



Attendance Policy

Amended By: Sarah Garratt

Last Reviewed: July 2017

Adopted by Governors: November 2017

Next Review: November 2018

MISSION STATEMENT

Highfields Primary School seeks to ensure that all its pupils receive a full-time education which maximises opportunities for each pupil to realise his/her true potential. Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education, it is vital that they attend regularly and on time.

In order to support this, the school will strive to provide a welcoming, caring environment, whereby each member of the school community feels wanted and secure.

All school staff will work with pupils and their families to ensure each pupil attends school regularly and punctually.

The school will establish an effective system of incentives and rewards which acknowledges the efforts of pupils to improve their attendance and timekeeping and will challenge the behaviour of those pupils and parents who give low priority to attendance and punctuality.

To meet these objectives Highfields Primary School will establish an effective and efficient system of communication with pupils, parents and appropriate agencies to provide mutual information, advice and support.

SCHOOL AIMS

1. To improve the overall percentage of pupils at school.
2. To make attendance and punctuality a priority for all those associated with the school including pupils, parents, teachers and governors.
3. To develop a framework which defines agreed roles and responsibilities and promotes consistency in carrying out designated tasks.
4. To provide support, advice and guidance to parents and pupils.
5. To develop a systematic approach to gathering and analysing attendance related data.
6. To further develop positive and consistent communication between home and school.
7. To implement a system of rewards and sanctions.
8. To promote effective partnerships with the Education Welfare Service and with other services and agencies.
9. To recognise the needs of the individual pupil when planning reintegration following significant periods of absence.

ATTENDANCE TARGETS & TRENDS

The recent attendance trends are as follows:

	Attendance %			Persistent Attendance		
	School	LA	National	School	LA	National
11/12	96.35	95.30	95.60	2.19	4.00	3.10
12/13	95.96	95.00	95.30	1.96	3.90	3.00
13/14	96.51	95.90	96.10	1.65	3.30	2.80
14/15	96.20	95.88	96.0	1.10	2.34	9.20
15/16 (Half terms 1-4)	96.6	96.0		5.77	9.26	

*Old attendance threshold

PA represents Persistent Absence. The percentage that triggers PA has changed over recent years. If a child's attendance falls below the following, they are classified as being Persistently Absent.

September 2010 – July 2015 – 85%

September 2015 onwards – 90%

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

School

The Headteacher is also required to maintain two registers:

- an admission register (known as the school roll) which contains a list of all pupils at the School;
- an attendance register (unless all pupils are boarders) for all pupils of compulsory school age on the admission register. This must be taken twice a day; once at the start of the morning session and once during the afternoon session. Similarly, the School keeps a register of pupils present on the school site during lunch time, this is needed in the event of an emergency to show which pupils need to be accounted for.

The Headteacher ensures that a clear policy on attendance is in place, which is known to staff, pupils and parents.

Class teachers must enforce this policy strictly. If a pupil is absent without explanation when the register is called and submitted, the Attendance Officer will contact the parents the same day wherever possible. The absence will also be followed up with the parent to ensure that a written note or verbal acceptable explanation is received explaining the absence. **Where no reply is received, a further letter will be sent warning that unless the absence is explained it will have to be recorded as unauthorised.**

When a pupil is missing from class for no apparent reason, the class teacher will immediately inform the school office so that the pupil's absence can be further investigated.

Understanding types of absence

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by the parents), as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED.

Authorised Absence

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason, like illness or other unavoidable causes.

Parents reporting absence should give the reason and date of return for the child. If this is unknown, regular contact (minimum every 2 days) should be kept with the school Attendance Officer. For periods of extended absence, the school WILL seek the advice of the school nurse and APO and will only authorise the number of days that have been advised for the illness.

