

Park Gate Primary School

Attendance Policy



SECTION 1

This policy is written to reflect education laws and the guidance produced by the Department for Education and Hampshire County Council in relation to school attendance. This policy is also consistent with the following school policies:

- Admissions
- Anti-bullying
- Child Protection
- Safeguarding
- Special educational Needs
- Behaviour

The level of attendance & punctuality expected from all our pupils is included in our school's home-school agreement which is issued to parents following their child's admission to a school. It is very important that parents ensure their child attends regularly and this policy sets out how this will be achieved, working in partnership with the school.

Rationale

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

Good attendance is important because:

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

SECTION 2

Promoting Good Attendance

The foundation for good attendance is a strong partnership between the school, parents and the child. The Home/School agreement clearly details the shared responsibilities of how we will work with parents and our expectations of what parents will need to do to ensure their child achieves good attendance.

To help us to focus on this we will:

- Provide information on all matters related to attendance in our newsletter and on our website.
- Regularly review attendance for every child.
- Report to parents on how their child is performing in school, what their attendance and punctuality rate is and how this relates to their attainments.
- Celebrate good attendance by displaying class achievements.
- Reward good or improving attendance through individual programmes.
- Set targets for school attendance.

Responsibilities of the School's Attendance Leader

A member of the Senior Leadership Team and Home School Link Worker will oversee, direct and co-ordinate the school's work in promoting regular and improved attendance and will ensure this policy is consistently applied throughout the school. These people will also ensure that attendance is both recorded accurately and analysed. (S)he will ensure that attendance issues are identified at an early stage and where possible ensure 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/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

Ensure that all children are registered accurately.

Promote & reward good attendance at all appropriate opportunities.

Liaise with senior staff on matters of attendance and punctuality.

Communicate any concerns or underlying problems that may account for a child's absence to parents and senior staff/DSL.

Responsibilities of Parents and Carers

Ensuring your child's regular and punctual attendance at school is a parent/carer's legal responsibility (section 444(1) AND 444(1a) of the 1996 Education Act) and permitting absence from school that is not authorised by the school creates an offence in law.

Parents will:

- Ensure their child arrives at school on time each day.
- Inform the school on the first day of absence.
- Discuss with the class teacher or a senior member of staff 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 or email 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.

SECTION 3

Recording Attendance

Legally the register of attendance must be marked twice daily. This is once at the start of the school day at 8.40am and again for the afternoon session at 1pm.

Lateness /Punctuality

It is important to be on time at the start of the morning and afternoon school sessions. The start of the school day is used to share information about the day's learning and follow up on learning from the previous day. It is essential that every child is present for this crucial part of the school day.

In line with our school Covid-19 risk assessment, from the beginning of the Autumn Term 2020 (until further notice), the school will operate staggered start and finish times as follows;

Year 6	8.20am	2.45pm
Year 6 (with siblings) and R	8.30am	2.45pm
Year 5	8.35am	2.50pm
Year 4 and Year 2	8.40am	2.55pm
Year 3 and Year 1	8.45am	3.00pm

All registers will close at 8.55am. Pupils will receive a late mark 'L' if they are not in the classroom at 8.55am when registers close.

When it is safe to do so, the pre-Covid-19 start time will be reintroduced with the school day beginning at 8.40am and all pupils expected to be in school at that time. Morning registration will be at 8.40 am and close at 8.50am. Pupils will receive a late mark 'L' if they are not in the classroom at 8.50am when registers close.

All lateness is recorded daily. This information will be required by the courts, should a prosecution for non-attendance or lateness be necessary

Children arriving after 9am will be marked as unauthorised absence code 'U' in line with county and Department for Education (DfE) guidance. This mark records a child as 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'. Where possible doctors and dentists appointments are to be made outside of school hours or during school holidays. Schools can request to see evidence of medical appointments to ensure the correct coding is entered in the register.

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 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 late and/or unauthorised absence in the last 100 possible school sessions the school is required to act in accordance with Hampshire County Council's Code of Conduct for issuing Penalty Notices unless the issuing of a Penalty Notice would conflict with other intervention strategies in place or other sanctions already being processed (See section 6 of this policy for further detail).

The school day ends at 2.55pm for Year R and KS1, and at 3pm for KS2. Parents are required to collect their 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.

Procedures for Reporting a Child as 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 a child is absent parents must contact the school as soon as possible on the first day of absence to give an explanation.

If a child is absent the school will:

- Telephone or text parents on the first day of absence if the school has not heard from parents about the reason for the child's absence. *This is because schools have a duty to ensure a child's safety as well as their regular school attendance.*
- Invite parents in to discuss the situation with a senior member of staff, DSL or HSLW if absences persist;
- Issue a Penalty Notice if the criteria of 10 unauthorised absences met or refer the matter to Hampshire's Attendance Legal Panel.

