



Attendance Policy

UN Convention on the Rights of the Child	
Article 28	You have the right to a good quality education. You should be encouraged to go to school to the highest level you can.

Approved by:	FGB
Last reviewed:	November 2023
Next review due by:	November 2026

This policy takes into account the latest government guidance, "Working together to improve school attendance: Guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools, and local authorities"
Published: May 2022

Persons responsible for implementing and monitoring this policy:

Headteacher, all teachers, pupil premium assistant, administration staff, parents

Monitoring through regular analysis of attendance data.

Reported to governors through headteacher's report half termly as well as being reported on in school's IDSR

Section 1:

1.1 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. This Attendance policy should be read with the following school policies:

- admissions
- anti-bullying
- safeguarding & child protection
- exclusion
- special educational needs
- Teaching
- Learning
- Behaviour

We expect a high level of attendance & punctuality from all of our pupils and this is included in our school's home-school agreement which parents must sign following their child's admission to the school.

It is very important therefore that parents make sure that their child attends regularly and this Policy sets out how, together, we will achieve this.

1.2 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 teachers share the responsibility for supporting and promoting excellent school attendance and punctuality for all.

It is our duty to consistently strive to achieve a goal of 100% 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 children to take full advantage of the educational opportunities offered, it is vital that every 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

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 contains 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 related to attendance in our regular newsletters;
- Report to parents on how their child is performing in school, what their attendance and punctuality rate is and how this relates to their attainment;
- Celebrate good attendance by rewarding individual achievements;
- Set Targets for the school for attendance;

Section 3:

3.1 Roles and Responsibilities:

Responsibilities of the School's Attendance Leader

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. They will ensure that attendance issues are identified at an early stage and that support is put in place to deal with any difficulties.

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 students are registered accurately
- Promote & reward good attendance at all appropriate opportunities.
- Liaise with the Attendance Leader on matters of attendance and punctuality
- Communicate any concerns or underlying problems that may account for a child's absence.

Responsibilities of Pupils (with due consideration and regard to the pupil's age):

- Attend every day unless they are ill or have an authorised absence.
- Arrive 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.

Responsibilities of Parents and Carers:

Ensuring their child's regular attendance at school is a parent/carers 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 will:

- Inform the school on the first day of absence.
- Discuss with the class teacher any planned absences well in advance.

- Support the school in aiming for 100% attendance for their child each year.
- Make sure that any absence is clearly accounted for by phone or email on the first and subsequent days of absence, or by letter if a phone is unavailable.
- 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
- Not take their child on holiday during term time.

3.4 Recording Attendance

Legally the register must be marked twice daily. This is once at the start of the school day 8.45am and again for the afternoon session at 1.00 pm.

3.5 Lateness /Punctuality

It is important to be on time at the start of the morning and afternoon school sessions. The start of lessons are used to give out instructions or organise work. If a child is late they can miss work and time with their class teacher getting vital information and cause disruption to the lesson for others. The child may also feel embarrassed which could lead to possible further absence.

- The school day begins at 8.45am and all **pupils are expected to be in school at that time.** Morning registration is at 8.50 am and it closes at 9.20am.
- 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 8.50am (when the classroom doors have been closed) is considered 'Late' and the 'L' mark will be used. A pupil will receive a late mark 'L' if they are not in the classroom at 8.50am when the registers are taken.
- Arrival after the close of registration (9.20am) will be marked as unauthorised absence code 'U' in line with county and Department for Education (DfE) 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 should 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. 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 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 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).

Parents are asked to collect their child promptly at the end of the school day. Where late collection is persistent and/or significantly late, the school is obliged to take any uncollected pupil to a place of safety and share concerns as necessary with other agencies, such as the Police and Children's Services - Social Care. If one is available, the school may place a child into the after school club and provide the parent with the bill.

3.6 What to do when a child is absent?

First Day Absence

A child not attending school is considered a **safeguarding** matter. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required.

If a child is absent the parent **must**:

- Contact the school as soon as possible on the first day of absence.

This can be via the StudyBugs App, a phone call or in person to the class teacher or office staff.

If a child is absent we **will**:

- Telephone or text parents on the first day of absence if we have not heard from them; *This is because the school has a duty to ensure each child's safety as well as their regular school attendance*
- Invite parents to a meeting to discuss the situation if absences persist;
- Refer the matter to the Hampshire's Attendance Legal Panels if absence is unauthorised and falls below 90%.

Third Day Absence

If a child is not seen and contact has not been established with any of the named parent/carers after three days of absence the school is required to start a child missing in education procedures as set down by Hampshire County Council Guidance. The school will make all reasonable enquires to establish contact with parents and the child, including making enquires to known friends, wider family.

Ten Days Absence

We have a legal duty to report the absence of any pupils 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 it is essential that we always have an up-to-date contact number for parents. There will be regular checks on telephone numbers throughout the year.

Continued or Ongoing Absence

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 a child has had absence and their attendance level is falling towards 90% we will contact parents and depending on the reasons for the absence will request a meeting with parents to discuss how the situation can be improved. If parents do not provide a suitable reason for the absence and so, do not support the school, then legal action may be taken.

