing board is responsible for monitoring attendance figures for the whole school on at least a termly basis. It also holds the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy.

3.2 The headteacher

The headteacher is responsible for:

- Implementation of this policy at the school
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils
- Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary

3.3 The attendance officer

The school attendance officer:

- Monitors attendance data across the school and at an individual pupil level
- Reports concerns about attendance to the headteacher and via My Concern in-school systems
- Works with education welfare officers to tackle persistent absence
- Arranges calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues
- Advises the headteacher when to issue fixed-penalty notices

3.4 Class teachers

Class teachers are responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the school office.

3.5 School Attendance Officer

School Attendance Officer is expected to take calls from parents about absence and record it on the school system. Those pupils with declining attendance or with an attendance of below 96% will be automatically referred the South Eastern Attendance Advisory Service (SEAAS).

Attendance concerns are also added to the school's My Concern system, to allow for the DSL team in supporting students and their families to improve their attendance.

4. Recording attendance

4.1 Attendance register

We will keep an attendance register and place all pupils onto this register.

We will take our attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. It will mark whether every pupil is:

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

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

- The original entry
- The amended entry
- The reason for the amendment
- The date on which the amendment was made
- The name and position of the person who made the amendment

See appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes.

We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

Pupils must arrive in school before 8:40 on each school day.

The register for the first session will be taken at 8:50 and will be kept open until 9:15. The register for the second session will be taken at 1:25 and will be kept open 1:50. Any student arriving to the lesson after this time will be marked with a U code.

4.2 Unplanned absence

The pupil's parent/carer must notify the school on the first day of an unplanned absence by 8:40 or as soon as practically possible (see also section 7).

The school will ensure that the following is communicated to parents: If your child is unable to attend school for any reason, for safeguarding reasons, it imperative that you call the absence line on 01634 240416 on each day of absence and state your child's name, year group and reason for absence.

We will mark absence due to illness as authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may ask the pupil's parent/carer to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised, and parents/carers will be notified of this in advance.

4.3 Planned absence

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised if the pupil's parent/carer notifies the school in advance of the appointment. Parents will be requested by the school to call the absence line on 01634 240416 and state your child's name, year group and reason for absence.

However, we encourage parents/carers to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

The pupil's parent/carer must also apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence. Go to section 5 to find out which term-time absences the school can authorise.

4.4 Lateness and punctuality

A pupil who arrives late:

- Before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code
- After the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code

Pupils arriving after the register has closed will be marked as late after registration (Code 'U') and this will count as an unauthorised absence.

Frequent lateness after the register has closed (U) will be discussed with parents and could provide grounds for prosecution or a Penalty Notice.

4.5 Following up absence

Where any child we expect to attend school does not attend, or stops attending, the school will:

- Follow up on their absence with their parent/carer to ascertain the reason, by 1pm
- Ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary, including the logging of concern on the school's My Concern system

- Identify whether the absence is approved or not
- Identify the correct attendance code to use

Only the relevant Key Stage Leaders can authorise absence for approved reasons. Where there is doubt, the Key Stage Leader will liaise with the Attendance Officer, on behalf of the Headteacher, to ensure consistent approach. The absence must be unavoidable. The Key Stage Leader on behalf of the Headteacher, is not obliged to accept a parent's explanation and if the absence is not authorised, parents will be notified.

If no explanation is received, absences will not be authorised.

All requests for exceptional leave of absence should be consider by the leadership team (as they know the pupil) and make a recommendation to the Attendance Officer for final approval and recording on the pastoral log. Authorised absence codes will only be used after there has been some communication between the parent and school.

The following reasons are examples of the kinds of absence that will not be authorised:

- Persistent nonspecific illness e.g., poorly/unwell
- Absence of siblings if one child is ill
- Oversleeping
- Inadequate clothing/uniform
- Confusion over school dates
- Medical/dental appointments of more than half a day without very good reasons
- Child's/family birthday
- Shopping trip
- Family holidays

Persistent unauthorised absence may result in a referral to SEAAS or an AS1 referral to the Local Authority School Liaison Officer for consideration of prosecution. The school will follow procedures prior to referral and parents will be notified in writing.

When a referral is made, the child's Registration Certificate, copies of all letters sent to parents and minutes of any meetings MUST be attached to the completed AS1 referral form with any other relevant information.

