



Re. Updated Attendance Policy and government statutory guidance

September 2024

Dear parent/carer,

We are writing to inform you about important changes to our school's attendance policy, which have been made in accordance with the latest government statutory guidance document, "Working Together to Improve Attendance." These changes aim to ensure that every student has the best possible chance to succeed in their education by promoting regular and punctual attendance.

The key points of the new attendance policy are as follows:

- 1. Regular Attendance:** It is crucial for students to attend school regularly. Consistent attendance is directly linked to academic achievement and personal development. **We expect all students to maintain an attendance of at least 97%.**
- 2. Punctuality:** Being on time is equally important. Late arrivals disrupt the learning environment and can affect the student's own progress. **Students should be on school site for 8:35am ready for line up at 8:40am.** Students who arrive to school after 8.40am without a valid reason will be issued a Late to School- Same day 45-minute detention.
- 3. Reporting Absences:** If your child is unable to attend school due to illness or any other valid reason, please notify the school office by 8:30am on the day of the absence via Class Charts, emailing attendance@highamlaneschool.co.uk, or a phone call to school on 024 7638 8123 or 024 7675 7000.
- 4. Authorised vs. Unauthorised Absences:** Absences will be categorised as either authorised or unauthorised. Examples of authorised absences include illness, and medical appointment (although we do expect parents/carers to make appointments outside of school hours where possible). **Unauthorised absences include holidays taken during term time without prior approval, students arriving late after 9:15am and absences without a valid reason.**
- 5. Leave of Absence, Unauthorised absence and Penalty notices:** Please be aware that Penalty Notice fees have increased to £160 to be paid within 28 days, this is reduced to £80 each child if paid within 21 days. These can be issued when a student has 10 sessions (AM and/or PM) of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks, this may include unauthorised leave of absence, absence without valid reason and students arriving late after 9:30am.
- 6. Support for Families:** We understand that there can be challenges affecting a child's attendance. Our school is committed to working collaboratively with families to address any barriers to regular attendance. This includes providing support and resources where needed.
- 7. Monitoring and Follow-Up:** Attendance will be monitored regularly. Parents/guardians will be informed if their child's attendance falls below the expected level of 97%. Persistent absenteeism may result in meetings with school staff to develop an attendance action plan or contract. In some cases, referral to external agencies may be necessary.

The following information below has been provided by Warwickshire Attendance Services and all schools have been instructed to pass this on to all parent/carers in preparation for the start of new school year.

Please be aware that from 1 September 2024, any leave of absence must be requested in writing, in advance, and you will be informed, in writing, whether or not this is authorised. Any unauthorised leave of absence forms will be sent to the Warwickshire Attendance Service, who will issue a Penalty notice.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE DURING TERM TIME

UPDATED INFORMATION FOR PARENTS

The Supreme Court clarified has clarified the law on unauthorised leave, including holidays, during term time (Platt v Isle of Wright 2017). The Supreme Court has made clear that attending school 'regularly' means that the children must attend school on every day that they are required to do so. As such, the parents of any child who is absent from school without authorisation for any length of time are likely to be considered as committing an offence under s444 of the Education Act 1996.

The law states a leave of absence may only be granted by a school if an application is made in advance and if it considers there are exceptional circumstances relating to the application.

Schools must judge each application individually considering the specific facts and circumstances and relevant background context behind each request.

A leave of absence is granted entirely at the school's discretion. Generally, a need or desire for a holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure and recreation would not constitute an exceptional circumstance.

Where a leave of absence is granted, the school will determine the number of days a pupil can be absent from school.

When making an application for Leave of Absence parents are advised to give sufficient information and time to allow the Head teacher the opportunity to consider all the exceptional circumstances and to notify parents of their decision. The school may also request further information on the application and supporting documentation where appropriate.

It is advised that if the resident parent has not received notification or a response regarding the leave of absence application, it is their responsibility to ascertain if the leave is authorised prior to the start of the leave.

The school can only consider Leave of Absence requests which are made by the 'resident' parent ie the parent with whom the child normally resides.

Where applications for leave of absence are made in advance and refused, the child is expected to be in school on the dates set out in the application. If the child is absent during that period, it will be recorded as an unauthorised absence. Where a leave of absence is requested, but additional days taken either prior to or after the request may be considered as part of the leave of absence.

Leave of Absences which are not made in advance cannot be authorised in line with legislation. This will result in the absence being recorded as 'unauthorised'.

All matters of unauthorised absence relating to a Leave of Absence will be referred to the Warwickshire Attendance Service, part of Warwickshire County Council. Penalty Notices are issued in accordance with

Warwickshire County Council's Code of Conduct for Penalty Notices and in the first instance, as an alternative to prosecution proceedings.

Leave of Absence taken in the academic year 2024-25

The law relating to Penalty Notices is due to change with effect from 1 September 2024. Therefore Penalty Notices issued for Leave of Absences taken after this date will be issued in accordance with the updated legislation.

- Penalty Notices are issued to each parent of each absent child, (for example 2 children and 2 parents, means each parent will receive 2 invoices – 4 in total).
 - First Leave of Absence offence: The Penalty Notice amount of £160 to be paid within 28 days, this is reduced to £80 each child if paid within 21 days.
 - Second Leave of Absence offence within a 3 year period (from the date of issue of the first penalty notice): The amount of £160 paid within 28 days. No reduced amount,
- Payment plans will not be offered and/or payments received outside of the 28 day period will not be accepted. Where a penalty notice expires unpaid the matter will be referred to Warwickshire County Council's Legal Services to consider criminal prosecution.
- Third Leave of Absence offence within a 3 year period (from the date of issue of the first penalty notice) A penalty notices will be not be issued and the matter will be referred to Warwickshire County Council's Legal Services to consider instigating criminal prosecution proceedings under S444 of Education Act 1996.

We believe that by working together, we can create a supportive environment that encourages regular attendance and punctuality. Your cooperation and commitment to your child's education are greatly appreciated.

For further details about the new attendance policy please go to the school website:

<https://www.highamlaneschool.co.uk/schoolpolicies>

Thank you for your attention to this important matter. We look forward to continuing our partnership in supporting your child's educational journey.

Yours faithfully,



Mr A Williams

Assistant Headteacher – Behaviour & Attendance