



Attendance policy

Introduction

The Head teacher is responsible for implementing and monitoring this policy. The level of attendance and 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

It is very important, therefore, that you make sure your child attends school 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 the school website.

National guidance

This policy has been drawn up using a range of national documents and guidance.

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.

Department of Education (DFE) guidance School Attendance (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.

All pupils must be punctual to their lessons.

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 so 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 is 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 they are 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:

We believe children learn best when they feel safe and secure. We aim to offer an outstanding education that encourages each child to be the best they can be. We recognise individual talents and develop confidence so every child is motivated, inspired and enjoys learning. Miss school and miss out.

- 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.

1. Operating the policy

Promoting good attendance

The foundation for good attendance is a strong partnership between the school, parents and the child. The Home School Agreement will contain 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 related to attendance in our regular newsletter
- 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 class attendance in our regular newsletter and outside the Reception area on our celebration display

Roles and responsibilities

Responsibilities of school leaders

- Co-ordinate the school's work on promoting regular and improved attendance
- Ensure the attendance policy is consistently applied throughout the school
- Ensure attendance is recorded accurately and analysed, identifying attendance issues early and putting support in place

- Meet with parents to discuss a child's absence and encourage them to keep absences to a minimum

- The headteacher will decide whether or not an absence will be authorised as this always rests with the school

Responsibilities of classroom staff

- Ensure that all pupils are registered accurately
- Promote and praise good attendance with pupils at all appropriate opportunities
- Liaise with the head teacher on matters of attendance and punctuality
- Communicate any concerns or underlying problems that may account for a child's absence
- Support pupils, who have been absent, to engage with their learning once they are back in school.

Responsibilities of pupils:

- Attend every day unless they are ill (Covid 19 or self-isolating) have an authorised absence
- Arrive in school on time
- Be responsible for going to the office if they arrive late

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/carers will:

- Inform the school on the first day of absence before 9.00am
- Discuss with the class teacher any planned absences well in advance
- Support the school with their child in aiming for 100% attendance each year
- Make sure that any absence is clearly accounted for by telephone on the first and subsequent days of absence, a message can be recorded or an email to adminoffice@whjs.hants.sch.uk (WHJS) or adminoffice@st-thomas.hants.sch.uk (St Thomas') If notification of an absence is by a message left or email to office staff may follow up with a call to get more information
- 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

2. Recording attendance

Legally the register must be marked twice daily. This is once at the start of the school day,

8.50am, and again for the afternoon session at 1.15pm (WHJS)

8.55am, and again for the afternoon session at 1pm (St Thomas')

Lateness/punctuality

It is important to be on time at the start of the morning and afternoon school sessions and to lessons. The start of school/lessons is used to give out instructions or organise work. 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 when having to enter a lesson already underway.

- The school day begins at 8.45 am (WHJS) and 8.55am (St Thomas') and all pupils are expected to be in school at this time.
- Morning registration is at 8.50 am and registers close at 9am. (WHJS) and 8.55am (ST Thomas')
- All lateness is recorded daily. This information will be required by the courts, should a prosecution for non-attendance or lateness be necessary.
- Late arrival before the registration has closed is marked with code *L*.
- Late arrival after the close of registration will be marked as unauthorised absence, 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 5 for further detail).

Parents 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 or carers will be invited to attend the school to 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 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 5 of this policy for further detail).

At the end of the school day, pupils should be collected promptly. Where late collection is persistent, the parent or carer will be contacted to discuss the problem. If late collection continues, parents or carers will be invited into school to a meeting with the head teacher to discuss improving collection arrangements. Where late collection is persistent and/or is significantly late, the school is obliged to take any uncollected pupil to a place of safety and share concerns, as necessary, with other agencies. School may place the child in after-school club and parents/carers will be sent the bill.

What to do if my 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 or carer should contact the school as soon as possible by phone or email on the first day of absence stating the child's name, class and reason for absence or by calling into school reception.

Once the child returns to school, the parent or carer should send a note in on the first day they

return with an explanation of the absence. This should happen even if the parent or carer has telephoned the school at the beginning of the absence.

If the parent or carer does not make contact, the school will telephone or text the parent or carer on the first day of absence. This is to fulfil our duty to ensure the safety of all children, as well as ensure their regular attendance at school. We will continue to keep in contact with the parents or carers of the child throughout the period of absence.

If no contact can be made with a parent or carer on day one, we may visit the family home, we may seek advice from other agencies, we will continue to make contact over the subsequent days as well as try to make other contact through known contacts, talk to the child's peer group to ascertain whether they know the child's whereabouts and finally write to the family asking them to contact the school.

Third day absence

If the child is not seen and contact has not been established with any of the named parents/carers, after three days of absence the school is required to start *child missing in education* procedures as set down by Hampshire County Council guidance.

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 or 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. It is therefore essential that contact numbers and addresses for parents or carers are kept up to date. School should have at least two emergency contact telephone numbers.

A form requesting updates is issued once an academic year, by the school, but it is the responsibility of parents or carers to notify the school when they change any of their contact details.

Continued or ongoing absence

If a child misses 10% (three weeks/sessions) 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 a child has attendance that is falling towards 90%, then the school contacts the parents or carers who may be invited in to discuss how the school can support the family in improving the child's attendance levels.

3. Procedures

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 head teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. It is

important to note that head teachers 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 term 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 the website and/or the school office) 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 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).

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

4. Types of absence

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 of absence from school after a parent's/carer's request. This includes: parents/carers 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 and 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.

5. Penalty Notices and the law

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 when there is unauthorised absence and:

1. the child or family do not require 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 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 absences 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/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 the last 100 possible school sessions – **these do not need to be consecutive**
- 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*), for up to 10 sessions (five days) (*L* code cannot be changed to *O* code)
- 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 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, or
- 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, and 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.

Please note: 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 Notice 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 cost of prosecuting recipients who do not pay.

Please note: If you pay the Penalty Notice and your child has further unauthorised absences which mean a Penalty Notice is issued then the Headteacher has the option to refer the case to the Attendance Legal Panel. For example, in the event that a Penalty Notice has previously been served to a family due to unauthorised holiday then if the family have future unauthorised leave this will result in legal action such as Prosecution or an Education Supervision Order. Further information is available in the leaflet titled Information on Penalty Notices for non-attendance at School – Advice for parents and carers.

Ways we can support

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/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. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and may make things worse. Contact your child's class teacher 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.

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. Ensure that he/she leaves home in the correct clothes and properly equipped. Show your child, by your interest, that you value his/her education.

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.

Leavers

If your child is leaving our school (other than when transferring to secondary school) parents are asked to give the school office 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.

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 head teacher 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 leave of absence. It is, however, down to the head teacher'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.

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 regional, county, national and international events and competitions. It is, however, down to the head teacher'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.

Permission for your child to leave early or arrive late to attend coaching and training sessions is also at the discretion of the head teacher and is not likely to be approved if it is a regular event, unless the sports club or association is providing an education tutor as part of their coaching. The headteacher will need to meet with you to discuss this and the requirements of such an arrangement.

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

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.

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).

Record preservation

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