SEAAS and Local Authority action may include:

- Attendance Improvement Meeting
- Home visits
- Liaison with other agencies
- Fast Track to Prosecution

5. Authorised and unauthorised absence

5.1 Approval for term-time absence

The headteacher will only grant a leave of absence to pupils during term time if they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'. A leave of absence is granted at the headteacher's discretion.

Exceptional circumstances could include:

- Service personnel returning from a tour of duty abroad where it is evidenced the individual will not be in receipt of any leave in the near future that coincides with school holidays.
- Where an absence from school is recommended by a health professional as part of a parent or child's rehabilitation from a medical or emotional issue.
- The death or terminal illness of a person close to the family.
- To attend a wedding or funeral of a person close to the family.
- Any strong personal reasons why a family might need to take a child away from school for a short break.
- Any examples provided are illustrative rather than exhaustive. It is acceptable to take a pupil's previous record of attendance into account when the school is making decisions. The fundamental principles for defining 'exceptional' are rare, significant, unavoidable, and short. And by 'unavoidable' it implies that an event could not reasonably be scheduled at another time. It is important to note that Head Teachers can agree the absence of a child in exceptional circumstances and this discretion can be used also to determine the length of the authorised absence

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, considering the specific facts, circumstances, and relevant context behind the request.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments (see sections 4.2 and 4.3 for more detail)
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart
- Traveller pupils travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English, and Welsh Gypsies, Irish and Scottish Travellers, Showmen (fairground people) and Circus people, Bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and New Travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a Traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school, but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision

In law, these are the only acceptable reasons for a child being absent from school.

The Headteacher may authorise absence in “exceptional circumstances”, but this must be requested in advance and agreement to each request is at the discretion of the Head Teacher, acting on behalf of the Governing Body (Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006). Each case will be judged on its merits and the Head Teacher's decision is final. Once the decision not to authorise leave is taken, it cannot be authorised retrospectively.

If the absence is not authorised and the holiday is taken anyway, the case may be referred to the Inclusion and Attendance Service who may issue a Penalty Notice to each parent for each child taken out of school.

Failure to pay the penalty in full by the end of the 21-day period will result in prosecution by the Local Authority.

5.2 Reducing persistent absence

Persistent unauthorised absence (students with 10% or more of the school year) may result in a referral to SEAAS or the Local Authority School Liaison Officer for consideration of prosecution. The school will follow all reasonable steps prior to referral and parents will be notified in writing. These steps will also be recorded on the school's My Concern system to help support timely intervention.

When a referral is made, the child's registration certificate, copies of all letters sent to parents and any minutes of any meetings relating to the absence will need to be attached to the completed referral form with any other relevant information.

5.3 Legal sanctions

The school or local authority can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age.

If issued with a fine, or penalty notice, each parent must pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the local authority.

Penalty notices can be issued by a headteacher, local authority officer or the police.

The decision on whether to issue a penalty notice may consider:

- The number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year
- One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission
- Where an excluded pupil is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason

If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute or withdraw the notice.

6. Strategies for promoting attendance

At The Holmesdale School we believe it to be important to reward pupils with excellent attendance. The following is minimum guidance to reward 100% attendance:

- End of terms 2 – Positive postcard sent home by SSM
- End of terms 4 – Positive postcard and Letter from Key Stage Leader (continued 100% attendance)
- End of terms 6 – Certificate from Headteacher (continued 100% attendance)

7. Attendance monitoring

The attendance officer at our school monitors pupil absence on a daily basis.

A pupil's parent/carer is expected to call the school in the morning if their child is going to be absent due to ill health (see section 4.2).

The parent/carer is expected to call the school each day their child is ill

If a pupil's absence goes above 3 days, the school will contact the parent/carer of the pupil to discuss the reasons for this.

If a pupil's absence continues to rise after contacting their parent/carer, we will consider involving an education welfare officer.

The persistent absence threshold is 10%. If a pupil's individual overall absence rate is greater than or equal to 10%, the pupil will be classified as a persistent absentee.

Pupil-level absence data will be collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. The school will compare attendance data to the national average and share this with the governing board.

The Holmesdale School collects and stores attendance data for internal purposes only. For example, to:

- Track the attendance of individual pupils
- Identify whether there are particular groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern
- Monitor and evaluate those children identified as needing intervention and support

8. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the local authority or DfE is updated, and as a minimum of every year by the senior leader in charge of Attendance. At every review, the policy will be approved by the full governing board.

9. Links with other policies

This policy links to the following policies:

- Child protection and safeguarding policy
- Behaviour policy

Appendix 1: attendance codes

The following codes are taken from the DfE's guidance on school attendance.

