



# HERITAGE HOUSE SCHOOL

## ATTENDANCE POLICY

**Approved by:** [ FGB ]

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Policy Adapted from Buckinghamshire Council

# Contents

## 1. Introduction

Regular school attendance is essential if children are to achieve their full potential.

Heritage House School believe that regular school attendance is the key to enabling children to maximise the educational opportunities available to them and become emotionally resilient, confident and competent adults who are able to realise their full potential and make a positive contribution to their community.

Heritage House School values all learners. As set out in this policy, we will work with families to identify the reasons for poor attendance and try to resolve any difficulties.

Heritage House School recognise that attendance is a matter for the whole school community. Our Attendance Policy should not be viewed in isolation; it is a strand that runs through all aspects of school improvement, supported by our policies on safeguarding, bullying, and behaviour

This Policy operates in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Behaviour Policy
- Safeguarding Policy
- Supporting Learners in school with medical conditions
- Children with health needs who cannot attend school

## 2. Legal Framework

This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation and statutory guidance including but not limited to:

- Education Act 1996
- Equality Act 2010
- DFE (2022) Working together to improve school attendance
- DFE (2022) School attendance
- DFE (2022) Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE)
- DFE (2016) Children Missing in Education
- DFE (2014) Supporting learners at school with medical conditions

Section 7 of the 1996 Education Act states that parents must ensure that children of compulsory school age receive efficient full-time education suitable to their age, ability and aptitude and to any special educational needs they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

A child is of Compulsory School Age at the beginning of the term following their 5<sup>th</sup> birthday. A child ceases to be of compulsory school age on the last Friday in June of the school year in which they reach the age of 16.

Under the Education Act 1996, the Local Authority has a statutory responsibility to ensure that parents secure education for children of compulsory school age and where necessary, use legal enforcement.

The Education (Learner Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, require schools to take an attendance register twice a day, once at the start of the morning session and then again during the afternoon session.

The register must record whether the learner was:

- present;
- absent;
- present at approved educational activity; or
- unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

### 3. Categorising absence

Where learners of compulsory school age are recorded as absent, the register must show whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised.

Absence can only be authorised by the school and cannot be authorised by parents. All absences will be treated as unauthorised unless a satisfactory explanation for the learner's absence has been received.

Parents should advise the school by telephone on the first day of absence by 8.30am and provide the school with an expected date of return. This should be followed up in the form of a written note from the parent/carer, though verbal explanations may be acceptable where this is considered appropriate. Alternative arrangements will be agreed with non-English speaking parents/carers.

Absence will be categorised as follows:

Illness: In most cases a telephone call or a note from the parent informing the school that their child is ill will be acceptable. Parents may be asked to provide medical evidence where there are repeated absences due to reported illness. This will usually be in the form of an appointment card, prescription etc.

Medical/Dental Appointments: Parents are advised where possible to make medical and dental appointments outside the school day. Where this is not possible, learners should attend school for part of the day. Parents should show the appointment card to school.

Other Authorised Circumstances: ***Head to insert what circumstances they consider to be exceptional – if any. Service families taking holidays in term time should be considered as exceptional.***

There may be exceptional reasons when families need their child to have leave of absence and this will be reviewed on a case by case basis.

Excluded (no alternative provision made): Exclusion from attending school is counted as an authorised absence. The child's class teacher will make arrangements for work to be sent home.

Late Arrival: Registration begins at 8:50am and closes at 9.00am. Learners arriving after this time will be marked as present but having arrived late. The register will close at 9.00am. Learners arriving after the close of register will be recorded as absent. This will not be authorised and will count as an absence for that school session.

On arrival after the close of register, learners must immediately report to the school office to ensure that we can be responsible for their health and safety whilst they are in school.

The absence will only be authorised if a satisfactory explanation for the late arrival can be provided, for example, attendance at a medical appointment. (Code M)

The absence will be recorded as **unauthorised** if the learner has arrived late after the registers close without justifiable cause, for example, if they woke up late or were waiting for their uniform to dry. (Code U)

Unauthorised absence: Absence will not be authorised unless parents have provided a satisfactory explanation that has been accepted as such by the school.

Examples of unsatisfactory explanations include:

- A learner's/family member's birthday
- Shopping for uniforms
- Having their hair cut
- Closure of a sibling's school for INSET (or other) purposes
- "Couldn't get up"
- Illness where the child is considered well enough to attend school
- Holidays taken without the authorisation of school

Leave of Absence and Extended Leave: Parents do not have an automatic right to remove their child from school during term time for the purpose of a holiday and are strongly advised not to do so. Parents should be aware that if their child is absent for 10 school days they will miss 5% of their education during that academic year.

Parents wishing to take their child out of school during term time must send a written request to the head teacher before arrangements are made. Documentary evidence of leave and return dates may be required in order to process your request. Retrospective requests will not be considered and therefore will result in the absence being categorised as unauthorised. Each request will be considered individually and will take the following factors into account:

- Length of the proposed leave
- Age of the learner
- The learner's general absence/attendance record
- Learner's ability to catch up the work missed
- Learner's educational needs
- General welfare of the learner
- Circumstances of the request

- Purpose of the leave
- Previous term time holidays taken
- When the request was made

All requests for leave of absence will receive a written response. Where a request has been granted, the letter should state:

- The expected date of return
- That parents must contact school should any delays occur

If the permission to take leave is not granted and the learner is absent, the absence will be **unauthorised**. In such cases the school may refer the matter to the County Attendance Team who may issue a Penalty Notice.

Persistent absenteeism: A learner becomes a “persistent absentee” (PA) when they miss 20% or more of schooling across the school year for whatever reason. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child’s educational prospects and parents/carers fullest support and co-operation is required to tackle this.

All absence is monitored and any case that reaches this threshold is considered by SLT and parents are informed.

Religious Observance Heritage House School acknowledges the multi-faith nature of British society and recognises that on some occasions, religious festivals may fall outside school holiday periods or weekends and that this necessitates a consideration of authorised absence or special leave for religious observance. (Code R)

It is reasonable for a parent to allow their children not to attend school on any day of religious observance if recognised by the parent’s religious body.

Parents are requested to give advance notice to the school if they intend their child to be absent.

However, in the interests of fulfilling the academic requirements of the school and limiting the authorised absence rate of the school, it is identified as reasonable that no more than one day be designated for any individual occasion of religious observance/festival and no more than three days in total in any academic year. Absence in excess of this will be categorised as unauthorised.

Learners with complex medical conditions: The school recognises that some learners attending Heritage House School have complex medical conditions which may on occasion prevent them from attending school for frequent or prolonged periods of time.

**Please refer to our Policy on Children with health needs who cannot attend school.**

Traveller Absence: The aim for the attendance of Traveller children, in common with all other children, is to attend school as regularly and as frequently as possible.

To protect Traveller parents from unreasonable prosecution for non-attendance, the Education Act 1944, section 86, states that a Traveller parent is safe from prosecution if their child accrues

200 attendances (i.e. 200 half days) in a year. Traveller absence (Code T) is acceptable only when the family is engaged in a trade or business that requires them to travel and when the child is attending school as regularly as that trade permits.

It does not mean that part-time education for Traveller children is legally acceptable, nor does it relieve parents of their duties to ensure that their children are receiving suitable education when not at school.

When in or around Buckinghamshire, if a Traveller family can reasonably travel back to their base school (see below) then the expectation is that their child will attend full-time.

Heritage House School will be regarded as the base school if it is the school where the child normally attends when they are not travelling. However, the learner must have attended in the last 18 months. Traveller children can register at other schools temporarily whilst away from their base school. In such cases, the learner's school place at Heritage House School will be kept open for them whilst travelling. This is to protect them from unfairly losing their place at their school of usual attendance.

Heritage House School can operate effectively as the child's base school only if we are engaged in on-going dialogue with Traveller families. This means that parents must:

- advise of their forthcoming travelling patterns before they happen; and
- inform the school regarding proposed return dates

Heritage House School will authorise absence of Traveller children if we are satisfied that a family is travelling and has given indication that they intend to return.

Traveller children will be recorded as attending an approved educational activity when:

- The child is on roll and attending another visited school
- Undertaking supervised educational activity under the jurisdiction of another Local Authority's Traveller Education Service
- The child is undertaking computer based distance learning that is time evidenced

Where Traveller children are registered learners at a school and are known to be present either at a site (official or otherwise) or in a house and are not attending school, the absence will be investigated in the same way as for any other learner.

#### **4. Deletions from the Register**

In accordance with the Education (Learner Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, learners will be deleted from the register only when one of the following circumstances applies:

- The school is replaced by another school on a School Attendance Order
- The School Attendance Order is revoked by the Local Authority
- The learner has ceased to be of compulsory school age
- Permanent exclusion has occurred and procedures have been completed
- Death of a learner

- Transfer between schools
- When a parent informs the school in writing that the learner is to be withdrawn to be educated outside the school system
- Failure to return from an extended holiday after both the school and the local authority have tried to locate the learner
- A medical condition prevents their attendance and return to the school before ending compulsory school-age
- In custody for more than four months (in discussion with The Youth Offending Team)
- 20 days' continuous unauthorised absence have elapsed and both the Local Authority and school have tried to locate the learner
- A learner has left the school but it is not known where he/she has gone after both the school and the Local Authority have tried to locate the learner

Heritage House School will follow Buckinghamshire County Council's Children Missing Education Protocol when a learner's whereabouts is unknown.

## **5. Roles and Responsibilities**

Heritage House School believe that improved school attendance can only be achieved if it is viewed as a shared responsibility of the school staff, governors, parents, learners and the wider school community.

Teachers will:

- Actively promote the importance and value of good attendance to learners and their parents
- Form positive relationships with learners and parents
- Contribute to a whole school approach which reinforces good school attendance; with good teaching and learning experiences that encourage all learners to attend and to achieve
- Comply with the Registration Regulations, England, 2006 and other attendance related legislation
- Implement systems to report, record and monitor the attendance of all learners, including those who are educated off-site
- Analyse attendance data to identify causes and patterns of absence
- Contribute to the evaluation of school strategies and interventions
- Work with other agencies to improve attendance and support learners and their families
- Document interventions used to a standard required by the Local Authority should legal proceedings be instigated

Request that Parents will:

- Talk to their child about school and what goes on there. Take a positive interest in their child's work and educational progress
- Instil the value of education and regular school attendance within the home environment
- Encourage their child to look to the future and have aspirations
- Contact the school if their child is absent to let them know the reason why and the expected date of return. Follow this up with a note where possible.
- Try to avoid unnecessary absences. Wherever possible make appointments for the doctors, dentists etc. outside of school hours
- Ask the school for help if their child is experiencing difficulties
- Inform the school of any change in circumstances that may impact on their child's attendance

- Support the school; take every opportunity to get involved in their child's education, form a positive relationship with school and acknowledge the importance of children receiving the same messages from both school and home
- Encourage routine at home, for example, bed times, home work, preparing school bag and uniform the evening before
- Not keep their child away from school to go shopping, or for the families convenience
- Avoid taking their child on holiday during term-time. Where this is unavoidable, send a written leave request to the Head Teacher in advance of booking the holiday.

## **6. Using Attendance Data**

All learners' attendance will be monitored and will be shared with the Local Authority and other agencies if a learner's attendance is a cause for concern.

**Those with the responsibility for attendance matters at Heritage House School are:**

Headteacher:	Jacqueline Clearkin
Administrator:	Tracey Walker

The Administrator will:

- Take the lead ensuring attendance has a high profile in school
- Take overall responsibility for ensuring the school conforms to all statutory requirements in respect of attendance
- Monitor pupil attendance every 3 weeks



Heritage House School will share attendance data with the Local Authority as required. All information shared will be done so in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.

## **7. Support Systems**

Heritage House School recognise that poor attendance is often an indication of difficulties in a child's life. This may be related to problems at home and or in school. Parents should make school aware of any difficulties or changes in circumstances that may affect their child's attendance and/or behaviour in school, for example, bereavement, divorce / separation. This will help the school identify any additional support that may be required.

Heritage House School also recognise that some learners are more likely to require additional support to attain good attendance, for example, those with physical or mental health needs, migrant and refugee learners and looked after children.

The school will implement a range of strategies to support improved attendance. Strategies used will include:

- Discussion with parents and learners
- Referrals to support agencies such as LD nurses, CAMHS, Family Support Service
- Friendship groups
- Reward systems
- Time limited part time time-tables
- Additional learning support
- Stress Reduction Support
- Reintegration support packages

Support offered to families will be child centred and planned in discussion and agreement with both parents and learners.

## **8. Legal Sanctions**

Where intervention fails to bring about an improvement in attendance, Heritage House School will notify the County Attendance Team of the irregular attendance.

The County Attendance Team or school, may invite parents to attend a Parenting Contract Meeting and issue a formal warning of a Penalty Notice.

Parenting Contracts (Anti Social Behaviour Act 2003) A Parenting contract is a voluntary agreement between the Local Authority, school and the parent, it can also be extended to include the child and any other agencies offering support to resolve any difficulties leading to improved attendance.

The contract will outline attendance targets and will detail agreed actions that will help to achieve the target. The contract will be reviewed regularly.

The contract can be used as evidence in a prosecution should irregular attendance continue.

Penalty Notices (Anti Social Behaviour Act 2003) Penalty Notices will be considered when:

- Intervention has failed to bring about improvement and further unauthorised absence has occurred following written warning to improve.
- A learner has taken leave of absence i.e. for the purpose of a holiday in term time and the absence has not been authorised by the school

A Penalty Notice gives the parent the opportunity to avoid a prosecution. A £60 fine, per parent/carer, per child must be paid within 21 days. The fine increases to £120 per parent/.carer, per child if paid after 21 days but within 28 days of the date the Notice was issued.

Failure to pay the Penalty Notice may result in a prosecution under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996.

Prosecution: The school will provide the Local Authority with evidence required for a prosecution under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996. This is to ensure that parents realise their own responsibilities in ensuring attendance at school and most importantly about returning children to education.

## Intervention Flow Chart

School will notify parent of the child's irregular school attendance and offer them the opportunity and support to improve.

If you receive a letter informing you of concerns regarding your child's attendance you should

- Consider any reasons why they are reluctant to attend
- Contact the school to discuss any difficulties you or your child may be experiencing.
- Ensure your child attends school regularly

If there is no improvement and the parent has not provided a good reason for the absence, the school may refer to the County Attendance Team

Whilst your involvement in a Parenting Contract is voluntary, if you fail to engage with the support offered and your child's attendance remains irregular, the County Attendance team may issue a Penalty Notice or begin legal proceedings in the Magistrates' Court.

If you are issued with a Penalty Notice of £60 per parent/carer, per child this must be paid in full within 21 days otherwise the Penalty will increase to £120 per parent/carer, per child. If you fail to pay the Penalty by the 28<sup>th</sup> day, the County Attendance Team may instigate legal proceedings against you.

If you are found guilty of this offence you can be fined up to £2500 and/or be imprisoned for a period of three months.

A Parenting Contract is a voluntary agreement between you and the Local Authority aimed at supporting you in improving your child's school attendance.

The County Attendance Team will invite you to attend a Parenting Contract Meeting and may issue a Warning of a Penalty Notice.

## appendix a – register codes

Registration Code	Explanation and usage – extracted from “School Attendance” DfE Oct 2014
/\	<b>Present in school / = am \ = pm</b> Present in school during registration
L	<b>Late arrival before the register has closed</b>
U	<b>Arrived after the register has closed</b>
B	<b>Off-site educational activity</b> This code should be used when learners are present at an off-site educational activity that has been approved by the school. Ultimately schools are responsible for the safeguarding and welfare of learners educated off-site. Therefore, by using code B, schools are certifying that the education is supervised and measures have been taken to safeguard learners. This code should not be used for any unsupervised educational activity or where a learner is at home doing school work. Schools should ensure that they have in place arrangements whereby the provider of the alternative activity notifies the school of any absences by individual learners. The school should record the learner’s absence using the relevant absence code.
D	<b>Dual Registered - at another educational establishment</b> This code is not counted as a possible attendance in the School Census. The law allows for dual registration of learners at more than one school. This code is used to indicate that the learner was not expected to attend the session in question because they were scheduled to attend the other school at which they are registered. The main examples of dual registration are learners who are attending a learner referral unit, a hospital school or a special school on a temporary basis. It can also be used when the learner is known to be registered at another school during the session in question. Each school should only record the learner’s attendance and absence for those sessions where the learner is scheduled to attend their school. Schools should ensure that they have in place arrangements whereby all unexplained and unexpected absence is followed up in a timely manner.
J	<b>At an interview with prospective employers, or another educational establishment</b> This code should be used to record time spent in interviews with prospective employers or another educational establishment. Schools should be satisfied that the interview is linked to employment prospects, further education or transfer to another educational establishment.
P	<b>Participating in a supervised sporting activity</b> This code should be used to record the sessions when a learner is taking part in a sporting activity that has been approved by the school and supervised by someone authorised by the school.
V	<b>Educational visit or trip</b> This code should be used for attendance at an organised trip or visit, including residential trips organised by the school, or attendance at a supervised trip of a strictly educational nature arranged by an organisation approved by the school.
W	<b>Work experience</b> Work experience is for learners in the final two years of compulsory education. Schools should ensure that they have in place arrangements whereby the work experience placement provider notifies the school of any absences by individual learners. Any absence should be recorded using the relevant code.
C	<b>Leave of absence authorised by the school</b> Only exceptional circumstances warrant an authorised leave of absence. Schools should consider each application individually taking into account the specific facts and circumstances and relevant background context behind the request.

<b>E</b>	<p><b>Excluded but no alternative provision made</b></p> <p>If no alternative provision is made for a learner to continue their education whilst they are excluded but still on the admission register, they should be marked absent in the attendance register using Code E. Alternative provision must be arranged for each excluded learner from the sixth consecutive day of any fixed period or permanent exclusion. Where alternative provision is made they should be marked using the appropriate attendance code.</p>
<b>H</b>	<p><b>Holiday authorised by the school</b></p> <p>Head teachers should not grant leave of absence unless there are exceptional circumstances. The application must be made in advance and the head teacher must be satisfied that there are exceptional circumstances based on the individual facts and circumstances of the case which warrant the leave. Where a leave of absence is granted, the head teacher will determine the number of days a learner can be away from school. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the head teacher's discretion.</p>
<b>I</b>	<p><b>Illness (not medical or dental appointments)</b></p> <p>Schools should advise parents to notify them on the first day the child is unable to attend due to illness. Schools should authorise absences due to illness unless they have genuine cause for concern about the veracity of an illness. If the authenticity of illness is in doubt, schools can request parents to provide medical evidence to support illness. Schools can record the absence as unauthorised if not satisfied of the authenticity of the illness but should advise parents of their intention. Schools are advised not to request medical evidence unnecessarily. Medical evidence can take the form of prescriptions, appointment cards, etc. rather than doctors' notes.</p>
<b>M</b>	<p><b>Medical or dental appointments</b></p> <p>Missing registration for a medical or dental appointment is counted as an authorised absence. Schools should, however, encourage parents to make appointments out of 11 school hours. Where this is not possible, the learner should only be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary for the appointment.</p>
<b>R</b>	<p><b>Religious observance</b></p> <p>Schools must treat absence as authorised when it is due to religious observance. The day must be exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the parents belong. Where necessary, schools should seek advice from the parents' religious body about whether it has set the day apart for religious observance.</p>
<b>S</b>	<p><b>Study leave</b></p> <p>Schools must record study leave as authorised absence. Study leave should be used sparingly and only granted to Year 11 learners during public examinations. Provision should still be made available for those learners who want to continue to come into school to revise.</p>
<b>T</b>	<p><b>GRT absence</b></p> <p>A number of different groups are covered by the generic term GRT – Roma, English and Welsh Gypsies, Irish and Scottish Travellers, Showmen (fairground people) and Circus people, Bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and New Travellers. This code should be used when GRT families are known to be travelling for occupational purposes and have agreed this with the school but it is not known whether the learner is attending educational provision. It should not be used for any other types of absence by these groups</p> <p>To help ensure continuity of education for GRT children it is expected that the child should attend school elsewhere when their family is travelling and be dual registered at that school and the main school. Children from these groups whose families do not travel are expected to register at a school and attend as normal. They are subject to the same rules as other children in terms of the requirement to attend school regularly once registered at a school.</p>