If a child misses 10% (which equates to 3 weeks) or more of schooling across the school year, for whatever reason, they are defined as **persistent absentees (PA)**. Where this absence is authorised the school will work with the Parents to support an improvement in their overall attendance.

All PA pupils and their parents are subject to an Attendance Plan or home school contract.

Children at this school are dependent on their parents/carers, who are responsible for their level of attendance and punctuality. It is vital that children enjoy coming to school, and whilst being encouraged to attend well and on time, will not carry blame and be made to feel unhappy if their parents are not supportive or effective in these areas.

Section 4:

4.1 Request for Leave of Absence:

Amendments to school attendance regulations were updated in November 2016: **(Pupil registration, England) regulations state that Head teachers should only authorise leave of absence in exceptional circumstances.**

The fundamental principles for defining 'exceptional' are rare, significant, or unavoidable which means the event could not reasonably be scheduled at another time. **We class 'exceptional circumstances' as an event which cannot reasonably have been predicted or foreseen. Family holidays, birthday celebrations and other trips are not exceptional and will not be authorised as the school year is designed to give families the opportunity for these breaks without having to disrupt the children's education.**

Parents/Carers wishing to apply for leave of absence for exceptional circumstances need to fill in a Leave of Absence form available from the school office and website in advance and before making any arrangements. The school will not provide work to be completed on the days that the pupil is absent.

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 with the code (see section 6 for detail).

Taking holidays in term time will affect a child's schooling as much as any other absence and the school expects parents to support us by not taking children out during school time.

Section 5:

5.1 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: 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: 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.

Section 6:

6.1 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. 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 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. a 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 then a penalty notice for non-attendance will be issued.

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

<https://documents.hants.gov.uk/code-of-conduct-issuing-penalty-notices-for-unauthorised-absence-from-schools.pdf>

Further advice can be found at

<https://www.hants.gov.uk/educationandlearning/behaviour-attendance-parents>

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 (codes G, U or O on the register)
- persistently late (coded *U*) for up to 10 sessions (five days) 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) 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 do 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.

Parents and Carers will be warned of the likelihood of a penalty notice being issued for unauthorised absence either via a letter, through the leave of absence request form, or through the schools attendance policy. 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

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 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.

For further information parents/carers can request a leaflet from their school.

In accordance with Section 6.5 of the Code of Conduct

"If a penalty notice has previously been issued and in the opinion of the Head teacher has been ineffective in addressing the absenteeism the case should be referred to the ALP (Attendance Legal Panel)"

Please note: If a parent pays the Penalty Notice and their 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 a parent due to unauthorised holiday, should their child have any future unauthorised leave this will result in further legal action for them, 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-for-parents/possible-penalties.

Section 7:

7.1 My child is trying to avoid coming to School. What should I do?

Children are sometimes reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents 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. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and may make things worse.

Parents should contact their child's class teacher immediately and openly discuss their worries. The child could be avoiding school for a number of reasons – difficulties with school work, friendship problems, bullying, family difficulties. It is important that the school can identify the reason for the child's reluctance to attend school and work together to tackle the problem. In some cases parents may find it helpful to discuss the circumstances of your child's difficulties with another professional.

What can I do to encourage my child to attend School?

Parents can make sure their child gets enough sleep and gets up in plenty of time each morning. Ensure that he/she leaves home in the correct clothes and properly equipped. Show their child, by their interest, that they value his / her education.

Each child will bring home a reading diary each evening which may also be used for communication between the class teacher and home. Parents should ensure they look at it with your child and sign it ready for the next day.

Parents should be interested in what their child is doing in school; chat to them about the things they have learnt, what they played at break times and what they enjoyed.

For many parents, their child attending school may be their first experience of being separated from them. This can seem daunting at first for both the parent and child 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 a child is leaving our school (other than when transferring to secondary school parents are asked to:

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

If pupils leave and we do not have the above information, then the 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 the school the above information, these investigations can be avoided.

7.3 Absence through child participation in Public Performances, including theatre, film or TV work & 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. Written notification from the agent confirming the arrangements for providing education, together with the programme of study should be submitted with the request for leave of absence. Any absence recorded as part of a child's participation in a public performance is recorded as C an authorised absence.

7.4. 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 headteachers 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. Written notification from the sports club / coach confirming the arrangements for providing education, together with the programme of study should be submitted with the request for leave of absence.

7.5 Gypsy Roma Traveller Showman 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.

Section 8:

8.1 Record preservation

School registers are legal documents. The school ensures compliance with attendance regulations by keeping attendance records for at least 3 years. Computer registers are preserved as electronic back-ups.

The Governing Body believes that fairness and consistency of judgment is essential to the operation of the school. All members of the school have equality of opportunity to achieve their full potential and will not be discriminated against because of age, disability, gender, sexual orientation, nationality, race, or religion. The Governing Body believes that the school always has to be aware of the potential for unconscious discrimination, to avoid assumptions about individual members of the school based on stereotypes and to use the teaching and learning arrangements actively to encourage everyone to achieve their full potential. All our policies are consistent with our duty of care to protect our pupils and to provide a learning environment that is safe and healthy. In all our dealings, we respect the strict code of confidentiality that underpins our school ethos.