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	Pupil is present at morning registration
\	Present (pm)	Pupil is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Pupil arrives late before register has closed
B	Off-site educational activity	Pupil is at a supervised off-site educational activity approved by the school
D	Dual registered	Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
J	Interview	Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
P	Sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
V	Educational trip or visit	Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised, or approved, by the school
W	Work experience	Pupil is on a work experience placement

Code	Definition	Scenario
------	------------	----------

Authorised absence		
C	Authorised leave of absence	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
E	Excluded	Pupil has been excluded but no alternative provision has been made
H	Authorised holiday	Pupil has been allowed to go on holiday due to exceptional circumstances
I	Illness	School has been notified that a pupil will be absent due to illness
M	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment
R	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance
S	Study leave	Year 11 pupil is on study leave during their public examinations
T	Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller absence	Pupil from a Traveller community is travelling, as agreed with the school
Unauthorised absence		
G	Unauthorised holiday	Pupil is on a holiday that was not approved by the school

N	Reason not provided	Pupil is absent for an unknown reason (this code should be amended when the reason emerges, or replaced with code O if no reason for absence has been provided after a reasonable amount of time)
O	Unauthorised absence	School is not satisfied with reason for pupil's absence
U	Arrival after registration	Pupil arrived at school after the register closed

Code	Definition	Scenario
X	Not required to be in school	Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
Y	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances	School site is closed, there is disruption to travel as a result of a local/national emergency, or pupil is in custody
Z	Pupil not on admission register	Register set up but pupil has not yet joined the school
#	Planned school closure	Whole or partial school closure due to half-term/bank holiday/INSET day

Letters to parents about their child's absence, attendance, and punctuality

- Letter 1 – Concerns about a pupil's high level of absence
- Letter 2 – Concerns about a pupil's unauthorised absence
- Letter 3 – Formal notice about unauthorised absence
- Letter 4 – Accepting a request for a holiday in term-time
- Letter 5 – Declining a request for a holiday in term-time
- Letter 6 – After an unauthorised holiday
- Letter 7 – Accepting a request for absence for religious observance
- Letter 8 – Concern about punctuality

Letter 1 – Concerns about a pupil's high level of absence

Use this letter in situations where a pupil's absence has been authorised, but absence levels are still high.

For example:

- A pupil is regularly ill, but doesn't have an identified medical need
- Combined circumstances (such as a family bereavement and pupil illness) means the pupil has missed a lot of lesson time

Absences from school

I'm writing to express my concern at [name's] recent high levels of absence from school.

[His/her] current attendance has fallen to [percentage]. Falling below 95% attendance will likely have an impact on [his/her] academic achievement.

We acknowledge that each family's circumstances are different, and we aim to work with parents to provide the best education for every child.

Our pupils' welfare is of paramount importance to us, and we believe that regular attendance throughout the year is essential for their success and fulfilment.

We want to make sure that we can support [name's] education in the best way possible, including looking into how we can help [him/her] to address gaps in learning due to absence.

Please contact the school office on [number] as soon as you can so we can arrange to discuss this.

Yours sincerely,

[Name]

Headteacher

Letter 2 – Concerns about a pupil's unauthorised absence(s)

Use this letter as the first step to address unauthorised absence.

Unauthorised absences from school

I'm writing to express my concern at [name's] recent unauthorised [absence/absences] from school.

[Name] has been absent from school for a total of [number] unauthorised sessions ([number] days) on the following dates:

> [date]

> [date]

> [date]

We acknowledge that each family's circumstances are different, and we aim to work with parents to provide the best education for every child.

Our pupils' welfare is of paramount importance to us, and we believe that regular attendance throughout the year is essential for their success and fulfilment.

Amend the line below based on your local authority's code of conduct for penalty notices:

Please note that unauthorised absences can result in a penalty notice being issued if your child has more than [number] unauthorised absences within [time period]. You can find more information about penalty notices in our school attendance policy. Copies of the policy are on the school website, or available from the school office.

Please contact the school office on [number] as soon as you can so we can arrange to discuss this.

Yours sincerely,

[Name]

Headteacher

Letter 3 – Formal notice about unauthorised absence

Use this letter if:

- You have previously tried to address a pupil's unauthorised absence
- The pupil's unauthorised absence has reached the threshold set by your local authority for the use of a penalty notice

Unauthorised absence

With reference to our letter dated [date], [name] has now had a total of [number] unauthorised absences within [time period]. These absences occurred on the following dates:

- [date]
- [date]
- [date]

In line with our attendance policy, and the local authority's code of practice, we must now request a penalty notice be issued by the local authority.

