




**The Harefield Academy**  
*Achievement through Active Learning*

# The Harefield Academy Attendance Policy and Extended Leave Policy

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## **The Harefield Academy Attendance and Punctuality Policy**

### **1.0 Introduction:**

The Harefield Academy aims for an environment which enables and encourages all students of the community to strive for excellence. For our students to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and your child should be at school, on time, every day. The Academy is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

It is very important therefore that you make sure that your child attends every day and this Policy sets out how together we will achieve this.

The Harefield Academy expects all students to achieve a minimum attendance percentage between 97% -100%.

### **1.1 Why Attendance is so important:**

We know that the most successful learners are those who attend school regularly. Their learning is fluid and they do not develop gaps in their understanding. Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect both their learning and wellbeing. Any student's absence disrupts teaching routines so may affect the learning of others in the same class.

Attendance at The Harefield Academy is clearly an important pre-requisite for a successful and fulfilling academic career. Prolonged absence, irregular attendance and lack of punctuality can all serve to undermine educational achievement and result in considerable long-term disadvantage to children and young people as well as having a detrimental impact on the students' mental health and well-being. Students who do not attend regularly may be placed at considerable risk and, in some cases, may be drawn into patterns of antisocial or criminal behaviour.

Staff at The Harefield Academy will provide a positive pro-active ethos that places high value on attendance and punctuality. All Academy staff have a responsibility to personally model good practice in this area. Ensuring your child's daily 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 prosecution from the Local Authority.

Attendance is a very important performance indicator and is used by OFSTED when inspecting schools and academies.

## 2.0 Promoting Daily Attendance:

Helping to create a pattern of daily attendance is everybody's responsibility – parents/carers, students and all members of The Academy staff.

### To maintain high expectations The Academy will:

- Give you details on The Harefield Academy overall attendance in the Headteacher's termly letter.
- Contact you if there is an unexplained absence from school.
- Report to you frequently on how your child is performing in school, what their attendance and punctuality rate is and how this relates to their academic progress and wellbeing.
- Celebrate good and improving attendance by awarding students for individual and class achievements. Merits, certificates and communication home will be put in place where attendance is persistently good or where there has been a significant improvement over time.
- Make live and termly attendance data available via Class Charts and the Data Capture report cycle.
- Regularly show your child his/her attendance and discuss this with them via their Tutors, Student Manager or Head of Year.
- Discuss any concerns with parents/carers to ensure we work in partnership to create the necessary supportive environment.
- Communicate with you on specific attendance targets if your child is persistently absent from school and make the Local Authority (Participation Team) aware.

## 2.1 Understanding types of absence:

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by The Academy as either **AUTHORISED** or **UNAUTHORISED**. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required, preferably in writing.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason like illness, medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable cause. These should be applied for in writing and/or present a copy of the appointment sheet. We encourage all students to attend school either before or after a medical/dental appointment where possible.

Unauthorised absences are those which The Academy does not consider reasonable and for which no "authorised leave" has been given. This type of absence can lead to the Local Authority (Participation Team) using sanctions and/or legal proceedings. This includes:

- Parents/carers keeping a student off school unnecessarily
- Truancy before or during the school day
- Absences which have never been properly explained
- A student who arrives at school too late to get a mark
- Shopping, looking after other students or birthdays
- Day trips and holidays in term time

- Excessive illness without medical evidence

The names of the two documents below provide parents/carers and schools further information on the absence related to sickness and health:

### **1. Public Health England – Guidance on Infection Control in Schools and other Childcare Settings**

### **2. Statutory Guidance from the DfE on Supporting Pupils at School with Medical Conditions**

The Harefield Academy and Local Authority will need to be provided with ‘medical evidence’ to enable authorisation of absence, particularly when it is frequent. Medical evidence needs to be in the form of a hospital or GP letter or a medical report from a medical professional such as from their Doctor, Optician, Hospital or Dentist.

Whilst any student may be off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best resolved between The Academy, the parents/carer and the child. If your child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and usually makes things worse.

You can help your child attending school by:

Making sure they understand the importance of good attendance and punctuality taking an interest in their education:

- Ask about school work and encourage them to get involved in school activities
- Checking your child’s Class Charts to review behaviour, rewards and homework information
- Ensuring regular and reasonable bed times
- Having uniform and equipment prepared the night before
- Providing a healthy breakfast
- Reporting any academic or social concerns promptly
- Advising of any family changes which may impact on your child’s wellbeing
- Retaining open and honest communication with your child’s school
- Being positive about school (even if your own experience was less than positive)
- Not letting them take time off school for minor ailments - particularly those which would not prevent you from going to work
- Schedule medical appointments outside of school time where possible

It is recognised that students may have difficulties in attending daily for a variety of complex and often inter-related reasons. These may include:

- The student’s educational, social and emotional development
- The student’s medical history
- Social, economic and cultural considerations within the family and community
- Factors operating within The Academy

- Availability of appropriate support from statutory and voluntary agencies within the community

### **3.0 Religious Observance**

The pattern of The Academy year takes account of most of the western Christian festivals and religious days. Important days of religious observance in the calendars of other religious traditions and denominations, however, often fall in term time and specifically on school days.

