



Attendance and Punctuality Policy

Introduction

At Harvey Road School we are committed to promoting excellent levels of attendance and punctuality, enabling our pupils to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them. Good attendance helps the children in our school community to maximise their learning.

Regular attendance at school is essential to enable children to make the best progress they are able to. The attendance of all children is monitored regularly, with the school seeking to work actively with parents to ensure a regular pattern is maintained. We expect all children on roll to attend every day that the school is in session.

One of our basic principles is to celebrate success. Good attendance is fundamental to a successful and fulfilling school experience. We actively promote 100% attendance for all our pupils and we use a variety of awards to encourage good attendance.

We believe that the most important factor in promoting good attendance is development of positive attitudes towards school and learning.

Poor attendance can seriously affect each child's:-

- attainment and progress in school
- relationships with other children and their ability to form lasting friendships
- confidence to attempt new work and to learn alongside others

The Governors and Headteacher will work in partnership with parents to promote full attendance at school so that children will achieve the following outcomes:

- To be healthy
- To stay safe
- To enjoy and achieve
- To make a positive contribution
- To achieve economic well-being

Responsibilities & Expectations

School

- Governors and the Headteacher have overall responsibility for the monitoring of attendance.
- The school will maintain records of attendance according to legislation and guidance on a daily basis.
- Only the headteacher can authorise absence.
- The school will provide attendance details on the child's annual report.
- The school will follow up all instances of poor attendance and punctuality by:
 - Recording all notifications of absence by telephone.
 - Implementing the school's '1st day response' policy. This means that if the school has not been notified by 9:15am to tell us why a child is not coming to school that day then the school will contact the parents/carers by 10am on the first day of absence (and subsequent days if appropriate) and a record of the outcome of the call will be kept.
 - Writing to parents/carers requesting a reason for absence if it has not been provided.
 - Recording any absences as authorised or unauthorised according to current DfE guidelines Attendance information will be shared with the County Attendance Improvement Officer who may be directed to support the family

- Contacting parents to arrange an interview with the Headteacher if there is a high level of absence (attendance is 90% or less)
- If attendance does not improve for reasons that the Headteacher does not accept, governors have authorised the Headteacher to use such strategies as issuing warning letters, penalty notices and legal action if required (see Fixed Penalty Notices policy)
- Details of poor attendance/punctuality will be reported to subsequent schools.

Parents

- Parents/carers are expected to do all that is reasonable to ensure that their child achieves as close to 100% attendance as is possible
- Parents/carers must inform the school on the 1st day of absence if a child cannot attend school (eg due to illness) and give the reason for their child's absence so that all parties know children are safe. Parents/carers will also maintain daily contact with the school until child returns to school. When a child is unwell, parents should contact the school before 9.15am on the first, and any subsequent days of absence. This phonecall should inform the school of the reason for absence.
- Full attendance is essential to the all-round development of a child and they should be allowed to take full advantage of educational opportunities available to them by law.
- Parents/carers have a legal obligation to ensure their child attends school. Parents do not have the right to take them on holiday during term time unless it has been authorised by the Headteacher. Absences from school affect the whole school community, not just the child concerned.

Pupils

- All pupils are expected to attend school regularly and punctually.
- All pupils will be expected to be ready to learn.

Absence

Every half-day absence has to be classified by the school (not by the parents) as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of each absence is always required.

- Class teachers complete a register at the beginning of each morning and afternoon session.
- Marking the attendance registers twice daily is a legal requirement.
- Teachers mark pupils present, absent or late.
- Pupil attendance is monitored regularly to highlight and take action where the attendance of individual children is causing concern.

Authorised Absence

An absence is classified as authorised when a child has been away from school for a legitimate reason and the school has received notification from a parent or carer: for example, if a child has been unwell and the parent writes a note or telephones the school to explain the absence.

Only the Headteacher can authorise absence for approved reasons. The absence must be unavoidable. The Headteacher is not obliged to accept a parent's explanation and if the absence is not authorised, parents will be notified.

Authorised absence codes will only be used after there has been some communication between the parent and school.

Unauthorised Absence

An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of the Headteacher.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no authorisation has been given. Below are examples but this list is not exhaustive:

- parents keeping children off school unnecessarily
- truancy during the school day
- holidays during school time
- no explanation is forthcoming

- absence of siblings if one child is ill
- parental illness [alternative arrangements should be made to get children to school – emergencies excepted]
- oversleeping
- inadequate clothing/uniform
- confusion over school dates
- child's/family/extended families birthday
- shopping trip

The Headteacher has the right not to authorise a child's absence if he is dissatisfied with the explanation given by the parents/carers.

Illness and Medical Appointments

As part of our Safeguarding Procedures, the school office will endeavour to contact the parent or carer and/or other emergency contacts regarding the reason for the absence to check on the safety of the child. If no message has been received from the parent and there is no response to the school's effort to contact the parent the absence may be recorded as unauthorised. Furthermore:

- Parents/carers must give specific reasons for the absence – being 'ill' is not enough.
- Parents/carers may be asked to provide evidence (for example a doctor's note) stating that their child is too ill to attend school.
- Unless parents/carers have been given a particular time of absence through illness by a doctor they are expected to contact the school each day to let us know what is happening. The details of telephone calls are recorded and monitored.
- Registers are monitored on a regular basis by our Attendance Improvement Officer to look at patterns of absence, identify individuals or groups absences, attendance of siblings, etc. They may ask to see parents/carers if attendance is not satisfactory.

