**Attendance Policy - Introduction**

School attendance is subject to various education laws and this school attendance policy is written to reflect these laws and the guidance produced by the Department for Education and Hampshire County Council. This attendance policy is also consistent with the following school policies: safeguarding, child protection and whole school positive behaviour policy.

Person(s) responsible for implementing and monitoring the policy is the Headteacher.

The level of attendance and punctuality expected from all our pupils is included in our school’s Starter Pack, which parents must sign following their child’s admission to a school (statutory).

The best way to ensure that you child is safe and thriving is to ensure that they attend school, every day. It is very important, therefore, that you make sure your child attends every day and this policy sets out how together we will achieve this. This policy will be annually publicised in writing for all staff, parents and pupils via the school’s website [www.sfs.hants.sch.uk](http://www.sfs.hants.sch.uk).

**Statement of intent**

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 pupils and endeavour to provide an environment where all pupils feel valued and welcome.

Parents and pupils play a part in making our school safe, inclusive and 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 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 the expectations of any future employer in the world of work.

**Operating the policy**

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

**Roles and responsibilities**

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 parents/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 Headteacher.

**Responsibilities of the school:**

* Ensure that all pupils are registered accurately
* Promote and reward good attendance with pupils at all appropriate opportunities
* Ensure that the Home School Partnership is aware of any matters of concern
* 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 their 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/carers:**

Ensuring your child’s regular attendance at school is a parent/carer’s legal responsibility (Section 444 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 each day of absence
* Discuss with the Home School Partnership Manager 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 telephone on the first and subsequent days of absence
* Avoid taking their child out of school for non-urgent medical or dental appointments
* Only request leave of absence if it is for an exceptional circumstance

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**Recording attendance**

Legally the register must be marked twice daily. This is once at the start of the school day 09:00 hours and again for the afternoon session at 12.50 hours.

**Lateness and 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 is used to give out instructions or organise work. 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 it can be embarrassing leading to possible further absence.

* At 08.45 hours and all pupils are expected to be in school
* Morning registration is at 09.00 hours and closes at 09.30 hours
* 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 and coded Uin line with Hampshire County Council and Department of Education 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
* Doctors and dentists appointments are to be made outside of school hours or during school holidays

Department for Education guidance suggests all official registers should be closed a maximum of 30 minutes after the start of school – but schools can choose to use a shorter period. For further advice and guidance refer to: Hampshire County Council’s guidance, *Promoting pupil* *attendance recording absence*, available at:

http://documents.hants.gov.uk/childrens-services/

HIAS/Promotingpupilattendanceandrecordingabsence-maindocument.pdf.

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Pupils who are consistently late are disrupting not only their own education but also that of the other pupils. Ongoing 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.

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

The absence of a child from school is considered to be 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 on the first day of absence by telephoning **01267 335640**.

If your child is absent we will:

* Telephone you on each day 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

* Ensure that the Home School Liaison Manager is in contact with the family
* Ensure that, if relevant, social workers or other associated professionals are aware of the absence

**If we cannot make contact with you:**

**Please note:** If contact cannot be established with any of the named parents/carers, the school will make all reasonable enquiries to known friends and wider family. If necessary we contact the schools that siblings attend to check on whether they have information that might help us. Home visits will be made in an effort to establish contact if necessary.

**Ten days absence**

We have a legal duty to report the absence of any pupil who is 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 we will notify the local authority 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. Please 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.

*However, we would not wait until ‘10 consecutive days of absence’ before taking action. Please expect that unexplained absence would be followed up immediately, on day one of the absence.*

**Continued or ongoing absence**

If your child misses 10% (three weeks/sessions) or more schooling across the school year, for whatever reason, they are defined as persistent absentees. We monitor all absence thoroughly and all attendance data is shared with the local authority.

**A welcome back**

It is important that on return from an unavoidable absence all pupils are made to feel welcome. This includes ensuring that the pupil is helped to catch up on missed work and brought up to date with any information that has been passed to the other pupils. Individual subject teachers will be aware of specific work that a pupil has missed and will make arrangements for catch up.

**Request for leave of absence**

Amendments to school attendance regulations were updated and enforced from September 2013: The Education (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 is, however, no legal entitlement for time off in school term 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 reception) 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 County Council’s Code of conduct, parents/carers will be issued with a fixed-penalty fine or other legal action in accordance with the code (see Section 6 for detail).

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.

**For national guidance refer to:**

*School attendance*, 2014, located at:

[www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-attendance](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-attendance)

National Association of Headteachers’ guidance document on *Authorised absence*, 2014: [www.naht.org.uk/welcome/news-and-media/key-topics/parents-andpupils/naht-issues-newguidance-on-authorised-absence/](http://www.naht.org.uk/welcome/news-and-media/key-topics/parents-andpupils/naht-issues-newguidance-on-authorised-absence/).

