



# **Hardenhuish School**

## **Attendance Policy**

If you would like any policy in a more accessible version, please contact the Administration Manager

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## 1. Introduction

Hardenhuish School is committed to ensuring that all pupils and students understand the importance of full attendance at school. We embrace our moral duty to ensure that attendance is a high priority and strive to continue to improve the attendance of all pupils and students, to give them the best possible chance of success and to realise their true potential.

Attendance at Hardenhuish School is everyone's responsibility.

We understand that school is the foundation for preparing young people for life as emotionally resilient, confident adults who will make a positive contribution to their community. We are committed to providing an education of the highest quality for all and endeavour to provide an environment where all pupils and students feel valued and welcome.

Furthermore, we understand that absence from school may also mean that a young person is more vulnerable to safeguarding risks, such as sexual and criminal exploitation, including county lines activity. At Hardenhuish, we take our duty to safeguard children and our vision to inspire and support all pupils/students to succeed seriously and therefore, work tirelessly to create a culture where pupils want to attend, and we see excellent attendance as an indicator of our inclusive environment.

## 2. Aims

This policy aims to show our commitment to meeting our obligations with regards to school attendance, including those laid out in the Department for Education's (DfE's) statutory guidance on [working together to improve school attendance \(applies from 19 August 2024\)](#), through our whole school culture and ethos that values excellent attendance, including:

- Setting high expectations for the attendance and punctuality of all pupils/students
- Promoting excellent attendance and the benefits of excellent attendance
- Providing a welcoming, caring environment, whereby each member of the school community feels safe and secure
- Reducing absence, including persistent and severe absence
- Ensuring every pupil/student has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled
- Acting early to address patterns of absence in a supportive manner
- Building strong relationships with families to make sure pupils/students have the support in place to attend school
- Setting aspirational targets for our school attendance above national average and returning to pre-pandemic levels

We will also promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

## 3. Legislation and Guidance

This policy is based on the [Department for Education's \(DfE's\) statutory guidance on working together to improve school attendance \(applies from 19 August 2024\)](#). The guidance is based on the following pieces of legislation, which set 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, and 2016 amendments)
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013

It also refers to:

- School census guidance
- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2024
- Mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance: guidance for schools
- [Summary table of responsibilities for school attendance 2024](#)

## 4. Roles and Responsibilities

### 4.1. Governors

The Community Committee will:

- Hold the Headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy.
- Regularly review and challenge attendance data on at least a termly basis and repeatedly evaluate the effectiveness of the school's processes and improvement efforts to make sure they are meeting pupils/students' needs.
- Ensure all staff receive adequate training on attendance as part of the regular continued professional development offer.
- Ensure dedicated training is provided to staff with a specific attendance function in their role, including in interpreting and analysing attendance data.

### 4.2. The Headteacher

The Headteacher is responsible for:

- Implementing this policy at the school
- Communicating the school's high expectations for attendance and punctuality regularly to pupils/students and parents through all available channels
- Monitoring school-level absence data
- Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies
- Issuing penalty notices
- Making decisions on 'exceptional circumstances' for leave of absence requests

### 4.3. The Deputy Headteacher

(also known as the 'Senior Attendance Champion') is responsible for:

- Leading, championing and improving attendance across the school
- Setting a clear vision for improving and maintaining excellent attendance
- Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes
- Monitoring and analysing attendance data
- Having a strong grasp of absence data and oversight of absence data analysis
- Regularly monitoring and evaluating progress in attendance
- Benchmarking attendance data to identify areas of focus for improvement
- Providing regular attendance reports to school staff
- Providing regular attendance reports to the Governors, Headteacher and Leadership Team
- Reporting concerns about attendance to the Headteacher
- Working with education welfare officers to tackle persistent absence
- Advising the Headteacher when to issue penalty notices

- Establishing whole school procedures for improving absence including supportive interventions
- Developing safeguarding systems and effective working with other agencies to protect and promote the welfare of pupils, maximising their attendance
- Line managing the implementation of this policy with Attendance Officer and Learning Managers
- Support staff to develop effective intervention and reintegration plans with pupils and parents
- Liaising with pupils, parents and external agencies, where needed
- Building productive relationships with parents to discuss and tackle attendance issues
- Represent the school at Local Authority Attendance Meetings, chaired by Education Welfare Officer

The Senior Attendance Champion is Jo Glossop (Deputy Headteacher) and can be contacted on [jeg@hardenhuish.wilts.sch.uk](mailto:jeg@hardenhuish.wilts.sch.uk).

