**Aims**

We aim to raise levels of achievement by ensuring the highest possible levels of attendance, punctuality and involvement at Howard House School. We endeavour to provide an environment which enables and encourages all members of the community to reach out for excellence. For our students to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is essential that they attend regularly and on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

In order to help us implement out attendance policy we will keep an accurate and up to date record of attendance or all students and staff. We will inform parents/carers and other stakeholders of attendance and punctuality issues. Where a student has particular difficulty in maintaining acceptable levels of attendance we will seek to identify causes of non-attendance and take action as quickly and effectively as possible.

Reducing absence and persistent absence is a vital and integral part of Howard House School’s efforts to:

* promote children's welfare and safeguarding
* ensure every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled
* ensure that pupils succeed whilst at school
* ensure that pupils have access to the widest possible range of opportunities when they leave school.

**Why Regular Attendance is so important:**

**Learning:**  Any absence affects the pattern of a child’s schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any pupil’s absence disrupts teaching routines so may affect the learning of others in the same class.

Ensuring your child’s regular attendance at school is your legal responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

**Safeguarding:** Your child may be at risk of harm if they do not attend school regularly. Safeguarding the interests of each child is everyone’s responsibility and within the context of this school, promoting the welfare and life opportunities for your child encompasses:

* Attendance
* Behaviour Management
* Health and Safety
* Access to the Curriculum
* Anti- bullying

Failing to attend this school on a regular basis will be considered as a safeguarding matter.

**Promoting regular attendance**

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody’s responsibility - parents/carers, students and all members of school staff.

**To help us all to focus on this we will:**

* Report to stakeholders concerned with individual students, at least every half-term, on how the young person is performing in school, what their attendance and punctuality rate is and how this relates to their attainment levels.
* Celebrate good attendance by displaying individual achievements
* Reward good or improving attendance through incentives, certificates and special activities.
* Run promotional events where stakeholders, young people and staff can work together on raising attendance levels across the school.

**Understanding types of absence**

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required, preferably in writing.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason like illness, medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable causes.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no “leave" has been given.

This type of absence can lead to the Howard House School using sanctions and/or legal proceedings. This includes:

* keeping children off school unnecessarily
* truancy before or during the school day
* absences which have never been properly explained
* students who arrive at school too late to get a mark
* shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
* Day trips and holidays in term time which have not been agreed.

Whilst any student may be off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents/carers and the child. If a young person is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and can have an extremely negative effect on their academic and social progress.

**Persistent Absenteeism (PA)**

A student becomes a ‘persistent absentee’ when they miss 20% or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any student’s educational prospects and we need the support and co-operation of all stakeholders involved with the student to tackle this.

We monitor all absence thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority and those involved with the student will be informed of this immediately.

PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully through our pastoral system and we also combine this with academic mentoring where absence affects attainment.

All our PA pupils and their parents are subject to an Action Plan and the plan may include: allocation of additional support through a Mentor or a Connexions worker, individual incentive programmes and participation in group activities around raising attendance. All PA cases are also automatically made known to the Education Welfare Officer/Social Worker involved with the student.

**Absence Procedures**

**If your child is absent you must:**

* Contact us as soon as possible on the first day of absence;
* Send a note in on the first day they return with an explanation of the absence – you must do this even if you have already telephoned us;
* Or, you can call into school and report to reception, who will arrange for a member of staff to speak with you.

**If your child is absent we will:**

* Telephone or text the person with parental responsibility on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you;
* Invite you in to discuss the situation with a member of the School Management Team (SMT) if absences persist;
* Refer the matter to our Education Welfare Officer (EWO Hazel Redford) if attendance moves below 87%.

**The Education Welfare Officer EWO / Educational Support for Looked After Children (ESLAC)**

Parents/Carers/Professionals are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any problems together. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, the school may refer the child to an Education Welfare Officer from the Local Authority or Educational Support for Looked After Children (ESLAC). They will also try to resolve the situation by agreement but, if other ways of trying to improve the child’s attendance have failed and unauthorized absences persist, these Officers can use sanctions such as Penalty Notices or prosecutions. Full details of the options open to enforce attendance at school are available from the school or the Local Authority.

Alternatively, students/parents/carers may wish to contact the EWO / ESLAC to ask for help or information. They are independent of the school and will give impartial advice. Their telephone number is available from the school office or by contacting the Local Education Authority

**Lateness**

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If a young person misses the start of the day they can miss work and do not spend time with their class teacher getting vital information and news for the day. Late arriving pupils also disrupt lessons, can be embarrassing for the young person and can also encourage absence.

**How we manage lateness:**

The school day starts at **9.00am** and we expect students to be in class at that time.

If a student has a persistent late record parents, carers and other stakeholders will be asked to meet with our EWO and/or SMT to resolve the problem. However, anyone involved with the students can approach the school at any time if you are having problems getting the young person to school on time.

**Holidays in Term time**

Taking holidays in term time will can negatively affect a students education as much as any other absence and we expect parents/carers to help us by not to take young people away in school time. Remember that any savings you think you may make by taking a holiday in school time are offset by the cost to the young persons’ education.

**There is no automatic entitlement in law to time off in school time to go on holiday.**

Full details of our policy and procedures are available from the school, but it is important that you understand the circumstances when leave in term time will **not** be agreed by us:

* When a student is just starting the school. This is very important as your child needs to settle into their new environment as quickly as possible.
* Immediately before and during assessment periods GCSE or any other public examinations.
* When a students attendance record already includes any level of unauthorised absence.
* Where a student’s attendance rate is already below (90%) or will fall to or below that level as a result of taking holiday leave.

Any period of leave taken without the agreement of the school, or in excess of that agreed, will be classed as unauthorised and may attract sanctions such as a Penalty Notice.

The school has targets to improve attendance and students have an important part to play in meeting these targets. Targets for the school are available from the school.

The minimum level of attendance for this school is **95%** attendance and Howard House School will keep those involved with a young person updated regularly about progress towards this level.

Our target is to achieve better than this because the school feels that good attendance is the key to a successful education.

Through the school year Howard House School monitors absences and punctuality to show us where improvements need to be made. Information on any projects or initiatives that will focus on these areas will be provided by the school and we ask for your full support.

**Completing the Register**

The Head of School is required by law to maintain an attendance register. The Head of School is required to ensure that an attendance register for all pupils on the school roll is taken twice each day: once at the start of the morning session and once during the afternoon session. For each pupil, the register must be marked either as present, engaged in an approved educational activity away from the school site, or absent. If the pupil is absent, the register must say whether or not the absence has been authorised by the school. AUTHORISED OR UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE.