

13th October 2024

Changes to Attendance and Punctuality

Dear Parents/Carers,

At Highgate Wood school, we know that good attendance starts with close and productive relationships with parents and students. That is why we treat all students and parents with dignity and our staff model respectful 'The Highgate Wood Way' relationships to ensure that we build a positive relationship between home and our school that can be the foundation of good attendance. In working in partnership with parents, it is key that we discuss the link between attendance and attainment and wider wellbeing, and there are points where we need to challenge parents' views where they have misconceptions about what 'good' attendance looks like. Where a student or family needs support with attendance, we have the best placed people in our school who can work alongside and support the family. Our pastoral team – your child's tutor, your child's Head of Year, our Pastoral Support Officers, and Safeguarding and Family Liaison Officer - and attendance officer, Deb King, are all here to offer support and guidance to ensure your child's attendance is good.

Where a pattern of absence is at risk of becoming, or becomes, problematic we will draw on these relationships and listen to and understand the barriers to attendance your child or your family is experiencing. In doing so, we take into consideration the sensitivity of some of the reasons for absence and understand the importance of our school as a place of safety and support rather than reaching immediately for punitive approaches.

As a result of these relationships, and the support offered, last academic year our whole school attendance improved significantly. We want to say a big thanks to you all for supporting your child and our school in achieving this. We intend for this improvement to continue this year, and the new guidance has been shared for schools by the DfE to improve on attendance and it is to be implemented this academic year.

There will be more about the changes and our new Attendance and Punctuality Policy in future letters, but some key changes are provided now which could impact on your child:

1. Change to the closure of the AM register
 - Schools are required to close the AM register after 30 minutes of it being opened.
 - A reminder that all students are expected to be in school before 8:30am and the register opens at 8:35am.
 - This means that from this academic term, if your child arrives after 9:05am, then they will be recorded with a U code.
 - This means that they have missed their AM session.
 - We will continue to issue any students who arrive after 9am with an immediate 60 minute Reflection on that same day.
 - Parents are advised to contact Ms King dki@hws.haringey.sch.uk or call the attendance absence number, if your child is going to arrive late. A reminder that a decision to make an absence authorised is made on the judgement of Ms King.

2. Fixed Penalty Notices

- There have been changes to penalty notices for unauthorised absence.
- Parents need to be aware that the threshold for issuing a penalty notice is 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks.
- A school week means any week in which there is at least one school session.
- This can be met with any combination of unauthorised absence (e.g. 4 sessions of unauthorised holiday taken in term time plus 6 sessions of arriving late after the register closes all within 10 school weeks).
- These sessions can be consecutive (e.g. 10 sessions of unauthorised holiday in one week) or not (e.g. 6 sessions of unauthorised absence taken in 1 week and 1 per week for the next 4 weeks).
- The period of 10 school weeks can also span different terms or school years (e.g. 2 sessions of unauthorised absence in the Summer Term and a further 8 within the Autumn Term).
- The first penalty notice issued to a parent in respect of a particular pupil will be charged at £160 if paid within 28 days. This will be reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days.
- A second penalty notice issued to the same parent in respect of the same pupil is charged at a flat rate of £160 if paid within 28 days.

As a school, we need our parents to communicate with us if there are any barriers or concerns about your child's attendance to our school. The sooner that you contact us, the sooner we can work together to help your child.

We will look at each case individually if the ten-session threshold is met. We advise all parents to contact Ms King and to arrange a meeting if support is required. We have a team of supportive staff members who will happily offer support and guidance to help ensure your child's good attendance.

We would also like to remind you of the importance of ensuring your child attends school for our morning registration, even if they have a mid-morning appointment scheduled. We kindly request that, whenever possible, your child attends the morning registration and then leaves for the appointment after this time.

Following any mid-morning appointment, we also ask that you support your child in returning to school promptly. This will help minimise disruption to their learning and ensure they can catch up on any missed work.

Finally, a reminder that any Special Leave of Absence request need to be made in writing to the Headteacher within the notice period specified in the Attendance and Punctuality policy. It is at the Headteacher's discretion to allow a SLOA; just by sending the request in to the Headteacher does not guarantee that you will be issued permission. Please see the criteria for parents SLOA's being granted, and when they will not be.

Thank you for your cooperation and continued support in helping to maintain your child's attendance and academic progress.

Please look out for more information about our new Attendance and Punctuality Policy.

Regards

Dean Mansfield
Deputy Headteacher