#### **4.4. The Director of 6<sup>th</sup> Form**

The Director of 6<sup>th</sup> Form with the 6th Form Team and tutors are responsible for:

- Monitoring the attendance of Year 12 and Year 13 students, including the monitoring of vulnerable students and disadvantaged groups
- Being vigilant about possible safeguarding issues associated with poor attendance and referring these to the safeguarding team
- Being vigilant about any SEND needs, or the potential of as yet undiagnosed SEND needs, which may be the underlying cause of poor attendance and referring these to the SEN team
- Promoting and celebrating excellent attendance through the rewards system and assemblies
- Challenging unexplained or persistent absence through contact with parents
- Meeting with parents where attendance and/or punctuality are a cause for concern
- Closely monitoring students with previous attendance concerns and those whose attendance falls below target in line with lower school attendance process
- Sending attendance concern letters to parents
- Creating appropriate intervention/action plans to secure improvement
- Ensuring early intervention for students who are at risk of persistently absent (PA)
- Using knowledge of historical patterns of attendance to identify students at risk of poor attendance and apply early intervention
- Identifying and reporting children who are missing in education to the safeguarding team

#### **4.5. The Designated Teacher for Looked After Children**

The Designated Teacher for Looked After Children is responsible for:

- Monitoring the attendance of Looked After Children in line with their PEPs
- Informing Learning Managers and other relevant staff on emerging attendance issues involving LAC pupils

#### **4.6. The Learning Managers**

The Learning Managers, in conjunction with their Pastoral Managers, are responsible for:

- Monitoring the attendance of their Year Group, including the monitoring of vulnerable pupils and disadvantaged groups

- Being vigilant about possible safeguarding issues associated with poor attendance and referring these to the safeguarding team
- Being vigilant about any SEND needs, or the potential of as yet undiagnosed SEND needs, which may be the underlying cause of poor attendance and referring these to the SEN team
- Promoting and celebrating good and improving attendance through the rewards system and assemblies
- Challenging unexplained or persistent absence through contact with parents
- Meeting with parents where attendance and/or punctuality are a cause for concern (below target)
- Closely monitoring pupils with previous attendance concerns using historic data
- Sending attendance concern letters to parents
- Chairing School Attendance Meetings (SAM) and SAM reviews following a downward trend in attendance
- Creating appropriate intervention/action plan to secure improvement
- Ensuring early intervention for pupils who are at risk of persistent absence (PA)
- Using knowledge of historical patterns of attendance to identify pupils at risk of poor attendance and apply early intervention
- Leading on Reduced Education Provision (REP) for long term absence
- Identifying and reporting children who are missing in education to the Senior Attendance Champion
- Consider what reasonable adjustments can be made to support pupils improve their levels of attendance, in line with guidance with from health professionals and whilst maintaining our statutory attendance responsibilities
- Requesting medical evidence when a child's attendance falls as a result of illness and remains below 90%

#### **4.7. The Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO)**

The SENCO, with the SEN team, are responsible for:

- Work collaboratively with the Year Teams in supporting high levels of attendance
- Sharing attendance concerns for any pupils/students on the SEND register with the DHT/LM/PM to allow for transfer of relevant information
- Being part of reintegration plans for pupils/students on SEND register following times of absence as needed
- Consulting on what reasonable adjustments can be made to support pupils/students to improve their levels of attendance, in line with guidance with from health professionals and whilst maintaining our statutory attendance responsibilities
- Working in partnership with parents to develop specific support approaches for attendance for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities, including, where applicable, ensuring the provision outlined in the pupil's education, health and care plan is accessed as appropriate over time.
- Working in partnership with families to help support routines where school transport is regularly being missed and work with other partners to encourage the scheduling of additional support interventions or medical appointments outside of the main school day
- Establishing strategies for removing the in-school barriers pupils with SEN face, including considering support or reasonable adjustments for uniform, transport, routines, access to support in school and lunchtime arrangements.
- Considering adjustments to practice and policies, agreed with the Senior Attendance Champion, to help meet the needs of pupils who are struggling to attend school, as well as

making formal reasonable adjustments under section 20 of the Equality Act 2010 where a pupil has a disability. Any adjustments should be agreed by, and regularly reviewed with the pupil and their parents.

