

## **Howell's School Attendance Policy**

This policy applies to the whole school, including the EYFS.

At Howell's school, we see student attendance as critical to academic success and social integration. We ask parents to familiarise themselves with the GDST Statement on School Attendance and these policy guidelines, and to help us to promote the standards of attendance and punctuality which are essential for an orderly school environment where all pupils can get the maximum benefit from their education.

### **GDST Statement on School Attendance**

Absence, whatever its cause, is detrimental to any student's academic, social and emotional development. Children with poor attendance tend to achieve less in both primary and secondary school, with a cumulative effect. Regular or persistent absence can also indicate a pupil welfare issue.

Parents have a legal duty to ensure their children of compulsory school age who are registered at school attend regularly. Parents can only allow their child to miss school if they are too ill to go in or they have advance permission from the school. Heads may only grant leave of absence *in exceptional circumstances*. As is required by law, the school will inform the local authority of any child who fails to attend regularly, or has been absent without the school's permission for a continuous period of 10 days or more. The local safeguarding partners will also be informed if absence amounts to a safeguarding concern.

In order to maximise our students' potential, the GDST is committed to ensuring students do not miss out on their education through poor attendance rates. We expect all GDST schools to at least meet the national attendance average, and school attendance rates are monitored accordingly. A member of LT is expected to review and analyse attendance across the school as a whole on a regular basis, following up on trends or patterns of concern, and reporting to the School Governing Board/GDST as required.

Class teachers and tutors are expected to monitor and review the attendance record of the students for whom they are responsible. An individual attendance record of below 90% must be followed up by the school, as will noticeable patterns, or sudden or unexplained absence.

### **School guidelines**

#### **Key contacts**

The senior leader with overall responsibility for attendance at the school is Anne Miles, Assistant Principal, Pastoral Senior School. For day-to-day attendance matters, please contact

your child's Head of Year. For the Prep School please contact Abby Matthews Head of Prep/Deputy Principal.

### **Leave of absence**

Leave of absence can only be authorised by the Principal and may only be permitted in exceptional circumstances. Parents should submit their request to the Principal no later than three days prior to the date of absence. If an absence is authorised in advance parents will be notified and an absence note will not be required on return.

### **Action on school absence**

It is the parents' responsibility to contact the school concerning the reason for a student's absence on the first day of absence and to provide such further information as may be required. If the school is not notified of a student's absence contact will be made to parents. The school will remain in contact with parents on a regular basis until the student returns.

On return to school, parents must supply a note or email indicating the cause of the absence. If this is not provided the absence will be investigated and recorded as unauthorised. Parents are informed if absences are recorded as unauthorised.

If an absence occurs, it is the responsibility of the student to make up any lost work. If an absence is planned in advance, the student must approach individual members of staff for guidance.

### **Reasons for absence**

#### Illness

Parents are requested to inform the school on the first day if their child is ill.

#### Medical and Dental Appointments

Routine visits to the dentist, optician etc., should be arranged during school holidays or out of school hours. Authorisation for medical and dental appointments can be given in an emergency or other unavoidable circumstances.

#### Bereavement

It is helpful if we are informed of family bereavement so that we can offer students sympathetic support. Absence under such circumstances will, of course, be authorised.

#### Religious Observance

Absence can be authorised on a day exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which a student's parents belong.

#### Family/Domestic Problems

Looking after other children, minding the house, or shopping within school hours are not acceptable reasons for absence under the law.

### Special Occasions

Exceptional occasions may be sanctioned through authorised absence. Such events might include a sibling's graduation or family wedding. Attending sports events or concerts are not sufficient cause for authorisation.

### Study Leave

Study leave may be authorised during the official examination period for Years 11 and 13 only. A letter is always sent to parents before study leave commences. Parents are asked to note carefully the dates on which study leave commences.

Although most students prefer to study at home during examination periods, there are always study facilities available in school for those who wish to work in school. Authorisation for absence for studying will not be given for periods outside those indicated to parents.

Study leave is a privilege which may be withdrawn if a student seems unlikely to use the time profitably.

### Work Experience

Students in Years 12 and 13 are encouraged to gain work experience during the school holiday periods. In addition to this there may be a period of work experience for specific year groups scheduled on the school calendar. Some College students may also be permitted to carry out work experience during times of the day when they have a study period. This must be agreed with the Head of College.

## COLLEGE

### Flexible day

Sixth formers have a flexible day, recognising their growing maturity and bridging the gap between formal schooling and post 18 study or work. They must attend school every day, arriving in time for morning registration and form time as required. They must attend all timetabled lessons, but will be able to leave the school during their non-taught sessions, signing in and out. All regular appointments, driving lessons etc. must be scheduled for these times. Permission to miss taught lessons will not be given, unless there are exceptional circumstances. Any student who does not attend lessons or whose progress is not good will have the privilege of a flexible day removed. Should a student be unable to attend school, parents/careers should notify the school in the usual way.

### Open Days

Sixth Form students are expected to visit Universities and Colleges during school holidays. However, a maximum two Open Days may be attended during term time if appropriate letters requesting authorisation for absence are brought in.

### Interviews

Sixth formers must, of course, attend interviews at Universities and Colleges at the times and on the dates allocated by the institutions. It is essential that they keep their Tutors informed of these dates.

### **Persistent or severe absence**

Where absence or a pattern of absence appears to be at risk of becoming problematic, the school will meet with the parents to discuss how to support the child and remove barriers to attendance where possible. This may include referrals to external services and other organisations. These actions will be regularly reviewed, and stepped up if there is no improvement to the situation. Where a whole family response is appropriate, this is likely to include a voluntary early help assessment. Ultimately if voluntary support is not effective the school will work with the local authority to put more formal measures in place. Persistent or severe absence is always treated as a safeguarding risk.

### **Students with individual needs**

Whilst good attendance is an expectation for all children at the school, we recognise that this may be more of a challenge for some students, including those with special educational needs or disabilities, or those suffering from long term medical conditions or mental health issues. The school will allow for these circumstances when working with such students and their parents, and will develop individualised support approaches that meet their specific needs where appropriate.

### **Returning to school**

Sometimes a student who has been absent for some time finds it difficult to return. In such circumstances, the school will work with the student and parents to support reintegration.

### **Punctuality**

Students are expected to be punctual at all times. If a student is late for registration, they must register with the tutor if possible. Otherwise, they must sign in as soon as they arrive. If a student fails to do this, the school will assume they are absent. Lateness without reasonable cause will be deemed to be unauthorised absence. Lateness after 9.30am will be deemed as an absence and will require a note of explanation from a parent/carer.

**Updated September 2023**