



# Attendance Policy

**Date agreed by Governing Body: December 2021**

**Review Date: December 2023**

## Rationale

At Wickham CE Primary School, we are committed to providing an education of the highest quality for all our children and endeavour to provide an environment where all pupils feel valued and welcome. Parents and pupils play a part in making our School so 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 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 that the 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 it easier to cope with School routines, School work and friendships;
- Regular attenders find learning more satisfying;
- Regular attenders are more successful in transferring between primary School, secondary School, and higher education, employment or training.

## Operating the Policy

The Attendance Policy is operated in accordance with the requirements and guidance set out in the following six sections.

### 1 Promoting Good Attendance and Punctuality

The foundation for good attendance is a strong partnership between the school, parents and the child. To help us all to focus on this we will report to you on how your child is performing in school, what their attendance and punctuality rate is and how this relates to their attainment.

### 2 Roles and Responsibilities

#### Responsibilities of the School's Attendance Leader

A member of the Senior Leadership Team will oversee, direct and co-ordinate the School's work 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. They 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 parent or 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 pupil's home does not mean an absence becomes authorised. The decision whether or not to authorise an absence **will always rest with the School**.

#### Responsibilities of Classroom Staff

It is the responsibility of classroom staff to:

- Ensure that all students are registered accurately;
- Liaise with the Attendance Leader on matters of attendance and punctuality;
- Communicate any concerns or underlying problems that may account for a child's absence.

#### Responsibilities of Children

It is the responsibility of each child to:

- Attend every day unless they are ill or have an authorised absence;
- Arrive in School on time.

#### Responsibilities of Parents, Guardians and Carers

Ensuring your child's regular attendance at School is the legal responsibility of a parent, guardian or carer (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 a child's absence;
- Discuss with the class teacher 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 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 (which is defined by the School as something that is out of personal control).

### 3 Procedures Recording Attendance

Legally the register must be marked twice daily. This is once at the start of the School day 9.00am and again for the afternoon session at 12.50pm.

#### Lateness /Punctuality

It is important to be on time at the start of the morning and afternoon School sessions and to lessons. The starts of School/lessons are used for learning. If your child is late, they can miss work, time with their class teacher getting vital information, cause disruption to the lesson for others, and can be embarrassing leading to possible further absence. Classroom doors open at 8.45am and all **pupils are expected to be in School at this time.**

Morning registration is from this time and is taken by 9.00am:

- All lateness is recorded daily. This information will be required by the Courts, should a prosecution for non-attendance or lateness be necessary;
- Arrival after the close of registration (9.00am) but before 9.15am will be marked as late 'L' code. Arrival after 9.15am will be marked as unauthorised absence code 'U' in line with County and 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 either outside of School hours or during School holidays.

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).

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).

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. If one is available, the School will place a child into the After School Club and provide the parent or carer with the bill.

### **What to do if my child is absent?**

#### **a. 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 the parents or carer must contact the School as soon as possible on the first day of absence, either by:

- telephone, the School office will inform the class teacher for you;
- send a note/email with an explanation of the absence;
- or, you can call into School and report to reception.

If a child is absent, we will:

- Telephone the parent or carer on the first day of absence if the School has not heard from the parent or carer; *this is because we have a duty to ensure the child's safety as well as their regular School attendance;*
- Telephone the second and third contact that we have on record for your child if we cannot get hold of the priority contact
- Invite the parent, guardian or carer in to discuss the situation with our Deputy Headteacher or Headteacher, if absences persist;
- Refer the matter to the Hampshire's Attendance Legal Panels, if absence is unauthorised and falls below 90%.

#### **b. Third Day Absence**

Please Note: If your child is not seen and contact has not been established with you any of the named parent/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 parents and the child, including making enquires to known friends and wider family.

#### **c. Ten Day's Absence**

We have a legal duty to report the absence of any pupil 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, guardian or 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. So 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.

#### d. Continued or Ongoing Absence

If a child misses 10% (three weeks / sessions) or more Schooling across the School year, for whatever reason they are defined as **persistent absentees**. Where this absence is unauthorised, the School will contact Hampshire County Council for advice, which can lead to court action.

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 with the Department for Education. If a 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 contact Hampshire County Council for advice on taking further action.

Children at this School are dependent on their parents, guardians or carers, who are responsible for their level of attendance and punctuality. It is vital that children enjoy coming to School; whilst they will be encouraged to attend regularly and on time, they will not be held personally responsible if their parents are not supportive or effective in these areas.

## 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 from 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 absences will not be authorised**.

Parents or carers wishing to apply for leave of absence need to fill in an application form 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, guardians or carers will be issued with a fixed-penalty fine, or other legal action in accordance with the code (see Section 6 for further detail).

**Taking holidays in term time will affect a child's Schooling as much as any other absence, and we expect parents or carers to help us by not taking children out during School time.**

## 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**. An authorised absence occurs 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.** An unauthorised absence occurs 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, birthdays, or to look after siblings;
  - truancy before or during the School day;
  - absences which have not been explained.

The 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 or 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.

## 6 Penalty Notices for Non-Attendance and other Legal Measures

In Education law, parents, guardians or 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 Attendance Legal Panels where:

1. **The child or family do not require the support from any agency to improve their 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 and remedies are available with regard to absences of a child of compulsory School age who is 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 parent or carers request for leave of absence

Where a pupil has unauthorised absence due to either:

1. non-approval of a parent/carer's request for leave of absence or
  2. 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 <http://www3.hants.gov.uk/education/hias/learning-behaviour-attendance/attendance-guidance-for-parents/possible-penalties.htm>.

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

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 (Code *U*) for up to 10 sessions (five days) after the register has closed;
- persistently late before the close of the register (Code *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 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:**

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

Parents or 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/guardian/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/guardians/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, 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 a Penalty Notice is paid and the child has further unauthorised absences, additional legal action will be taken. For example, in the event that a Penalty Notice has previously been served due to an unauthorised holiday, should the child have any future unauthorised leave, this will result in further legal action, such as prosecution or an Education Supervision Order.

For further information parents, guardians or 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>

## **7 Leavers**

If a child is leaving our School, other than when transferring to the secondary School, parents are asked to give the School comprehensive information about their plans including any date of a move and the new address and telephone numbers, the child's new School and the start date when known. This should be submitted to School in writing.

If pupils leave and the School does not have the above information, then the child is considered to be a 'Child Missing in Education'. This requires Schools and Local Authorities then to carry out investigations to try and locate the child, which includes liaising with Children's Services, the Police and other agencies. By giving the School the above information, these investigations can be avoided.

### **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.

### **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 Code C, an authorised absence.

### **Absence through competing at regional, county or national level for Sport**

Parents of children with significant abilities in sport 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 absence, and they will wish to discuss the nature and frequency of the absence and how learning will continue if absence occurs. Permission for the 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 association are providing an education tutor as part of their coaching.

### **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 back-ups or as microfiche copies.

## **Appendix**

### **The Law**

The Education Act 1996 Part 1, Section 7 states:

*The parent of every child of compulsory School age shall cause him/her to receive efficient full-time education suitable-*

*[a] To his/her age, ability and aptitude and*

*[b] To any special needs he/she may have.*

*either by regular attendance at School or otherwise.*

For educational purposes, the term parent is used to include those that have parental responsibility and/or those that have the day-to-day care of the child.

The legislation that appertains to children who are of compulsory School age and are registered at School is contained within this Act.

Part V1 Section 444 contains the details of when an offence is committed if a child fails to attend School.

### **Register and Admission Roll Keeping**

The legal requirements are found in: The Education [Pupil Registration] (England) Regulations 2006 11

### **Guidance Documents on Attendance**

The following DfE documents are used to guide attendance recording:

Absence and Attendance codes (Guidance for Schools and Local Authorities)

Keeping Pupil Registers (Guidance on applying the Education Pupil Registration Regulations)

These and other guidance documents are available on the DfE and Hampshire County Council websites.