Where the school has been unable to contact the parents to explain an absence (via phone or text), **a written notification will normally be issued to parents to complete. If this is not returned to school, the absence will remain unauthorised and will be passed to the Attendance and Prosecution Officer.**

Unauthorised Absence

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no 'leave' has been given. This includes:

- Parents or carers keeping children off school unnecessarily e.g. to buy uniform, to have a haircut, because it is the child's birthday

- Truancy before or during the school day
- Absences which have never been properly explained
- Children who arrive at school too late to get a mark
- Parents or carers unable to bring their child to school due to their illness or appointments

Unauthorised absence is absence without permission from a teacher/Attendance Officer/member of leadership team or other authorised representative of the School – this includes all unexplained or unjustified absences.

Whilst any child may be off school because they are ill, sometimes there can be other reasons as to why children can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best addressed between the school, the parents and the child at an early stage to avoid the situation escalating.

Religious Observance

Code R will be used to authorise 1 day only for each religious festival or observance.

Persistent Absenteeism (PA)

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more schooling across the year for *whatever* reason. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we need parent's fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

We monitor all absence thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority and you will be informed of this immediately.

All PA cases are automatically known to the Attendance and Prosecution Officer.

Parents

All children of compulsory school age (5-16) should receive suitable education, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise. If a child is registered at school, parents have the primary statutory responsibility for ensuring that their child attends regularly. You can support your child by:

- Ensure your child attends school regularly and punctually;
- Ensure regular and appropriate bed times;
- Having uniform and equipment ready the night before;
- Providing a healthy breakfast;
- Make sure your child understands that you do not approve of absence from school;
- Encourage good attendance, making sure that your child goes to school regularly and arrives on time;
- Take an interest in your child's school work;
- Notify the School if their child cannot attend for any reason – this is for the child's security as well as administrative reasons. This should be done by informing the school on the first day of absence that the child is going to be away, clearly stating the reason why and if possible, an expected return to school date;
- Report any academic or social concerns promptly.
- Co-operate with the school staff and the Attendance and Prosecution Officer (APO) to make sure their child overcomes his or her attendance problems and receives the education to which he/she is entitled.

Parents are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any problems together. This is nearly always successful. Alternatively, parents may wish to contact the APO themselves to ask for a help or information. They are independent of the school and will give impartial advice. Their telephone number is available from the school office or by contacting the Local Education Authority.

Attendance Officer

Highfields employs a part-time Attendance Officer. This person will undertake the following role:

- to be the initial point of contact for all parents with queries about attendance;
- monitoring punctuality by recording the names of children who are late;
- conducting first day calls to establish reasons for absence;

In addition to the attendance officer, part of our **Learning Mentor's** role is to:

- conducting termly attendance sweeps to identify children whose attendance is below 96% and informing parents by letter if this is the case;
- organising termly attendance celebration assemblies;
- liaising with the Attendance and Prosecution Service;
- keeping in regular contact with families and carers of children;
- working closely with the Head Teacher and reporting attendance trends to the Head Teacher;
- conducting home visits;
- working with the SENDCo to act as a point of contact for specialist support and building up knowledge of support services available to children and families.

Governors

The governing body is legally responsible for many aspects of school management including the attendance register and so it is registered with the Data Protection Registrar under the Data Protection Act 1998. However, the Headteacher manages the day-to-day running of the School and in so doing takes responsibility for the day-to-day implementation of this policy.

Governors will:

- Receive and discuss termly reports about attendance levels in school;
- Regularly review the attendance policy
- Consider requests for extended absences submitted by parents

Attendance and Prosecution Officer

As stated earlier in the policy, parents are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any difficulties together. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be resolved, the school may refer the child to the Attendance and Prosecution Officer from the Local Authority. S/he will try to resolve the situation by agreement but, if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed and unauthorised absences persist, these Officers can use sanctions such as Penalty Notices or prosecutions in the Magistrates Court. The legislation is the Education Act 1996 sec. 44.1 and 44.1.a.

"If any child of compulsory school age who is a registered pupil at a school fails to attend regularly at the school, his/her parent is guilty of an offence."

