



ATTENDANCE POLICY

Review Date: May 2020

For a child to reach his or her 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. Every child has a right to access the education to which he or she is entitled. Parents and teachers share the responsibility for supporting and promoting excellent school attendance and punctuality for all.

It is the school and parents' 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 daily punctual attendance.

To take full advantage of the educational opportunities offered, it is vital that your child is at school, on time, every day the schools are open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. The routines children develop around attendance and punctuality at school are the same routines that will be expected by 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 underachievement and absence below 95%
- daily attenders make better progress, both socially and academically
- daily attenders find school routines, schoolwork and friendships easier to cope with
- daily attenders find learning more satisfying
- daily attenders are more successful in transferring between primary school, secondary school, and higher education, employment or training.

Responsibilities of the Senior Leadership Team

A member of the senior leadership team will oversee, direct and co-ordinate the schools' work in promoting daily and improved attendance, and will ensure that the Attendance Policy is consistently applied throughout the schools. This person will also ensure that attendance is both recorded accurately, and analysed. (S)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, a senior leader will discuss with parents/carers the 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 that an absence becomes authorised. The decision whether or not to authorise an absence will always rest with the school.

Responsibility of Class Teachers

It is the responsibility of classroom staff to:

- ensure that all pupils are registered accurately
- liaise with the senior leadership team on matters of attendance and punctuality
- communicate any concerns or underlying problems that may account for a child's absence.

Responsibilities of Pupils

- Attend every day unless he or she is ill or has an authorised absence
- arrive in school on time
- go to all their registrations and lessons on time
- take responsibility for registering at the school office if he or she is late or is leaving the school site during school hours.

Responsibilities of Parents and Carers

Ensuring your child's daily attendance at school is your legal responsibility (chapter 1, section 7 of the 1996 Education Act) and allowing your child to have unauthorised absence from school is against the law.

Parents will:

- inform the school on the first day of absence if your child is unwell
- support the school, along with their child, in aiming for 100% attendance each year
- make sure that any absence is clearly accounted for by phone on the first and subsequent days of absence, or by letter/email if a phone is unavailable
- avoid taking their child out of school for non-urgent medical or dental appointments
- submit the Pupil Absence Request Form at least three weeks in advance if you believe you meet exceptional circumstances
- understand that a leave of absence will only be authorised if it is deemed to be for an exceptional circumstance.

Recording Attendance

Legally the register must be marked twice daily. This is once at the start of the school day 8.55am and again for the afternoon session at 1.00pm.

Lateness / Punctuality

It is important to be on time for school. The start of lessons is used to give out instructions or organise work. If your child is late, he or she can miss work, miss time with the class teacher, miss getting vital information and cause disruption to the lesson for others.

The school day begins at 8.55am and all pupils are expected to be in school at this time. Morning registration is at 8.55am and it closes at 9.10am.

All lateness is recorded daily. If the register has been taken at 8.55 and your child arrives before 9.10 am an 'L' lateness code will be used. This information will be required by the courts, should a prosecution for non-attendance or lateness be necessary.

Arrival after the close of registration will be marked as unauthorised absence code 'U' in line with county and Department for Education (DfE) guidance. This mark shows pupils to be on site, but is legally recorded as an absence.

If a pupil is late owing to a medical appointment, he or she 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.

Pupils who are consistently late disrupt not only their own learning but also that of other pupils. Ongoing and repeated lateness is considered as unauthorised absence and will be subject to legal action (see below for further detail).

Parents, guardians or carers of pupils who have patterns of lateness will be contacted to discuss the importance of good timekeeping 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 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 below for further detail).

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 should I do if my child is absent?

First Day of 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 by 9.15am, on the first day of absence. The school office has an out of hours answer machine service so you can call before the start of the school day. If you do not contact the school the school office will contact you as a matter of urgency as your child is technically 'missing from education' which is a safeguarding concern.
- send a note in on the first day they return with an explanation of the absence.

If your child is absent, we will:

- telephone or text you by 10am 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 his or her regular school attendance
- invite you in to discuss the situation with appropriate staff members if absence is prolonged or unexplained
- refer the matter to the Hampshire's Attendance Legal Panels if the unauthorised absence rate is 10 sessions or more within a 100-session period.

Third Day of Absence

If your child has not been seen and contact has not been established with you or any of the named parents or carers after three days of absence, the school is required to start a Child missing in education procedure as set down by Hampshire County Council guidance. We will make all reasonable enquires to establish contact with the parents of the child, including making enquires to known friends, and wider family if appropriate.

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/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. Help us to help you and your child, by making sure that we always have an up to date contact number. There will be regular checks on telephone numbers throughout the year.

