



HEATHFIELD SCHOOL

Attendance (including Children Missing from Education) Policy

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| Policy Area: | Safeguarding |
| Relevant Statutory Regulations: | <p>ISSR Part 3</p> <p>Education Act 1996</p> <p>Children Act 1989</p> <p>Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2023</p> <p>Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003</p> <p>Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences (RIDDOR) 2013</p> <p>DfE: Children missing education: statutory guidance for local authorities 2024</p> <p>DfE: Statutory guidance on children who run away or go missing from home or care, January 2014</p> <p>DfE: Working together to improve school attendance Statutory guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities (August 2024)</p> <p>Keeping Children Safe in Education 2024</p> <p>DfE: Summary table of responsibilities for school attendance 2024</p> |
| Key Contact Personnel in School | |
| Nominated Member of Leadership Staff Responsible for the policy: | Assistant Head (Pastoral and Boarding) |
| Version: | 2024.03 |
| Date updated: | 01 November 2024 |
| Date of next review: | 01 September 2026 |

This policy will be reviewed at least biennially, and/or following any concerns and/or updates to national and local guidance or procedures, in consultation with parents and pupils. It should be available to all parents, including new joiners and displayed on the school's website

Introduction

Heathfield School ("the School") believes that all children, regardless of their circumstances, are entitled to a full time education which is suitable for their age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs they may have.

The School believes education to be a partnership between the family and the School. The School is committed to providing the highest quality of education for its pupils, and the School looks to parents to support this objective. Attendance is mandatory under The Education Act 1996 and is also part of the School terms and conditions.

Regular school attendance correlates directly with success in academic work and provides opportunities for important communication between teachers and pupils. 10% absence means the equivalent of one day or more per fortnight across a full school year. The expected attendance is at least 92.9% (national average). National research shows that when pupils of equal 'ability' are compared, those with attendance of over 95% perform one grade higher per subject than those with attendance of 85% or less. Each further 10% fall reduces this by another grade. Regular attendance also has a cumulative effect of establishing life-long positive traits — responsibility, determination, respect for rules of society - that are critical for developing career- readiness skills, success at university and in life.

The School expects all pupils on roll to attend every day when the School is in session, provided they are fit and healthy enough to do so. Under the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2023, the proprietor is responsible for making sure the School keeps an attendance register that records which pupils are present at the start of both the morning and the afternoon sessions of the school day. This register will also indicate whether an absence was authorised or unauthorised.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the School's Safeguarding Children and Child Protection Policy, particularly in reference to pupils persistently missing from education. This policy has now incorporated the School's Children Missing from Education Policy.

The following guidance is also relevant:

- Working together to improve school attendance Statutory guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities (August 2024)
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (September 2024)

Aims

This policy aims to maximise the attendance and punctuality of all pupils and make clear the responsibility that all stakeholders share for attendance.

Objectives

The purpose of this policy is to ensure:

- that clear expectations and legal duties in relation to attendance and punctuality are set for pupils, teachers and parents
- a robust system of registration, monitoring and enforcement of attendance is consistently maintained.

Pupil Responsibility

All Pupils, whether day or boarding should be in their form room prepared for the day by 8.10am during term time.

Day pupils may leave school at 16:00 or stay on site to attend supervised activities such as a co-curricular club, fixture or prep. Boarders should sign back in to their boarding house or go straight to a registered activity. When staying beyond the registered activity pupils, including day, should sign in to the boarding house for their age group.

Procedures to Ensure all Pupils are Present

Parents are responsible for making sure their children come to and are delivered to the School safely. On arrival at the School, all pupils are registered and records are kept on the School's database system. If a pupil is not present, the Attendance Team will attempt to contact the parents or guardians of the pupil to find out the reason for the absence.

Pupils are also registered before the start of the afternoon session when they sign into lunch to check that they are still in school. As well as these formal measures, staff are also expected to know their classes well enough to check if pupils are missing or unaccounted for and update their lesson registers. If they are concerned, they should contact the appropriate School staff by emailing absences@heathfieldschool.net.

Parental Responsibility

Parents have a legal duty to ensure that their children attend school regularly and should arrive on time.

It is the parents' responsibility to contact the School by 08:20 on the first day their child is absent and on any subsequent days. This is a safeguarding requirement so that all parties know that their child is safe. Parents must email absences@heathfieldschool.net and may wish to share further information with the tutor or Head of Year.

Definitions

Authorised absence:

When a pupil is away from school, the School has received notification from a parent or guardian, and the school has granted permission for the absence.

Unauthorised absence:

When a pupil is away from school without the permission of the School.

The decision as to whether an absence is authorised or unauthorised rests solely with the School. Therefore, an absence may be deemed unauthorised even if it has the support of a parent.

Registration and Late Arrivals

Marking the attendance registers twice daily is a legal requirement under Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2023. The School monitors attendance using the management information system (Engage). Morning registration is taken by form tutors between 08:10 – 08:20. Tutors should use Code L if pupils are late to this session and should save their register at 8:20; pupils arriving after this time should report to the Administration Office where their name and reason for lateness will be recorded. The AM Attendance session lasts until 8:40 where any pupil arriving before this point should be marked as L as part of a 'grace' period. Any pupil arriving into school after 8:40 and therefore being late for Period 1 of lessons without a reason covered by another Attendance or Absence Code should be marked as Code U and this will count as an unauthorised absence. The PM Attendance Session is initially recorded by teaching staff on lunch duty as the pupils go into lunch between 12:30 and 13:45 following a lunch rota and then transferred electronically onto Engage by the Attendance Team. Pupils arriving after these times report to the Administration Office where their name and reason for lateness will be recorded.

NB. In addition to this, all boarders will have been registered at breakfast, supper and bedtime.

If a pupil has failed to return from an official break in School (at the time prescribed by parents and/or the School) then parents should be immediately contacted in order to determine the reason why.

If parents cannot be contacted or parents believe their child is in School or a boarder is absent when they should be in School then the procedure set out in the Missing Child Policy will be followed.

The Role of the School Staff in recording and monitoring attendance

The Governing Board and Headmistress: Take an active role in supporting leaders in a whole school culture that prioritises attendance and ensures that expectations and statutory duties are fulfilled/

Attendance Lead: The Assistant Head of Pastoral and Boarding is the designated Attendance Lead and is responsible for all processes and record keeping pertaining to attendance at School. The staff member currently in post is:

Andrew Valner

Email: avalner@heathfieldschool.net

Telephone: 01344 898356 / 07793 804952

Attendance Team: This consists of administration and boarding staff who assist in the keeping and checking of registers.

Absences Email Group: A shared email inbox with all Heads of Year, Boarding Staff, Health Centre Staff and Senior leadership Team. All absences should be reported to this email address with a view to all the recipients having knowledge of a pupil's absence including any appointments and their potential location around the school site. The email address is absences@heathfieldschool.net

Designated Roaming Staff Member: Consisting of Senior leadership Staff and Heads of Year on a rota tasked with checking pupils are in lessons and responding to help in locating pupils on site from teaching staff.

Form tutors will

- complete a register at the beginning of each morning. Teachers mark pupils as present, absent or late; a teacher can only mark as present a pupil that they have seen;
- notify relevant pastoral staff of any known/planned absences (via absences@heathfieldschool.net).

The **School** will

- endeavour to contact a parent or guardian at the earliest opportunity if an absence is unexpected. The HoY or Houseparents (“HP”) are usually staff assigned to confirm whereabouts of an absent pupil;
- ensure attendance and lateness records are up to date;
- ensure unauthorised absences are followed up, with a seven day reply deadline before the absence is unauthorised (Code N will be changed to O);
- ensure the appropriate attendance code is entered into the register (see below for National Attendance Codes);
- ensure parents are informed every half term of their child’s attendance figure if they fall below 90% whereby their child’s attendance is classed as ‘persistently absent’;
- the Attendance Lead will examine attendance figures at the end of the first half term and weekly thereafter and will identify all pupils whose attendance/ punctuality has dropped below 90% and whether improvements are being made.

Record keeping

The School keeps accurate attendance records on file for a minimum period of six years.

The LA have the right to examine and take extracts of attendance registers from the school (Para 50), although they will not want as much information from independent schools as from maintained schools.

Timeline of School action

Poor punctuality

- If a pupil shows persistent lateness, the tutor must contact home / the boarding house
- If punctuality does not improve the HoY will be asked to intervene and organise a Pupil Support Plan with the Pupil and Parent/Guardian
- If improvement is still not shown, parents will be required to meet with the Attendance Lead or Headmistress at an Attendance Meeting.
- NB: there may be barriers to good attendance beyond the control of a pupil. Reasons for lateness and poor attendance should be investigated thoroughly and an Attendance Meeting might be called to offer support and solutions to families.

Authorised absence

- The HoY will identify all pupils whose attendance has dropped below 95% after the first half term, and monthly thereafter. They may contact the pupil’s parent or guardian if the reasons have not already been discussed.
- When a pupil’s attendance drops below 90%, the Attendance Lead will investigate in more detail. Parents will be invited into school to discuss the impact of the absences and solutions sought at an Attendance Meeting. The Designated Safeguarding Lead will be made aware.
- If attendance is below 90% for 2 half terms in any academic year, the Attendance Lead or Headmistress will meet with the parents. The Designated Safeguarding Lead will also be involved and a referral to the Bracknell Forest Children and Adult Partnership may be made depending on the reasons for the persistent absence and consideration of any improvements made since initial interventions were made and whether any external support has already been utilised.

Unauthorised absence

A child absent from education is a potential indicator of abuse or neglect.

- In the first instance, the School will contact the parent or guardian of any pupil who has an unauthorised absence. Where there has been no communication, an email will be sent to parents requesting reasons for absence with a seven day reply deadline before the absence is deemed unauthorised.
- The HOY will identify all pupils who have more than 3 unauthorised absences in a half term. With the Attendance Lead, they will investigate in more detail and parents may be invited into School to discuss the absences. The Designated Safeguarding Lead should be made aware and the situation closely monitored.
- If there is no improvement in the following half term, the Attendance Lead or Headmistress will meet with the parents. The Designated Safeguarding Lead will also be involved and a referral to the Bracknell Forest Children and Adult Partnership may be made.
- Any pupil who has been absent without the School's permission for a continuous period of 10 school days or more is deemed to be a safeguarding risk. The Designated Safeguarding Lead will be actively involved and a referral to the Bracknell Forest Children and Adult Partnership will be made.

If a pupil is absent from a lesson

If there is any doubt about the whereabouts of a pupil, the class teacher should take immediate action by emailing absences@heathfieldschool.net. The School will follow the appropriate procedure to locate her as set out in the Missing Child Policy.

Promoting Good Attendance

The school promotes good attendance by:

- Sharing this policy which upholds its benefits (see introduction) including the positive statistics of good attendance;
- Sharing the leaflet in the appendices of this policy to the families of children struggling with attendance;
- Sharing data regularly with families including those whose children are classed as 'persistently absent,' with targeted strategies of how to improve their attendance;
- Making reporting absences a straightforward process for our families including all information channelled into one email box (absences@heathfieldschool.net) which includes an automated message with useful information to all absence requests and query;
- The Attendance Lead offers consultations to families on how their child can boost their attendance.
- The Attendance Lead meets twice termly with the Educational Welfare Officer to discuss individual pupil cases who can offer advice and access to wider support services.

Penalty Proceedings

Aside from an impact on attainment, poor attendance will have other long term repercussions, including:

- Recording attendance percentages on School full reports. Increasingly reports are requested as part of references. Thus, pupils with poor attendance could jeopardise long term prospects.
- In terms of writing references the School cannot in good faith make a positive comment about a pupil's reliability should they have poor attendance and punctuality.
- When a pupil has a record of poor punctuality or attendance without good reason, the School may preclude them from possessing positions of responsibility in the Sixth Form.
- In significant cases the School reserves the right to review a pupil's place at Heathfield, particularly during the transition from Year 11 to the Lower Sixth.
- If authorised attendance is below 90% for 2 half-terms in any academic year, a referral to the Bracknell Forest Children and Adult Partnership may be made.

- Any pupil who has been absent without the School's permission for a continuous period of 10 school days or more is deemed to be a safeguarding risk. The Designated Safeguarding Lead will be actively involved and a referral to the Bracknell Forest Children and Adult Partnership will be made.

Requests for leave of absence

Parents are issued with an attendance leaflet to help explain the importance of attending school and the process they need to adhere to. A parent's explanation, a letter or telephone message does not in itself authorise an absence.

Absences will only be authorised if an explanation is received and agreed by the School.

Term dates are published in advance in order that parents can arrange holidays and family activities without disrupting their child's education. The School expects parents to respect these dates to ensure their child's full participation in the life of the school.

Parents are requested to note that pupils are required to attend a number of events that occur after the normal School day or on Saturdays. These compulsory events are advertised in advance and often fall on Weekends:

The following reasons are examples of absence that will not normally be authorised:

- Absence of siblings if one child is ill
- Oversleeping
- Confusion over school dates
- Medical/dental appointments of more than half a day without very good reasons,
- Child's/family birthday
- Family holidays
- Travelling during term time

Boarders are particularly required to note that leaving early at the end of a School term in order to utilise cheaper/more convenient flights is not acceptable. Such absence will be recorded as unauthorised.

Authorisation of absence: up to one day

N.B. With the exception of School Events such as Open Mornings or Prize Giving where permission must be requested from the Headmistress.

Absence can be authorised by the relevant HoY, Assistant Head or Deputy Head (Pastoral and Boarding) for:

- interviews
- careers courses etc. connected with a pupil's future,
- participation in representative games and activities.
- unavoidable doctors' and dentists' appointments. Whenever possible these should be arranged after the School day, at weekends or during the School holidays.

Sixth Formers are allowed to attend visits during the week with permission of the Head of Sixth Form.

Authorisation of absence: absence of more than one day

Only the Headmistress can authorise absence of more than one consecutive day.

Requests for leave of absence on compassionate grounds or in exceptional family circumstances should be made in writing to the Headmistress.

Where there is doubt, the Headmistress, on behalf of the governing body, should take a consistent approach. **The absence must be absolutely unavoidable.**

If absences are not authorised, parents will be notified.

Medical long-term absence

Parents are asked to use their discretion but the School retains the right to ask for medical evidence if a pupil is judged to have excessive illness.

When a pupil has an illness or injury that means a pupil will be away from school for over five days, the School will do all it can to send material home, so that the pupil can keep up with their school work. After five consecutive days' absence, a doctor's note or evidence of a prescription must be provided.

If the absence is likely to continue for an extended period, or be a repeated absence, the School reserves the right to contact the support services, so that arrangements can be made for the pupil to be given some tuition outside School.

The school will ensure that those missing school because of mental or physical ill health, or those with SEND, will be given extra support, by considering the individual needs of pupils. The school must alert the LA about any pupil who misses 15 consecutive or cumulative days due to illness, as they may need additional support from the LA. In developing and implementing this policy, the school must consider its obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The school will consider the use of part-time timetables for pupils as set out in the Working together to improve school attendance Statutory guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities (August 2024).

Study leave

Pupils will be granted study leave during public exams only. During this time, pupils will be expected to sign in and out. Pupils are only allowed to take study leave that has been agreed with the School and their parents.

Boarders

Term dates are published over a year in advance in order that flights can be booked without disrupting a pupil's education. The School therefore expects all pupils to arrive punctually on the first day of term, and not to leave School before the last day of term.

All pupils who board are cared for by House staff, who are responsible for the pupils during term-time, including ensuring that they are safely occupied outside normal school hours.

The School expects pupils to 'sign out' when they leave the School and 'sign in' on return. This is to ensure that the School always knows the whereabouts of the pupils during term time when they are under the School's care. Boarders also sign in for supper and are checked in at bedtime to ensure all pupils are accounted for.

The School expects the pupils to live with their parents or their guardian when they are away from School during leave from school on weekends and half terms (see Educational Guardian Policy). Permission must be sought from the pupil's Houseparent if a pupil is invited to stay with another family. The House staff will liaise with both families. Permission forms and Weekend Leave forms are gathered to ensure that the School has a clear picture of who is taking responsibility for a pupil when they are away from School.

If a pupil is taken ill during a weekend spent outside of school and will not be returning on time, parents or guardians must inform the School. The School will always telephone the home if the pupil is more than three hours late in returning from a weekend spent outside of school

Sixth Form attendance privileges

Sixth Form pupils are expected to attend the full school day. However, as befits their increasing responsibility and independence, they may be granted a number of unique privileges. These privileges are given at the discretion of the School and will be removed should there be any academic or pastoral concerns.

Written permission must be provided by home and agreed by the Head of Year (Sixth Form).

Any pupil leaving site **must** sign out with their House staff (if during School hours). On their return pupils must also sign in. Failure to do this will be treated according to the Pupil Code of Conduct Policy.

Register Codes

/ \ - present for morning and afternoon sessions.

The following are **classified as authorised absence**:

I – Illness.

M – Attending medical/dental appointment.

C – Leave of absence for exceptional circumstances.

R – Religious observance.

E – Suspended or permanently excluded.

T – Parent travelling for occupational purposes.

S – Study leave.

C1 – Participating in a regulated performance or undertaking regulated employment abroad.

J1 – Attending an interview for employment or admission to another educational institution.

C2 – Pupil is absent from school for part of the week (on a part-time timetable) – then also use the code for the reason why absent.

The following are **NOT classified as absences**:

B – An offsite educational activity.

K – Alternative provision arranged by the LA.

L – Late arrival before the register is closed (during the 30 mins ‘grace’ period).

P – Approved sporting activity.

V – Attending an educational visit or trip.

W – Work experience.

The following are **classified as unauthorised absence**:

G – Holiday not granted by the school.

N – Reason for absence not yet established.

O – Absent in other or unknown circumstances.

U – Arrived in school after the register closed (after 30 mins ‘grace’ period).

The following are **classified as ‘not a possible attendance’**:

D – Dual registration, so attending another school where registered.

X – Pupils of non-compulsory school age absent when they are not timetabled to attend (e.g. EYFS).

Q – Lack of access arrangements by LA.

Y1 – Transport normally provided not being available.

Y2 – Widespread disruption to travel.

Y3 – Part of school premises being closed.

Y4 – Whole school site being unexpectedly closed.

Y5 – Pupil is in criminal justice detention.

Y6 – Public health guidance or law not to attend.

Y7 – Any other unavoidable cause [this includes absence due to non-payment of fees (reason stated in accompanying field)].

Off Roll

When a pupil leaves the School (or before the end of the final day of term in the Upper Sixth) the following action will be taken by the School:

- Determine with the pupil/parents the next school which will be attended.
- Make contact with the next school to determine that the pupil is intending to start there and that there is an agreed/official start date.
- Transfer all relevant information to the next school (including any safeguarding records).

Should the next school not yet be determined the School will:

- Ask parents to inform Heathfield when a new school has been chosen/allocated.
- If there is a significant period of time between a pupil leaving Heathfield and the next School being determined (10 school days) then the DSL will inform both Bracknell Forest Child and Adult Partnership and the Local Authority in which the pupil resides.

The School informs the Local Authority when any pupil leaves (or joins) the School at non-standard transition times.

Children Missing Education

All staff should be aware that children being absent from school or college, particularly repeatedly and/or for prolonged periods, and children missing education can act as a vital warning sign of a range of safeguarding possibilities. This may include abuse and neglect such as sexual abuse or exploitation and can also be a sign of child criminal exploitation including involvement in county lines. It may indicate mental health problems, risk of substance abuse, risk of travelling to conflict zones, risk of female genital mutilation, so-called 'honour'-based abuse or risk of forced marriage. Early intervention is essential to identify the existence of any underlying safeguarding risk and to help prevent the risks of a child going missing in future. It is important that staff are aware of School's unauthorised absence procedures and children missing education procedures.

This includes informing the local authority if a child leaves the school without a new school being named, and adhering to requirements with respect to sharing information with the local authority, when applicable, when removing a child's name from the admission register at nonstandard transition points.

The School has a duty to inform the local authority of any pupil who fails to attend school regularly, or has been absent without the School's permission for a continuous period of ten school days or more.

Children missing education are children of compulsory school age who are not registered pupils at a school and are not receiving suitable education otherwise than at a school.

Heathfield School ("the School") is extremely concerned about any child missing education, not only in the way that it impacts on the individual's potential achievement, but also in relation to their safety and welfare. The School recognises that a child missing education are at risk of underachieving, being victims of harm, exploitation or radicalisation.

The School works with the local authority in accordance with DfE Guidance regarding Children Missing Education which was updated in August 2024. The guidance can be found here https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/66bf57a4dcb0757928e5bd39/Children_missing_education_guidance_-_August_2024.pdf

Related Policies

- Educational Guardianship Policy
- Educational and Co-curricular Trips and Visits Policy
- Missing Child Policy
- Promoting Positive Behaviour Policy
- RIDDOR Policy

- Risk Assessment Policy
- Safeguarding Children and Child Protection Policy

Appendix - Attendance leaflet for parents

ATTENDANCE



Why it is important to attend School every day

- Pupils with good attendance, generally achieve higher grades and enjoy learning at school more. Having a good education will help to give your child the best possible chances in life
- Learning is a progressive activity; each day, lessons build upon those of the previous days learning
- It gives children the opportunity to:
 - o Make lots of friends and feel included
 - o Boosts social skills, confidence, and self esteem
 - o Develop skills and learn new things
 - o Work towards achieving their full potential
 - o Improve their career prospects

What can parents do to help?

- Show your child why you think school is important
- Avoid keeping your child off school if they are worried or have a problem, come, and talk to the Pastoral care team (HOY, House staff, AHPB, DHPB, Surgery)
- Make sure your child attends school regularly and arrives on time – they will establish a good routine which will carry them through their life
- If your child starts missing school, work with the school and we will help to improve your child's attendance. We do not have all the answers, but together we are closer to a solution
- If your child is ill or must miss school for any other reason, please contact the school immediately – **email absences@heathfieldschool.net by 8.20am.**
- The school will not approve shopping trips, family holidays, birthday treats during school hours
- Only keep your child at home for a genuine illness
- Avoid taking holidays during school time, so they do not miss valuable learning time

NOTICE: Attendance notice is an email issued to parents or carers who fail to ensure their child attends school regularly (90%). A percentage below 90% is considered a 'persistent absence' by the local authority.

THE LAW

- A child registered at a school can legally miss school only in limited circumstances. These are:

- When your child is too ill to attend
 - When the school have authorised the absence beforehand
- If your child is missing without good reason, schools and local authorities have a number of legal powers they can use.
- Authorised Absences include:
 - Genuine illness resulting with seeing a doctor
 - Religious observances
 - Family bereavement
 - Unauthorised absences include:
 - Holidays
 - Birthday celebrations
 - Oversleeping
 - Shopping

LEAVE OF ABSENCE IN TERM TIME

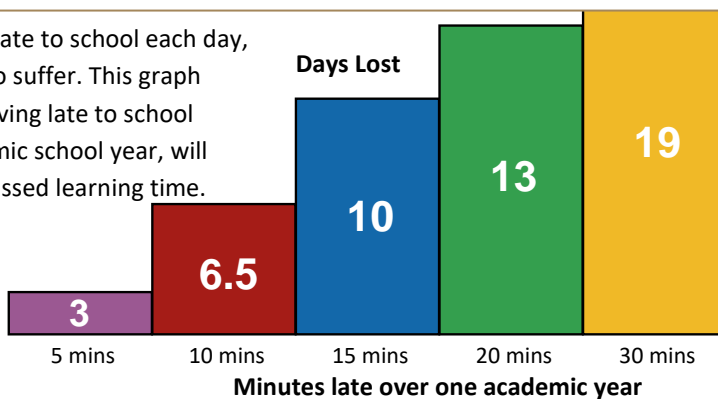
A leave of absence is granted entirely at the Headmistress’s discretion. This will only be granted if there are exceptional circumstances e.g. wedding of a parent, funeral of a close relative, National sporting activity. The DfE states “if an application for leave of absence is not made prior to the time of the required absence then the absence will be recorded as unauthorised regardless of circumstances.”

Please note, absence will not be authorised under any circumstances during the period of public examinations or internal assessments.

An application for leave of absence must be made in advance via an email to headmistress@heathfieldschool.net

Medical appointments during the school day are permitted - the relevant HOY should be notified via absences@heathfieldschool.net

If your child arrives late to school each day, learning will begin to suffer. This graph illustrates when arriving late to school daily over an academic school year, will increase valuable missed learning time.



Be Here! On Time, All Day, Every Day, ATTENDANCE COUNTS!

When should my child return to School?

No need to stay off School

Conjunctivitis
Glandular Fever
Tonsillitis
Head Lice
Headache
Cold
Injury to a limb where pupils can move e.g. arm injury

Chicken Pox: When all spots have crusted over

Continuous periods of Diarrhoea & Vomiting: 48hr after last episode

Flu/Covid: 3-5days until feeling better

Wherever possible we encourage pupils to come into School, even if they try to cope. We have a Health Centre so should there be any deterioration they will be cared for until they can be collected. Our Health Centre is contactable 24/7 and can offer advice as needed.