Our school, like others in the LA, has a named APO responsible for the attendance of all the pupils at Highfields Primary. Even when a child lives in a neighbouring authority, but attends this school, follow-up work will be undertaken by our named APO. Any necessary legal action is also the responsibility of Sandwell LA.

APOs check our registers regularly to ensure that they are being completed in accordance with the school's policy and to identify any patterns of absence which have not already been notified. The APO promptly follows up incidents where the staff have identified a possible attendance problem (pupils whose attendance is 85% or less even after school intervention).

Holidays/Leave of Absence during term-time

Amendments to Education regulations 2103 which came into force from 1st September 2013 state that Head Teachers **may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances**. Exceptional circumstances **do not include** family holidays, visiting relatives or friends, spectating at sporting or other events, looking after unwell family members, babysitting younger family members, birthdays or shopping etc.

If you choose to take your child out of school during term time without leave of absence being granted, then it will be recorded as an unauthorised absence on the school register.

Where parents choose to take their children out of school for an unauthorised holiday / leave of absence they may be liable for a fixed penalty fine. In England, local authorities can, at the request of education provider's fine parents £60 per parent, per child. If the fine is not paid within 21 days, the fine goes up to £120 per parent, per child. If the fine is not paid within 28 days, it is regarded as a breach of section 444 of the 1996 Education Act and parents are liable for prosecution. The maximum sentence, if found guilty, is a fine of £2,500, a three-month jail term and other penalties / costs.

If you consider that a request for leave of absence during term time is for 'exceptional circumstances' then a written request should be made to the Head Teacher. This should be done by the following

Under the Education (Pupil Registration) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 absence may not be Authorised unless:

- (a) An application has been made in advance to the Head teacher by a Parent/Carer with whom the pupil normally resides (lives with most of the time); and
- (b) The Head teacher, or a person Authorised by them, considers that Leave of Absence should be granted due to the exceptional circumstances relating to that application.

It is only a Parent "with whom the child normally resides" (lives with most of the time) that can apply for a Leave of Absence for their child. A Parent/Carer who does not live with the child cannot apply for a Leave of Absence. Any application they might make should be rejected by the school.

Parents/Carers should ensure that any Leave of Absence application is made in advance of any Leave of Absence to be taken. (Schools may have specific timescales for processing Leave of Absence applications. Parents/Carers should make sure they know what these are. Different schools may have different timescales.)

Parents/Carers should ensure that they know if their Leave of Absence application has been Authorised by the Head teacher before planning, booking or paying for anything in relation to that Leave of Absence application.

Parents/Carers should ensure they provide the Head teacher with all the detail and information they would want the Head teacher to know in deciding if a Leave of Absence can be Authorised.

Head teachers can only Authorise a Leave of Absence if they consider that the detail and information provided by a Parent/Carer in the application can be considered as an "exceptional circumstance".

It is at the Head teacher's discretion to decide if the detail and information provided by a Parent/Carer can be considered as an "exceptional circumstance" and agree if any Leave of Absence can be Authorised.

Disagreements between Parents/Carers and schools in relation to what is and is not an "exceptional circumstance" cannot be considered by the Attendance & Prosecution Service.

Parents will need to request a Leave of Absence form from the school office

Completing the form fully, clearly explaining why you consider that the request is exceptional

It is also the responsibility of parents to provide the school with proof of why the leave is requested. Proof of the circumstances must be provided when the written request is made.

The completed form should be handed to the office no later than 4 weeks before the date that the leave of absence is requested.

The request will be processed in school within 5 working days and parents will be notified in writing of the decision. Any request made later than the timescales specified will be denied and the absence unauthorised unless the request could not have been made earlier due to a bereavement.

** check what timescale we are going to agree with for the leave of absence forms.

CHILDREN MISSING FROM EDUCATION

Children who are 'missing in education' refers to all children who are not on a school roll or being educated otherwise (e.g. privately or in alternative provision) for example children of immigrant families or travelling communities who are never registered in education; or have been out of educational provision for a substantial period of time (agreed as ten days without provision of a reasonable explanation.)

