

HAZELWICK

ATTENDANCE POLICY

This policy was updated in September 2025

The policy will next be reviewed in September 2026

Introduction

Hazelwick School strives to provide a welcoming, caring environment, whereby each member of the school community feels wanted and secure.

Hazelwick School seeks to ensure that all its students receive a full-time education that maximises opportunities for all students to realise their true potential.

Hazelwick School recognises that punctuality and regular school attendance are essential to social inclusion and a prerequisite to effective learning and academic progress.

Students with no absence are 3.1 times more likely to achieve a Level 5 or above than students who missed 10 – 15% of all sessions.

Students with no absence are 2.2 times more likely to achieve 5+ GCSE grades 9 – 4 including English and Math, than students who missed 15% - 20% of KS4 lessons. Of students with absence of 50%, only 3% managed to achieve 5 or more GCSE grades 9 – 4, including English and Maths.

All school staff work with students and their families to ensure each student attends school regularly and punctually.

The school has established a system that recognises students with good attendance, acknowledges the efforts of students to improve their attendance and timekeeping, and will challenge the behaviour of those students and parents/carers who give low priority to attendance and punctuality.

To continue to meet these objectives, Hazelwick School has established an effective and efficient system of communication with students, parents/carers and appropriate agencies to provide mutual information, advice and support.

Hazelwick Attendance Policy aims:

1. To encourage and support high rates of attendance for all students at Hazelwick
2. To make attendance and punctuality a priority for all those associated with the school including students, parents/carers, teachers and governors.

In order to achieve these aims the school will:

- maintain a framework that defines agreed roles and responsibilities and promotes consistency in carrying out designated tasks
- provide support, advice and guidance to parents/carers and students
- maintain a systematic approach to gathering and analysing attendance-related data
- further develop positive and consistent communication between home and school
- maintain a system of publicising and recognising good attendance and punctuality and apply appropriate sanctions where necessary
- maintain a system that monitors, reviews and improves student attendance
- promote effective partnerships with the West Sussex Pupil Entitlement: Investigation team and with other services and agencies
- recognise the needs of the individual student when planning reintegration following significant periods of absence

Parents'/Carers' Duty

Parents/Carers have a legal duty to ensure that their child attends school regularly and punctually. The only reasons why a child may, legitimately, be absent from school are:

- Ill health
- Religious observance (see below)
- Where leave of absence has been granted by the Headteacher (see below)
- Where absence has been authorised through the use of the school Leave of Absence procedure (Appendix 2)
- Where transport should be provided by the local authority but is unavailable

Parents/Carers are expected to:

- Ensure their son/daughter leaves for school on time
- Provide a detailed written explanation for absences on the first day of their child's return to school
- Ring or email school on the first day of absence and on following days, where appropriate (see below)
- Contact the school (Head of Year) when concerned over issues relating to the child's attendance
- Encourage and support participation in extra-curricular activities
- Support the school in its aims to improve attendance

Students are expected to:

- Arrive at school by 8.25am and be ready to register in the form room at 8.30am
- Be in the classroom ready to be registered for the statutory afternoon school session at 12.25pm.
- Move purposefully between lessons and arrive in class on time
- Ensure parents/carers provide a note explaining any absence and pass the note to the Form Teacher on the first day of return
- Bring in a letter from home when requesting release from school for medical appointments and present it to the Head of Year, in advance of the day concerned where possible (The Leave of Absence system) – see below and Appendix 2

Leave of absence

- Parents/Carers should be aware that they **do not have the right** to take their child out of school during term time. Only the Headteacher or nominated representative can authorise absence
- Parents/carers must always request permission in advance for their child to miss school
- Holidays during school time will **not** be authorised
- Absence taken when not authorised by the school will be recorded as 'unauthorised absence' and will be subject for consideration under the Fixed Penalty Notice scheme (see details below)
- To apply for permission for their child to be absent from school, parents/carers must complete the *Request for Leave of Absence* form and return it to school for consideration at least 10 school days (where possible) in advance of the proposed leave of absence. See Appendix 1

Parents/carers need to be aware of our policy and procedures with regard to the following issues:

- *Medical appointments:*
 - Such appointments count as an absence. Where possible, these should be arranged for out of school hours. Requests for students to attend such appointments during school hours should be made in advance, where this is known, using the Leave of Absence system.
- *Day of Religious Observance:*

- This counts as an absence. We will authorise a maximum of **one** day for each relevant religious festival. This is provided that a request is made in advance of the absence. Time taken in excess of one day will be recorded as 'unauthorised' absence.
- *Holiday:*
 - Holidays taken during school time will **not** be authorised.
- *Leave of Absence:*
 - Requests for leave of absence will be dealt with on a case by case basis. Such requests will only be granted in exceptional circumstances.
 - Where a request for a leave of absence is granted, it will be recorded as an 'authorised absence'.
- *Unauthorised absence and the 'Fixed Penalty Notice Scheme':*
 - Absence taken when not authorised by the school will be recorded as 'unauthorised absence' and will be subject for consideration under the Fixed Penalty Notice scheme. (See Appendix 4)

The Leave of Absence system

The Headteacher has the discretion to authorise unavoidable absences for reasons including:

- medical/dental appointments
- interviews for employment/further or higher education
- agreed external tests e.g. music grades, driving test, etc.
- compassionate grounds e.g. bereavement

This is usually managed through the school's Leave of Absence system. The exception to this is when the request is made on compassionate grounds in which case appropriate liaison/communication is made between the school and home.

Notifying Absences

The school uses the InTouch system to communicate with parents/carers whose child is not in school on the first day of an absence and any subsequent days. The school expects a response from the parent/carer. If no response or other communication is received, the school will follow up their initial contact with a phone call.

Medical Appointments – information for parents/carers

Parents/Carers are asked to make all but emergency medical and dental appointments outside of the school day. If this is not possible, please give as much notice as possible of the intended appointment. Requests for absence in this case are managed through the Leave of Absence system. See Appendix 2. If you need to collect your child from school for an appointment, they must sign out at Reception and back in again when they return. If your child must attend a series of appointments during the school day, please ensure, where possible, that the times and days of appointments are varied to avoid the same lesson being interrupted each time.

Punctuality

The school day begins promptly at 8.30am. Students will be reminded of this by teaching and pastoral staff. Lateness to school and lessons may result in detentions being set. Further sanctions may be applied if required for repeat offenders. Parents/Carers have access to daily updates regarding their child's punctuality via the InSight system. Periodic formal punctuality checks are carried out and letters are sent to the parents/carers of any student identified through this process.

Monitoring

All student attendance is monitored and tracked closely. If a student's attendance falls below 95%, it is a cause for concern. Depending on the reasons and the extent of the non-attendance, parents/carers may be contacted in order to discuss the matter with a view to seeing how the school and parents/carers can work in partnership to improve the situation. In cases where a student's attendance falls below 92%, more formal measures may be required. Where attendance does not improve and falls below 90%, or in circumstances of unauthorised absence, the school may refer the case to the Local Authority.

Habitual lateness is also a cause for concern. The definition of late is when a student arrives to registration after the register has been taken. The attendance record will be coded with 'L' for late. Students are expected to be in registration by 8.30am. The afternoon registration closes 10 minutes after the start of Lesson 4. Students will be marked late (L) if they have not registered by this time. Sanctions for late arrivals are detailed under punctuality.

If a student regularly arrives after 9.00am (morning registration) or the close of afternoon registration their attendance record will be coded with a 'U' which carries an unauthorised absence for the entire session. The use of a 'U' code will happen following discussions with the Deputy Headteacher/Head of Middle or Lower School and communication with the parents/carers. Students who accumulate lates in the 'U' category may be subject to a Fixed Penalty Notice (fine). See details regarding the Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN) Scheme below and in Appendices 1 and 4.

Poor attendance and lateness after the registers close will result in referral to the West Sussex Pupil Entitlement: Investigation team. This could lead to legal proceedings being initiated including the issuing of a fixed penalty notice (see below). The school has a statutory obligation to inform the Local Authority of any student who fails to attend regularly or has had ten or more sessions (half days) of unauthorised absence.

Recognising and Celebrating Excellent Attendance

Each Year team recognises the excellence of the attendance figures for their year group, for example, through assemblies. The importance of good attendance is reinforced at these times. Prizes for exceptional attendance are awarded in each of the end of year Awards Evenings. Attendance is a key criterion for Congratulations trips.

Support

The school offers a variety of different support to students and their families where attendance is an issue. This may include support from a form teacher, a mentor, a school counsellor, the pastoral team, the SENDCO, senior staff and the Hazelwick Education Welfare Officer/Inclusion Welfare Officer. Where necessary the school will enlist the support of the West Sussex Pupil Entitlement: Investigation team and/or other agencies as appropriate.

Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN) Scheme – information for parents/carers

Regular and punctual attendance at school is vital if students are to maximise their opportunities to achieve success. Securing such attendance outcomes is also a legal requirement and a responsibility that is placed upon parents.

The Fixed Penalty Notice Scheme for unsatisfactory school attendance is in use in West Sussex. A Fixed Penalty Notice is a fine given for 'unauthorised' absence from school. Only the Headteacher can authorise absence from school.