Third Day Absence

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

If the school were still unsuccessful in locating a child after 3 days we would also treat this as a safeguarding concern and contact Children's Services for advice and to report our concerns.

Ten Day's Absence

The school has a legal duty to report the absence of any pupils absent without an 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 last known address and alert key services to locate the child.

Continued or Ongoing Absence

If a child misses 10% or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason they are defined as **persistent absentees**. Continued absence could result in a referral being made to the Attendance Legal Panel which might result in legal action being taken.

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 the school will monitor all absence thoroughly and all attendance data is shared with the Local Authority and the Department for Education.

Children at this school are dependent on their parents/carers, who are responsible for their level of attendance and punctuality. It is vital that children enjoy coming to school, and whilst being encouraged to attend well and on time, will not carry blame and be made to feel unhappy if their parents are not supportive or effective in these areas.

SECTION 4

Request for Leave of Absence

Amendments to school attendance regulations were updated and enforced from September 2013. (Pupil registration) (England) regulations state that headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. It is important to note that headteachers can determine the length of the authorised absence as well as whether absence is authorised at all. The fundamental principles for defining 'exceptional' are rare, significant, or unavoidable which means the event could not reasonably be scheduled at another time. There are no rules on this as circumstances vary from school to school and family to family. There is however, no legal entitlement for time off in school time to go on holiday and in the majority of cases holiday will not be authorised. Parents/Carers wishing to apply for leave of absence need to fill in an application form, available from the school office, in advance and are advised not to make any travel arrangements until the form has been returned.

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 taken in accordance with Hampshire County Council's Code of Conduct.

Taking holidays in term time will affect a 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 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, used as a carer or family holidays
- school refusal or truancy before or during the school day
- absences which have not been explained
- Sickness of a parent or other family member
- Non urgent medical treatment
- Inadequate clothing for school

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.

SECTION 6

Penalty Notices for Non Attendance and other Legal Measures

In education law, parents/carers are committing an offence if they fail to ensure the regular attendance of their child of compulsory school age at the school at which the child is registered, unless the absence has been authorised by the school.

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 when there is unauthorised absence and:

- The child or family do not require the support from any agency to improve the attendance.
- The child has 10 or more sessions of unauthorised absence and parents are complicit in the child's absence.
- A Penalty Notice has previously been issued but further unauthorised absences continue to happen.

The following legal measures for pupils of compulsory school age who are registered at a school may be implemented:

- Parenting contracts set at Education Planning Meetings
- Parenting orders

- Penalty notices
- Education Supervision Orders
- Prosecution

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 (coded *U*) for 10 sessions (five days) after the register has closed.
- persistently late before the close of the register (coded *L*) 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.

These conditions apply 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 does not require any agency support to improve the attendance then a single Penalty Notice is issued for either:

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

This includes where a pupil has unauthorised absence due to either:

- Non-approval of a parent/carer's request for leave of absence, or
- A holiday that has been taken without permission.

Parents and carers will be warned of the likelihood of a penalty notice being issued for unauthorised absence either via a letter, through the leave of absence request form, or through the schools attendance policy and website. The penalty notice is a fine that is issued to each parent/carer who condoned (or was responsible for the child) during the period of unauthorised absence for which the fine has been issued. For each case of unauthorised absence the school or Hampshire County Council will decide whether a Penalty Notice is issued to one or more parent/carers for each child. 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/carer.

Each Penalty Notice carries a fine of £60 if paid within 21 days of the Penalty Notice being posted. If the fine is not paid within 21 days the penalty is automatically increased to £120 if paid within 28 days. If the fine remains unpaid the Hampshire County Council will consider prosecution for the non-attendance. Payment methods are detailed on the Penalty Notices themselves. Penalties are to be paid to Hampshire County Council and revenue resulting from payment of Penalties is used by the

County Council to help cover the costs of issuing Penalty Notices and/or the cost of prosecuting recipients who do not pay.

Please note: If a Penalty Notice has previously been paid and your child has further unauthorised absences additional legal action will be taken. E.G. If a Penalty Notice has previously been issued to a parent/carer due to unauthorised term time holiday and unauthorised absence occurs again it will result in further legal action being taken such as prosecution or an Education Supervision Order.

For further information parents/carers can request a leaflet from their school and should visit Hampshire County Councils website at: <http://www.hants.gov.uk/education/hias/learning-behaviour-attendance/attendance-guidance-for-parents/possible-penalties>

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