



Alver Valley
Federation of Schools

Attendance Policy

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ATTENDANCE POLICY

NOTES:

Statutory: It is not statutory for schools to have an attendance policy. It is statutory to have a home school agreement as set down in Section 110 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998

Section 175 of the Education Act 2002 places a duty on governing bodies to have regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State with regard to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and students under the age of 18.

DfE Guidance 2014:

Schools should:

1. Promote good attendance and reduce absence, including persistent absence
2. Ensure every child has access to full time education
3. Act early to address patterns of absence

Parents must perform their legal duty by ensuring children of compulsory school age who are registered to a school attend regularly

School attendance is subject to various education laws and this school attendance policy is written to reflect these laws and the guidance produced by the Department for Education and Hampshire County Council. This Attendance policy is also consistent with the following school policies:

- admissions
- child protection
- exclusion
- safeguarding
- special educational needs
- teaching and learning

The level of attendance & punctuality expected from all our pupils is included in our school's home-school agreement which parents must sign following their child's admission to a school (this is a statutory requirement).

It is very important therefore that you make sure that your child attends regularly and this Policy sets out how together we will achieve this. This policy will be annually publicised in writing for all staff, parents and students on the school's website.

If possible we will endeavour to get this policy translated into another language if asked to do so by parents.

Section 1

Rationale / Statement of Intent:

For a child to reach their full educational achievement a high level of school attendance is essential.

We are committed to providing an education of the highest quality for all our pupils and endeavour to provide an environment where all pupils feel valued and welcome. Parents and pupils play a part in making our school successful. Every child has a right to access the education to which he/she is entitled. Parents and schools share the responsibility for supporting and promoting excellent school attendance and punctuality for all.

It is our duty to consistently strive to achieve high attendance for all children. Every opportunity will be used to convey to pupils and their parents or carers the importance of regular and punctual attendance.

For our pupils to take full advantage of the educational opportunities offered it is vital your child is at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. The routines children develop around attendance and punctuality at school are the same as the expectations of any future employer in the world of work. High attainment, confidence with peers and staff and future aspirations depend on good attendance.

Good attendance is important because:

- Statistics show a direct link between under-achievement and absence below 95%
- Regular attenders make better progress, both socially and academically
- Regular attenders find school routines, school work and friendships easier to cope with
- Regular attenders find learning more satisfying
- Regular attenders are more successful in transferring between primary school, secondary school, and higher education, employment or training

Section 2:

Operating the Policy

1. Promoting Good Attendance

The foundation for good attendance is a strong partnership between the school, parents and the pupil. The Home/School agreement contains details of how we will work with parents and our expectations of what parents will need to do to ensure their child achieves good attendance.

To help us all to focus on this we will:

- Provide information on all matters relating to attendance in our regular Home/School newsletter and on our website

- Report to you on how your child is performing in school, what their attendance % and punctuality rate is and how this relates to their attainments;
- Celebrate good attendance through the school assemblies and updates
- Reward good or improving attendance through certificates and outings/events
- Set targets for the school and for classes for attendance and display these in the school.
- Set individual attendance targets for pupils to help them improve reduce their absence rate where this falls below national benchmarks.

2. Roles and Responsibilities:

Responsibilities of the School's Attendance Lead:

The Head of School, will oversee, direct and co-ordinate the school's work in promoting regular and improved attendance and will ensure the Attendance Policy is consistently applied throughout the school. The Attendance Officer with responsibility for attendance will support the Head of School in this work. They will also ensure that registers are completed in the morning and in the afternoon so that we can fulfil our duties of care under safe-guarding regulations. This person will also ensure that attendance is both recorded accurately and analysed. They will ensure that attendance issues are identified at an early stage and that support is put in place to deal with any difficulties. A text message will be sent to all parents or carers if a pupil does not appear on a register. This is to alert parents and carers to the pupil's absence from school and to ask them to inform us of the reason so that we can ensure that the pupil is safe.

If absence is frequent or continuous, except where a child is clearly unwell, staff will discuss with parent/carers the need and reasons for their child's absence and will encourage them to keep absences to a minimum. A note or explanation from a pupil's home does not mean an absence becomes authorised. The decision whether or not to authorise an absence **will always rest with the school.**

Responsibilities of Classroom Staff:

- Ensure that all pupils/children are registered accurately using the school's system
- Promote & reward good attendance at all appropriate opportunities.
- Liaise with the Attendance Officer on matters of attendance and punctuality
- Communicate any concerns or underlying problems that may account for a pupil's absence

Responsibilities of Pupils:

- Attend every day unless they are ill or have an authorised absence
- Arrive in school on time
- Attend all their registrations on time

Responsibilities of Parents and Carers:

Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is a parent/carer's legal responsibility (section of the 1996 Education Act) and permitting absence from school that is not authorised by the school creates an offence in law.

