



HCAT
Attendance and
Punctuality
Policy 2025



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Attendance Policy

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Section 1 Introduction and Aims

HCAAT are committed to promoting a culture of high expectation, achievement, and excellence. Good attendance is crucial if students are to take advantage of the opportunities available to them and complete a successful journey through their time at our schools and as they move on into higher education or the world of work.

At Horizon, for our students to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and arrive, on time, every day that the school is open unless the reason for absence is unavoidable. Any absence affects the pattern of a student's schooling and regular absence will affect their learning. Any student's absence or late arrival disrupts teaching routines and so may affect the learning of others in the same class. Ensuring a student's regular attendance at school is a parent/carer's legal responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason may result in a fine or prosecution.

We are committed to working with parents and carers to maximise the achievement and attendance for all students. There is a clear link between good attendance and punctuality with educational achievement.

100% - Outstanding Attendance (100% is College target)

100%	100% Attendance
97%-99.9%	
95%-96.9%	Below Target Attendance
92%-94.9%	Cause for Concern
90.1%-91.9%	At Risk of becoming Persistent Absentee
90% or below	Persistent Absence
50% or below	Severely Persistently Absence

Persistent absenteeism is when a student misses 10% or more of the possible sessions in an academic year.

Evidence suggests that students with an attendance of below 97% have a significantly lower chance of achieving their potential, regardless of their ability.

The legal framework

The law entitles every child to an efficient, full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude and any special educational need they may have. It is the legal responsibility of every parent to make sure their child receives that education either by attendance at school or by education otherwise than at school. Where a parent decides to have their child registered at school, they have an additional legal duty to ensure their child attends regularly (DFE 2024).

Attending regularly means their child MUST attend every day that the school is open, except in a small number of allowable circumstances such as being too ill to attend or being given permission in advance by the headteacher for an absence (DFE 2024).

The government expects schools to:

- Promote good attendance and reduce absence, including persistent absence
- Ensure every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled
- Act early to address patterns of absence.

The government expects parents to:

- Perform their legal duty by ensuring children of compulsory school age who are registered at a school or academy attend regularly
- All pupils to be punctual to their lessons

Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act states that if a child of **compulsory school age** fails to attend regularly, the parent is guilty of an offence. Parents, therefore have a legal responsibility to ensure their child's attendance. Failure can lead to legal action being taken by the Local Authority in the Magistrates Court, or the need to issue Penalty Notices.

Since March 2001 there has been a further offence, Section 444 (1A) where a parent knowingly allows their child to be absent from school. This offence can carry a custodial sentence.

The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007 also allow the Local Authority to issue Penalty Notices on behalf of schools and academies for unauthorised pupil absence for children of **compulsory school age**.

Registration

The law states that children should arrive at school on time, every day. Every school day comprises of two sessions, morning and afternoon. It is a legal requirement that the attendance register be taken at the start of each morning and afternoon session.

The register is marked using the DfE Attendance and Absence Codes. Guidance on applying Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations can be found in ['Working together to improve school attendance'](#) published by the DfE.

Section 2 College Expectations and Responsibilities

We expect that all students will:

- Attend College regularly
- Attend College punctually
- Attend College appropriately prepared for the day
- Discuss promptly with their Teacher/Pastoral Teams and Attendance Team any problems that may affect their attendance

We expect that all parents/carers who have day to day responsibility will:

- Encourage regular and punctual school attendance
- Ensure that the child/children in their care arrive at school punctually, prepared for the school day
- Contact school before morning registration, on **each day** of the student's absence, by calling school and making the appropriate selection when prompted to do so and then stating the reason for absence. **Any unexplained absence is treated as unauthorised absence**
- Contact school if a student will be arriving late and provide a reason for lateness.
- Contact the school promptly whenever any problem occurs that may keep the student away from school
- Provide the school with more than one emergency contact number for their child
- Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day
- Reply to the automated text message, requesting reasons for absence

We expect that Teachers have a responsibility to:

- Complete registers accurately and promptly at the start of the lesson
- Amend the register for late comers who are late by more than 5 minutes without a note and add the minutes late to the register
- Inform the Attendance Team of any information provided by students regarding their current or future attendance

- Inform the Pastoral Team/Attendance Office prior to any trip/activity if any student is to be absent from “normal” lessons. The trip organiser to ensure that the Attendance Team has a full list of the students involved in the trip/activity