- Ensuring joined up pastoral care is in place where needed and consider whether a time-limited phased return to school would be appropriate.
- Communicating with the local authority, for pupils with an EHCP (Education Health Care Plan), where their attendance falls or they become aware of barriers to attendance that relate to the pupil's needs.
- Liaising with the local authority to review and amend the EHCP to incorporate attendance and support where appropriate.
- Leading on Reduced Education Provision (REP) for long term absence for any pupils with an EHCP.

#### **4.8. The Attendance Officer**

The Attendance Officer is responsible for:

- Liaising with Year Teams, tutors, parents on any attendance issues causing concern
- Monitoring registration marks for morning and afternoon attendance for Ns and action accordingly (all Ns should be updated with appropriate code within 5 days of absence)
- Checking daily messages on the absence line
- Recording on Arbor the details of messages left by parents on the absence line
- Checking all vulnerable pupils are present and action if absent by informing the Year office
- Updating registers using the cover summary sheet and all pupils who have alternative provision
- Initiating first day response for all absences via text messaging or telephone calls.
- Sending messages/making calls to parents of pupils with unexplained absence
- Sending any concerns to the relevant pastoral team for follow up
- Monitoring incomplete registers daily and provide the DHT with regular information to act on
- Produce accurate Attendance Certificates in preparation for all attendance communication and meetings
- Completing forms for Fixed Penalty Notices where applicable and maintaining a log
- Issuing Fixed Penalty Notice requests in line with school attendance protocol and LA guidance

Class teachers are responsible for recording attendance for both morning and afternoon sessions on a daily basis, using the correct codes (see Appendix 1: Attendance Codes), and submitting this information to the school office on the same day.

#### **4.9. The Teachers/Tutors**

The Teachers and Tutors are responsible for:

- Recording attendance for both morning and afternoon sessions on a daily basis, using the correct codes (see Appendix 1: Attendance Codes)
- Ensuring that an accurate register is taken every lesson and following up on any suspicious absenteeism
- Challenging lateness and setting high standards of punctuality themselves
- Emphasising the importance of attendance and its impact on attainment
- Promoting the next lesson and the sequence of the lesson to motivate students to be in the classroom

- Applying rewards and sanctions consistently
- Reviewing the tutor group weekly attendance update date to identify issues, intervene early and help set targets as part of discussions around attendance
- Considering the individual needs and vulnerabilities of pupils
- Warmly welcoming tutees/pupils/student back into school following absence
- Reinforcing that pupils/students are expected to catch up on missed work and reminding them how to do this
- Promoting and engaging with the attendance policy

#### 4.10. Parents<sup>1</sup>

Parents are responsible for:

- Making sure their child attends every day on time. All pupils should be in site by 8.30am. The register closes at 9am. The end of the school day is 3pm.
- Calling the school to report their child's absence on the day of the absence (and each subsequent day of absence) with the reason for absence.
- Providing the school with more than 1 emergency contact number for their child
- Completing, in advance, [a leave of absence request](#) if, in exceptional circumstances, a leave of absence is requested
- Ensuring that, where possible, medical appointments for their child are made outside of the school day
- Attending SAM meetings and reviews to discuss absences and keeping to any attendance contracts that they make with the school and/or local authority
- Seeking support, where necessary, for maintaining good attendance, by contacting their child's tutor or Year team.
- Treating staff with respect (verbally and in writing) in all matters including attendance. The school is upholding the legal requirement of good attendance for all children.
- Providing medical evidence for prolonged or intermittent absence in the case where a pupil's attendance is classed as persistently absent (less than 90%) and remains or returns to below 90%.

Pupils and Students are responsible for attending every timetabled lesson on time unless they are ill or have an authorised absence.

## 5. Recording Absence

### 5.1. Attendance Register

We will keep an electronic 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, using the appropriate national attendance and absence codes from the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024, whether every pupil is:

- Present
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity

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<sup>1</sup> Parents refers to the adult in the school and/or local authority decided is most appropriate to work with, including all those who have parental responsibility for a young person and those who have day-to-day responsibility for the young person (lives with and looks after them).