Parents and Carers will:

- Ensure that their child attends school every day unless they are ill or have an authorised absence
- Ensure their child arrives in school on time
- Take responsibility for registering at the Reception Desk if they are late or are leaving the school site during school hours providing a reason for any lateness
- Inform the school on the first and any subsequent days of absence if their child is not in school and provide a reason
- Discuss with the school any planned absences in advance
- Avoid taking their child out of school for non-urgent medical or dental appointments
- Only request for leave of absence if it is for an exceptional circumstance (an explanation of what constitutes an exceptional circumstances is contained on the Hampshire County Council Attendance Website (see appendix at the end of this document)

Section 3:

1. Recording Attendance

Legally the register must be marked twice daily. This is once at the start of the school day 08.45 am in the infant school and 08.40 am in the junior school and again for the afternoon session at 13.00 pm

Recording Absence - record preservation

School registers are legal documents. We will ensure compliance with attendance regulations by keeping attendance records for at least 3 years.

2. Lateness /Punctuality

It is important to be on time at the start of the morning and afternoon school sessions and to lessons.

- The school day begins at 08.45 am in the infant school and 8.40 am in the junior school and all pupils are expected to be in school at that time ready and willing to learn.
- All lateness is recorded daily. This information will be required by the courts, should a prosecution for non-attendance or lateness be necessary
- Arrival after the close of registration will be marked as unauthorised absence code 'U' in line with county and DfE guidance. This mark shows them to be on site, but is legally recorded as an absence. School registration is at 08.40/08.45 am, any pupil arriving after this time but before 09.05 am will be recorded as 'L'. Students arriving after 09.05 am will be recorded as 'U', in line with County and DfE guidance.
- If a pupil is late due to a medical appointment, they will receive an authorised absence coded 'M'. Please be advised that where possible doctors and dentists appointments are to be made outside of school hours or during school holidays. Where this is not possible, this information should be provided by the parent in the form of appointment cards, letters or email communications that prove that the pupil is attending a legitimate medical appointment. Any evidence should be handed into

reception. Where surgeries and dentists confirm appointments by email or text message, this evidence would be acceptable.

On-going and repeated lateness is considered as **unauthorised absence and will be subject to legal action** (see section 6 for further detail).

Parents, guardians or carers of pupils who have patterns of lateness will be contacted to discuss the importance of good time keeping and how this might be achieved. If lateness persists; parents, guardians or carers will be invited to a meeting to discuss the problem and further support may be offered where appropriate. If the support offered is declined or not acted upon and a child has 10 or more sessions of unauthorised absence due to lateness recorded in any 10 week period the school or the Hampshire County Council will be required to issue parents with a penalty notice in accordance with Hampshire's Code of Conduct for issuing penalty notices for non-attendance (See section 6 of this policy for further detail).

3. What to do if my child is absent?

First Day Absence

It is important that you telephone the school on the first and every day of your child's absence. If you do not we will telephone or text you; please contact us before 08:30am.

If we are unable to contact you, we will carry out safeguarding checks using a range of methods which could include inquiring with contacts and in the wider community, carrying out a home visit or through contacting other services and if we still remain concerned we would notify the police that your child is considered an absent or missing person. We have an answering machine for messages out of hours. The school's telephone number is 02392 581777.

Third Day Absence

Please Note: If your child is not seen and contact has not been established with you or any of the named parent/carers after three days of absence the **school is required to start a child missing in education procedure as set down by Hampshire County Council Guidance**. We will make all reasonable enquiries to establish contact with parents and the child including making enquiries to known friends, wider family. Representatives of our pastoral support team may call at a pupil's address to ascertain if they are at home and to ensure that they are safe and free from harm. This is so that the school complies with its legal obligations and County guidance.

Ten Day's Absence

We have a legal duty to report the absence of any pupil who is absent without an explanation for 10 consecutive days. If the child is not seen and contact has not been established with the named parent/carer then the Local Authority is notified that the child is 'at risk of missing'. Children's Services Staff will visit the last known address and alert key services to locate the child. So help us to help you and your child by making sure we always have an up to date contact number. There will be regular checks on telephone numbers throughout the year.

Continued or On-going Absence

If your child's misses 10% or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason they are defined as **Persistent Absentees (PA)**, and fall under particular scrutiny across the school.

All our PA pupils and their parents are subject to school monitoring on a day to day, week by week basis.

Section 4:

Request for Leave of Absence:

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 children out during school time.

Amendments to school attendance regulations were updated and enforced from September 2013: **(Student registration) (England) regulations state that Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances.** It is important to note that Headteachers can determine the length of the authorised absence as well as whether absence is authorised at all. The fundamental principles for defining 'exceptional' are rare, significant, or unavoidable which means the event could not reasonably be scheduled at another time. **There are no rules on this** as circumstances vary from school to school and family to family. There is however, no legal entitlement for time off in school time to go on holiday **and in the majority of cases holiday will not be authorised.**

Parents/Carers wishing to apply for leave of absence need to fill in an application form (available from main reception or available to download from the school website) in advance and before making any travel arrangements.

If term time leave is taken without prior permission from the school, the absence will **be unauthorised** and if the number of sessions absent hits the thresholds set down in Hampshire's Code of Conduct parent/carers will be issued with a fixed-penalty fine or other legal action in accordance the code (see section 6 for detail).

Section 5:

Understanding types of absence:

Pupils are expected to attend school every day for the entire duration of the academic year, unless there is an **exceptional reason** for the absence. There are two main categories of absences:

- **Authorised Absence (AA):** is when the school has accepted the explanation offered as satisfactory justification for the absence, or given approval in advance for such an absence. If no explanation is received, absences cannot be authorised.

- **Unauthorised Absence (UA):** is when the school has not received a reason for absence or has not approved a child's leave absence from school after a parent's request. This includes:
 - parents giving their children permission to be off school unnecessarily such as for shopping, birthdays, to look after siblings
 - truancy before or during the school day
 - absences which have not been explained

A school can, if needed, change an authorised absence to an unauthorised absence and vice versa if new information is presented. Any changes will be communicated to parents/carers. An example of this would be where a parent states a child is unwell but on return to school there is evidence they have been on holiday.

A summary of all absences and their codes will be provided in a pupil's individual report. Parents can also request a copy of their child's attendance.

Section 6:

Penalty Notices for Non Attendance and other Legal Measures:

In law, parents/carers are committing an offence if they fail to ensure the regular attendance of their child of compulsory school age at the school at which the child is registered unless the absence has been authorised by the school.

Legal Measures for tackling persistent absence or lateness

Hampshire Schools and Hampshire County Council will use the full range of legal measures to secure good attendance. Legal measures will only be considered through a referral to Hampshire's Attendance Legal Panels where:

- 1. The child or family do not require the support from any agency to improve the attendance**
- 2. The child has 10 or more sessions of unauthorised absence in the last 100 sessions (10 weeks) and parents are complicit in the child's absence**

The following legal measures are for pupils of compulsory school age who are registered at a school:

- Parenting contracts set at Education Planning Meetings
- Parenting orders
- Penalty notices
- Education Supervision Orders
- Prosecution

Legal Measures for absence taken when the Headteacher has declined parent/carers request for leave of absence

Where a pupil has unauthorised absence due to either:

1. non-approval of a parent/carer's request for leave of absence or
2. holiday that has been taken without permission

and the unauthorised absence is for 10 or more sessions (5 days) in any 100 possible school sessions (10 weeks) then a penalty notice for non-attendance will be issued by the school to initiate legal proceedings.

Where a child has **unauthorised absence** the school must enforce Hampshire's Code of Conduct for issuing Penalty Notices or follow its guidance on other Legal Measures for Non-Attendance. The Code of Conduct is a statutory document that ensures that powers for legal sanctions are applied consistently and fairly across all schools and their families within the authority. A copy is available from: <http://www3.hants.gov.uk/education/hias/learning-behaviour-attendance/attendance-guidance-for-parents/possible-penalties.htm>

The code of conduct states that:

Schools or Hampshire Local Authority will issue a Penalty Notice for any unauthorised absence where the pupil has been:

- absent for 10 or more half-day sessions (five school days) of unauthorised absence during any 100 possible school sessions – these do not need to be consecutive
- persistently late (coded *U*) for up to 10 sessions (five days) out of 100 sessions (10 weeks) after the register has closed
- persistently late before the close of the register (coded *L*), but the school has met with parents and has clearly communicated that they will categorise as unauthorised any further lateness (code *O*), and where the threshold of 10 sessions (five days) out of 100 sessions (10 weeks) has been met
- absent for any public examinations of which dates are published in advance
- absent for any formal school assessments, tests or examinations where the dates have been published in advance

unless the issuing of a Penalty Notice would conflict with other intervention strategies in place or other sanctions already being processed.