School need to monitor closely children who are registered to start school with us and do not arrive and families who move home to ensure that children re-register and start at a new school after the move.

If a child has been missing for more than ten consecutive days without provision of reasonable explanation, the school's Attendance Officer, in liaison with the Head Teacher, should inform the Pupil Tracking Officer and EWO of the absence of the child.

Any absence of a child that is subject to a child protection plan, or that school have reason to believe may be at risk of harm, must immediately be reported to the Pupil Tracking Officer, Children's Social Care (to the named Social Worker if there is one in place) and/ or to the police if necessary.

A child should not be removed from school roll until he/she has been absent from school for at least 4 weeks and both the school and the education service have been unable to locate the child. Then the child's CTF file should be uploaded to the DfE secure site for the transfer of pupil information. The CME Officer in the Local Authority must be informed. If a parent removes their child and tells school that the child will be educated in an establishment other than a school, notification must be given to the Education Service of this within at least 10 days. The pupil's records should then be transferred to the education service.

If, in the unlikely event, school feel that a child may have run away or gone missing, school should try to establish with the parents/ carers what has happened. If this is not possible, one of our Designated Safeguarding Leads will, along with the class teacher, assess the child's vulnerability and decide upon a course of action.

INITIATIVES TO IMPROVE ATTENDANCE RATES

Wherever possible the School works alongside the LA in supporting and implementing attendance initiatives which:

- * help children develop the habit of regular attendance;
- * reward children for good attendance and
- * show parents clearly that unjustified absence will be recorded and challenged.

The School has considered initiatives that are most appropriate and always takes into account a pupil's individual circumstances, e.g. setting reward schemes such as certificates, for 100% attendance or effort to attend. Other helpful initiatives include:

- * Implementing first day contact with parents of children who are absent from school without prior knowledge. It is hoped that this sends a clear signal to pupils and parents that absence is a matter of concern and will be followed up;
- * Having the Learning Mentor responsible for first day contact and the Head Teacher responsible for attendance overall;

- * Corridor attendance displays (raising the profile of attendance in class)
- * 100% attendance certificates at the end of each half term/year for pupils who have full attendance for that half term/term/year;
- * The provision of a breakfast club;
- * The Learning Mentor is a paid, school-based employee who helps to identify and support pupils by early intervention, and by helping them overcome problems inside and outside of school, leaving teachers more free time to teach.

A detailed list of rewards for 2016/17 is attached to this policy and will be reviewed on an annual basis.

PUNCTUALITY AND ATTENDANCE PROCEDURES

Lateness

The School actively discourages late arrival of pupils by staff setting a good example and by challenging it whenever it occurs.

School starts at 8.40am for morning Nursery, 12.30pm for afternoon Nursery and 8.50am for the rest of school. Punctuality is very important as lessons start as soon as registers have been taken. It is also very unsettling for children if they cannot enter school through the same gates as their friends, but instead have to come into school through the school office when they are late and then walk into class after everyone else.

Registers are taken twice a day; once 5 mins after the morning bell and again 5 mins after the beginning of the afternoon session. Late marks are recorded in registers for children who arrive in school after the register has been taken but before 9.05am for the morning session. Despite being signed in, children arriving after these times will have their attendance recorded as U (Late after register close). This then counts on the child's attendance record as an absence. Parents are now asked to sign their child in as late via our Inventry electronic system, this will enable school to produce data and evidence for children who are causing concern.

The school uses an electronic system for taking registers (E-Reg).

The school Attendance Officer regularly completes a punctuality trawl and sends letters home to parents if children are regularly late. A monitoring period will then follow, and if progress is not made then a referral to the APO will be made. In extreme cases, punctuality issues can be grounds for legal action being taken against the parents.

Summary

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents and to promote attendance. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend. School staff are committed to working with parents as the best way to ensure as high level as attendance as possible.

This policy should be read in conjunction with:

Highfields Safeguarding Policy

Highfields Late Collection Policy