- 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: Attendance Codes for the DfE attendance codes.

We will also record:

- Whether the absence is authorised or not
- The nature of the activity, where a pupil is attending an approved educational activity
- The nature of circumstances, where a pupil is unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 6 years after the date on which the entry was made.

The school day starts at 8.30am and ends at 3pm. Pupils must arrive in school by 8.30am on each school day.

The register for the first session will be taken at 8.30am and will be kept open until 9am. The register for the second session will be taken at 1.15pm and will be kept open until 1.45pm.

## **5.2. Unplanned absence**

Parents must notify the school of the reason for the absence on the first day of an unplanned absence by 9am or as soon as practically possible, by calling the school 01249 650693.

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

Where the absence is longer than 3 days, or there are doubts about the authenticity of the illness, the school will ask for 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 will be notified of this in advance.

## **5.3. Planned absence**

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the parent notifies the school in advance of the appointment. [Absence request forms](#) are available on the school website. However, we encourage parents 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.

Parents must also apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence (see section 5)

## **5.4. 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

Parents are encouraged to inform the school at the earliest opportunity if their young person will be late by calling the school on 01249 650693. If any other members of staff are informed of absence by a parent, they must let the attendance officer know as soon as possible.

Pupils are regarded as late if they arrive after 8.30am (or in the afternoon after 1.15pm); a U code will be recorded on the register if they arrive after 9am. If a student arrives late but before registration closes, an L code will be recorded. The number of minutes late, and the reason for lateness, will be recorded on the register.

### **5.5. Following up unexplained absence**

Where any pupil we expect to attend school does not attend, or stops attending, without reason, the school will:

- Text the parent(s) on the morning of the first day of unexplained absence to ascertain the reason. If the school cannot reach any of the pupil's emergency contacts, the school may contact police, social services and/or the educational welfare officer
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not
- Identify the correct attendance code to use and input it as soon as the reason for absence is ascertained – this will be no later than 5 working days after the session(s) for which the pupil was absent
- Text/Call the parent on each day that the absence continues without explanation, to make sure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary.
- If absence continues, the school will consider involving an education welfare officer
- Where relevant, report the unexplained absence to the pupil's youth offending team officer or social worker
- Where appropriate, offer support to the pupil and parents to improve attendance
- Identify whether the pupil needs support from wider partners, as quickly as possible, and make the necessary referrals
- Where support is not appropriate, not successful, or not engaged with we may issue a notice to improve, penalty notice or other legal intervention (see section 5.2 below), as appropriate.

Reporting to parents

The school will regularly inform parents about their child's attendance and absence levels. Parents can check attendance on both the parent Arbor app. Attendance figures will also be shared on every school report.

## **6. Authorised and unauthorised absence**

### **6.1. Approval for term time absence**

The Headteacher will allow pupils to be absent from the school site for certain educational activities, or to attend other schools or settings.

The Headteacher will only grant a leave of absence to a pupil during term time if the request meets the specific circumstances set out in the [2024 school attendance regulations](#).

These circumstances are:

- Taking part in a regulated performance, or regulated employment abroad
- Attending an interview
- Study leave
- A temporary, time-limited part-time timetable
- Exceptional circumstances

A leave of absence is granted at the Headteacher's discretion, including the length of time the pupil is authorised to be absent for.

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

The Headteacher will only grant a leave of absence to pupils during term time if they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'.

As a leave of absence will only be granted in exceptional circumstances, leave of absence will not be granted for the purposes of a family holiday.

Leave of absence will not be granted for a pupil to take part in protest activity during school hours.

Any request should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated and, where possible, at least two weeks before the absence, and in accordance with any [leave of absence request form](#), accessible via the school website. The Headteacher may require evidence to support any request for leave of absence. If a pupil is over compulsory school age (e.g. sixth form), leave can be requested or agreed by the pupil or a parent they normally live with.

