



Elvetham Heath Primary School ATTENDANCE POLICY

Section 1

Rationale

For a child to achieve personal excellence and 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 our children feel valued and welcome. Parents and children play a part in making our school so successful. 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 that 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 at school are the same as expectations of any future employer in the world of work. High attainment, confidence with peers and staff and future aspirations depend on good attendance.

Research clearly demonstrates the link between regular attendance and educational progress and attainment. We are committed to encouraging and supporting parents in ensuring their child achieve maximum possible attendance and that any problems that prevent this are identified and acted on promptly.

Good attendance is important because:

- Statistics show a direct link between under-achievement and attendance 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 learners find learning more satisfying;
- Regular attenders are more successful in transferring between primary school, secondary school, and higher education, employment or training.

DfE Guidance School Attendance (2014)

Schools should:

1. Promote good attendance and reduce absence, including persistent absence.
2. Ensure every child has access to full time education.
3. Act early to address patterns of absence.

Parents must perform their legal duty by ensuring children of compulsory school age who are registered to a school attend regularly.

All pupils must be punctual to their lessons.

Section 2

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 contains details of how we work with parents and our expectations of what parents need to do to ensure their child achieves good attendance.

To help us achieve 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 achievements;
- Set targets for the school;
- Run meetings where parents, pupils and staff can work together on raising attendance levels for individual children.

Roles and Responsibilities

The Headteacher and Deputy Headteacher 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. They will also ensure that attendance is both recorded accurately and analysed on a weekly basis. 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 parents/carers the need and reasons for their child's absence and will encourage them to keep absences to a minimum. A note, phone message 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:

- Ensure that all students are registered accurately;
- Liaise with attendance leader (Deputy Headteacher) 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 they are ill or have an authorised absence;
- Arrive in school on time;
- Go to all registrations and lessons on time;
- Take responsibility for registering at the Reception Desk if they are late or are leaving the school site during school hours.

Responsibilities of Parents and Carers:

Ensuring your 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:

- Inform the school on every day of absence;
- Complete 'Leave of absence request form' well in advance of planned absence;
- Support the school with their child in aiming for 100% attendance each year;
- Make sure that any absence is clearly accounted for by telephone or email on the first and subsequent days of absence;
- Avoid taking their child out of school for non-urgent medical or dental appointments;
- Only request for leave of absence if it is an exceptional circumstance.

The school academic year commences in September and concludes in July. A child is expected to attend for the full academic year.

It is the responsibility of the parents to ensure that their child attends school on a full time basis.

Section 3 **Recording Attendance**

A record of attendance will be kept in the form of a register marked twice daily, at the start of the school day at 8.50am and again for the afternoon session at 12.50pm (Year R, 1 and 2), 1.10pm (Year 3) and 1.15pm (Year 4,5 and 6) Therefore each day at school your child will have two attendance marks.

Lateness/Punctuality

It is important to be on time at the start of the morning and afternoon school sessions and to lessons. The start of school/lessons are used to give instructions or organise work. If a 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 for the child leading to further absence.

If a child arrives during or after the register has been called, their attendance will be registered as late. 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 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'. Please be advised that where possible doctors and dentist appointments are to be made 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.**

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 a meeting held at 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 section 6 of this policy for further detail).

What to do if my child is absent

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 as soon as possible by email, telephone or by reporting in person at reception, before registration on the first day and any subsequent days, of absence;
- send a note in on the first day you return with an explanation of the absence if we ask you to – you must do this even if you have already phoned us.

If your child is absent we will:

- Telephone you on the first day, and any subsequent days, 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 Headteacher or Deputy Headteacher;
- Refer the matter to the Hampshire's Attendance Legal Panels if absence is unauthorised and falls below 90%.

Please note: If your child is not seen and contact has not been established with you, or any of the named parent/carers after 3 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 enquiries to establish contact with parents and the child including making enquiries to known friends, wider family and contacting the Parent Support Advisor who may visit the family home.

Ten days of absence

We have a legal duty to report the absence of any pupil who is absent without 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 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.

Continued or Ongoing Absence

If your child misses 10% (3 weeks/ 30 sessions) or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason they are defined as **persistent absentees**. Where this absence is authorised the school will liaise with the local authority to explain the reason why the absence has been authorised.

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 late or non-attendance thoroughly and all attendance data is shared with the Local Authority and the Department for Education.

If your child has regular pattern of absence, or absence levels are high and their attendance is falling towards 90%, we will contact you and depending on the reasons for absence will arrange for you to visit school and meet with the **Headteacher** or **Deputy Headteacher**. If there is regular absence it may be necessary to contact the Education Authority's Locality Team. Where absence levels remain persistently low the school will, if necessary, use its legal powers.

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 for 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 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 with the code.

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

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 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, to look after siblings;
 - Truancy before or during the school day;
 - Absences which have not been explained.

Authorised Absence

Absence from school is acceptable only in the following circumstances:

- when attendance was prevented by sickness;
- when permission has been granted by an authorised member of the school staff;
- when permission has been granted for religious observance.

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.

In all cases where permission is sought for a planned absence parents must make a formal request by completing a leave form in advance of, and at least two weeks before, the period of leave. The right for leave to be granted is at the Headteacher's discretion.

With the exception of religious observance, the HT will not consider any exceptional circumstance during the following times:

- the first half of the summer term for **Year 2** and **Year 6** pupils;
- during the phonics testing period in the summer term for **Year 1** pupils.

Pupils' authorised and unauthorised absence levels will be reported to parents in the summer term.

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 (5 years old and over) 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 the attendance.**
- 2. The child has 10 or more sessions of unauthorised absence and parents are complicit in child's absence.**

The following legal measures are for pupils of compulsory school age who are registered at school:

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

Legal measures for absence taken when the Headteacher or Deputy Headteacher has declined parent/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 authorised 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 it's 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 (codes *G*, *U* or *O*);
- 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 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. **10 sessions of unauthorised absence or lateness in any 10 weeks school period.**
2. **1 or more sessions of unauthorised absence during a public exam, formal school assessment of testing where dates are published in advance.**

Parents and Carers will be warned of 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; 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 PN 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 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 their 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

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, parents and the child. If a child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or give in to pressure to excuse them attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and may make things worse.

Contact your child's class teacher, Year Group leader or Deputy Headteacher immediately and openly discuss your concerns. 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 circumstances of your child's difficulties with another professional.

Make sure your child gets enough sleep and gets up in plenty of time each morning. Ensure that he/she leaves home in the correct clothes and is properly equipped. Show your child, by your interest, that you values his/her education.

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

Leavers

If your child is leaving school (other than when transferring from primary to secondary school) parents are asked to give the Headteacher comprehensive information about your 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. 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.

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 or Deputy 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 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 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 are also at the discretion of the Headteacher and are 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.

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 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. 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.

Approved by FGB: September 2015

Next due for review: September 2017

NOTES

The Law

The Education Act 1996 Part 1, Section 7 states:

The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him to receive efficient full-time education suitable –

- a) To his age, ability and aptitude
- b) To any special needs he 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.

Registration and Admission Roll Keeping

The legal requirements are found in: The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006.

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 website

Hampshire County Council Guidance is available on Hanstweb at:

<http://www3.hants.gov.uk/education/hias/learning-behaviour-attendance/lba-resourecs-for-schools/attendance-guidance/attendance-guidance-for-schools.htm>

Appendix A
Attendance codes

Key to Codes	
/	Present (AM)
\	Present (PM)
B	Educated off site (not Dual reg.)
C	Other authorised circumstances
D	Dual registration
E	Excluded
G	Family holiday (not agreed)
H	Family holiday (agreed)
I	Illness
J	Interview
L	Late (before registers closed)
M	Medical/Dental appointments
N	No reason yet provided for absence
O	Unauthorised Abs
P	Approved sporting activity
R	Religious observance
S	Study leave
T	Traveller absence
U	Late (after registers closed)
V	Educational visit or trip
W	Work experience
#	Planned whole or partial school closure
Y	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances
X	Non-compulsory school age absence
Z	Pupil not on roll
-	All should attend / No mark recorded