If a child's unauthorised absence meets any of the above criteria and the family or child does not require any agency support to improve the attendance then a single Penalty Notice is issued for either:

- 1. 10 sessions of unauthorised absence or lateness in any 10 week school period**
- 2. 1 or more sessions of unauthorised absence during a public exam, formal school assessment or testing where dates are published in advance**

The penalty notice is a fine that is issued to each parent/carer who condoned (or was responsible for the child) during the period of unauthorised absence for which the fine has been issued. For each case of unauthorised absence the school or Hampshire County Council will decide whether a penalty Notice is issued **to one or more parent/carers** for each child. **N.B** This could mean four penalty notices for a family with two siblings both with unauthorised absence for holiday i.e. one PN for each child to each parent

The fine is £60 if paid within 21 days of the penalty notice being posted. If the fine is not paid within 21 days the Penalty is automatically increased to £120 if paid within 28 days. If the fine remains unpaid the Hampshire County Council will consider prosecution for the non-attendance. Payment methods are detailed on the Penalty Notices themselves. Penalties are to be paid to Hampshire County Council and revenue resulting from payment of Penalties is used by the County Council to help cover the costs of issuing Penalty Notices and/or the cost of prosecuting recipients who do not pay.

Section 7:

1. Leavers

If your child is leaving our school (other than when leaving at the end of Year 2 or 6) parents are asked to:

- Give the Head of School comprehensive information about their plans including any date of a move and your new address and telephone numbers, your child's new school and the start date when known. This should be submitted to our school in writing

If pupils leave and we do not have the above information, then your child is considered to be a '**Child Missing in Education**'. This requires schools and Local Authorities to then carry out investigations to try and locate your child, which includes liaising with Children's Services, the Police and other agencies. By giving us the above information, these investigations can be avoided.

2. Gypsy Roma Traveller Showman and Showman families

For further advice and guidance on Attendance & GRT and Showman see County Guidance at: <http://documents.hants.gov.uk/childrens-services/HIAS/Promotingstudentattendanceandrecordingabsence-Section6.pdf>

Further support & Guidance is available from Hampshire's EMTAS Service telephone: 01256 330195 or email www.hants.gov.uk/emtas

Absence of a child from a traveller family that has left the area may be authorised if the absence is for **work purposes only** and it is believed that the family intends to return. To ensure the continuity of learning for Traveller children, dual registration is allowed. That means that a school cannot remove a Traveller child from the school roll while they are travelling. When the Traveller is away the home school holds the place open and records the absence as authorised through the T code. Distance Learning packs for traveller children are not an alternative to attendance at school.

3. Absence through child participation in Public Performances, including film or TV work & Modelling.

For further advice and guidance on child employment and performance licenses visit Hantsweb at:

<http://www3.hants.gov.uk/childrens-services/childrenandyoungpeople/child-employment.htm>

Parents of a child performer can seek leave of absence from school for their child to take part in a performance. They must contact the Headteacher to discuss the nature and frequency of the work, whether the child has a valid performance licence and whether education will be provided by the employer during any future leave of absence. Any absence recorded as part of a child's participation in a public performance is recorded as 'C', an authorised absence.

4. Absence through competing at regional, county or national level for Sport.

Parents of able sportsmen and women can seek leave of absence from school for their child to take part in a regional, county, national and international events and competitions. It is however, down to the Headteacher's discretion whether to authorise this and they will wish to discuss with you the nature and frequency of the absence and how learning will continue if absence occurs. Permission for your child to leave early or arrive late to attend coaching and training sessions are also at the discretion of the Headteacher and are not likely to be approved if it is a regular event, unless the sports club or association are providing an education tutor as part of their coaching. If participation is approved the Headteacher will review this decision if child's progress at school is not maintained thereafter.

Appendices

The Law

The Education Act 1996 Part 1, Section 7 states:

The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him to receive efficient full-time education suitable:

- [a] to his age, ability and aptitude and
- [b] to any special needs he may have

either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

For educational purposes the term parent is used to include those that have parental responsibility and/or those that have the day to day care of the child.

The legislation that appertains to children who are of compulsory school age and are registered at school is contained within this Act.

Part V1 Section 444 contains the details of when an offence is committed if a child fails to attend school.

Register and Admission Roll keeping

The legal requirements are found in: The Education [Student Registration] (England) Regulations 2006

Guidance documents on attendance:

The following DfE documents are used to guide attendance recording.

‘Absence and Attendance codes (Guidance for Schools and Local Authorities)’

‘Keeping Student Registers (Guidance on applying the Education Student Registration Regulations)’

These and other guidance documents are available on the DfE website.

Hampshire County Council Guidance is available on Hantsweb at:

<http://www3.hants.gov.uk/education/hias/learning-behaviour-attendance/lba-resources-for-schools/atten-guidance/attendance-guidance-for-schools.htm>

Flow chart to show Attendance Officer Daily Actions