On receipt of the notice, you must pay:

- £60, if paid within 21 days
- £120, if paid after 21 days but within 28 days

If payment is not made within 28 days, the local authority may decide to pursue further legal action.

We would like to invite you in for a meeting with [appropriate member of staff], so we can discuss how we can support you to help improve [name's] attendance.

Please contact the school office on [number] urgently so we can arrange this meeting.

Yours sincerely,

[Name]

Headteacher

Letter 4 – Accepting a request for a holiday in term-time

Your request for a holiday absence

Thank you for your request to take [name(s)] out of school between [date] and [date].

Having considered the exceptional circumstances set out in your application, I'm able to agree to your request.

I haven't come to this decision lightly. Our school is dedicated to the education of all our pupils and believes regular attendance throughout the year is essential to every child's success and fulfilment.

Each request for a holiday absence is considered on its merits at the time. Please note that my decision in this instance does not set a precedent and does not mean I'll be able to agree to a similar request, from you or other parents, in the future.

Yours sincerely,

[Name]

Headteacher

Letter 5 – Declining a request for a holiday in term-time

Your request for a holiday absence

Thank you for your request to take [name(s)] out of school between [date] and [date].

In this case I regret I cannot consent to your request.

Our school, while acknowledging that each family's circumstances are different, is dedicated to the education of all our pupils and believes regular attendance throughout the year is essential to every child's success and fulfilment.

I have not made this decision lightly. A request for an absence is considered on its merits at the time and many variables are taken into consideration.

Because each request is unique, my decision in this instance can't be directly compared with decisions made by the school in the past, and nor does it set a precedent for the future.

I'm sorry to have to disappoint you on this occasion.

Yours sincerely,

[Name]

Headteacher

Letter 6 – After an unauthorised holiday

Holiday absence

I'm writing about your action in taking [name(s)] out of school for a family holiday between [date] and [date].

We're treating this as an unauthorised holiday because [explain the evidence you have].

Our school works with parents to provide the best education for each child and believes that regular attendance throughout the year is essential to every child's success and fulfilment.

We expect you to consult the school before booking holidays that mean your child will be absent, or before making any plans that will involve your child's absence from lessons or other commitments.

If in line with your local authority's code of conduct for penalty notices, add:

We have the power to request that the local authority issue a penalty notice for unauthorised term-time holidays.

If issued with a penalty notice, you must pay:

- £60, if paid within 21 days of receiving the notice
- £120, if paid after 21 days but within 28 days

If you don't pay the penalty within 28 days, the local authority could pursue legal action.

Continue with:

Absences like these could have a detrimental effect on [name(s)] education.

We would like to arrange a meeting so that we can discuss this further. Please contact the school office urgently on [phone number].

Yours sincerely,

[Name]

Headteacher

Letter 7 – Accepting a request for absence for religious observance

Your request for absence for religious observance

Thank you for your request to take [name(s)] out of school on [date] because of [religious occasion].

In this case, I'm prepared to agree to your request, and it will be considered an authorised absence.

Each request for an absence is considered on its merits at the time. We recognise that a family's religious beliefs and traditions are intrinsic to their sense of identity. However, please note that my decision in this instance does not set a precedent and does not necessarily mean I'll agree to a similar request, from you or other parents, in the future.

Yours sincerely,

[Name]

Headteacher

Letter 8 – Concern about punctuality

Poor punctuality

I'm writing to you because [name] has been late to school [number] times in [timeframe].

[He/she] arrived at school after the register had closed on the following dates:

> [date]

> [date]

> [date]

[He/she] also arrived at school late (but before the register had closed) on the following dates:

> [date]

> [date]

> [date]

The school day begins promptly at [time] and registration closes at [time]. Afternoon registration takes place between [time slot].

Arriving promptly makes sure that your child doesn't miss work, and that disruption to the teacher and other pupils is minimised. Persistent lateness can lead to a significant loss in learning time.

Amend the following sentence in line with your local authority's code of conduct for penalty notices:

Persistent lateness can result in a penalty notice. The school can request that the local authority issues a penalty notice related to lateness when:

> [Insert the conditions set out in your local authority's code of practice]

We're committed to working with families to make sure every pupil gets the support they need. We would therefore like to arrange a meeting to discuss how we can work with you to help improve [name's] punctuality.

Please contact the school office on [number] to arrange a meeting.

Yours sincerely,

[Name]

Headteacher