We expect that Heads of Year and the Pastoral Team have a responsibility to:

- Hold weekly meetings with the Attendance Officer/s to discuss students of concern and highlight students who they can intervene with
- Phone parent/carer to enquire why the student is absent from school and advise them to send the student into school unless he/she is too unwell to be in lessons. In the absence of contact a home visit is made
- Monitor and analyse their year group attendance data on a regular basis
- Introduce intervention strategies to improve the attendance of all groups of students

We expect that Student Wellbeing Officers have a responsibility to:

- Attend meetings with students, parents/carers and the Attendance Team to discuss attendance

We expect that the Attendance Team has a responsibility to:

- Send a text message and email if no information is received from the parent/carer, relating to why the student is absent from school. In the event of no response to the text message it will then be followed up by a telephone call and may result in a home visit
- Phone parents/carers if the student has left site – liaising with the safeguarding lead
- Have weekly meetings with EWO and Attendance Leads
- Analyse school and Year Group attendance data daily and weekly
- Visit the student at home to enquire about his/her absence or bring them into school. Home visits are prioritised based on need and levels of concern - this determines who should make the home visit and when it should take place. Details of the home visit are recorded

Failure to improve attendance may result in further action, such as a penalty notice or prosecution.

To ensuring the highest expectations, we will follow the Department for Education's Guiding Principles:

Expect

Aspire to high standards of attendance from all pupils and parents and build a culture where all can, and want to, be in school and ready to learn by prioritising attendance.

Monitor

Rigorously use attendance data to identify patterns of poor attendance (at individual and cohort level) as soon as possible so all parties can work together to resolve issues before they become entrenched.

Listen and Understand

When a pattern is spotted, we will discuss with pupils and parents to listen to understand barriers and will agree how partners can work together to resolve these.

Support

We will remove barriers in school and help pupils and parents to access the support they need to overcome barriers outside of school.

Formalise

Where absence persists and voluntary support is not working or not being engaged with, we will work together to explain the consequences clearly so that families are clear on the need to respond.

Enforce

Where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working and not being engaged with, we will enforce attendance through statutory intervention and prosecution to protect the pupil's right to an education.

Section 3 Rewards and Sanctions

Rewards

Students are rewarded:

- If they achieve 100% attendance for a week – they automatically receive an achievement point
- If they achieve 100% attendance for a week, they also are awarded a sticker to add to the attendance reward chart in the planner. Every 5 weeks with 100% attendance will result in the student being able to collect an attendance prize

- **Y7, Y8 and Y9** – awarded bronze, silver and gold pin badges if they secure 100% attendance during each term. Bronze if you achieve 100% in one term, silver in two terms and gold in all three terms
- Each week the form with the highest attendance will be rewarded with a prize for the entire form
- If they achieve 100% attendance for the full academic year - they receive a personalised letter, a gold pin badge and an additional prize
- Multiple year group attendance reward assemblies
- Most improved attendance is rewarded on a half termly basis, based on improvements made from the previous half term
- Form time breakfast for the forms with the highest cumulative attendance
- In various other ways by the Attendance Team and The Pastoral Team

Sanctions

Students must be in their timetabled room at the start of the lesson or form period dependent on Year (Form period – Y7, Y8, Y9 or Period 1 – Y10 and Y11). Registers close 30 mins after the start of the session.

Y7, Y8 and Y9 registers close at 9.00 am

Y10 and Y11 registers close at 9.20 am

Arriving after this time you are classed as late to school and could result in a U code, or another code if more appropriate.

Students will be challenged for poor punctuality as follows:

- Each U code will result in 1 hour's detention as they have arrived significantly late to school without a valid reason
- A total of 2 U codes will result in the Pastoral Team making contact with home
- A total of 4 U codes will result in a letter being sent home making parents and carers aware of the arising punctuality concerns
- A total of 4 U codes will result in a meeting in school with the Head of Year and parents/carers

Students who are late to school but arrive before the registers close will be awarded a Late (L) code for that session.