Continued or Ongoing Absence

We recognise that children at Burley and Sopley schools 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 the school encourages the children to value the importance of daily attendance and arriving by 8.55am, we will endeavour to ensure that children will not be made to feel responsible if their parents are not supportive or effective in ensuring their good attendance.

If your child misses 10% (3 weeks within a school year) or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason he or she is defined as a persistent absentee. Where this absence is authorised, the school will meet with the parents to find ways to improve the problem.

Absence for whatever reason disadvantages a child by creating gaps in his or her learning. Research shows that these gaps affect attainment when attendance falls below 95%. As such we monitor all absence thoroughly, and all attendance data are shared with the local authority and the Department for Education. If your child has had absence and his or her attendance level is falling towards 90%, we will contact you and – depending on the reasons for the absence – will consider implementing plans to improve his or her attendance.

In all cases the schools will consider referring the matter to Hampshire's Attendance Legal Panels if the unauthorised absence rate is 10 sessions or more within a 100-session period.

Request for Leave of Absence

Amendments to school attendance regulations were updated and enforced from September 2013: 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, and unavoidable which means that the event could not reasonably be scheduled at another time. There are no rules on this. There is no legal entitlement for time off in term time to go on holiday and in the vast 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 schools' website and 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's Code of Conduct, parents/carers will be issued with a fixed penalty fine, or other legal action in accordance with the code (see below 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.

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 absence:

- 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, or to look after siblings
 - failure to attend due to parents' ill health
 - 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 that a child is unwell, but on return to school there is evidence that he or she has been on holiday.

Penalty Notices for Non Attendance and other Legal Measures

In education law, parents/carers are committing an offence if they fail to ensure the daily 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:

- The child or family does not require the support from any agency to improve the attendance
- The child has 10 or more sessions of unauthorised absence and parents are complicit in the child's absence.
- The following legal measures apply to 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 parents’/ carers’ request for leave of absence

Where a pupil has unauthorised absence due to either:

- non approval of a parent’s/carer’s request for leave of absence, or
- 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://www.hants.gov.uk/educationandlearning/behaviour-attendance-parents#step-6>

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
- persistently late after the register has closed (coded U) for up to 10 sessions (five days)
- persistently late before the close of the register (coded L), but the school has met with parents and has clearly communicated that it will categorise as unauthorised any further lateness (coded 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 does not require any agency support to improve the attendance, then a single penalty notice is issued for either:

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

Parents/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 school’s attendance policy and website. The penalty notice is a fine that is issued to each parent/carer who condoned (or was responsible for the child) during the period of unauthorised absence for which the fine has been issued. For each case of unauthorised absence the school or Hampshire County Council will decide whether a penalty notice is issued to one or more parents/carers for each child. NB: This could mean four penalty notices for a family with two siblings, both with unauthorised absence for holiday, ie: one penalty notice for each child to each parent.

Each penalty notice carries a fine of £60 if paid within 21 days of the penalty notice being posted. If the fine is not paid within 21 days, the penalty is automatically increased to £120 if paid within 28 days. If the fine remains unpaid then Hampshire County Council will consider prosecution for 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 should visit Hampshire County Council's website at:
<https://www.hants.gov.uk/educationandlearning/behaviour-attendance-parents#step-6>

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

Children are sometimes reluctant to attend school. Any problems with daily attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents and the child. If a child is reluctant to attend, it is always better to share this with the school rather than say he or she is ill. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter, and may make things worse.

Contact your child's class teacher or ELSA immediately and openly discuss your worries. Your child could be avoiding school for a number of reasons – difficulties with schoolwork, friendship problems, family difficulties, etc. It is important that we identify the reason for your child's reluctance to attend school and work together with you 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 that your child gets enough sleep, and gets up in plenty of time each morning. Ensure that he or she leaves home in the correct uniform and properly equipped for school. Show your child, by your interest, that you value his or her education.

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

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 and supportive home and school life will make the transition a quick and easy experience for you both.

Leavers

If your child is leaving one of our schools (other than when transferring to secondary school) parents are asked to give the school office comprehensive information about their plans including:

- the date of any 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 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.

Absence through child participation in public performances, including theatre, film or TV work and modelling

Parents of a child performer can seek leave of absence from school for their child to take part in a performance. They must contact the headteacher to discuss the nature and frequency of the work, whether the child has a valid performance licence, and whether education will be provided by the employer during any future leave of absence. 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

Parents of talented children 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 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 headteacher and is not likely to be approved if it is a regular event, unless the sports club or relevant association is providing an education tutor as part of their coaching.

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 he or she is 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.