Absences which are not 'authorised' by the school are subject to consideration under the Fixed Penalty Notice scheme. This Notice, issued by the Local Authority (West Sussex) dealt with by the Pupil Entitlement: Investigation Team requires the payment of a fine of £160 per parent per child. Each case will be looked at individually, initially within the school and then by the Local Authority (West Sussex).

When a student has reached a figure of 10 school sessions (within a recorded 10-week school period) missed without authorisation by the school, a referral is made to the local authority for consideration of legal intervention, which may include the use of Fixed Penalty Notices and/or court action.

For 'unauthorised' holidays in term time, no warning period is given since parents/carers will be aware of the consequences.

Please note: should a period of unauthorised absence for a holiday in term time be 15 school days or more, an FPN may not be deemed suitable. Instead, the matter may be brought directly before the Court.

Non-Payment of Fixed Penalty Notices

The FPN is issued with an invoice for £160, and 28 days are given for you to settle the Penalty. If the FPN is paid within the first 21 days, the amount payable is reduced to £80.

The circumstances in which the school can issue a fixed penalty notice are determined by the Local Authority. Notices will be issued by the Local Authority at the request of the school in the following circumstances:

- early intervention to address unauthorised absence (where that unauthorised absence would meet the criteria for a prosecution under s444, 1996 Education Act)
- unauthorised holidays in term time
- unwarranted delayed return from an authorised absence (without school agreement)
- persistent late arrival after the register has closed

In 2024, the government announced an escalation process, whereby the second FPN does not include the option of a price reduction for early repayment. A third referral does not lead to an FPN, but either leads to the case being referred to court, or to an Investigating Officer being allocated.

Revision history

Document will be reviewed annually by the Curriculum & Standards Committee.

Version No	Effective date	Summary of changes
N/A	N/A	Previous updates not recorded for content change
1	September 2025	Page 5 – Monitoring, paragraph 3, line 1. Time of close of morning registration has been amended to 9am from 8.50am. Increased space on the Leave of Absence Form for the reason section.



Request for Leave of Absence

Parents/Carers should be aware that they **do not have the right** to take their child out of school during term time. They must always request permission in advance for their child to miss school. Holidays during school time will **not** be authorised.

Absence taken when not authorised by the school will be recorded as 'unauthorised absence' and will be subject for consideration under the Fixed Penalty Notice scheme (see extracts from the school's Attendance Policy overleaf). The final day of each term contains the two statutory registration sessions and therefore counts as a full school day, despite the slightly earlier finish.

To apply for permission for their child to be absent from school, parents/carers must complete this form and return it to school for consideration at least 10 school days (where possible) in advance of the proposed leave of absence.

PARENTAL SECTION

Surname of child:		First name of child:	
Date of birth:		Form Group:	
Surname of parent/carer:		First name of parent/carer:	
Address of requesting parent/carer:			
Relationship of requesting parent/carer:		Is this the child's home address?	Yes No
Reason for requested leave of absence:			
Length of absence requested (school days):			
Date(s) of absence requested:			
Would your child miss any examinations?		Yes	No
Is his/her attendance already below 94% or a previously agreed individual target?		Yes	No
Has your child already had approved leave of absence during this school year?		Yes	No
If so, state the number of days previously agreed:			
Have you had a previous request for leave of absence declined during this school year?		Yes	No
Does your child have siblings in other schools for whom you are also requesting leave of absence?		Yes	No
If so, state which schools your other child(ren) attend:			
Signature parent/carer:		Date:	
FOR SCHOOL USE ONLY			
Signature of Head of Year:		Leave of Absence approved?	Yes No
Signature of Headteacher:			

Extracts from the Hazelwick School Attendance Policy

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- *Unauthorised absence and the 'Fixed Penalty Notice Scheme':*
 - Absence taken when not authorised by the school will be recorded as 'unauthorised absence' and will be subject for consideration under the Fixed Penalty Notice scheme.

Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN) Scheme – for your information

Regular and punctual attendance at school is vital if students are to maximise their opportunities to achieve success across a broad range of activities. Securing such attendance outcomes is also a legal requirement and a responsibility that is placed upon parents.

The Fixed Penalty Notice Scheme for unsatisfactory school attendance is in use in West Sussex. A Fixed Penalty Notice is a fine given for 'unauthorised' absence from school. Only the Headteacher can authorise absence from school.

Absences which are not authorised by the school are subject to consideration under the Fixed Penalty Notice scheme. This Notice, issued by the local authority, requires the payment of a fine of £160 per parent per child. Each case will be looked at individually, initially within the school and then by the Local Authority (West Sussex).

When a student has reached a figure of 10 school sessions (within a recorded 10-week school period) missed without 'authorisation' by the school, a referral is made to the local authority for consideration of legal intervention, which may include the use of Fixed Penalty Notices and/or court action.

For 'unauthorised' holidays in term time, no warning period is given since parents will be aware of the consequences.

Non-Payment of Fixed Penalty Notices

The FPN is issued with an invoice for £160, and 28 days are given for you to settle the Penalty. If the FPN is paid within the first 21 days, the amount payable is reduced to £80.

Appendix 2

The Leave of Absence system

The Headteacher has the discretion to authorise unavoidable absences during a school day for reasons including, for example:

- medical/dental appointments
- interviews for employment/further or higher education
- agreed attainment tests e.g. music grades, driving test etc.
- compassionate grounds e.g. bereavement

This is usually managed through the schools' Leave of Absence system. The exception to this is when the request is made on compassionate grounds in which case appropriate liaison/communication is made between the school and home.

Parents/Carers should communicate the reason for the request for absence to the relevant Year Team(s) and then complete the Leave of Absence form. Students should always sign out/in at the main reception when using the Leave of Absence system. If collecting their child for an appointment parents/carers should report to the main school reception.

Appendix 3

Extracts from 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' September 2024 - KCSIE 2024 para 178

Children being absent from education for prolonged periods and/or on repeat occasions can act as a vital warning sign to a range of safeguarding issues including neglect, child sexual and child criminal exploitation - particularly county lines. It is important the school or college's response to persistently absent pupils and children missing education supports identifying such abuse, and in the case of absent pupils, helps prevent the risk of them becoming a child missing education in the future. This includes when problems are first emerging but also where children are already known to local authority children's social care and need a social worker (such as a child who is a child in need or who has a child protection plan, or is a looked after child), where being absent from education may increase known safeguarding risks within the family or in the community.

A BRIEF GUIDE TO Fixed Penalty Notices

Sections 444 Education Act 1996

Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003

Crime and Disorder Act 1998

This leaflet offers you a brief summary about the Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN) scheme and what it could mean for you.

What is a FPN?

It is a Penalty given for unauthorised absence from school, rather than the matter being brought before the courts. It is a time limited offer which lasts 28 days. It is issued per parent, per child. Please note **only** a Head Teacher can authorise absence from school.

Who issues them?

In West Sussex the Local Authority issues them through the Pupil Entitlement: Investigation

When are they used?

When a pupil has accrued 10 sessions recorded of unauthorised absence in a 10 school week period. A school day is 2 sessions; AM and PM. This period can straddle school holidays and academic years and the absence doesn't have to be consecutive.

This includes:

- Holidays taken in term time without the agreement of the school.
- Arriving late to school after the register had closed.
- Any absence marked in the register as unauthorised.

FPNs can also be used during the first 5 days of exclusion. Parents are made aware of the consequences by letter when a child is excluded from school.

How much is the FPN?

For the first occasions a child is absent without authority the FPN is £160, and a parent is given the opportunity to pay within 21 days at a rate of £80.

For the second occasion the same child is absent without authority the FPN is £160.

For the third occasions the same child is absent without authority a FPN may not be issued and instead the case may be referred direct to a Magistrates Court or alternative interventions may be considered.

Please note.

If the school refers a period of absence that is 15 consecutive school days or more; Pupil Entitlement: Investigation may consider a FPN is not appropriate.

In these instances, the matter may instead be brought directly before the Magistrates Courts.

How do I pay?

The information on how to pay is included on the FPN. Payment cannot be made in part or by instalments.

What happens if I don't pay?

If you don't pay within the 28 days, the offer of a FPN is withdrawn. The Local Authority will then consider instigating a prosecution in the Magistrates Court for the offence of poor school attendance. If a guilty finding is made this could result in a fine of up to £2500 per parent per child and/or a parenting order or a community service order. In addition, the court may impose court costs.

Can I appeal?

There is no statutory right of appeal once a Notice has been issued. A parent can choose to take up the offer of the FPN by paying it or choose not to allow the offence to go before the Court.

Parents can contact the FPN team should they have new information unknown to the school for consideration.

Whilst a review is made the FPN cannot be placed on hold or deferred.

In addition, a school is not required to consider new information offered after the absence was taken.

Can I be prosecuted if I pay the Fixed Penalty Notice?

You cannot be prosecuted for the period of absence identified in the Fixed Penalty Notice if you have paid it. You may subsequently be prosecuted for further periods of unauthorised absence from school. Each case is considered on an individual basis.

**** REMEMBER ****

For absences other than unauthorised holidays in term time School staff would much rather work with parents/carers to resolve poor attendance than resort to enforcement actions like Fixed Penalty Notices or Court.

Pupil Entitlement: Investigation

Fixed Penalty Notice Team

WSCC, Bridge House, Barrington Road, Goring by Sea, Worthing, BN12 4SE.

Email:

FPN.PEI@westsussex.gov.uk

Advice Line: 03302 228200