<b>G</b>	<p><b>Holiday not authorised by the school or in excess of the period determined by the Head Teacher.</b></p> <p>If a school does not authorise a leave of absence for the purpose of a holiday but the parents still take the child out of school, or the child is kept away for longer than was agreed, the absence is unauthorised. The regulations do not allow schools to give retrospective approval. If the parents did not apply for leave of absence in advance, the absence must be recorded as unauthorised.</p>
<b>N</b>	<p><b>Reason for absence not yet provided</b></p> <p>Schools should follow up all unexplained and unexpected absences in a timely manner. Every effort should be made to establish the reason for a learner's absence. When the reason for the learner's absence has been established the register should be amended. This code should not be left on a learner's attendance record indefinitely; if no reason for absence is provided after a reasonable amount of time it should be replaced with code O (absent from school without authorisation).</p>
<b>O</b>	<p><b>Absent from school without authorisation</b></p> <p>If the school is not satisfied with the reason given for absence they should record it as unauthorised.</p>
<b>X</b>	<p><b>Not required to be in school</b></p> <p>This code is used to record sessions that non-compulsory school age children are not expected to attend.</p> <p><b>Not attending in circumstances relating to coronavirus (COVID-19)</b></p> <p>This code is used to record sessions where the learner's travel to or presence at school would conflict with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• guidance relating to the incidence or transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19) from Public Health England or the Department of Health and Social Care or</li> <li>• any legislation (or instruments such as statutory directions) relating to the incidence or transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19).</li> </ul>
<b>Y</b>	<p><b>Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances</b></p> <p>This code can be used where a learner is unable to attend because:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The school site, or part of it, is closed due to an unavoidable cause; or</li> <li>• The transport provided by the school or a local authority is not available and where the learner's home is not within walking distance; or</li> <li>• A local or national emergency has resulted in widespread disruption to travel which has prevented the learner from attending school.</li> </ul> <p>This code can also be used where a learner is unable to attend because:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The learner is in custody; detained for a period of less than four months. If the school has evidence from the place of custody that the learner is attending educational activities then they can record those sessions as code B (present at approved educational activity).</li> </ul> <p>This code is collected in the School Census for statistical purposes.</p>
<b>Z</b>	<p><b>Learner not on admission register</b></p> <p>This code is available to enable schools to set up registers in advance of learners joining the school to ease administration burdens. Schools must put learners on the admission register from the first day that the school has agreed, or been notified, that the learner will attend the school.</p>
<b>#</b>	<p><b>Planned whole or partial school closure</b></p> <p>This code should be used for whole or partial school closures that are known or planned in advance such as: between terms; half terms; occasional days (for example, bank holidays); weekends (where it is required by the management</p>

	information system); up to five non-educational days to be used for curriculum planning/training; and use of schools as polling stations.
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