

Purbrook



Infant School

Attendance Policy 2021/22



Persons responsible for implementing and monitoring the policy:

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Section 1:

Rationale

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 children and endeavour to provide an environment where all children feel valued and welcome. Parents and children play a 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 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 children 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 your child is at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. The routines children develop around attendance and punctuality around 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 pre-school, infant school, junior school, secondary school and higher education, employment or training.

Section 2

2.1 Promoting good attendance and punctuality

The foundation for good attendance is a strong partnership between the school, parents and the child. The Home School Agreement will contain details of 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 weekly Friday Flier newsletter and on our school website
- report to you on how your child is performing in school, what their attendance and punctuality rate is and how this relates to their attainments
- celebrate good attendance by recognising individual and class achievements
- set and publicise targets for the school and for individuals and groups of children
- develop initiatives where parents, children and staff can work together on raising attendance levels

2.2 Roles and responsibilities

Responsibilities of the school's attendance leader

The Assistant Headteacher will oversee, direct and co-ordinate the school's work, in consultation with the headteacher and deputy headteacher, in promoting regular and improved attendance and will ensure the attendance policy is consistently applied throughout the school. This person will also ensure that attendance is both recorded accurately and analysed. He 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 need 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 necessarily mean the absence becomes authorised. The decision whether or not to authorise absence will always rest with the school.

Responsibilities of classroom staff

- ensure that all children are registered accurately
- promote good attendance at all appropriate opportunities
- liaise with the attendance leader/HT where there are concerns about matters of attendance or regular poor punctuality
- communicate any concerns or underlying problems that may account for a child's absence
- support children who have been absent in order that they can engage with their learning once they are back in school

Responsibilities of children

- Take responsibility for registering themselves in their classroom (staff to oversee)

Responsibilities of parents and 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 constitutes an offence in law.

Parents must:

- Inform the school on the first day of absence
- Discuss with the class teacher or attendance leader/ HT any planned absences well in advance
- Support the school in aiming for 100% attendance each year
- Make sure that any absence is clearly accounted for by telephone or text on the first day of absence and if the absence extends beyond one week
- 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 at 8.55am and again for the afternoon session at 1.00pm for the Early Years Foundation Stage and at 1.15pm in KS1.

Children will self-register in class and the class teacher or support staff will record attendance and absence in the register.

3.2 Lateness/ Punctuality

It is important to be on time at the start of the morning and afternoon school sessions. The start of the school day is used to give out vital instructions and to discuss the day's learning. If your child is late, this may mean that they miss work time with their class teacher, vital information or they may cause disruption to the lesson for others. Children sometimes feel uncomfortable arriving late and this can impact negatively on their learning for the day.

- The school day begins at 8.55am and all children are expected to be in school by this time. Morning registration is at 8.55am and officially closes at 9.25am.
- All lateness is recorded daily. This information is required by the court should a prosecution for non-attendance or lateness be necessary
- Arrival after the close of registration 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 child 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 school hours or during school holidays.

Children 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 (see section 6 for further details).

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 will be offered. If support is not appropriate or is declined and the child has ten or more sessions of unauthorised absence due to lateness recorded in any ten 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 6 of this policy for further detail).

Please collect your child promptly at the end of the school day. Where late collection is persistent 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. On occasions where there are no staff available to care for the child or collections are more than fifteen minutes late, the child may be placed into the Beehive after school club and the parent/carer could be charged for this.

3.3 What to do if my child is absent

First Day's absence

A child not attending school is considered a safe-guarding matter. This is why 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

If your child is absent we will:

- Telephone or text you on the first day of 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
- Invite you in to discuss the situation with our assistant headteacher/HT if absences persist
- Refer the matter to Hampshire County Council's legal panels if absence is unauthorised and falls below 90%

Third Day Absence

If your 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. We will make all reasonable enquiries to establish contact with parents/carers 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 ten consecutive days. If the child is not seen and contact has not been established with the named parent/carer then the 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. Help us to help you and your child by making sure we always have an up-to-date contact number. There will be regular checks on telephone numbers throughout the year.

Continued or ongoing absence

If your child misses 10% (three weeks) 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. 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 absence and their attendance level is falling towards 90% we will contact you, and depending on the reasons for the absence, will ask for you to come into school for a meeting and will monitor attendance daily.

All our persistent absentee children and their parents are subject to an Attendance Plan.

It is important that on return from an unavoidable absence all children are made to feel welcome. This should include ensuring that the child is helped to catch up on missed work and parents are provided with information that has been passed on to other families.

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. 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 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 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.

Section 5

Understanding types of absence

Children 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 children permission to be off school unnecessarily, such as for shopping or birthdays
 - 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

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 the support from any agency to improve attendance
2. the child has ten or more sessions of unauthorised absence and parents are complicit in the child's absence

The following legal measures will be used on 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 authorised 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-for-parents/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 ten or more half-day sessions (five school days) of unauthorised absence during any one hundred 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 ten sessions (five days) has been met
- absent for any formal school assessments, tests or examinations where the dates have been published in advance unless the issuing of a Penalty Notice would conflict with other intervention strategies in place or other sanctions already being processed.

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

1. Ten sessions of unauthorised absence or lateness in any ten week school period
2. One or more sessions of unauthorised absence during 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 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-for-parents/possible-penalties

Section 7

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

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 e.g. the Parent Support Adviser / the school ELSA (Emotional Literacy Support Assistant).

Additional Advice

- Make sure your child gets enough sleep and gets up in plenty of time each morning.
- Ensure that your child/ren leave home in the correct clothes and are properly equipped
- show your child, by your interest, that you value their education i.e. chat to them about the things they have learnt, friends they have made, even what they have had for lunch

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 attendance officer 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. These should be provided to the 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 carry out investigations to try to 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

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

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

Any absence recorded as part of a child's participation in a public performance is recorded as C and 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 regional, county, national and international events and competitions. 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. Permission for your child to leave earlier or arrive late to attend coaching and training sessions is also at the discretion of the headteacher 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.

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 backups or microfiche copies (if schools are not SIMS centrally hosted and do not have secure electronic server back-up they must print hard copies of the official registers and bind into annual volumes.).