Those parents who are nurturing young people within a faith tradition understandably want them to be able to engage in those key events which involve corporate worship and celebration and which affirm their religious beliefs. The Harefield Academy will be sensitive to parental requests for the authorisation of absence for religious observance because they recognise that a family's religious beliefs and traditions are intrinsic to their sense of identity and contribute to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Whilst sympathetic to the need of families to remain in contact with relatives and their heritage overseas, The Academy will not authorise exceptional leave of absence for extended visits abroad because of the consequences for students' attendance and learning.

The Headteacher implements that policy and decides whether or not to authorise absence for religious observance, balancing religious requirements with the importance of regular attendance. It is a matter for the Headteacher whether to authorise an absence for religious observance. The Headteacher should be satisfied that the request demonstrates exceptional circumstances to justify the authorisation of any absence.

SACRE has published an annual list of religious festival dates on which absence might be authorised. Hillingdon SACRE is aware that headteachers value this guidance so that this local understanding does not diminish robust procedures aimed at improving attendance.

### **4.0 Requests: Performance and Filming**

A performance is where a child takes part in a theatre production, commercial or TV/film production, the Headteacher will consider each request on an individual basis.

- A child must not take part in performances or rehearsals on more than six consecutive days.
- A request for exceptional leave for a student performing must be made as early as possible for consideration.
- The Academy will authorise six days for a performance/filming as long as they have no absences for any other reason; this would equate to 97% attendance. Each time a request is received, the student's attendance level will be considered, including previous years' absences. If a student's attendance level is below 97%, the Headteacher is not at liberty to authorise a request, even if the Local Authority Application Processing Team may have issued a Performance Licence without a Headteacher's permission.
- The school must be satisfied that the child's education will not suffer by reason of taking part in the performances or filming.

#### **4.1 Requests: Sporting Competitions**

We understand that some of our students represent their sport to a very high standard and with that comes commitments to competitions during the school term which may fall within school times. Absence for these types of events **will not** be authorised if a child's attendance is below our expected threshold of 97%. All such requests must be approved in advance which may fall within school times. Competitions that are arranged by The Academy will not affect a student's attendance.

#### **5.0 Persistent Absenteeism (PA) Student with Attendance Below 90%:**

A student becomes a 'persistent absentee' (PA) when they miss 10% (90% or below attendance) or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we need parents/carers' fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

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

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

All our PA students and their parents/carers are invited in to discuss an Individual Attendance Plan and the plan may include: allocation of additional support; recommendation for counselling/mentoring; voluntary referral to an outside agency support, i.e. Team Around the Family (TAF)/Early Intervention Team (EIT); home visits; Attendance Panel meetings. All PA cases are also automatically made known to the Participation Officer for further intervention, parents/carers will be invited to attend an Attendance Panel to discuss their child's attendance with our named Participation Team Officer from the Local Authority. Following the child's attendance panel if there is no improvement during the monitoring period the Local Authority will make the decision whether to issue a fixed penalty notice to parents/carers for failing to ensure their child's consistent attendance at school.

#### **5.1 The Harefield Academy Absence Procedures:**

##### **If your child is absent it is the parent/carers' responsibility to:**

- Contact us as soon as possible on the first day of absence (and each day thereafter) on The Academy absence line or by sending in an email.
- Send a note in on the first day they return with an explanation of the absence – you must do this even if you have already telephoned or emailed.
- Or, you can call into school and report to reception, who will support with an appointment for a member of staff to speak with you in accordance with availability.

##### **If your child is absent we will:**

- We will telephone, email or send an unexplained absence to you for each day of absence where we have received no communication from you, this will be logged on SIMS.

- The Tutor, Student Manager or Head of Year will ring home to discuss concerns and advise on improvement.
- Invite you in to discuss the situation with one of our Pastoral Leaders if absences persist.
- An unannounced home visit will be organised with the Designated Safeguarding Lead and our Safer School's Officer or Student Manager, if there are any concerns for the student's welfare.

**If your child's attendance fails below 97% we will:**

- Automatically send a first letter to the student's parents/carers advising them that their child's attendance has fallen below 97% and continue to monitor the students' attendance.
- Communicate in writing in relation to unsatisfactory attendance continuing to cause a concern. Arrange an Individual Attendance Plan meeting, with a member of the Pastoral Team, student and parents/carers. Any further days taken off school will not be authorised. At the Individual Attendance Plan meeting, clear targets will be set and will be reviewed over a four week period.
- If attendance remains unsatisfactory and a student fails their Individual Attendance Plan within the four week period without reasonable justification, a referral will be made to the Participation Officer of the Local Authority where a panel meeting will be held between the school, Participation Officer, student and parents/carers.
- If there is no improvement in the child's attendance during the monitoring period set by the Participation Officer, the Local Authority will then make a decision whether to issue a fixed penalty notice to parents/carers.

