

St Matthew's C.E. Primary School



Attendance Policy

Review date January 2023

Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these."

Matthew 19:14

Respect, Faith, Friendship, Achievement

Overview

Every child has the right to the best education and deserves to be happy and successful in school. We foster children's growing independence and aspirations by giving them opportunities to plan and execute their own work and we encourage children to support and learn from each other. We respect every person as unique and treat everyone with dignity. We always seek to improve and work together to achieve more, especially valuing our partnership with parents. We encourage high standards and know every child can be successful.

We believe in working in partnership with our parents and our local community to provide the best, most stimulating, inspiring and relevant curriculum for our children. We are a happy, welcoming school which develops our children's self-confidence, self-esteem and independence. We equip children with the foundations they need to become responsible citizens, achieve economic wellbeing and meet the challenges of the future

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

It is our duty to consistently strive to achieve a goal of 100% attendance for all children. Every opportunity will be used to convey to pupils and their parents or carers the importance of regular and punctual attendance.

For our children to take full advantage of the educational opportunities offered it is vital every child is at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. **The routines children develop around attendance and punctuality at school are the same as the expectations of any future employer in the world of work.** High attainment, confidence with peers and staff and future aspirations depend on good attendance.

Good attendance is important because:

Statistics show a direct link between under-achievement and absence below 95%
Regular attenders make better progress, both socially and academically
Regular attenders find school routines, school work and friendships easier to cope with
Regular attenders find learning more satisfying
Regular attenders are more successful in transferring between primary school, secondary school, and higher education, employment or training

Section 1 Promoting good attendance

The foundation for good attendance is a strong partnership between the school, parents and the child. The schools Home/School agreement 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 all to focus on this we will:

- Provide information on all matters related to attendance in our regular Newsletter and on the school Website

- Report to parents on how their child is performing in school, what their attendance and punctuality rate is and how this relates to their attainment
- Celebrate good attendance
- Work with parents to help them improve their child's attendance

Section 2 Roles and Responsibilities:

Responsibilities of the School's Attendance Leader (Headteacher)

The Headteacher will oversee, direct and co-ordinate the school's work in promoting regular and improved attendance. Specifically they will:

- ensure the Attendance Policy is consistently applied throughout the school
- ensure that the school Attendance Policy is fully available to parents
- ensure that attendance is recorded accurately
- analyse attendance regularly to ensure that attendance issues are identified at an early stage
- ensure that the school makes every effort to work with parents to improve attendance
- authorise penalty notices or other legal measures

Responsibilities of Classroom Staff:

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

Responsibilities of Parents and Carers:

Ensuring a child's regular attendance at school is a parent/carers legal responsibility (section of the 1996 Education Act) and permitting absence from school that is not authorised by the school creates an offence in law.

Parents will:

- Ensure their child attends every day unless they are too ill to attend school or have an authorised absence
- Ensure their child arrives on time every day
- Inform the school on the first day of absence
- Discuss with the class teacher any planned absences well in advance
- Support the school in aiming for 100% attendance for their child each year
- Make sure that any absence is clearly accounted for by phone on the first and subsequent days of absence, or by letter if a phone is unavailable
- Avoid taking their child out of school for non-urgent medical or dental appointments
- Only request for leave of absence if it is for an exceptional circumstance

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

- any date of a move
- your new address and telephone numbers

- your child's new school
- 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.

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.

3.2. Lateness /Punctuality

The start of school is used to review work from previous days and work on development points given to improve that work or prepare them for future learning. It is also used to support children's individual learning needs. The start of the day is also an important social time where children settle themselves into the school day.

The school day begins at 8:45am and all pupils are expected to be in school at that time. Morning registration closes at 8:55am.

Pupils will be given a late code 'L' mark if they arrive after 8:55am

All lateness is recorded daily.

Arrival after the close of registration at 9:15am will be marked as unauthorised absence code 'U' in line with county and Department for Education (DfE) guidance. This mark shows them to be on site, but is legally recorded as an absence.

If a pupil is late due to a medical appointment, they will receive an authorised absence coded 'M'.

Pupils who are consistently late are disrupting not only their own education but also that of the other pupils. On-going and repeated lateness is considered as unauthorised absence and will be subject to legal action (see section 6 for further detail).

The school day ends at 3:10pm and children need to be collected **promptly** unless a child in Year 6 has been given authorisation by school and parents to walk home themselves. 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.

Parents, guardians or carers of pupils who have patterns of lateness will be contacted to discuss the importance of good time keeping and how this might be achieved. If lateness persists, parents, guardians or carers will be invited to attend the school and discuss the problem and support offered. If support is not appropriate or is declined and a child has 10 or more sessions of unauthorised absence due to lateness recorded in any 10 week period the school or the Hampshire County Council will be required to issue parents with a penalty notice in accordance with Hampshire's Code of Conduct for issuing penalty notices for non-attendance (See section 6 of this policy for further detail).

3.3. Absence procedures

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 a parent must:

- Contact the school as soon as possible on the first day of absence;
- Send a note in on the first day they return with an explanation of the absence – parents must do this even if they have already telephoned the school. Or, they can call into school and report the reasons to the office staff.

If a child is absent the school will:

- Telephone the parents on the first day of absence if the school has not heard from them; *This is because the school has a duty to ensure a child's safety as well as their regular school attendance*
- Invite parents in to discuss the situation with the Headteacher if absences persist;

Third Day Absence

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

Ten Day's Absence

The school has a legal duty to report the absence of any pupils who is absent without an explanation for 10 consecutive days. If a 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.