Other valid reasons for authorised absence include (but are not limited to):

- Illness (including mental-health illness) and medical/dental appointments
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parent(s) belong(s). If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parent's religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart
- Parent(s) travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh gypsies, Irish and Scottish travellers, showmen (fairground people) and circus people, barges (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
- If the pupil is currently suspended or excluded from school (and no alternative provision has been made)

Other reasons the school may allow a pupil to be absent from the school site, which are not classified as absences, include (but are not limited to):

- Attending an offsite approved educational activity, sporting activity or visit or trip arranged by the school
- Attending another school at which the pupil is also registered (dual registration)
- Attending provision arranged by the local authority
- Attending work experience
- If there is any other unavoidable cause for the pupil not to attend school, such as disruption to travel caused by an emergency, a lack of access arrangements, or because the school premises are closed

## 6.2. Sanctions

Hardenhuish School will make use of the full range of potential sanctions – including, but not limited to, those listed below – to tackle poor attendance. Decisions will be made on an individual, case-by-case basis.

### 6.2.1. Penalty Notices

The Headteacher (or someone authorised by them), local authority or the police can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age, by issuing a penalty notice.

If the school issues a penalty notice, it will check with the local authority before doing so, and send a copy of any penalty notice issued. Before issuing a penalty notice, the school will consider the individual case, including:

- Whether the national threshold for considering a penalty notice has been met (10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks)
- Whether a penalty notice is the best available tool to improve attendance for that pupil
- Whether further support, a notice to improve or another legal intervention would be a more appropriate solution
- Whether any obligations that the school has under the Equality Act 2010 make issuing a penalty notice inappropriate

A penalty notice may also be issued where parents allow their child to be present in a public place during school hours without reasonable justification, during the first 5 days of a suspension or exclusion (where the school has notified the parents that the pupil must not be present in a public place on that day).

Each parent who is liable for the pupil's offence(s) can be issued with a penalty notice, but this will usually only be the parent/parents who allowed the absence.

The payment must be made directly to the local authority, regardless of who issues the notice. If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute or withdraw the notice.

If issued with a first penalty notice, the parent must pay £80 within 21 days, or £160 within 28 days.

If a second penalty notice is issued to the same parent in respect of the same pupil, the parent must pay £160 if paid within 28 days.

A third penalty notice cannot be issued to the same parent in respect of the same child within 3 years of the date of the issue of the first penalty notice. In a case where the national threshold is met for a third time within those 3 years, alternative action will be taken instead.

### 6.2.2. Notices to Improve

If the national threshold has been met and support is appropriate, but parents do not engage with offers of support, the school may offer a notice to improve to give parents a final chance to engage with support.

Notices to improve will be issued in line with processes set out in the local code of conduct for the local authority area in which the pupil attends school.

They will include:

- Details of the pupil's attendance record and of the offences

- The benefits of regular attendance and the duty of parents under section 7 of the Education Act 1996
- Details of the support provided so far
- Opportunities for further support, or to access previously provided support that was not engaged with
- A clear warning that a penalty notice may be issued if attendance doesn't improve within the improvement period, along with details of what sufficient improvement looks like, which will be decided on a case-by-case basis
- A clear timeframe of between 3 and 6 weeks for the improvement period
- The grounds on which a penalty notice may be issued before the end of the improvement period

## 7. Monitoring attendance

Termly monitoring of whole school attendance and the attendance of groups of students takes place by the Senior Attendance Champion and is present to the Headteacher, Leadership Team and Governors.

- Monthly/Termly (depending on the length of term) monitoring is conducted by the Senior Attendance Champion, the Year Teams, SEN team and the Attendance Officer
- Fortnightly monitoring is conducted in the Year Teams and Attendance Officer (where necessary)
- In addition, the Senior Attendance Champion consults with the EWO on a regular basis for guidance, advice and discussion of more complex cases.
- Weekly monitoring of the attendance data is undertaken by the Year Teams and appropriate interventions are planned and actioned.
- Daily monitoring is undertaken by the Year Team and the Attendance Officer who liaise closely to ensure that all absences are explained; that the correct coding has been used and that contact is made with parents as required. As part of the daily monitoring, the Year Team will prioritise contact for students with Pupil Premium status and the SEN team for pupils with SEN.
- Pupil level absence data is shared directly with the DfE, via the Local Authority from Arbor via Wonde. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. We compare our attendance data to the national average and share this with governors. Annual absence figures are published and used as benchmark data for school improvement.