Arrangements for medical appointments:

- a) We expect that every effort should be made by parents to arrange medical appointments outside of school hours.
- b) An appointment card or verification by the doctor/dentist/hospital is required (e.g. sight of a letter from the hospital)
- c) If it is necessary for a child to be out of school for this reason, the child should be returned to school directly after the appointment. Should this not happen, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised.

If your child is absent due to vomiting, they should not return to school for the next 24 hours after the last bout of sickness. This is to reduce the risk of infection to other children and adults at school.

Medical evidence may be required for absences greater than five days.

Lateness

- It is important that children are safe and therefore accounted for at all times during the day. Because of this, any unexplained absence is monitored very carefully.
- Registers are taken at 9.05am. Any child arriving after that will be recorded as late.
- Afternoon sessions begin at 1.15pm when the register is taken again. Children returning after home lunch after this time will be recorded as late.
- Registers will close at 9.15am and 1.30pm. Any pupil arriving after the registers have closed will be recorded as unauthorised absence unless there are exceptional circumstances for such late arrival.
- Parents/carers will be expected to sign the late book and give a reason for their child's lateness
- Parents/Carers whose children are regularly late for school will be contacted by a member of school staff who will work with parent(s) to bring about an improvement in punctuality

Frequent lateness is disruptive to learning, both for the child concerned and the class. Where patterns of lateness arise this will be raised with parents and may be discussed with the Attendance Improvement Officer or, if deemed appropriate by the school, Children's Services. Frequent or regular lateness after the register has closed can provide grounds for prosecution or the issue of a Penalty Notice as code 'U' is an unauthorised absence.

Term Time Holiday

There have been amendments to The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 which came into force from 1st September 2013.

These remove all reference to family holiday and extended leave therefore:

- NO leave of absence will be granted
- Parents may make an application for leave of absence for an exceptional circumstance
- The Headteacher will decide whether this application will be granted
- The Headteacher will decide the number of days granted for any leave of absence
- Leave of absence taken without permission will be unauthorised
- Governors have authorised the Headteacher to decide what is deemed is authorised due to exceptional circumstances. There will be no right of appeal to this.

Persistent Absenteeism

A pupil is classed as a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more schooling across the year for whatever reason. Absence at this level damages any child's educational potential and we will try to work with parents/carers to improve attendance rates quickly. Persistent Absentees are monitored carefully through our pastoral system and this is combined with academic support where absence adversely affects attainment. All persistent absentees are made known to the Attendance Improvement Officer.

Attendance Improvement Officer (AIO)

Harvey Road School works in partnership with the allocated AIO to improve attendance for individual pupils and the whole school.

The headteacher and appropriate staff meet with the AIO for regular meetings to discuss and review attendance.

Harvey Road School and the AIO work with identified individual pupils and their parents to improve poor attendance.

When the attendance does not improve sufficiently and after discussion with the AIO, the school may apply for a Fixed Penalty Notice to be issued, invite parents/carers to a meeting to offer support or may make a formal referral to the Local Authority.

Fixed Penalty Notices

A Fixed Penalty Notice will be considered where absence is not authorised and an agreement has not been found between the Headteacher and the family.

A Fixed Penalty Notice can be issued when a pupil has 15 sessions or more of unauthorised absence (one session = half a day) in the current and/or previous half term. The school is bound by the Hertfordshire Code of Conduct for Penalty Notices for Unauthorised Absence (truancy) issued February 2016.

- There is no statutory right of appeal once a Penalty Notice has been issued although the Local Authority may withdraw a notice if it has been issued incorrectly.
- The amount payable is £60 per parent if paid within 21 days or £120 per parent if paid after 21 days but within the 28 days of receipt of the notice.
- Separate notices are issued to each parent in respect of each child.
- If the notice remains unpaid after the expiry date of the payment period and the Local Authority has not withdrawn the notice, the Local Authority will prosecute for the offence under section 444 of the Education Act 1996.
- The issuing of penalty notices will comply with the code of conduct and practice as determined by the Local Authority

- Monies paid through the penalty notice system are retained by the Local Authority not the school.

Children Missing Education

If families move away from the area, or wish to transfer their child to another school, the Headteacher must be informed in writing. Children cannot be removed from the school roll until we have been notified by another school that a place has been offered and accepted.

Children who stop attending and who cannot be traced cannot be removed from the school roll. They are reported to the local authority Attendance Service. Where a child is missing from education, Local Authority guidance will be followed.

Harvey Road School will contact a school that has received a child within the first term of arrival to ensure that the child is attending the new setting.

Exceptional Circumstances

The school will actively seek to work with parents/carers where there is a genuine difficulty with attendance.

- Support strategies will be put in place for individual pupils where appropriate.
- When a child has an illness that means he/she will be away from school for over five days, the school will do all it can to send work home, so that they can keep up with their school work.
- If the absence is likely to continue for an extended period, or be a repetitive absence, the school will contact the home education support service, so that arrangements can be made for the child to be given some tuition outside school.

Rewards for Positive Attendance

We appreciate that if children are ill then they need to be absent from school. However, the prime benefit derived from regular attendance is that continuity and progression in learning are ensured. Harvey Road School therefore celebrates this through termly Attendance awards which acknowledge the efforts children and parents have made to have excellent attendance.

Levels of Attendance

97% Excellent – Well done! This will help all aspects of your child's progress and life in school. This will give them a good start in life and supports a positive work ethic.

95% Average – Where attendance falls below 95% this is classed as 'causing concern'. Parents may be offered support in order to help improve their child's level of attendance.

90% or less Low – Below 90% absence is now affecting attainment and progress at school. This is considered as 'persistent absenteeism' and the school will take whatever appropriate action is necessary to improve the child's attendance.

N Rowlands
Headteacher
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