- Late to school on 5 occasions will result in a 60-minute late detention. A detention will be issued every time the student reaches a further 5 lates to school
- Late to school on 10 occasions in a half term will result in a letter being sent home making parents/carers aware of the arising punctuality concerns, which will be kept on file
- Late to school on 15 occasions in a half term will result in a parental meeting being arranged between a member of the Pastoral team and parents/carers to discuss punctuality concerns
- Late to school on 20 occasions in a half term will result in a parental meeting being arranged with the Associate Assistant Principal and parents/carers to discuss punctuality concerns
- Truancy to lessons or form period will be dealt with by the Pastoral Teams

Students who are **late to lessons** will be awarded a Late (L) code for that lesson:

- Late to lessons on 5 occasions within the same week, will result in a 30-minute late detention
- At the end of each half term if your child has exceeded 15 lates to lessons, a letter goes home to parents/carers with the number of lates their child has received that half term
- Punctuality to lessons is also included in your child's progress report

Section 4 Definitions

Authorised and Unauthorised Absences

Every half-day absence from the school counts as one session and this must be classified by the school (not the parent/carer) as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. Therefore, information about the cause of absence is always required.

Authorised Leave of Absence is an absence from the school for a valid reason such as:

- Genuine illness
- Medical/dental appointments which fall unavoidably in school time
- Other emergencies and exceptional circumstances as determined at the discretion of the Head of Upper, Middle or Lower School

Parents/carers are requested to provide written confirmation of any medical/dental appointments and, wherever possible, arrange these appointments outside of the school day. **If this is unavoidable, the student must attend before and after the appointment wherever possible otherwise the absence will not be authorised.** If a student has an appointment to be attended during the school day, he/she must have a signed note in their planner from their parent/carer which must be countersigned by a member of the Pastoral Team – the student must show this note to the staff member supervising student reception who will then allow the student to attend the appointment.

You can email evidence of appointments to: attendance@horizoncc.co.uk

Unauthorised Leave of Absence is an absence which the school does not consider reasonable and for which a 'leave of absence' request has not been agreed. This type of absence can lead to the Local Authority using sanctions and/or legal proceedings. This includes:

- Parents/carers keeping children off unnecessarily
- Truancy before or during the school day
- Absences which are not explained properly
- Students who arrive at school after **the register has closed**
- Students who have been permitted to stay up late the previous night
- Shopping
- Looking after other children
- Birthdays
- Day trips and holidays in term time which have not been agreed

Whilst any child may be absent from school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance should be addressed between the school, the parents/carers, and the child. If the parent/carer thinks their child is reluctant to attend school, then we will work with that family to understand the root problem.

Persistent Absenteeism (PA) – When attendance is less than 90%

A student becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they fall below 90% attendance for whatever reason. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's education and we need parents/carers' fullest support and co-operation to tackle this. We monitor all absence and the reasons given thoroughly.

PA students are tracked and monitored carefully. We also combine this with academic tracking where absence affects attainment. Persistent Absenteeism can also lead to legal proceedings and the issuing of Penalty Notices fines.

The Education Welfare Officer (EWO)

Parents are expected to contact the school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any problems together. This is almost always successful. If difficulties cannot be resolved in this way, the school may refer the child to the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) from the Local Authority.

The EWO will also try to resolve the situation by agreement, but if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed and unauthorised absences persist, these Officers can use sanctions such as Penalty Notices fines or prosecutions in the Magistrates Court. Full details of the options open to enforce attendance are available from the school or Local Authority. Alternatively, parents/carers or students may wish to contact the EWO themselves to ask for help and information. They are independent of the school and will give impartial advice. Their number is available from the school office or by contacting the Local Education Authority. If a child's attendance gives cause for concern and sickness is continually reported, support will be sought through the School Nursing Team.

Children Missing Education

The Children Missing Education Service (CME) refers to a student whose absence is unexplained and their whereabouts are unknown.

Children who stop attending and who cannot be traced cannot be removed from roll immediately. They are reported to the Local Authority Attendance Service. Where a child is missing from education, Local Authority guidance will be followed.

If families move away from the area, or wish to transfer their child to another school, the Head of School/Principal must be informed in writing. Children cannot be removed from roll until we have been notified by another School/College that a place has been offered and their attendance has been confirmed.

Section 5 Attendance Codes

Below is a table of the most common codes you may see on your child's attendance registration certificate and what they mean. The full list of codes can be found:

[Working together to improve school attendance \(applies from 19 August 2024\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)
(publishing.service.gov.uk)

Codes that are classed for statistical purposes as attending

Code	Meaning
/\	Present at the school
L	Late arrival before the registers have closed
V	Attending an educational visit or trip
P	Participating in a sporting activity

Codes that are classed for statistical purposes as not attending and would affect your child's cumulative attendance figure.