## 8. Strategies for promoting and improving attendance

We reward and improve attendance by:

- Promoting the importance of excellent attendance to pupils/students and parents
- Emphasising the direct links between attendance and impact on attainment
- Promoting the next lesson and sequence of the lesson to motivate pupils to be in the classroom
- Presenting Gold Awards (99-100%), Silver Awards (98-99%) and Bronze Awards (97-98%) three times throughout the year. Pupils receive a certificate/email home and ACE points. Platinum Awards are presented by the Headteacher to all pupils who receive three Gold Awards in one year.
- Sharing tutor group and year group data weekly which can then inform early discussions alongside prizes for highest/improved attendance throughout the year.

- Rewarding 'Improved Attendance' throughout the year with certificates, emails home and ACE points.
- Presenting ACEs to pupils for having no late marks or minutes in a week
- Monitoring attendance regularly via tutors and Learning Managers who celebrate good attendance and encourage improved attendance where appropriate.

To ensure the reward system is non-discriminatory and inclusive to those pupils with medical conditions, human input is added to the raw data to ensure that improvements and personal achievements are also rewarded.

Parents are encouraged to use the Arbor App so they can see their child's attendance.

### **8.1. Attendance Concerns**

The school target for attendance is 97% (See Appendix 2: Attendance Protocol). If a pupils attendance falls below 95% and the school holds concerns, we will follow up by sending a letter to inform you of our concerns. We endeavour to intervene as soon as possible to make sure we are maintaining and supporting pupils to have good attendance in collaboration with parents.

If attendance continues to decline, following our robust and consistent monitoring of attendance, we will invite parents to attend a School Attendance Meeting (SAM), where we can explore reasons for the absence and try to support in improving the attendance rate. Invitations will be sent to both parents with parental responsibility who we hold details for, regardless of residency. At this meeting targets will be set, to support improved attendance, in conjunction with parent and pupil. Should a young person's % attendance rate fall to below 90%, they are classed as persistently absent from school (DFE Working together to improve school attendance – August 2024). Medical evidence will therefore be required to authorise any further absences (this could include a medical appointment card, a prescription or a doctor's note) whilst the child remains or returns to an attendance rate below 90%.

If a parent does not attend the SAM and no prior notice is given, the meeting will be held in the absence of parents (and minutes with targets will be sent). If a parent is unable to attend the SAM meeting and communicates this, we are able to offer one further (mutually convenient) meeting or if preferred by the parent, the meeting can be held via the phone or teams. Given the time sensitive nature of a declining attendance pattern, non-attendance at a SAM meeting, cannot have an ongoing delay to our attendance process. Following the SAM meeting we will continue to monitor attendance and as part of our monitoring complete a review, that will be set at the SAM meeting, or an invitation will be sent following the meeting (up to four weeks after the SAM). If there is an improvement, then we will continue to support the improved attendance. If there is a further decline, the student is below 90% attendance and we have received no medical evidence to enable us to authorise the absence from school, we will consider further action in accordance with Working Together to Improve Attendance 2024 legislation. Further action could be in the form of an Attendance Contract (see below), a Formal Notice to Improve or a referral to the Education Welfare Service. The threshold for this referral is ten unauthorised sessions (the equivalent of five days), in a ten-week period. The Education Welfare Officer will then arrange a local authority attendance meeting. Parents will be informed of the intention to refer.

### **8.2. Attendance contracts**

Purpose of attendance contracts and when they may be appropriate (taken from Working together to improve school attendance (applies from 19 August 2024) ([publishing.service.gov.uk](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)).

- An attendance contract is a formal written agreement between a parent and either the school or local authority to address irregular attendance at school or alternative provision.

- An attendance contract is not legally binding but allows a more formal route to secure engagement with support where a voluntary early help plan has not worked or is not deemed appropriate.
- An attendance contract is not a punitive tool, it is intended to provide support and offer an alternative to prosecution.
- Parents cannot be compelled to enter an attendance contract, and they cannot be agreed in a parent's absence.
- There is no obligation on the school or local authority to offer an attendance contract, and it may not be appropriate in every instance, but an attendance contract should always be explored before moving forward to an education supervision order or prosecution.
- The aim from the outset should be for the parent(s), and the pupil where they are old enough, the school and the local authority to work in partnership.
- Where a school and/or local authority decide to use an attendance contract, a meeting should be arranged with the parent(s). It should include the pupil if they are old enough to understand. The meeting should explain the purpose of an attendance contract and why using one would be beneficial in the family's circumstances.
- The parent(s) should be asked to outline their views on the pupil's attendance at school, any underlying issues and how they believe these should be addressed. The meeting should also allow them to share their views on the idea of an attendance contract and what type of support they think would be helpful to secure the pupil's regular attendance.
- Where a parent fails to attend the meeting without good reason or notification, further attempts should be made to contact them and arrange another meeting but all attempts at support should be recorded.
- One attendance contract may be arranged with all parents, or in circumstances where it is desirable to have different requirements for each parent then separate attendance contracts for each parent should be arranged. Further detail is available on the hyperlink above.

