



Attendance Policy

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Version Control

The table below shows the history of the document and the changes that were made at each version:

Date agreed	Summary of changes
4 th March 2025	Updates throughout.
15 th March 2022	N/A

1. Purpose of Policy

Hampstead School wants to ensure that all students receive a full-time education to maximise opportunities, attainment, well-being, and wider life chances for everybody to realise their potential. We aim for an environment, which enables and encourages all members of the school community to strive for excellence and enjoyment in education. For our students to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and punctually.

At Hampstead School, our objectives are to develop an ethos which demonstrates to students, parents/carers, and the wider community the importance of good attendance and punctuality.

Regular and punctual attendance is essential for effective learning and students should be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. This is important to your child's achievement, wellbeing, and their wider development. There is a renewed national focus on maximising students' time in the classroom, as evidence shows that the students with the highest attendance throughout their time in school gain the best exam results at all levels of education.

We acknowledge that some students find it harder than others to regularly attend school. Hampstead School and professional partners will work with students and parents to remove any barriers to attendance by building strong and trusting relationships with the intention to work together to put the right support in place. If you have any concerns about your child's attendance, please speak to us. The key contacts are at the end of this document and on our school website.

2. Attendance Target

Hampstead School intends to maintain high levels of attendance each year and it is our intention to meet or exceed national expectations, since excellent attendance is fundamental in achieving academic success. Our current target is 95%.

The school has set a target to improve attendance and your child has an important part to play in meeting these targets.

Minimum attendance targets for the school and for classes are displayed in the school and you should take time to study them.

We will keep you updated regularly about progress to this level and how your child's attendance compares.

Throughout the school year we monitor absence and punctuality to identify where improvements need to be made. Information about projects or initiatives that focus on these areas will be available on the website or in our fortnightly bulletin. We ask that you take time to access this information to support us in achieving our aims.

3. Term Dates

School term dates are published in advance and can be found on the school website.

Whilst every effort is made for common term dates across the council, there are times that term dates may differ if you have children attending more than one school. Please check the term dates on each school website and do not assume each school will have the same term dates.

They are also available from the school office and will be regularly highlighted in the school newsletter.

Staff training days (inset days) are included in the term dates schedule. Parents or carers will receive written notice of any changes in term dates. Those changes would also be published in the calendar on the weekly school newsletter.

4. Why Regular Attendance is Important

Learning

We know from experience and from studies that regular absence and poor punctuality can have a detrimental effect on a student's learning. When a student is absent or arrives late it disrupts teaching routines so may affect the learning not only of that student but also that 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 a penalty notice or prosecution.

Safeguarding and access to support services

At Hampstead School, we believe every student should be able learn in an enjoyable and safe environment and be protected from harm. We respect and value all students and are committed to providing a caring, friendly, and safe environment for all our students so they can learn and participate in all school activities in a relaxed and secure atmosphere.

Attending school regularly promotes the welfare and safety of children whilst they are not in the care of their parents/carers. Safeguarding is about offering early help and support to children and families and difficulties with attendance and lateness may be signs that something is worrying the student or that there are difficulties within the family. Poor or irregular attendance, persistent lateness, or children missing from education may be considered a safeguarding matter if this places your child at risk of harm.

Safeguarding the interests of each child is everyone's responsibility and within the context of this school; safeguarding and promoting the welfare and life opportunities for students encompass:

Attendance, Behaviour Management, Health and Safety, Access to the Curriculum and Anti-bullying, protecting children from abuse and neglect, online safety, radicalisation and extremism, awareness of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE).

More information on safeguarding and the protection of students can be found in the school's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

To allow us to safeguard the students in our care it is important that parents and carers provide the school with their current contact details and provide at least three other contact numbers in case of emergency.

It is also important for parents to let school know of any specific vulnerability in relation to their child or home circumstances. If you are uncertain about what would be considered a vulnerability or would like to discuss attendance, please contact the appropriate year group team. Email addresses can be found here: <https://www.hampsteadschool.org.uk/communications>

We will seek advice on attendance concerns from our school Education Welfare Officer (EWO) and Camden's Attendance and Children Out of School (ACOS) and where appropriate, we will seek consent to refer to other support services that can help support students and their families to improve attendance.

5. Promoting Regular Attendance

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

To help us all to focus on this we will:

- Provide parents / carers with details of attendance in external communications.
- Share attendance and punctuality data with parents as part of the twice yearly reporting schedule and discuss how this data impacts attainment and progress.
- Celebrate good progress and regular attendance by individuals, classes and whole school.
- Reward good or improving attendance through class competitions, certificates, and outings/events. There may be factors in some student's lives that may mean they do not achieve 100% attendance but good or improve attendance should also be celebrated.
- Run partnership events, such as Attendance Surgeries, where parents, students and staff and ACOS can work together to raise attendance levels.

6. Informing Students About Importance of Good Attendance & Punctuality

Students receive guidance from teachers on an individual, class and school level about the importance of good attendance and punctuality. If a student has concerns about their attendance or punctuality, they are encouraged to speak to their Form Tutor or Head of Year.

Students are encouraged to walk and cycle to school and to get to school on time before the bell rings at 8.35am.

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Students are encouraged to exercise good 'sleep hygiene' and go to bed at an appropriate time so that they are not tired the next day. See here for practical advice for improving sleep NHS Sleep Advice: <https://www.nhs.uk/every-mind-matters/mental-wellbeing-tips/how-to-fall-asleep-faster-and-sleep-better/>

It is important for students to prepare for school as much as possible the night before, so they are not rushed in the mornings. Please encourage your child to check their timetable and pack their bag the night before school, to help them feel organised and ready for the day.

Hampstead School endeavours to work with Student Leadership Team to help promote and develop initiatives to improve school attendance and punctuality and to raise awareness of the need for excellent attendance.

7. The Law Relating to Attendance & Safeguarding

Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 states that:

...the parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him / her to receive efficient full-time education suitable:

(a) to age, ability, and aptitude and

(b) to any special educational needs, he/ she may have

either at school or otherwise

Compulsory School Age: A child is compulsory school age from the beginning of the next term after their 5th birthday until the last Friday of June in the academic year of their 16th birthday.

Section 175 of the Education Act 2002 places a duty on local authorities and governing boards to have regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State with regard to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and students under the age of 18.

This policy is written in relation to the following acts of Parliament and guidance relating to attendance:

- Education Act 1996
- The Education (Student Registration) (England) Regulations 2006
- Working together to improve school attendance.

We will also act on new and emerging legislation and guidance to support excellent attendance in our school.

8. Types of Absence

Every half-day absence from school must be classified by the school (not by the parents), as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why, information about the cause of any absence is always required, preferably in writing.

Authorised Absence

An authorised absence is where the school has either given permission in advance for the student to be absent or where an explanation offered is accepted as satisfactory justification for absence.

Absence may generally be authorised for the following reasons:

- Illness, medical appointments - appointments should always be made outside school times where possible.
- Unavoidable cause (which is expected to be an emergency and unavoidable)
- Days of religious observance
- Traveller child travelling for the purposes of parents' employment.

Unauthorised Absences

An unauthorised absence is where either no explanation has been given for the student's absence or where the explanation offered is not considered acceptable by the school.

This includes:

- Parents / Carers keeping students off school to assist with translation.
- Absences which have never been properly explained
- Students who arrive at school too late to get a late mark – See lateness section.
- Shopping, looking after other children or birthdays.
- Day trips and holidays in term time.

Working together to improve school attendance states "the DfE does not consider a need or desire for a holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure and recreation to be an exceptional circumstance."

If an absence is recorded as unauthorised the school may refer this to the Local Authority's Attendance and Children Out of School. The Local Authority can use various sanctions to promote regular attendance such as issuing a penalty notice fine or initiate court proceedings. (Further information below)

We recognise that students can occasionally be absent from school due to illness, but it can sometimes be that they are reluctant to attend. In this instance, it is advisable for schools, parents/carers and the student to work together to resolve these problems. If your child is reluctant to attend, it is inadvisable to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from

attending. This gives the impression that attendance is not important and usually makes things worse. Please contact your child's Form Tutor, Head of Year or SAO if you have concerns.

9. Persistent & Severely Absent Students

A student is a 'persistent absentee' (PA) if they miss 10% or more of their schooling across the school year for whatever reason.

A student is "severely absent" (SA) if they miss 50% or more of their sessions across the school year for whatever reason.

Absence at both these levels is causing considerable damage to any student's educational prospects and we need parent's fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

We monitor all absence thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA or SA thresholds or is at risk of moving towards that level, is given priority and you will be informed of this immediately.

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

All our PA and SA students and their parents/carers are subject to an Action Plan and the plan may include allocation of additional support through a Mentor, individual incentive programmes and participation in group activities around raising attendance.

If your child has or is at risk of reaching the threshold for Persistent Absence or Severely Absent you will be asked to provide evidence for any future absence. This may be medical evidence for illness which can be in the form of prescription, appointment cards, medicine packaging, hospital letter or a screen-print from the My GP app. Where we have concerns about your child's health, we may ask you to talk to the school nurse or for permission to contact their GP or other medical professionals for advice.

We will use our attendance data to identify patterns of poor attendance at both individual and for different groups within the school population. Once concerns have been identified we will work together with students, parents, and other services where appropriate to resolve the issue, understand and remove any barriers to attendance and work to resolve them before they become a more serious issue.

10. Absence Procedures

If your child is absent, you must contact the school via: <https://studybugs.com/about/parents>

- Contact us as soon as possible on the first day of absence and give an expected return date. You need to inform us at least every second day thereafter to advise school of your child's progress.

If your child is absent, we will:

- Telephone, text or email you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you.
- Invite you in to discuss the situation with Pastoral Leaders and the EWO.
- Consult with ACOS (Attendance and Children Out of School) as necessary, if attendance moves below 95% and at least 10% or more of the absences are unauthorised.

11. Legal Sanctions & Actions

The school will make every attempt to contact the parent or carer by telephone and in writing. In the first instance we would invite them to discuss the problem unless the absence relates to leave in term time without permission. Where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or not being engaged with, attendance may be enforced where necessary through statutory intervention or prosecution to protect the student's right to an education. A referral may be made to the LA under the following circumstances based on the national framework for penalty notices:

- A single consistent national threshold for when a penalty notice must be considered of ten sessions (usually equivalent to five school days) of unauthorised absence within a rolling ten school week period, may span different terms or school years This will include unauthorised absence for lateness Code U.
- A term time holiday taken without permission would count towards the ten sessions.
- A national limit of two penalty notices that can be issued to a parent for the same child within a rolling 3-year period, so at the third (or subsequent) offence(s) other legal prosecution will be considered.

Penalty notices are issued to each parent or carer for each of their children, for example two parents with three children would receive a total of six penalty notices, one parent with two children will receive a total of two penalty notices.

From September 2024 each penalty notice is £80 if paid in the first 21 days, from days 22 to 28 the fine doubles to £160 for each penalty notice.

For the second offence issued to the same parent for the same child within a rolling 3-year period being charged at a higher rate of £160 for days 1 – 28, with no option for this second offence to be discharged at the lower rate of £80.

The Attendance and Children Out of School has asked us to point out that it is not possible to pay these fines by instalments or lower the cost when they have increased, or to simply fine one parent.

Payment can be made online and instructions on how to pay are included on the penalty notice letter. Any problems with paying online should be discussed as early as possible with the Attendance and Children Out of School by ringing 020 7974 1007.

If a penalty notice is not paid or the Attendance and Children Out of School feels that the level of absence warrants court action, the local authority will arrange for a court hearing. There are a range of sentencing options available to the magistrate including the maximum penalty of a fine of up to £2500 per parent for each offence as well as the possibility of up to three months in prison.

12. What Happens After a Long Absence?

The school is sensitive to the needs and circumstances of students returning after significant periods of absence and will support the smooth reintegration of students both academically and socially. In such circumstances the school will work with parents, carers and student towards an agreed reintegration plan which may include opportunities for counselling and feedback, peer support and mentoring, along with an agreed review period.

13. Lateness

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If your child misses the start of the day, they can miss work and do not spend time with their class teacher getting vital information / instructions and news for the day. Late arriving students can also disrupt lessons, and this can be embarrassing for the student and can cause absence.

How we manage lateness

The school day starts at 8.35am and we expect your child to be on the school site at that time.

Students arriving after 8.35am are late and this lateness is recorded at the gate. Students are expected to hand in their mobile phone and will attend a detention later in the day. Phone will be returned after detention.

At 9.30am the registers will be closed. If your child arrives after that time, they will receive an unauthorised absence mark that shows them to be on site but not counted as a present for statistical / legal purposes. This means a Penalty Notice(s) could be issued if the problem persists.

If your child has a persistent late record, you will be asked to meet with Pastoral Leaders / Attendance Team to resolve the problem, but you can approach us at any time if you are having problems getting your child to school on time.

The school day usually ends at 3pm, although there are a range of extracurricular clubs and activities that your child may attend after this time.

14. Exceptional Leave in Term Time

Working together to improve school attendance states “the DfE does not consider a need or desire for a holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure and recreation to be an exceptional circumstance.”

Parents should plan their holidays around school breaks and avoid requesting leaves of absence for holidays. There is no entitlement in law for any leave of absence from school in term time. Taking leave in term time will affect your child’s schooling as much as any other absence and we expect parents to help us by not taking students away in school time.

Remember that any monetary savings you may make by taking a holiday in school time are offset by the cost to your child's education.

All applications for a leave of absence must be made in advance to the Head and will only be considered if there are exceptional circumstances. In deciding the school will consider the circumstances of each application individually, including any previous pattern of leave in term time. The Head will be the final arbiter as to the authorisation of any leave.

Full details of our policy and procedures are available from the school.

Any period of leave taken without the agreement of the school, or more than that agreed, will be classed as unauthorised and may attract sanctions such as a Penalty Notice. Your child's school place may also be at risk. Previous good attendance or your child's education ability are not considered when the school make the decision. If you have siblings at other schools, you must seek permission from all the schools, and it is possible that one school may grant it, and another may not.

If exceptional leave is agreed, you will receive an email from the school. If you do not get a letter DO NOT, assume that permission has been granted. Only the Head can decide if they will grant exceptional leave – no one else in school has permission to do so and leaving an application form is not permission to take leave.

If leave has been granted and a student returns late outside of the agreed dates either before or after, the school will reserve the right to unauthorised the entire period of leave taken.

If parents have any comments, concerns, or complaints regarding the school attendance policy these can be addressed in writing to the Head, or an appointment can be arranged for discussion with the Head. If any parents wish to work with the school in partnership to promote and implement good school attendance practice this is encouraged and applauded. If a parent believes the school can support or assist them in their child's school attendance, we would be happy to accommodate this.

Alternatively, parents or students may wish to contact the Attendance and Children Out of School themselves to ask for help or information. They are independent of the school and will give impartial advice. Their telephone number is 0207 974 1653 or you can email acos@camden.gov.uk

15. Children Missing from Education

If you move from the area and your whereabouts are unknown, the school can legally remove your child from the roll after 20 school days of unauthorised absence. It is vital that if you keep school informed of any change of details and regularly update them if details change. Your child may be at risk of losing their school place if your whereabouts are not known.

It is also important that emergency contact information is kept up to date and that if you are leaving the area, you provide details of where and how you can be contacted. If you do not do this and the school is unable to trace your child, this would be treated as a safeguarding matter.

16. Help & Support

If you need help with attendance, it is important that you contact school about the issues as soon as possible. The quicker we know what the problem is, the quicker that we can work together to solve it and put a plan together which will meet your child's needs and ensure your child can benefit from all that school has to offer. Where needed we can also involve other services to make sure that your child and your family gets the right support, at the right time from the right people.

17. Summary

All school staff are committed to working with parents and students as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible and that every student's welfare and life opportunities are promoted.

The people responsible for attendance matters in the school are:

Head Teacher: Matthew Sadler

Deputy Head Teacher / DSL: Gloria Elliott

Governor: Natalie Couceiro

Attendance Lead / Assistant Head Teacher: Annie Henken

Policy Consultation & Review

This policy is available on our school website and available on request from the Administration Office.

This policy was last reviewed by the Safeguarding, Behaviour & Personal Development Committee on Tuesday 4th March 2025. This policy will be reviewed on an annual basis. It is due to be reviewed again in the academic year 2025-26.