

# Policy for



# Attendance 2017/2018

## Attendance policy

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## **Introduction**

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.

The expectation that children are in school on time every day is included in school's Home School Agreement, which parents must sign following their child's admission to a school. It is very important, therefore, that you make sure 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 pupils via our website.

## **Section 1: Rationale/statement of intent**

### **School Vision**

Our school vision is for children to be at the heart of everything we do and this really does underpin how we feel about attendance – we are working hard to offer high quality opportunities for children and so we feel strongly that we want them to be in school as much as possible to benefit from these opportunities! Not only do our children need to be in school but they need to be on time so that they are not missing out on any part of the week or the day.

Every child has a right to access the education to which he/she is entitled. We believe that parents and teachers share the responsibility for promoting excellent school attendance and punctuality for all our children. It is our duty to consistently strive to achieve a goal of 100% attendance for all children. There are times that children are not well or an absence is completely unavoidable but we want these times to be the rare exceptions.

### **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**

### **2.1 Promoting good attendance**

The foundation for good attendance is a strong partnership between the school, parents and the child. The Home School Agreement and this policy contains details of how we work with parents and our expectations of what parents 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 related to attendance in our school website
- report to you on how your child is performing in school: what their attendance and punctuality rate is
- celebrate good attendance each week in assembly
- reward good attendance through class competitions and the awarding of class bears in assembly each week
- set targets for the school attendance

## **2.2 Roles and responsibilities**

The Headteacher 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. They will also ensure that attendance is both recorded accurately and analysed. She will ensure that attendance issues are identified at an early stage and that support is put in place to deal with any difficulties.

The Family Partnership Manager will work to support families in improving absence. This will include meeting together with families to make and review action plans to improve attendance. This is detailed further in section 3.3

### **Responsibilities of classroom staff**

- Ensure that all students are registered accurately.
- Promote and reward good attendance with students at all appropriate opportunities.
- Liaise with the Family Partnership Manager
- Communicate any concerns or underlying problems that may account for a child's absence.
- Support pupils with absence to engage with their learning once they are back in school.

### **Responsibilities of parents/carers**

Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is a parent/carer's legal responsibility (Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act) and permitting absence from school that is not authorised by the school creates an offence in law.

Parents will:

- Ensure their child attends school on time every day unless they are ill or have an authorised absence
- inform the school on the first and any subsequent days of absence by telephone or in person
- discuss with the Year Group Team Leader or class teacher any planned absences well in advance
- support the school with their child in aiming for 100% attendance each year
- avoid taking their child out of school for non-urgent medical or dental appointments
- only request leave of absence if it is for an exceptional circumstance

## Section 3

### 3.1 Recording attendance

Legally the register must be marked twice daily. This is once at the start of the school day 9.00am, and again for the afternoon session after lunch.

### 3.2 Lateness/punctuality

It is important to be on time at the start of school. If your child is late they can miss work time with their class teacher getting vital information, cause disruption to the lesson for others, and it can be embarrassing leading to possible further absence.

Classrooms doors open at 8.45 and children are welcome in class from that time. The school day begins at 9.00am and **all children are expected to be in school at this time.**

**Morning registration is at 9.00am and children arriving after 9.00 are marked as late.**

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 9.30 will be marked as unauthorised absence and coded *U* in line with Hampshire County Council and Department of Education guidance. This mark shows them to be on site, but is legally recorded as an absence.

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.

Pupils who are consistently late are disrupting not only their own education but also that of the other pupils. Ongoing 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 attend the school and discuss the problem and support offered. If support is not appropriate or is declined and a child has 10 or more sessions of unauthorised absence due to lateness recorded in any 10 week period, Hampshire County Council will be required to issue parents with a Penalty Notice in accordance with Hampshire County Council's *Code of conduct: issuing Penalty Notices for unauthorised absence from schools* (See Section 6 of this policy for further detail).

### 3.3 What happens if my child is absent?

If your child is absent:

On the first day of absence we will try to contact you by telephone or text if we have not heard from you – this is because we have a duty to ensure your child's safety as well as their regular school attendance. If we cannot get hold of you we will leave a text or message saying that if we do not hear from you within 20 minutes and establish the whereabouts/safety of the child then we will contact Children's Services and/or the Police.

#### **SO PLEASE PHONE IN TO REPORT ABSENCE.**

If your child is not coming to school you **MUST** inform us by **9am**.

You can notify us of your child's non-attendance as follows:

1. Telephone to speak to the office
2. Telephone and leave a message on our absence line (24hours)
3. Send us a text
4. In writing ahead of time, i.e. for a medical appointment
5. In person by visiting the school office

#### **Ten days' 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/carers 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.

#### **Continued or ongoing absence**

If your child misses 10% or more schooling across the school year, for whatever reason, they are defined as *persistent absentees*. Absence for whatever reason disadvantages a child by creating gaps in his or her learning. Research shows these gaps affect attainment when attendance falls below 95%. As such, we monitor all absence thoroughly and all attendance data is shared with the local authority and the Department for Education. If your child has had absences and their attendance level is falling towards 90% we will contact you and, depending on the reasons for the absence, will ask you to meet with the Family Partnership Manager for a School Attendance Meeting to agree an action plan to improve attendance.

#### **What happens if my child is a persistent absentee**

We want to help you get your child's attendance back on track as quickly as possible. The Family Partnership Manager will write to you and ask you to come to a School Attendance Meeting (SAM). This is an opportunity for us to talk about what is impacting on your child's attendance and how we can work together to try and improve this. We will also set a target so you know how what you are working towards. 3-6 weeks later we will meet again for a School Attendance Review

Meeting. We can see if there has been an improvement. If attendance improves above 90% we will continue to monitor your child's attendance but if attendance does not show sufficient improvement we will either agree further date to review or referral to the Attendance Legal Panel.

## **Continued Lateness**

If your child is late (ie after 9am) more than 6 times in a six week period you will be asked to meet with the Family Partnership Manager to discuss the reasons for this and see how we can support you to make a change. This will be a School Attendance Meeting and the procedure will be the same as above. If there is insufficient improvement and your child continues to be late then any absence after 9.00 will be marked as an Unauthorised.

## **Section 4**

### **Request for leave of absence**

Amendments to school attendance regulations were updated and enforced from September 2013: The Education (Pupil 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. Parents/carers wishing to apply for leave of absence need to fill in an application form (available from school reception) in advance and before making any arrangements.

If term-time absence 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 County Council's *Code of conduct*, parents/carers will be issued with a fixed-penalty fine or other legal action in accordance with the code (see Section 6 for detail).

## **Section 5**

### **Understanding types of absence**

There are two main categories of absences:

authorised absence: is when the school agrees with the absence

unauthorised absence: 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.

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.

## **Section 6**

### **Penalty Notices for non-attendance and other legal measures**

In education 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.

The following legal measures will be used 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.

Where a child has unauthorised absence the school must enforce Hampshire County Council's *Code of conduct: issuing Penalty Notices for unauthorised absence from schools* 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:

[www.hants.gov.uk/education/hias/learning-behaviour-attendance/attendance-guidance-forparents/](http://www.hants.gov.uk/education/hias/learning-behaviour-attendance/attendance-guidance-forparents/) possible-penalties.

The *Code of conduct* states that schools or Hampshire County Council 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 (ten days) after 9.30
- persistently late before 9.30 (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) 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 have received additional agency support as appropriate to improve the attendance then a Penalty Notice is issued for either:

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

This includes where a pupil has unauthorised absence due to either:

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

Parents and carers will be warned of the likelihood of a Penalty Notice being issued for unauthorised absence via a letter, through the leave of absence request form, or through the school's attendance policy and website. 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 parents/carers** for each child. **NB:** This could mean four Penalty Notices for a family with two siblings, both with unauthorised absence for holiday, ie one Penalty Notice for each child to each parent.

Each Penalty Notice carries a fine of £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 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.

**Please note:** If you pay the Penalty Notice and your child has further unauthorised absences additional legal action will be taken. For example, in the event that a Penalty Notice has previously been served to you due to unauthorised holiday, should your child have any future unauthorised leave this will result in further legal action for you, such as prosecution or an Education Supervision Order. For further information parents/carers can request a leaflet from their school and should visit Hampshire County Council's website at: [www.hants.gov.uk/education/hias/learning-behaviour-attendance/attendance-guidance-forparents/possible-penalties](http://www.hants.gov.uk/education/hias/learning-behaviour-attendance/attendance-guidance-forparents/possible-penalties).

## Section 7

### 7.1 Family difficulties - how can we help?

Children are sometimes reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents/carers and the child. If a child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending.

Contact your child's teacher or Year Group Team Leader immediately and openly discuss your worries. Your child could be avoiding school for a number of reasons – difficulties with school work, bullying, friendship problems, family difficulties. It is important that we identify the reason for your child's reluctance to attend school and work together to tackle the problem. In some cases you may find it helpful to discuss the circumstances of your child's difficulties with another professional.

The Family Partnership Manager is there to support you and offer you advice around parenting, routines and encouraging 100% attendance.

### **What can I do to encourage my child to attend school?**

Make sure your child gets enough sleep and gets up in plenty of time each morning. For many parents, your child attending school may be your first experience of being separated from them. This can seem daunting at first for both of you, but consistency and a caring, supportive home and school life will make the transition a quick and easy experience for you both.

## **7.2 Leavers**

If your child is leaving our school (other than when transferring to the junior school) parents are asked to:

1 Give the Family Partnership Manager 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

2 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.

## **7.3 Absence through child participation in public performances, including theatre, film or television work and modelling**

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. It is, however, down to the headteacher's discretion as to 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. Any absence recorded as part of a child's participation in a public performance is recorded as C, an authorised absence.

The regulations related to children participating in public performances are separate to those around authorising leave of absence. Headteachers can authorise this absence.

For further advice and guidance on child employment and performance licenses visit Hantsweb at: [www.hants.gov.uk/childrens-services/childrenandyoungpeople/child-employment](http://www.hants.gov.uk/childrens-services/childrenandyoungpeople/child-employment).

For national advice see: [www.gov.uk/child-performance-licence-england-scotland-wales](http://www.gov.uk/child-performance-licence-england-scotland-wales).

#### **7.4 Gypsy, Roma, Traveller and Showman families**

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. For further advice and guidance on attendance and Gypsy, Roma, Traveller and Showman families, see Hampshire County Council guidance at:

<http://documents.hants.gov.uk/childrensservices/>

[HIAS/Promotingpupilattendanceandrecordingabsence-Section6.pdf](#).

Please note pupils must have attended 200 sessions in a rolling 12-month period to be able to request leave for work purposes. Further support and guidance is available from Hampshire County Council's Ethnic Minority and Traveller Achievement Service (EMTAS).

### **Section 8**

#### **Record preservation**

School registers are legal documents. We will ensure compliance with attendance regulations by keeping attendance records for at least three years. Computer registers will be preserved as electronic back-ups or microfiche copies.