### **8.3. Reducing persistent and severe absence**

Persistent absence is where a pupil misses 10% or more of school, and severe absence is where a pupil misses 50% or more of school. Reducing persistent and severe absence is central to the school's strategy for improving attendance.

The school will:

- Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence
- Consider potential safeguarding issues and, where suspected or present, address them in line with Keeping Children Safe in Education
- Welcome pupils back following an absence and provide catch up support to build confidence and bridge gaps.
- Hold regular meetings with the parents of pupils who the school (and/or local authority) considers to be vulnerable or at risk of persistent or severe absence, or who are persistently or severely absent, to:
  - Discuss attendance and engagement at school
  - Listen, and understand barriers to attendance
  - Explain the help that is available
  - Explain the potential consequences of, and sanctions for, persistent and severe absence
  - Review any existing actions or interventions

- Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance, in conjunction with the local authority, where relevant
- Consider alternative support that could be put in place to remove any barriers to attendance and re-engage these pupils. In doing so, the school will sensitively consider some of the reasons for absence.
- Provide tailored praise and encouragement when pupils attend and arrive on time
- Make reasonable adjustments to support the pupil's attendance at school
- Implement sanctions, where necessary

## **9. Supporting pupils who are absent or returning to school**

### **9.1. Pupils absent due to complex barriers to attendance**

We will continue to look at every student as an individual and work with families to create an action plan to help the student to improve their attendance. We want parents to feel supported and able to speak to staff and to seek help at the earliest opportunity.

#### **9.1.1. Pupils absent due to mental or physical ill health or SEND**

Where a pupil has an EHCP and their attendance falls, or the school becomes aware of barriers to attendance that related to the pupil's needs, the school will inform the local authority.

We encourage face to face meetings with parents and pupils where both are offered an opportunity to be honest about barriers they are experiencing. We will then work collaboratively with relevant school departments to create plans to overcome these. These will be specific to each individual. This will be led by the SEND team where appropriate.

For pupils struggling with mental and physical health, we have a range of wellbeing support that can be implemented as appropriate; this might include mentoring or working with the school counsellor. We can contact the Medical Needs Education Reintegration Service (MNERS) for advice and support.

#### **9.1.2. Pupils returning to school after a lengthy or unavoidable period of absence**

This will be tailored to the individual needs of the pupil. We encourage parents to seek support from the relevant Learning Manager or Pastoral Manager who will offer targeted support for each individual once the needs of that pupil have been assessed. If the student is off for a period of 15 days in an academic year (this is not necessarily 15 days consecutively), school are required to contact the Education Welfare Service



## 10. Appendix 1: Attendance Codes

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

Code	Full name	Description
<b>Pupil is counted as present.</b>		
/ or \	Present am or pm	Pupil present in school during registration.
L	Late	Pupil arrived late before the register has closed.
<b>Pupil is counted as present, at an Approved Educational Activity.</b>		
B	Educated off site	Pupil is at an off-site supervised educational activity approved by the school.
K	Education provision provided by LA	Pupil has education provision arranged by a local authority, rather than the school.
P	Sporting Activity (Approved)	Pupil is taking part in a sporting activity that has been approved by the school and supervised by someone authorised by the school.
V	Educational trip	Pupil is on an education visit/trip arranged by the school.
W	Work Experience	Pupil in the attending approved work experience.
<b>Pupil is counted as absent, authorised.</b>		
C	Exceptional circumstance	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence by the Headteacher for exceptional circumstances.
C1	Participating in a regulated performance	Pupil is participating in a regulated performance or employment abroad.
C2	Part-time timetables	Pupil has an authorised reduced educational provision which is agreed by the school and the LA.
J1	Interview	Pupil has a leave of absence to attend an interview for employment or admission into another educational institution
E	Excluded	Pupil has been suspended or excluded from school and no alternative provision has been made.
M	Medical/Dental Appointments	Pupil is absent due to a medical or dental appointment that could not be made outside of school hours.
R	Religious Observance	Pupil is absent for religious observance on a day designated by the religious body.
S	Study Leave	Pupil has been granted study leave to prepare for a public examination.
T	Traveller Absence	Used when Roma, English and Welsh Gypsies, Irish and Scottish Travellers, Showmen (fairground people) and Circus people, Bargees (occupational boat dwellers) or New Travellers are known to be travelling for occupational purposes and have agreed this with the school.
I	Illness	Pupil is unable to attend due to illness.

