



Attendance Policy 2023

National Guidance

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 of Education and Hampshire County Council. The Attendance Policy is also consistent with the following school policies:

- Admissions
- Behaviour and Anti-Bullying
- Child Protection
- Safeguarding
- Teaching and learning
- Special Educational Needs

The level of attendance and punctuality expected from all our pupils is included in our school's information packs, newsletters and website. It is very important therefore that you make sure that your child attends regularly and this policy sets out how together we can achieve this. This policy is publicised in writing for all staff, parents and children via the school website.

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 children play a fundamental part in making our school successful. Every child has a right to access the education to which they are entitled. Parents and teachers share the responsibility for supporting and promoting excellent attendance and punctuality for all.

It is our duty to consistently strive to achieve a goal of 100% attendance for all children and every opportunity to convey to children and their parents or carers, the importance of regular and punctual attendance is utilised.

It is essential that children arrive at school on time every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. The routines children develop around punctuality and attendance at school are the same 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
- 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 infant school, junior school, school, secondary school and higher education, employment or training

Promoting good attendance and punctuality

The foundation for good attendance is a strong partnership between school, parents or carers and the child. The school website 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 focus on this we will:

- Provide information on all matters related to attendance in our weekly snapshot
- Celebrate good attendance by displaying monthly class achievements and weekly class attendance
- Report to you on how your child is performing in school, their attendance and punctuality rate. This will be at least 3 times a year.

Roles and Responsibilities

The Executive Head Teacher /Head of School will oversee, direct and co-ordinate the schools work in promoting regular and improved attendance and will ensure the attendance policy is consistently applied throughout the school.

The Executive Head teacher /Head of School will support the school administrative assistants to ensure that attendance is recorded accurately and analysed. The Executive Head Teacher /Head of School 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 parents/ carers the needs and reasons for their child's absence and will encourage them to keep absences to a minimum. A note or explanation from a child's home does not mean an absence becomes automatically authorised. The decision to authorise or unauthorised a child's absence rests with the Executive Head Teacher or head of School.

Responsibility of classroom staff

- Ensure that all pupils are registered accurately
- Promote and reward good attendance with the children
- Liaise with the Executive Head teacher/Head of School on matters of attendance and punctuality
- Communicate any concerns or underlying problems that may account for a child's absence
- Support children with absence to engage with their learning once they are back in school

Responsibilities of pupils (with the support of their parent or carer)

- Attend every day unless they are ill or have unauthorised absence
- Arrive in school on time

Responsibilities of Parents and Carers

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

- Inform the school on the first day of absence before 9am and every day that the child is absent
- Take responsibility for registering at the office if their child is late or needs to leave school during the day
- Notify the school of 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 phone on the first day and any subsequent days absence, by letter or e-mail if a phone is unavailable.
- 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

Recording Attendance

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

- The school day begins at 8.40 am and all pupils are expected to be in school by **8:50am**
- Arrival after 8:50 am and before 9:10am will be registered as an 'L' code

- Arrival after the close of registration **which is 9:10am** will be marked as **an** 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 are to be made outside of school hours or during school holidays.
- All lateness is recorded daily. This information will be required by the courts, should a prosecution for non-attendance or lateness be necessary

Lateness and Punctuality

It is important that all children are on time at the start of the school day. Pupils who are consistently late are disrupting not only their own education but also that of other children. Ongoing and repeated lateness is considered as unauthorised absence and will be subject to legal action.

Parents, guardians or carers of children 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 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 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.

Please collect your 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.

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 your child is absent you must:

- Contact us as soon as possible on the first day of absence by telephone, or by coming into reception. Please ensure that this is done by 9am.

If your child is absent we will:

- Telephone you on the first day of the absence 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. We will call daily until we are able to make contact with you.*
- We will call all the contacts available to us on the first day in order to find out the reason for the absence and to check the child is safe
- Invite you in to discuss the situation with the Head of School if absences persist
- Refer the matter to the Hampshire County Council's Legal Intervention Team if absence is unauthorised and falls below 90% (persistent absence)

Subsequent Absence

Please contact us each day your child is absent.

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 procedures 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 and wider family.

Ten Days Absence

We have a legal duty to report the absence of any child 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'. Hampshire 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 of more than one person.

Continued or On-going 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 their 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 of Education. If your child has had absence and their attendance level is falling towards 90% we will contact you and depending on the reasons for the absence will take further action as detailed in the policy. Where necessary the Executive Head teacher will issue a penalty notice. Children at this school are dependent on their parent/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.

Request for leave of absence

Amendments to school attendance regulations were updated and enforced from 2013 and amended on 2016: 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 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 Councils Code of Conduct February 2019, parents/ carers will be issued with a fixed-penalty fine or other legal action in accordance with the code.

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.

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 request.

This includes:

- Parents giving their child permission to be off school unnecessarily, such as for shopping, birthdays or looking after siblings
- 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 penalty notice may then be issued.

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 Legal Intervention Panel 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 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 February 2019* 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:

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

The Code of Conduct states all schools or Hampshire County Council will issue a Penalty Notice for any unauthorised absence where the child 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) 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 informal 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:

- 10 sessions of unauthorised absence or lateness in any 10 week school period
- 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, 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 i.e 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 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:

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

Frequently Asked Questions

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 parent/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.

Be interested in what your child is doing in school, chat to them about the things they have learnt, what friends they have made and even what they had for lunch!

What to do if your child is leaving our school

Give the Executive Head teacher 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 Executive Head teacher /Head of School 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 Executive Head teacher /Head of School 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, as 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 Executive Head teacher /Head of School 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 Executive Head teacher /Head of School 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.

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.

Record Preservation

School registers are legal documents. We will ensure compliance with attendance regulations by keeping attendance records for at least 3 years. Computer registers will be preserved as electronic backups.

Monitoring and Review

This policy will be monitored by the Executive Head teacher and the Governing Body. It will be reviewed -annually.

Attendance Policy
Lydlynch Infant School
Approved by Governing Body
<i>Signed: Chair of Governors</i>
Date ratified: March 2023
Review date: (March 2024)