Code	Meaning
M	Medical/ dental appointment *evidence needed (<i>authorised</i>)
I	Illness - not medical or dental appointment (<i>authorised</i>)
G	Holiday not granted by the school (<i>unauthorised</i>)
O	Absent in other or unknown circumstances (<i>unauthorised</i>)
U	Arrived in school after registration closed (<i>unauthorised</i>)
C1	Participating in a regulated performance (<i>authorised</i>)
J1	Attending an interview (<i>authorised</i>)

Section 6 Punctuality and Lateness

Poor punctuality is not acceptable, and all students must arrive on time. If a child misses the start of the day/lesson, they can miss learning and vital information and news for the day. The late arrival of students also disrupts lessons, which can be embarrassing for the student and can also encourage absence. Good timekeeping is a vital life skill which will help our children as they progress through their school life and out into the wider world. We will encourage good punctuality by being positive role models to our students and by celebrating good punctuality.

How we manage lateness:

Late marks will be monitored by the Pastoral Teams. Concerns will be acted upon immediately and parents/carers will be notified.

Daily Absence Procedures

Parents/carers must notify the attendance office as soon as possible on the first day of absence, and no later than 20 minutes after the start time of that year group, and the reason for absence will be recorded

AM Registers are taken at; – Y7 – 8.30 am, Y8 – 8.30 am, Y9 – 8.30 am, Y10 – 8.50 am, Y11

Section 6 Absences and Penalty Notices

Holidays Students arriving after this time will receive a late mark

If a student has not arrived within the first hour of their start time, the attendance team will contact parents/carers asking for a reason for absence.

Students arriving after 1 hour of their start time will receive an unauthorised late mark (showing them to be on site but with unauthorised absence for that half-day session)

If no reason has been established this absence will be recorded as unauthorised. If a child is receiving multi-agency support, this will also be reported to the safeguarding lead and/or allocated social worker. Attendance staff may undertake a home visit

Amendments to the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 make clear that from September 2013, **no holidays will be authorised by the school in term-time**. Holidays in term-time will be recorded as unauthorised and will incur a fine, unless the below exceptional circumstances apply:

Exceptional Circumstances

- Service personnel returning from/scheduled to embark upon a tour of duty abroad
- Other exceptional circumstances at the discretion of the Principal

To request a holiday in term-time, parents/carers must request a holiday form and send the completed form into school, clearly stating the reasons for taking the holiday. The form can also be found on our school website.

Any period of leave taken without the agreement of the school, or more than that agreed, will be classed as unauthorised and will attract a Penalty Notice. A separate Penalty Notice could be issued to each parent for each child who has unauthorised absence.

Unauthorised Absences

The Principal, within the context of the law, can authorise absence. If a parent/carer has offered a note or an explanation in relation to a particular absence this does not oblige the Principal to accept it if it is felt that the explanation is not a valid reason for absence. If there are doubts about the explanation that remain after further investigation, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised. Where parentally condoned unjustified absence appears to be a problem the school will involve the Education Welfare Officer.

Unauthorised absences, including truancy, are recorded on a student's registration certificate, which may be used as a point of reference for future employers, colleges or universities.

Section 7 Penalty Notice Fines

The school will be following the new DfE National Framework and the Barnsley Code of Conduct 2024 when requesting Penalty Notices to be issued from the Local Authority. Further information on the National Framework can be found here: [Working together to improve school attendance \(applies from 19 August 2024\) \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/100000/working-together-to-improve-school-attendance-applies-from-19-august-2024.pdf)

Penalty Notices can be issued to address unauthorised absence, which may include term time holidays, irregular attendance, and poor punctuality. A Penalty Notice will be issued by the Local Authority at the point which 10 sessions (5 days) are recorded as unauthorised absence ("O" code, "U" code or "G" code) within a 10-week period. The 10 school week period may span different terms or school years (e.g. 2 sessions of unauthorised absence in the Summer Term and a further 8 within the Autumn Term)

This may include unexplained absence, a term time holiday and/or poor punctuality. The cost of the penalty notice is £80 per child, if paid within 21 days of receipt of the notice. This rises to £160 per child, if paid between 22 and 28 days. If the Penalty Notice is not paid within 28 days, the Local Authority may prosecute the parent/carer for failing to ensure regular school attendance under Section 444 Education Act 1996 and this could result in a criminal conviction and court costs.

Multiple Penalty Notices may be issued within a term. In the case of repeated fines, if a parent receives a second fine for the same child within any three-year period, this will be charged at the higher rate of £160.

Fines per parent will be capped to two fines within any three-year period. Once this limit has been reached, other action like a parenting order or prosecution will be considered.

If you're prosecuted and attend court because your child hasn't been attending school, you could get a fine of up to £2,500

The Local Authority may now issue Penalty Notices to both parents/carers with responsibility or day to day care. The school will notify both parents/carers that a notice may be issued for either leave of absence or unauthorised absence. Both parents/carers will then be afforded the opportunity to either improve attendance or make an informed decision regarding the leave of absence.

The Local Authority may also issue Penalty Notices if your child has been excluded from school and seen in a public place during the period of exclusion.

The Local Authority also retains discretion to issue a Penalty Notice fine before the threshold is met for example:

- If parents/carers take multiple term time holidays below the threshold
- Repeated absence for birthdays or other family events
- A combination of non-attendance due to leave of absence and unauthorised absence



Pupil attendance is important

With the introduction of the new National Framework for Penalty Notices, the following changes will come into force for Penalty Notices issued after the **19th August 2024**.

Penalty Notices can be issued for

Leave of Absence - Penalty Notices can be requested by schools for leave of absence in term time for 5 or more days. This can be consecutive absence, or non- consecutive. The LA retains discretion to issue a penalty notice before the threshold is met.

Unauthorised Absence - Penalty Notices can be requested by schools when there have been 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a 10-week period. In these circumstances a Notice to Improve may be sent to the parent by the Local Authority on behalf of the school prior to the notice being issued.

Per parent, per child

Penalty Notice Fines will now be issued to **each parent**, for **each child** that was absent.

For example: 3 siblings absent for term time leave would result in each parent receiving 3 separate fines

First offence

The **first** time a Penalty Notice Fine is issued for a term time leave or irregular attendance the amount will be:

£160 per parent per child paid within 28 days

Reduced to £80 per parent, per child if paid within 21 days

Any non-payment of the Penalty Notice may be referred to the Magistrates Court

Second offence (within 3 years)

The **second** time a Penalty Notice Fine is issued for a term time leave or irregular attendance the amount will be:

£160 per parent per child paid within 28 days

Any non-payment of the Penalty Notice may be referred to the Magistrates Court

Third offence an any further offence (within 3 years)

The **third** time an offence is committed for term time leave or irregular attendance, A Penalty Notice Fine will not be issued, and the case will be presented straight to the **Magistrates court. Magistrates' fines can be up to £2500 per parent, per child.**

Section 8 Absence Procedures

The school will monitor attendance on a daily basis.

When a student's attendance or punctuality begins to be a concern, parents will be informed and subsequently become involved as outlined below:

Attendance will be monitored every day.
Stage 1 – If a student accumulates 4 broken weeks a letter will be sent to parents/carers (Letter 1). The purpose of this letter is to inform you of the impact of the absence on your child's attendance figure and direct parents/carers to discuss any attendance concerns or barriers with the school. Attendance will be monitored for a further 4 weeks.
Stage 2 – If a further 4 broken weeks occurs (8 in total), a second letter will be sent to parents/carers (Letter 2 – Attendance check-in). Your child's form tutor or another suitable member of staff will complete an attendance check in with your child to identify any potential barriers that may be negatively impacting your child's attendance. This check in will then be reviewed by the Pastoral Team to decide if any support is needed. Attendance will be monitored for a further 4 weeks.
Stage 3 – If a further 4 broken weeks occurs (12 in total), a third letter will be sent to parents/carers (Letter 3 – Internal School Attendance Panel ISAP). A meeting will be arranged with the student, parents/carers and member of the Attendance Team which may result in an attendance contract if appropriate. Parents/carers must attend this meeting either virtually or in person, failure to do so would lead to either an EWO visit or an attendance officer visit.
*At any point - 10+ sessions (each school day consists of two sessions) of unauthorised absence in a 10 week period could result in a Penalty Notice fine being issued. **Home visits can be carried out at any point if we either have attendance concerns or need to carry out a safe and well check due to absence from school.