I01	Illness	This code maps to the statutory mark of I. This is for students absent due to non-coronavirus related illness (unless the truthfulness of the claim is in question). This code should not be used for medical or dental appointments.
<b>Pupil is counted as absent, unauthorised.</b>		
G	Unauthorised holiday	Pupil is on holiday not approved by the school.
N	No Reason	Pupil is absent but the reason for the absence has not been provided.
O	Unauthorised Absence	Pupil is absent but school is not satisfied with the reason given for absence.
U	Late (After Register Closes)	Pupil arrived in school after the register has closed.
<b>Other codes</b>		
D	Dual Registration	Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are registered.
X	Non-statutory school age absence	Non-compulsory school-age children are not expected to attend.
Y1	Unable to attend	Absence due to transport normally provided not being available.
Y2	Unable to attend	Widespread disruption to travel
Y3	Unable to attend	Part of school closed.
Y4	Unable to attend	Unexpected whole school closure (e.g. due to adverse weather)
Y5	Unable to attend	Pupil is in the criminal justice system.
Y6	Unable to attend	Absence due to public health guidance or law.
Y7	Unable to attend	Any other unavoidable cause.
Z	Pupil Not On Roll	Pupil has not joined the school yet but has been registered
#	School Closed To Pupils	whole or partial school closures that are known or planned in advance.

# 11. Appendix 2: Attendance Protocol

## HARDENHUISH SCHOOL ATTENDANCE PROTOCOL

Hardenhuish School sets an ambitious average attendance target of 97% for all pupils in Years 7 to 11. Below are the routines, proactive and reactive steps we will take to try to achieve this.

### PROMOTING GOOD ATTENDANCE

Promote importance of good attendance to pupils and parents; highlighting links between attendance and attainment and attendance and social and emotional intelligence/skills for the future. This will be done through tutoring, assemblies, PLAGs and through posters around the site.

Certificates will be awarded for 'Improved Attendance' throughout the year.

### REWARDING ATTENDANCE ABOVE 97%

Pupils receive rewards certificates for two-termly attendance (3 per year).

97-98% = Bronze Attendance Certificate

98-99% = Silver Attendance Certificate

99%-100% = Gold Attendance Certificate

3 Gold Certificates in a school year = Platinum Certificate awarded by the Headteacher

### MONITORING ATTENDANCE

**Daily:** If a parent of an absent child has not contacted the school to inform us of a reason for absence, a member of staff will contact them on the first day of absence (either through text message or by telephone) to enquire as to the reason for absence. If no response is given, the Attendance Officer (AO) will follow up until reason for absence is known.

**Throughout the term:** The Pastoral team review attendance figures in a series of meetings throughout each term\* and compare them against previous figures to identify trends that may be emerging.

\*Year Team fortnightly. Learning Manager (LMs/Pastoral Manager (PM)/Attendance Officer (AO) fortnightly. Deputy Headteacher (DHT)/LMs/PMs/AO/SEN termly to review reasons for absences and decisions made.

*\*\*Professional judgement must be used when considering the figures/interventions below. The time of year and nature of absences must be considered before the interventions listed are triggered (e.g. if a pupil has missed a week of school with a broken limb in September, their attendance in October will be around 80%, such pupils should not face the interventions listed). Most pupils will go through each stage concurrently but pupils may be placed straight on a higher stage at the discretion of school staff if warranted (based on previous years' attendance). Pupils who are unable to attend school due to exceptional circumstances (for example, extended absence due to medical reasons confirmed by a medical professional) will be supported through a Reduced Educational Provision agreement (REP) see below.*

