



# The High Weald Academy

## A Brook Learning Trust Academy

### Attendance Policy



#### Introduction

At Brook Learning Trust we bring together our unique academies in our belief in the power of education to change lives and communities. It is our steadfast purpose to challenge and defy the barriers that constrain the educational progress of any child. We set high aims for aspiration and secure collective responsibility for all our children's achievements. Our work is underpinned by the values of Integrity, Respect, Courage, Optimism, Excellence and Accountability.

#### Attendance: The High Weald Academy Mission Statement

- The High Weald Academy is committed to the continuous raising of the achievement of all our students. Regular attendance is critical if our students are to be successful and benefit from the opportunities presented to them.
- One of our basic principles is to celebrate success. Good attendance is fundamental to a successful and fulfilling school experience. The High Weald Academy actively promotes 100% attendance for all of our students and we use a variety of rewards to promote good attendance and punctuality.
- We recognise that parents/carers have a vital role and a legal responsibility to ensure good attendance. We promise to identify attendance and punctuality issues, investigate them and work in partnership with parents/carers, students and other agencies to resolve them.

#### The High Weald Academy Attendance Policy

The High Weald Academy seeks to ensure that all students receive a full-time education which maximises opportunities for each student to realise his/her true potential.

The High Weald Academy will strive to provide a welcoming, caring, environment in which each member of the academy community feels happy, included and secure.

All academy staff will work with students and their families to ensure that each student attends school regularly and punctually.

The High Weald Academy will establish an effective system of incentives and rewards, which acknowledges the efforts of students to improve their attendance and timekeeping, and will challenge the behaviour of those students and parents who give low priority to attendance and punctuality.

To meet these objectives, The High Weald Academy will establish an effective and efficient system of communication with students, parents and appropriate agencies to provide mutual advice, information and support.

#### Whole School Policy for attendance – Aims

1. To improve the overall percentage of students attending school
2. To make attendance and punctuality a priority for all those associated with The High Weald Academy including students, parents, teachers and academy councillors
3. To develop a framework which defines agreed roles and responsibilities and promotes consistency in carrying out designated tasks
4. To provide support, advice and guidance to parents and students

5. To develop a systematic approach to gathering and analysing attendance related data
6. To further develop positive and consistent communication between school and home
7. To implement a system of rewards and sanctions
8. To promote effective partnerships with the Education Welfare Service and with other services and agencies
9. To recognise the needs of the individual student when planning reintegration following significant periods of absence

### **Aim Number 1**

#### **To improve the overall percentage attendance of students of the Academy**

1. Apply whole school attendance policy consistently
2. Establish and maintain a high profile for attendance and punctuality
3. Relate attendance issues directly to The High Weald Academy's values, ethos and curriculum
4. Monitor progress in attendance measurable outcomes

### **Aim Number 2**

#### **To make attendance and punctuality a priority for all those associated with The High Weald Academy including students, parents, teachers and Academy Councillors**

1. Use staff/school handbook and policy
2. Hold a Year 7 induction evening for parents/students
3. Contribute to newsletters
4. Display materials at focal points – tutor rooms etc / screens / messages around school
5. Discuss attendance issues with the Local Authority attendance service/staff in appropriate meetings and/or in relevant staff meetings (eg attendance review meetings)
6. Promote the awards system

### **Aim Number 3**

#### **To develop a framework which defines agreed roles and responsibilities and promotes consistency in carrying out designated tasks**

1. Maintain procedures for statutory registration
2. Make telephone/letter/e-mail/text message contact via the attendance officer on the first day of absence
3. Ensure clearly defined late registration procedures
4. Undertaking immediate action in response to lateness (involving both students and parents)
5. Appoint an Attendance Officer to deal with attendance matters
6. Define clearly the roles and responsibilities within The High Weald Academy staffing structure
7. Timetable staff to meet with the School Liaison Officer, making optimum use of his/her time
8. Have clear procedures prior to referral to the School Liaison Officer
9. Review attendance regularly