3.4 Continued or Ongoing Absence

Absence for whatever reason disadvantages a child by creating gaps in his or her learning. Research shows these gaps affect attainment when attendance falls below 95%. As such we monitor all absence thoroughly and all attendance data is shared with the Local Authority and the Department for Education.

If a child has had absence and their attendance level is falling towards 90% the school will contact the parents/carers either by letter or by direct contact to inform them of their child's current attendance and express the school concerns.

If a child has missed 10% or more schooling across one term or more for whatever reason they are defined as persistent absentees. Where this absence is authorised the school will:

- Arrange a meeting between the parent/carer and either the Headteacher to discuss how best to support the parent/carer and their child to improve their attendance
- Look at the child's attendance pattern and if concerned will not authorise any further absence
- Look at referring the child's case to the attendance legal panel

Section 4 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, 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 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's Code of Conduct parent/carers will be issued with a fixed-penalty fine, or other legal action in accordance the code (see section 6 for detail).

Section 5: Understanding types of absence:

Pupils are expected to attend school every day for the entire duration of the academic year, unless there is an *exceptional reason* for the absence. There are two main categories of absences:

Authorised Absence: is when the school has accepted the explanation offered as satisfactory justification for the absence, or given approval in advance for such an absence. If no explanation is received, absences cannot be authorised.

Unauthorised Absence: is when the school has not received a reason for absence or has not approved a child's leave absence from school after a parent's request. This includes: parents giving their children permission to be off school unnecessarily such as for

- Shopping
- Birthdays
- to look after siblings
- truancy before or during the school day
- absences which have not been explained

If needed, we will 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.

6.1 Legal Measures for tackling persistent absence or lateness

Schools have the authority to issue penalty notices for non attendance and other legal measures will be considered through a referral to Hampshire's Attendance Legal Panels where:

- The child or family do 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 are for pupils of compulsory school age who are registered at a school:

- Parenting contracts set at Education Planning Meetings
- Parenting orders
- Penalty notices
- Education Supervision Orders
- Prosecution

6.2 Legal Measures for absence taken when the Headteacher has declined parent/carers request for leave of absence

Where a pupil has unauthorised absence due to either:

- non approval of a parent/carer's request for leave of absence
- 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

6.3 Penalty Notices for non-attendance- Hampshire's Code of Conduct

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

<http://www3.hants.gov.uk/education/hias/learning-behaviour-attendance/attendance-guidance-for-parents/possible-penalties.htm>

The code of conduct states that:

Schools or Hampshire Local Authority will issue a Penalty Notice for any unauthorised absence where the pupil has been:

- absent for 10 or more half-day sessions (five school days) of unauthorised absence during any 100 possible school sessions – these do not need to be consecutive
- persistently late (coded *U*) for up to 10 sessions (five days) after the register has closed
- persistently late before the close of the register (coded *L*), but the school has met with parents and has clearly communicated that they will categorise as unauthorised any further lateness (code *O*), and where the threshold of 10 sessions (five days) has been met
- absent for any public examinations of which dates are published in advance
- absent for any formal school assessments, tests or examinations where the dates have been published in advance

unless the issuing of a Penalty Notice would conflict with other intervention strategies in place or other sanctions already being processed.

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

- 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 and Carers will be warned of the likelihood of a penalty notice being issued for unauthorised absence either via a letter, through the leave of absence request form, or through the schools attendance policy 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 parent/carers for each child. N.B This could mean four penalty notices for a family with two siblings both with unauthorised absence for holiday i.e. one 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 the Hampshire County Council will consider prosecution for the non-attendance. Payment methods are detailed on the Penalty Notices themselves. Penalties are to be paid to Hampshire County Council and revenue resulting from payment of Penalties is used by the County Council to help cover the costs of issuing Penalty Notices and/or the cost of prosecuting recipients who do not pay.

For further information parents/carers can request a leaflet from school and should visit Hampshire County Councils website at:

<http://www3.hants.gov.uk/education/hias/learning-behaviour-attendance/attendance-guidance-for-parents/possible-penalties.htm>

Section 7: additional reasons for absence

7.1 Absence through child participation in Public Performances, including theatre, film or TV work & Modelling.

Parents of a child performer can seek leave of absence from school for their child to take part in a performance. They must contact the Headteacher to discuss the nature and frequency of the work, whether the child has a valid performance licence and whether education will be provided by the employer during any future leave of absence. Any absence recorded as part of a child's participation in a public performance is recorded as C an authorised absence.

7.2 Absence through competing at regional, county or national level for Sport.

Parents of able sportsmen and women can seek leave of absence from school for their child to take part in a regional, county, national and international events and competitions. It is however, down to the Headteacher's discretion whether to authorise this. The school will discuss with the Parents/Carers the nature and frequency of the absence and how learning will continue if absence occurs.

7.3 Gypsy Roma Traveller Showman and Showman families

Absence of a child from a traveller family that has left the area may be authorised if the absence is for work purposes only and it is believed that the family intends to return. To ensure the continuity of learning for Traveller children, dual registration is allowed. That means that a school cannot remove a Traveller child from the school roll while they are travelling. When the Traveller is away the home school holds the place open and records the absence as authorised through the T code. Distance Learning packs for traveller children are not an alternative to attendance at school.

Section 8 Record preservation

School registers are legal documents. As a school we will ensure compliance with attendance regulations by keeping attendance records for at least 3 years. Computer registers will be preserved as electronic back-ups or microfiche copies

Agreed by: [name/body]:.....

Date:.....

Signed (Chair):.....