



***Head of School: Mr P. Coiffait***

# **School Policy**

## **Attendance Policy**

**Co-ordinator: Debbie Fitton**

**Governors adopted this policy on: November 2019**

**Signed by the Chair: S. Foxen – Durnien**

**To be reviewed on: November 2020**



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# **Hawthorns School Attendance Policy**

## **Attendance Statement**

Hawthorns School believes that if pupils are to benefit from education, good attendance is crucial and we will do all we can to ensure maximum attendance for all pupils. Our school will give a high priority to conveying to parents, carers and pupils the importance of regular and punctual attendance. We recognise that parents and carers have a vital role to play and that there is a need to continue strong home-school links and communication systems that can be utilised whenever there are concerns about attendance. If there are problems which affect a pupil's attendance we will investigate, identify and strive in partnership with parents and pupils to resolve those problems as quickly and efficiently as possible.

## **Why Regular Attendance is so important:**

Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any pupil's absence disrupts teaching routines so may affect the learning of others in the same class.

Ensuring a child's regular attendance at school is a legal responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

As learners grow and prepare for their next steps of education and employment they need to see good attendance and punctuality as important qualities that are valued by others and employers.

## **Aims**

Our school aims to meet its obligations with regards to school attendance by:

- Promoting good attendance and reducing absence, including persistent absence
- Acting early to address patterns of absence
- Ensuring every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled
- Supporting parents to perform their legal duty to ensure their children of compulsory school age attend regularly
- Promoting and supporting punctuality in attending school.

## **Legislation and guidance**

This policy meets the requirements of the school attendance guidance from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on school attendance

parental responsibility measures. These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

**The Education Act 1996 Section 7** states that parents must ensure that children of compulsory school age receive efficient full-time education suitable to their age, ability and aptitude to any special educational need they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise. A child is of compulsory school age at the beginning of the term following their 5<sup>th</sup> birthday. The Local authority has a statutory responsibility to ensure that parents secure education for children of compulsory school age and where necessary use legal enforcement.

**The Education and Inspections Act 2006** requires schools to take an attendance register twice a day, at the start of the morning and afternoon session. The register is a legal document and must record if a pupil is

- Present
- Absent - authorised or unauthorised
- Present at approved educational activity
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

A certified extract of the register can be used as evidence in legal proceedings against parents for failing to ensure their child's regular attendance or in seeking an Education Supervision Order in respect of a pupil.

Registers must be kept for a minimum of 3 years following completion at the end of the academic school year.

### **Penalty Notices for unauthorised absences**

Schools can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age. The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice ultimately rests with the headteacher, following the local authority's code of conduct for issuing penalty notices.

Section 444(A) of the Education Act 1996 empowers the local authority to issue Penalty Notices in cases of unauthorised absence from school. This means that when a pupil has unauthorised absence of 10 sessions (5 days) or more, in any term (where no acceptable reason has been given for the absence) or if their child persistently arrives late for school after the close of registration, their parents or carers may receive a Penalty Notice of £120, which is reduced to £60 if paid within 21 days. The penalty notice will need to be paid in full before 28 days of the notice being served. Failure to pay a penalty notice may result in prosecution.

In law, an offence is committed if a parent or carer fails to secure a child's regular attendance at school. Tameside Education Welfare Service, in conjunction with schools and

Greater Manchester Police, will use these powers as an early deterrent to prevent patterns of unauthorised absence developing.

Parents may also receive a Penalty Notice without a warning letter for the offence of failing to secure regular school attendance under the following circumstances:

- Their child is stopped on a truancy sweep more than once
- They go on holiday in term time without school's permission
- The child fails to return to school following a fixed term exclusion

The Education and Inspections Act 2006 also makes it an offence if a parent fails to ensure that their child is not in a public place during the first 5 days of a fixed term or permanent exclusion. Penalty Notices may be issued for such an offence.

Current Government guidelines state that an attendance level below 90% deems a pupil to be a **Persistent Absentee**. Further prolonged periods of poor attendance without good reason will lead to the issuing of a Fixed Penalty Notice. This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the school census, which explains the persistent absence threshold.

### **Reporting an absence**

Parents must notify the school by phone on the first day of an unplanned absence – for example, if their child is unable to attend due to ill health – by 9am or as soon as practically possible. We will not accept messages from transport escorts.

Absence due to illness will be authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may ask parents to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily. If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents will be notified of this in advance.

It is a shared responsibility between parents and school to keep each other updated about a pupil who is absent for more than 2 days.

## **Medical or dental appointments**

Absence for a medical or dental appointment is counted as an authorised absence; advance notice is required for authorising these absences.