**6.0 The Participation Officer:**

Parents/carers are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any problems together. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be resolved in this way, the school will refer the child to the Participation Officer from the Local Authority. The Participation Officer will also try to resolve the situation by agreement but, if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed and unauthorised absences persist, the Participation Officers will impose sanctions available to them such as Penalty Notices per parent/carer per child (currently £60 rising to £120 if unpaid after 21 days and if unpaid after 28 days a summons to Court will be issued for each unpaid Penalty Notice) for prosecutions in the Magistrates Court. The legislation is the Education Act 1996 sec. 444(1) and 444(1A). Parents/carers that have previously been issued with Penalty Notices for their child's unauthorised absences, in the event of further unauthorised absences, can be summonsed to Court.

"If any child of compulsory school age who is a registered pupil at a school fails to attend regularly (The Harefield Academy definition of 'regularly' is 97%) at the school, their parent/carer is guilty of an offence."

Alternatively, parents or student may wish to contact the Participation Team themselves to ask for help or information. They are independent of The Academy and will give impartial advice. Their telephone number is 01895 250858 or [participationteam@hillington.gov.uk](mailto:participationteam@hillington.gov.uk).



## 7.0 Lateness:

Poor punctuality is not acceptable and is disruptive to learning. If your child misses the start of the day they can miss work and do not spend time with their Tutor or class teacher getting vital information and news for the day. Late arriving students also disrupt tutor time and lessons, can be embarrassing for the student and can also encourage absence.

### 7.1 How we manage lateness:

The school day starts at 8.45am and this is the time we expect your child to be in their tutor. Registers are marked at 8.45am and your child will receive a late mark if they are not in by that time. Once your child has been issued with three late marks to their tutor and/or their lessons, they will automatically receive a 30minute after school detention.

At 9.05am tutor time finishes and the registers will be closed. Students have a responsibility to follow The Academy late procedures should they arrive late after 9.05am they will need to sign in at reception. If your child does not have a valid reason, i.e. dental/medical appointment with evidence provided as to why they are late, they will be issued with a 30minute after school detention.

In accordance with the Regulations, if your child arrives after 9.05am they will receive a mark that shows them to be on site, but this will **not** count as a present mark and it will mean they have an unauthorised absence. This may mean that you could face the possibility of a Penalty Notice if the problem persists.

If your child has a persistent late record you will be asked to meet with a member of the Pastoral Leadership 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.

Students are responsible for making sure that their own punctuality is maintained daily at the highest level.

The Local Authority Participation Team can issue a Penalty Notice for persistent lateness under the following circumstances:

- The student has developed a pattern of persistent lateness – this is defined as 12 unauthorised absences due to lateness (U) over any 6 week period.
- The school has previously informed the student's parent/carer in writing of the student's persistent lateness and the legal consequences of these unauthorised absences.

<b>Minutes late per day</b>	<b>Equivalent of missing</b>
5 Minutes	3.4 school days a year
10 Minutes	6.9 school days a year
15 Minutes	10.3 school days a year

20 Minutes	13.8 school days a year
30 Minutes	20.7 school days a year

## 7.2 Exceptional Leave:

Taking holidays 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.

If you have taken your child out of school for a holiday without making a request for leave or have been advised by the Headteacher that if you take your child on holiday it will be recorded as a unauthorised absence, the matter may be referred to the Participation Team and a Penalty Notice may be issued to each parent/carer in respect of each child. If unauthorised leave is repeated, the parents/carers may be summonsed to Court without a Penalty Notice being issued, for the offence of failing to ensure their child's regular attendance at school.

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

There is **no** automatic entitlement in law to time off in school time to go on holiday.

1. It is widely known that the link between a student's attendance and attainment is irrefutable.
2. Evidence shows that a student with poor attendance achieve at least 1 grade lower in their GCSEs.
3. Early poor attendance habits follow through into further education and employment.
4. Graduates earn, on average, double that of young people that leave school with no qualifications.
5. All Hillingdon schools are encouraged to adopt a policy of not authorising Exceptional Leave.
6. Exceptional Leave will always be refused in Year 11.
7. Exceptional leave will always be refused when a student's attendance is less than 97%.
8. Exceptional leave will always be refused when school is aware of any truancy.
9. Exceptional leave will always be refused when requests are regular (annual) or when patterns become identifiable.

## 7.3 Telephone numbers:

There are times when we need to contact parents/carers about lots of things, including absence, so we need to have your current contact numbers at all times. We need to have a minimum of three different contacts in case of an emergency, these numbers must be accessible. So to help us to help you and your child by making sure we always have an up to date contact numbers – if we don't then something important may be missed. There will be regular checks on telephone numbers throughout the year.

## **8.0 School Targets**

Like many schools, attendance is a specific priority and area for development for The Academy and your child has an important part to play in meeting these targets. The minimum level of attendance for The Harefield Academy is **97%** attendance and we will keep you updated regularly about progress to this level and how your child's attendance compares.

Our target is to achieve better than 97% because we know that good attendance is the key to successful schooling and we believe our students can be amongst the best in Hillingdon.

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures and its attendance policy to parents/carers and to promote attendance. School attendance data must be available to the Local Authority and the DFE. Equally, parents/carers have a duty to make sure that their children attend.

All school staff are committed to working with parents/carers and students as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible.