

# North Halifax Grammar School

## Attendance Policy



<b>Approved by</b>	<b>Headteacher</b>
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<b>Policy Owner</b>	<b>Assistant Headteacher 3</b>

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## 1. Principles:

North Halifax Grammar School is committed to ensuring that all families understand the importance of 100% attendance. Attendance in school is vital for academic success. Studies have shown that students who attend less than 97% of the time fail to achieve their potential and therefore are denied the chance to a successful, fulfilling life. For these reasons, we monitor attendance patterns with vigilance and hold parents and students to account where necessary. We expect all students to attend at all times, even if they are feeling under the weather or experiencing some stress and anxiety. It is important that students are in the habit of regularly attending school and often the best way of overcoming ill health or anxiety is to get out of the house and engage in learning.

## 2. Aims:

North Halifax Grammar School aims to meet its obligations with regards to school attendance by:

- Maintaining exceptionally high levels of attendance and punctuality across the school, significantly above local and national averages;
- Ensuring every student has access to full-time education to which they are entitled;
- Working with parents to ensure individual student's attendance is as high as possible, supporting and challenging where needed.
- Acting early to address patterns of absence
- Building strong relationships with families to make sure students have the support in place to attend school

It is our legal duty to ensure our children attend school regularly.

## 3. Legislation and guidance:

This policy is based on the Department for Education's (DfE's) statutory guidance on [working together to improve school attendance \(applies from 19 August 2024\)](#) and [school attendance parental responsibility measures](#). The guidance is based on the following pieces of legislation, which set out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

Part 6 of the [Education Act 1996](#)

Part 3 of the [Education Act 2002](#)

Part 7 of the [Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)

[The Education \(Student Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006 \(and 2010, 2011, 2013, and 2016 amendments\)](#)

[The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)

It also draws to:

[School census guidance](#)

## **4. Roles and responsibilities:**

### **4.1 Trustees:**

The board of trustees is responsible for:

- Setting high expectations of all school leaders, staff, students and parents
- Making sure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties, including:
- Making sure the school records attendance accurately in the register, and shares the required information with the DfE and local authority
- Making sure the school works effectively with local partners to help remove barriers to attendance, and keeps them informed regarding specific students, where appropriate
- Recognising and promoting the importance of school attendance across the school's policies and ethos
- Making sure the school's attendance management processes are delivered effectively, and that consistent support is provided for students who need it most by prioritising staff and resources
- Making sure the school has high aspirations for all students, but adapts processes and support to students' individual needs
- Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data and helping school leaders focus improvement efforts on individual students or cohorts who need it most
- Working with school leaders to set goals or areas of focus for attendance and providing support and challenge
- Monitoring attendance figures for the whole school and repeatedly evaluating the effectiveness of the school's processes and improvement efforts to make sure they are meeting students needs
- Where the school is struggling with attendance, working with school leaders to develop a comprehensive action plan to improve attendance
- Making sure all staff receive adequate training on attendance as part of the regular continued professional development offer, so that staff understand:
  - The importance of good attendance
  - That absence is almost always a symptom of wider issues
  - The school's legal requirements for keeping registers
  - The school's strategies and procedures for tracking, following up on and improving attendance, including working with partners and keeping them informed regarding specific students, where appropriate

### **4.2 The Headteacher:**

The Headteacher is responsible for;

- Ensuring this policy is implemented consistently across the school
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual students

- Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies
- Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary, and/or authorising the Assistant Headteacher with responsibility for attendance to be able to do so
- Communicating the school's high expectations for attendance and punctuality regularly to students and parents through all available channels

#### **4.3 The designated senior leader responsible for attendance**

The designated senior leader is responsible for:

- Leading, championing and improving attendance across the school
- Setting a clear vision for improving and maintaining good attendance
- Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes
- Having a strong grasp of absence data and oversight of absence data analysis
- Regularly monitoring and evaluating progress in attendance
- Establishing and maintaining effective systems for tackling absence, and making sure they are followed by all staff
- Liaising with students, parents/carers and external agencies, where needed
- Building close and productive relationships with parents to discuss and tackle attendance issues
- Creating intervention or reintegration plans in partnership with students and their parents/carers
- Delivering targeted intervention and support to students and families

The designated senior leader responsible for attendance is Mr D Kennedy and can be contacted via [d.kennedy@nhgs.co.uk](mailto:d.kennedy@nhgs.co.uk).