However, we encourage parents to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

## **Authorised and Unauthorised absence**

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

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart.
- Traveller pupils travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh Gypsies, Irish and Scottish Travellers, Showmen (fairground people) and Circus people, Bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and New Travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a Traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision
- Transport arranged by the LEA has failed to arrive where the pupil lives beyond statutory walking distance
- Exceptional family circumstances may be authorised at the discretion of the Head of Site

Absence will be recorded as unauthorised when a child is absent without permission from school **Unauthorised absences** include:

- Shopping ,haircuts ,missed bus, slept late ,no uniform, birthdays

Parents/carers may be required to provide the school with written evidence of reason for absence e.g.

- Appointment cards/letters
- Medical certificate
- Letter from GP

If there is an extensive period of absence due to medical reasons the school or the Family Multi-agency Link Worker may ask for the permission of the parent/carer to contact the child's GP to confirm that the medical condition prevents the child from attending school and to establish a possible return date for the child.

### **Procedures for following up absence**

The school will follow up any absences to ascertain the reason, ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary, identify whether the absence is approved or not and identify the correct attendance code to use.

It is the responsibility of the parent/carer to contact the school on the first morning of the child's absence. If this contact is not made then the school will:

- Contact the parent/carer by Parent mail
- Contact parent/carer by telephone and keep trying until contact is made and a reason for absence given. All alternative contact numbers will also be used.
- If no contact is made with parents/Carers by 10.30am, the Family Multi agency Link Worker and another member of staff may make a Home Visit to the home address.
- They will take with them a standard written letter from school to leave at the address if no contact is made. The letter informs parents of the visit and that school will now be contacting the police
- The Family Multi-agency Worker will phone 101- the non-emergency police line for concerns to report the concern and to request a Safe and Well Check to ensure the parent and child are safe. If no contact is established from this then the police will be contacted.

Concerns about absence of any kind are always referred by class staff to the school Family Multi-agency Link Worker. This will result in a phone call or visit to parents/carers and if necessary, they are asked to come in to school for a meeting. This meeting will try to identify and resolve the difficulties which are preventing the pupil from attending school. Parents/carers will also be made aware of the legal requirements regarding school attendance

### **Registration**

At Hawthorns School a manual registration system is used. Manual registers must be marked in ink and where an alteration is necessary this must be clearly identified showing both the original entry and change. Correction fluid must not be used.

- Registers will be collected from and returned to the table outside Beech class at the end of the registration period.

- Registration begins at 9.00 am every morning and 12.45pm/1.15 pm each afternoon depending on classes. Registers will be closed 30 minutes later. If a pupil arrives after the register has closed, they should report to reception and class staff will be informed as to the reason for lateness.
- The DfE attendance codes used to mark attendance or absence are listed in registers
- Attendance marks are transferred on to the SIMS system.

It is essential that children arriving after 9.10 am and leaving school before 3 pm with a parent/carer are signed in or out at the Reception Office. A reason must also be given. This register is also used in the case of fire as an appendix to class registers.

### **Lateness and punctuality**

- Persistent lateness can cause considerable harm to a child's learning as many important learning activities start at the beginning of the day. Late pupils also disrupt other pupils in the classroom when they enter. Being punctual is an important life skill for children to learn.
- Children arrive at school from 8.50am and Registers are taken between 9 am and 9.15am
- Children arriving from 9.15am – 9.30am must report to reception and will be marked late in the register using **code L** unless there is an agreed late plan in place.
- A late mark **code U** will be recorded after 9.30am if no late plan has been agreed.
- If a child is persistently late, contact will be made with parents/ carers to try to resolve this issue.
- If lateness cannot be avoided due to exceptional circumstances an agreed plan will be drawn up between parents and school to confirm the reasons for regular late arrival. A copy of this plan will be kept in the attendance file in the office.
- Any child arriving after 9.30am on a late plan will be marked in the register with **code C**
- Lateness will be monitored fortnightly as part of our attendance monitoring

### **Holidays in Term Time**

Parents do not have an entitlement to take their children on holiday in term time. Holidays should be taken during the allocated term times.

**Any application for holidays during term-time cannot be authorised other than in exceptional circumstances.**

Parents, who take their children on holiday without permission, will incur unauthorised absences for their child and a possible fine from the local authority.

## **Leave of Absence Requests**

If leave of absence for exceptional circumstances is required, parents/carers are requested to complete the **Pupil Leave of Absence form**, which can be obtained from the school office. Requests should be made at least 2 weeks in advance and each request will be considered by the Headteacher and a prompt response given. Individual circumstances are treated at the discretion of the Headteacher and may not be authorised. These remain on a child's record and are monitored for further action by the Family Multi-agency Link Worker, and could result in court action. Where extended holidays are taken we will ask for a forwarding address.

## **Strategies for promoting attendance/punctuality.**

- All absences will be followed up on the first day
- The importance of good attendance and punctuality is highlighted in the school prospectus, Attendance policy, newsletters, on the website, and reported to parents at termly PIP evenings, Annual Reviews and on pupil reports.
- Parents/carers, pupils and staff will be regularly reminded of what constitutes authorised and unauthorised absence.
- Parents /carers will be kept regularly informed of all concerns regarding attendance and punctuality.
- All issues, which may cause a pupil to experience attendance difficulties, will be promptly investigated by the school and support provided by The Family Multi-agency Link Worker.
- A weekly prize and Harry bear will be awarded to the class with the best attendance.
- Individual pupil certificates awarded for 100% attendance each term. Pupils with 100% attendance for the whole year will receive a medal at the end of the summer term.

## **Monitoring attendance**

The persistent absence threshold is 10%. If a pupil's individual overall absence rate is greater than or equal to 10%, the pupil will be classified as a persistent absentee.

- Attendance is monitored daily by the Attendance Lead
- Parents/Carers are expected to phone the school by 9am in the morning of the first day of absence.
- If a pupil's absence goes above 2 days we will contact the parents regularly to discuss the absence and offer support.
- We collect and monitor attendance/lateness data to track the attendance of individual or groups of pupils causing concern and monitor and evaluate those children identified as being in need of intervention and support.

- Attendance data is reported regularly to stakeholders.
- Pupil-level absence data is collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. We compare our attendance data to the national average, and share this with governors.

### **Grading system for attendance**

The grading system is used as an indicator for patterns of attendance and to give early warning of possible problems emerging. It also highlights those pupils whose attendance is above expectations.

- **Excellent attendance**      **98-100%**
- **Good**                              **94.5 -97.9%**
- **Monitor**                            **92- 94.4%**
- **Cause for concern**            **90-91.9%**
- **Persistent absentee**            **Below 90%**

### **Attendance Target**

The school sets an attendance target each year. This is agreed by the Senior Leadership team based on attendance figures achieved in previous years. We know that good attendance is the key to successful schooling so we ensure that attendance monitoring is given high priority.

***Our Attendance Target for 2019-20 is 95%.***

### **Roles and Responsibilities**

#### **The Governing Board**

The governing board is responsible for monitoring attendance figures for the whole school on at least a termly basis. It also holds the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy.

#### **The Headteacher**

The Headteacher will

- meet regularly with the Family Multi-agency Link Worker/Attendance lead to discuss any attendance/punctuality concerns

- be responsible for ensuring this policy is implemented consistently across the school, and for monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors
- support other staff in monitoring the attendance of individual pupils and issue fixed-penalty notices, where necessary.

### **The Attendance lead/Family multi agency link worker**

The Attendance lead will:

- Transfer attendance data on to SIMS and monitor daily, weekly and half termly attendance at the school and individual pupil level
- Meet with class staff about attendance concerns
- Report concerns about attendance to the Headteacher
- Follow up attendance issues as necessary - this may involve phone calls, home visits or meetings with parents/carers.
- Work with education welfare officers to tackle persistent absence
- Encourage good attendance and communicate with parents and carers as soon as there is a problem with attendance or punctuality.
- Regularly report to governors and parents on pupil's attendance.

### **The Business support team will:**

- Support the Family Multi-agency Link worker where needed and contact parents/carers to establish a child's reason for absence
- Ensure that registers are kept safely and are available for inspection to relevant professionals.

### **Reception staff**

Reception staff are expected to take calls from parents about absence and pass information to the Family Multi agency Link worker and class staff.

### **The class teacher will:**

- Take and maintain the register daily, once for the AM session and once for the PM session using the correct codes, and submitting the register to the school office.
- Recording absences immediately so contact can be made with parents/carers as soon as possible.
- Set a good example in matters of attendance and punctuality
- Expect pupils to attend school regularly, on time, properly equipped and ready to learn.

**Parents and Carers will:**

- Ensure their child regularly and punctually attends school, properly dressed, equipped and in an appropriate condition to learn.
- Immediately inform the school of the reason for any absence by telephone call on the first morning of any absence

**Monitoring, Evaluation and Review**

It is the responsibility of the governors to monitor overall attendance and they will request an annual report from the Headteacher /Attendance lead . Data will be monitored weekly , as well as at the end of every half and full term by the Attendance Lead . All absences will be followed up and support provided where necessary to ensure our attendance figures are as high as possible.

***This policy will be shared with staff, parents and governors and reviewed on an annual basis.***