### **Aim Number 4**

#### **To provide support, advice and guidance to parents and students**

1. Highlight attendance in:
  - Tutor time
  - PSHE
  - Assemblies
  - Student Manager meetings and case conferences

- Staff available to talk to students
  - Making use of available resources
  - Homework clubs
2. Public support offered by schools
  3. Set aside area/time for parents to speak to staff
  4. Seek improved communication with parents eg when parents ring in
  5. Provide accurate and up-to-date contact information for parents
  6. Involve parents from earliest stage

### **Aim Number 5**

#### **To develop a systematic approach in gathering and analysing attendance related data**

1. Standardise recording of:
  - authorised/unauthorised absence
  - educational activity
  - presence
2. Be consistent in the collection and provision of information
3. Decide what information, if any, is provided for:
  - Academy councillors
  - pastoral staff
  - other school staff
  - parents
  - students
  - Attendance Service
4. Identify developing patterns of irregular attendance and lateness

### **Aim Number 6**

#### **To further develop positive and consistent communication between home and school**

1. Initiate first day absence contact
2. Make full use of computer generated letters
3. Promote expectation of absence letters/telephone calls from parents
4. Explore the wide range of opportunities for parental partnerships
5. Provide information in a user friendly way (may include languages other than English and non-written)
6. Encourage parents to visit the school

### **Aim Number 7**

#### **To implement a system of rewards and sanctions**

1. Actively promote attendance and associated rewards and effective sanctions
2. Ensure fair and consistent implementation
3. Involve students in system evaluation through discussion at School Council
4. Make use of imaginative and immediate sanctions
5. Take action which accords with objectives agreed between School and others, eg School Liaison Officer, parent, Behaviour Support Service

## **Aim Number 8**

### **To promote effective partnerships with the PRU, Inclusion and Attendance Service and with other services and agencies**

1. Designated key staff for liaison with Attendance Welfare Service and other agencies
2. Carry out initial intervention/enquiries prior to referral
3. Gather and record relevant information to assist completion of Attendance Welfare Service
4. Arrange multi-agency liaison meetings as appropriate
5. Establish and maintain list of named contacts within the local community eg community police contact officer
6. Encourage active involvement of other services and agencies in the life of The High Weald Academy
7. Develop understanding of agency constraints and operating environments

## **Aim Number 9**

### **To recognise the needs of the individual student when planning reintegration following significant periods of absence**

1. Be sensitive to the individual needs and circumstances of returning students
2. Involve/inform all staff in/of reintegration process
3. Provide opportunities for counselling and feedback
4. Involve parents as far as possible
5. Agree timescale for review of reintegration plan
6. Include School Liaison Officers, parents and student in reintegration plan

### **Parental responsibility**

The responsibility for ensuring children attends school regularly and punctually rests with parents/carers. To this end, it is desirable that parents/carers should be the first line of contact whenever the child is absent from school.

It is the parents'/carers' responsibility to contact The High Weald Academy **whenever and on the first day** the child is absent.

Parents must telephone or e-mail The High Weald Academy when their child/ren are absent to explain the reason. This should be done before 09:30am. We operate a system of Daily Calling where we will contact parents and carers of children who are absent without explanation. This will be done initially by 'School Comms' an automated message, which will ask parents/carers to respond to the message sent. Reasons for absence are recorded on SIMS.net. Medical evidence should be provided on return to school [see page 5].

Registers are checked daily and where there is cause for concern further appropriate action is taken – contact is made with parents and carers; further monitoring of a child's attendance will be set up; the Attendance Welfare Service and, in the case of children on the Child Protection Register, Social Services are informed. The High Weald Academy wishes to support parents and carers who are finding it difficult to ensure regular and punctual attendance.

If no evidence of improvement is seen after this intervention, then formal procedures will follow. These are:

- Referral to Attendance and Behaviour Service and a visit or telephone call from the School Liaison Officer.
- A request to attend an Academy Councillor Panel dealing with Attendance and Punctuality

matters, to explain in a formal interview the reasons for non-attendance of the child/children.

### **The role of the Teacher**

Teachers should complete SIMS.net at the beginning of every session. The Attendance Officer will identify unauthorised absences. Frequent absence is a cause for concern.