#### **4.4 Pastoral Assistant**

The pastoral assistant is responsible for;

- Monitoring attendance data at the school and individual student level
- Reporting concerns about attendance to the assistant headteacher
- Work with education welfare officers to tackle persistent absence
- Arranging calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues
- Working with education welfare officers to tackle persistent absence
- Take calls from parents about absence and record it on the school system
- Informing teaching staff of wellbeing issues as required
- Providing regular attendance reports to school staff and reporting concerns about attendance to the designated senior leader responsible for attendance, and the headteacher

#### **4.5 Class teachers/student progress tutors**

Class teachers/student progress tutors are responsible for recording attendance for all teaching sessions and registration on a daily basis, using the correct codes (see Appendix 1), and submitting this information to the school office.

#### **4.6 Parents and carers**

Parents and carers are expected to:

- Make sure their child attends every on time
- Call the school to report their child's absence before 8am on the day of the absence and each subsequent day of absence, and advise when they are expected to return
- Provide the school with more than 1 emergency contact number for their child
- Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day
- Seek support, where necessary, for maintaining good attendance, by contacting the relevant Year Group Leader for their child.

#### **4.7 Students**

Students are expected to:

- Attend school every day, on time
- Attend every timetabled session, on time

### **5. School procedures:**

#### **5.1 Attendance register**

By law, all schools (except those where all students are boarders) are required to keep an attendance register, and all students must be placed on this register.

The attendance register will be taken at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. It will mark whether every student is:

- Present;
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity;
- Absent;
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances;

Students must arrive in school by 8.20am on each school day. The register for the first session will be taken at 8.25am.

The register for the second session will be taken at 1.00pm. In exceptional circumstances (such as severe weather or public transport disruptions) the closing of registration may be delayed at the discretion of the Headteacher.

#### **5.2 Unplanned Absence**

Parents must notify the school on the first day of an unplanned absence. For example, if their child is unable to attend due to ill health. Parents must telephone the school before 8.00am the same morning, and each subsequent morning, to inform us of the reason for absence. It is possible to leave messages on the student absence voicemail at any time prior to 8.00am. To report an absence dial the main school telephone number and select the appropriate option.

Absences can also be reported on the edulink app via absence 'reporting tab', also by emailing [studentabsence@nhgs.co.uk](mailto:studentabsence@nhgs.co.uk)

North Halifax Grammar School will contact parents on a daily basis if they fail to inform the school of an absence. The school must be notified of the reason for a child's absence in order to safeguard the child and protect their educational well-being. Absence is monitored very carefully at the school. Every day missed is a learning opportunity wasted. The school will make home visits to those students who are not in school where necessary.

Parents must comply with attendance law and will be notified by letter if the school has concerns. North Halifax Grammar School will work with parents and students to overcome barriers to students attending school where possible and will look to support improved attendance before taking punitive action.

If the support offered by the school does not work and a student falls below the threshold for Persistent Absence (PA) or is at risk of becoming persistently absent the school may seek corrective action through the following process;

- Step one- where student attendance is between 90%-93% notification will be given to parents or carers that their child is at risk of falling into the Persistent Absence (PA) category of below 90% attendance and that an improvement in attendance is expected.
- Step two- where student attendance is below 90% parents or carers will be officially notified by the school that their child has fallen into the PA category and that an improvement in attendance is expected. Parents or carers may be asked by the school to attend a meeting to address the attendance concerns.
- Step three- where student attendance is persistently or significantly below 90% parents or carers will receive communication from the Local Authority (LA) expressing concerns regarding the attendance of their child. This communication will set out possible support from the school and action taken by the LA, including initiating a parental contact, issuing a penalty notice or involving other external agencies.
- Step four- NHGS to instruct the local authority to issue a penalty notice against parents/carers where they have failed to engage with the school to seek to improve their child's attendance.

The process outlined above is for guidance, with the school reserving the right to take firmer action more swiftly where parents or carers fail to engage with the school to help improve their child's attendance.

### **5.3 Planned absence**

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the discretion of the school.

Valid reasons for authorised absence include:

- Illness and emergency medical/dental appointments

- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the student’s parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents’ religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart. Students may be granted more than one day authorised absence each academic year with this decision being at the discretion of the Headteacher
- Participation in an event that will further the education, character or future prospects of the student involved

Only emergency appointments for dentists, opticians, and doctors should be during school hours. Routine appointments must be made out of school hours. Students have 13 weeks’ school holiday per year and further time off on teacher training days.

We kindly ask parents to make routine doctor and dental appointments during these dates in order to avoid unnecessary absence. When it is known in advance that an absence is to be requested for emergency appointments, parents must make the school aware at least 2 days in advance. In such instances the student should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

Only half a day absences (maximum) will be authorised for medical appointments unless the parent or carer is able to contact school to demonstrate the need for a full day of absence.

#### **5.4 Lateness and punctuality**

Arriving on time to lessons is crucial to ensure that students are making the most of their time in school and learning to their potential. Lateness is not acceptable in school and is sanctioned as part of our behaviour management system. It is expected that students learn to take responsibility for managing their time in order that they move into positions of responsibility later in life.

A student who arrives late but before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code. A student who arrives after the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code.

Please note that persistent lateness will result in school sanction. The following system is used to sanction students for persistent lateness;

- 3 late marks in a term results in a 30 minute pastoral detention on Monday or Wednesday lunchtime.
- 6 late marks in a term results in a one hour school detention on Thursday.
- 9 late marks in a term results in a two hour Assistant Headteacher detention on Wednesday.
- 12 late marks + will result in repeated Assistant Headteacher detentions or progression to a Headteacher Detention on Saturday morning 9-11am.

Students who arrive at school more than 30 minutes after the morning register closes will receive a ‘U’ code for unauthorised absence. These marks will count towards unauthorised absence in school and if a number are accumulated could result in penalty action being taken against parents.



## **6. Authorised and unauthorised absence:**

### **6.1 Granting approval for term-time absence**

The Headteacher will not grant any leave of absence to students during term time unless it is considered to be exceptional circumstances. To request leave of absence, please write to the Headteacher explaining the exceptional circumstance. Requests must be submitted 10 days before the intended date (where possible).

Please note that in-line with DfE guidance North Halifax Grammar School do not authorise any term time holidays/visits/family gatherings of any kind. Holidays taken during term time may result in fixed term penalties being issued and a meeting with a member of the Strategic Leadership Group being required on return from the holiday. We urge you not to take your child out of school, the impact is exceptionally detrimental on your child's learning and progress. The school will not support this.

### **6.2 Legal sanctions**

Schools can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age. NHGS will work with families to avoid the use of fines and put supportive measures in place where possible to improve attendance before determining that the use of a fine is appropriate.

The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice ultimately rests with the Headteacher. This may take into account:

- The number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year
- The overall level of attendance for the student in question
- One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission
- Where an excluded student is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason

If issued with a penalty notice, parents must pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the local authority.

### **6.3 Reporting and monitoring absence**

In order to ensure the safety and educational well-being of all students, we have a rigorous monitoring system and follow up policy when absence occurs. The protocols for monitoring absence are as follows;

- Parents and carers must report any absence for each day of the period of absence and clearly state the reason for the absence. The school will determine whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised.
- Parents or carers will be contacted through Edulink by 10am on the first day of any unreported absences with a request that immediate contact be made to inform the

school of the reason for the absence. A follow up phone call will be made after 1pm on the first day of the period of absence to determine the reason for the absence.

- If no contact has been made by the second day of absence, this then triggers a home visit by the pastoral assistant (this could happen on the first day of absence in the case of a particularly vulnerable child).
- Where a student has been absent from school for over 5 days and has not been in contact with their teachers, the DSL will consider the circumstances and communication received to determine if a home visit is required. A risk assessment will be carried out and a home visit will be arranged to meet with the student if it is felt necessary, following the risk assessment. The school has a duty to investigate prolonged periods of absence to establish if safeguarding concerns are evident.
- Attendance data is regularly reviewed by pastoral staff in school and action is taken to inform parents or carers where concerns exist regarding student attendance. The process for addressing and supporting an improvement in attendance is outlined below;
  - Step one- where student attendance is between 90%-93% notification will be given to parents or carers that their child is at risk of falling into the Persistent Absence (PA) category of below 90% attendance and that an improvement in attendance is expected.
  - Step two- where student attendance is below 90% parents or carers will be officially notified by the school that their child has fallen into the PA category and that an improvement in attendance is expected. Parents or carers may be asked by the school to attend a meeting to address the attendance concerns.
  - Step three- where student attendance is persistently or significantly below 90% parents or carers will receive communication from the Local Authority (LA) expressing concerns regarding the attendance of their child. This communication will set out possible support from the school and action taken by the LA, including initiating a parental contact, issuing a penalty notice or involving other external agencies.
  - Step four- NHGS to instruct the local authority to issue a penalty notice against parents/carers where they have failed to engage with the school to seek to improve their child's attendance.

## **7. Supporting students who are absent or returning to school**

### **7.1 Students absent due to complex barriers to attendance**

The school recognises that some students face complex and multifaceted barriers that impact their ability to attend regularly. These barriers can include, but are not limited to, chronic health conditions, mental health issues, family circumstances, socio-economic challenges, and other personal difficulties.

To address these issues effectively, the school will:

- Identify and Assess: Work closely with students, their families, and relevant professionals to understand the specific barriers to attendance.

- Personalised Support Plans: Develop individualised attendance plans that outline tailored support strategies, including mental health services, counselling, and academic adjustments.
- Interagency Collaboration: Partner with external agencies such as social services, healthcare providers, and community organisations to ensure comprehensive support.
- Flexible Learning Options: Provide alternative educational arrangements, such as part-time attendance, to accommodate the student's needs.
- Regular Reviews: Conduct regular reviews of the student's situation and progress, making adjustments to support plans as necessary to promote improved attendance and well-being.
- Parental Engagement: Encourage and facilitate active parental involvement in addressing attendance barriers, offering guidance and support to families.
- Monitoring and Reporting: Implement a system for monitoring attendance patterns and reporting concerns promptly to ensure timely intervention.

By addressing these complex barriers with a compassionate and individualised approach, the school aims to support each student's right to education and promote their overall development and success.

## **7.2 Students absent due to mental or physical ill health or SEND**

The school is committed to supporting students who experience mental or physical ill health or have special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). We understand that these conditions can significantly impact attendance and strive to provide a nurturing and accommodating environment to support these students.

To ensure their educational needs are met, the school will:

- Early Identification: Promptly identify students whose attendance is affected by mental or physical health issues or SEND, through close monitoring and communication with parents, caregivers, and healthcare professionals.
- Tailored Support Plans: Develop and implement individualised support plans that address the specific needs of each student, including adjustments to the curriculum, learning environment, and teaching methods.
- Health and Wellbeing Services: Provide access to in-school health and wellbeing services, including counselling, therapy, and nursing support, to address the health-related barriers to attendance.
- Collaboration with Professionals: Work collaboratively with healthcare providers, therapists, and other specialists to ensure a coordinated approach to supporting the student's health and educational needs.
- Alternative Learning Arrangements: Offer flexible learning options, such as part-time schedules to accommodate students who are unable to attend school regularly.
- Parental and Carer Involvement: Engage with parents and carers to create a supportive home environment that reinforces the student's educational engagement and well-being.

- Regular Monitoring and Review: Continuously monitor the student's attendance and progress, conducting regular reviews of their support plans and making necessary adjustments to enhance their learning experience.
- Inclusive Practices: Foster an inclusive school culture that respects and values the diversity of all students, ensuring that those with ill health or SEND are fully included in all aspects of school life.

By providing comprehensive and compassionate support, the school aims to help students with mental or physical ill health or SEND achieve their full potential and maintain consistent attendance.

## **8. Links with other policies**

- Safeguarding Policy
- Behaviour Policy