**The Principal of The High Weald Academy will authorise absence. The parent/carer is not empowered to authorise absence.**

At The High Weald Academy students are expected to arrive by **8.25am**. The school day starts at 8.35am. It is recommended that students arrive at school 10 minutes beforehand.

Any students arriving after **8.45am** and after the register has been closed in a normal lesson will be recorded as late.

The legal responsibility for ensuring that students attend school regularly and punctually rests with parents/carers.

It is essential that parents/carers should be the first line of contact whenever a student is absent from school.

It is the parents'/carers' responsibility to contact The High Weald Academy whenever a student is absent and on the first day of absence.

Absence is either authorised, such as in the case of illness, religious observance, etc, or unauthorised, when there is no reason given for such absence or it is considered the reason is unjustified, i.e. a longer period than would reasonably be expected, or no reasonable explanation.

### **Authorising Absence**

As stated above, only academy the Principal can authorise absence and they are not obliged to accept a parent's explanation for absence. A letter, telephone message or email from a parent does not in itself authorise an absence. If absences are not authorised, parents will be notified. The absence must be unavoidable in order to be authorised. If no explanation is received, absences will not be authorised. Absence leave during term time can only be approved in exceptional circumstances. The following reasons are examples that will **NOT** be authorised:

- Persistent non-specific illness eg being poorly / unwell
- Absence of siblings if one child is ill
- Oversleeping
- Inadequate uniform
- Confusion over school dates
- Medical/ dental appointments of more than half a day without very good reason
- Child's / family birthday
- Shopping trip
- Family holidays

### **Providing Medical Evidence**

If a child is absent for more than 3 days through illness then medical evidence must be provided. This could take the form of a doctor's letter, an appointment card or prescription label with a current date. Where a student's attendance record is deemed a cause for concern, a medical explanation will be requested from parents for all absences. Where this is the case parents will be informed in

writing. All absences from this point, unless accompanied by medical evidence, will remain unauthorised for a period determined by the school (a minimum period of time of 4 weeks but in some cases for the remainder of the academic year). If attendance improves significantly then a decision may be made to authorise further absences without medical explanation. All letters explaining absence (recording parental and/or medical explanations) should be sent to the Attendance Office. Where there is doubt about the authenticity of absence attributed to illness, the school will refer the matter to the school nurse for further action.

### **Leave of absence for taking a holiday**

From September 2013 the Department for Education has amended the Pupil Registration Regulations, removing the Principal's ability to authorise leave of absence for the purpose of a family holiday. The school publishes the dates of its school terms at least a year in advance to assist parents/carers in the planning of holidays. The annual school calendar (outlining at a glance information about key events and dates) is available on the school website or a copy can be requested from the school office. Section 444 of the Education Act 1966 says that parents are guilty of an offence of failing to secure regular attendance at school unless they can prove that the child was absent for the following reasons:

- The school had given permission in writing
- Due to sickness or any unavoidable cause (the sickness of unavoidable cause must relate to the child, not the parent)
- Religious observance
- Due to failure by the Local Authority to provide transport

These are the only acceptable reasons for a child being absent from school. Holidays must not be taken during term time unless there are 'exceptional circumstances'.

Leave of absence for the purpose of a holiday during term time will not be authorised.

At the beginning of the school year The High Weald Academy will write to all parents/carers emphasising the requirement for good attendance and its impact on good attainment. It will be highlighted that holiday is not authorised at High Weald Academy.

### **Exceptional Circumstances**

In the event that leave may be required for 'exceptional circumstances' a written request should be directed to the Principal with at least two weeks' notice. Observing guidelines set out by the LEA, the Principal will then consider the request.

Exceptional circumstances might include:

- Service personnel returning from a duty abroad where it is evidenced that 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

The fundamental principle for defining 'exceptional' are that they are rare, significant, unavoidable and short. Holidays taken without the Principal's permission will mean the absence is unauthorised, which in turn will result in a Penalty Notice being served by the local authority.

## Lateness

The school day begins at 8.35am and all students are expected to be in School for registration at this time. **Any child arriving in class after 8.45am is late.** Reasons for lateness and time arrived are noted on SIMS.net.

Students who are consistently late are disrupting not only their own education but also that of others. Where persistent lateness gives cause for concern, further action will be taken.

Registers are closed at 9.10am.

## Roles and responsibilities

*Teacher/subject teachers have initial responsibility for:*

- Expecting good attendance and punctuality from the students in their group/class
- Conveying the importance of regular and punctual attendance to parents/students
- Recording attendance, absence and lateness appropriately and accurately in the register
- Referring the concerns to the Student Manager, Attendance Officer and Director and Head of Cohort.

*Attendance Officer has responsibility for:*

- Carrying out First Day Calling
- Close monitoring of students causing concern
- Contacting parents
- Liaison with the Local Authority Attendance Service

*Vice Principal has responsibility for:*

- Ensuring the implementation of this Policy
- Report attendance and absence matters/concerns to the Academy Council
- Setting targets for the improvement of attendance as required by the LEA

*Academy Councillors have responsibility for:*

- Ensuring the implementation of this Policy
- Liaising with the Vice Principal

*Parents have responsibility for:*

- Informing The High Weald Academy of reason for absences or lateness
- Ensuring that they do not allow a child to have time off school
- Making appointments outside school time wherever possible
- Following government policy of regular school attendance

## Completing the Register

The completion of registers can sometimes become so routine that its importance is lost. However, incomplete or inaccurate registers are unacceptable for several reasons:

- Registers provide the daily record of attendance of all students; important if the school has to be evacuated in an emergency
- They are documents which may be required in a court of law, eg as evidence in prosecutions for non-attendance
- They contribute to end of term and end of year reports for any certificates of achievement

For every session:

- SIMS.net must be completed at the beginning of each session
- The appropriate symbol must be entered – these are available in SIMS.net
- If an attendance code pre-exists in the register eg 'E' – the teacher should not over write this code as it will have been entered by the Attendance Officer as a pre-designated attendance pattern
- Data will automatically be produced
- Tutors should remind students each day to take any absence notes to the Attendance Office
- Notes from parents/carers and/or the office should be kept and filed at the Attendance Office

## Local Authority Action

For students with attendance below 90%, where there is no improvement in attendance and/ or where there are at least 10 sessions (5 days) unauthorised absence in a 100 session period, the school will consider the following:

- Attendance Improvement Meetings
- Home Visits
- Signposting to other agencies such as the Child and Young Persons Service or Social Services
- Fixed Penalty Notices for Poor Attendance

**Penalty Notices are issued in accordance with KCC's Education Penalty Notice Code of Conduct effective from January 2016 and revised in April 2017. The Attendance Service issues a warning letter setting out 15 school days during which no unauthorised absence is to be recorded. If unauthorised absence is recorded during the 15-day period a Penalty Notice may be issued. Penalty Notices may be issued in the following circumstances:**

- Truancy
- Parentally condoned absences
- Leave of absence in term time without authorisation
- Delayed return from leave of absence without prior agreement
- Persistent lateness after the register has closed
- Being present in a public place without reasonable justification during the first 5 days of any fixed term or permanent exclusion.

Where Penalty Notices are imposed, the regulations state that the penalty will be £120 to be paid within 28 days, reduced to £60 if paid within 21 days. Penalty Notices are issued to each parent of each child. Failure to pay a penalty in full by the end of the 28-day period may result in prosecution by the Local Authority.

Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 says that parents are **guilty** of an offence of failing to secure regular attendance at school unless they can prove that the child was absent:

- With leave (the school has given permission)
- Due to sickness or any unavoidable cause (the sickness or unavoidable cause must relate to the child and not the parent)
- Religious observance
- Failure by the Local Authority to provide transport

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

Children are required by law to attend school 190 days per year. The Government states that every pupil's attendance should be at least 95%.

#### **POLICY REVIEW AND RATIFICATION**

Policy reviewed annually and ratified by the academy council in March

This review by SLT & the Attendance Officer                      March 2018

Summary of amendments to this iteration:                      Changes to terminology only

Ratified by academy council    March 2018

Next review    March 2019