**For Hampshire County Council advice and guidance refer to:**

Guidance on recording absence:

<http://documents.hants.gov.uk/childrens-services/HIAS/Promotingpupilattendanceandrecordingabsence-maindocument.pdf>

Guidance on approval of extended leave of absence:

[www.hants.gov.uk/education/hias/learning-behaviour-attendance/lba-resources-for-schools/atten-guidance/attendance-guidance-for-schools](http://www.hants.gov.uk/education/hias/learning-behaviour-attendance/lba-resources-for-schools/atten-guidance/attendance-guidance-for-schools)

**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

* Truancy before or during the school day
* Absences which have not been explained

**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 has 10 or more sessions of unauthorised absence and parents are complicit in the child’s absence.

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

* Parenting contracts set at Education Planning Meetings
* Parenting orders
* Penalty Notices

For national guidance refer to: Parental responsibility measures for behaviour and attendance, which covers legal measures for non-attendance:

[www.gov.uk/government/publications/parental-responsibility-measures-for-behaviour-andattendance](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/parental-responsibility-measures-for-behaviour-andattendance).

For Hampshire County Council guidance refer to: *Guidance for schools on support and procedures for pursuing legal action for non-attendance*, May 2015:

[www.hants.gov.uk/education/hias/learning-behaviour-attendance/lba-resources-for-schools/atten-guidance/attendance-guidance-for-schools](http://www.hants.gov.uk/education/hias/learning-behaviour-attendance/lba-resources-for-schools/atten-guidance/attendance-guidance-for-schools).

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* Education Supervision Orders
* Prosecution

Where a child has unauthorised absence the school must enforce Hampshire County Council’s Code of conduct: issuing Penalty Notices for unauthorised absence from schools 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:

[www.hants.gov.uk/education/hias/learning-behaviour-attendance/attendance-guidance-forparents/possible-penalties](http://www.hants.gov.uk/education/hias/learning-behaviour-attendance/attendance-guidance-forparents/possible-penalties).

The Code of conduct states that schools or Hampshire County Council 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 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 Penalty Notice is issued for either:

* 10 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 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 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 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** **parents/carers** for each child. **NB:** 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 you pay the Penalty Notice and your child has further unauthorised absences additional legal action will be taken. For example, in the event that a Penalty Notice has previously been served to you due to unauthorised holiday, should your child have any future unauthorised leave this will result in further legal action for you, 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 Council’s website at:

[www.hants.gov.uk/education/hias/learning-behaviour-attendance/attendance-guidance-forparents/possible-penalties](http://www.hants.gov.uk/education/hias/learning-behaviour-attendance/attendance-guidance-forparents/possible-penalties).

**My child is trying to avoid coming to school, what should I do?**

Children are sometimes reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents/carers and the child. If a child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and may make things worse.

Contact the **Home School Partnership Manager (01264 335640)** immediately and openly discuss your worries. 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 the circumstances of your child’s difficulties with another professional.

**What can I do to encourage my child to attend school?**

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 properly equipped. Show your child, by your interest, that you value his/her education.

**Leavers**

If your child is leaving our school (other than when transferring to the secondary school or leaving at the end of Year 11) parents are asked to:

* Give the attendance officer comprehensive information about their 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, thePolice and other agencies. By giving us the above information, these investigations can beavoided.

**Absence through child participation in public performances, including theatre, film or television 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 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.

It is, however, down to the Headteacher’s discretion as to 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. 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 as to 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 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 is providing an education tutor as part of their coaching. The regulations related to children participating in public performances are separate to those around authorising leave of absence. Headteachers can authorise this absence.

For further advice and guidance on child employment and performance licenses visit Hantsweb at:

[www.hants.gov.uk/childrens-services/childrenandyoungpeople/child-employment](http://www.hants.gov.uk/childrens-services/childrenandyoungpeople/child-employment).

For national advice see:

[www.gov.uk/child-performance-licence-england-scotland-wales](http://www.gov.uk/child-performance-licence-england-scotland-wales).

**Gypsy, Roma, Traveller 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 Tcode. Distance learning packs for Traveller children are not an alternative to attendance at school.

For further advice and guidance on attendance and Gypsy, Roma, Traveller and Showman families, see Hampshire County Council guidance at:

<http://documents.hants.gov.uk/childrensservices/>

HIAS/Promotingpupilattendanceandrecordingabsence-Section6.pdf.

Please note pupils must have attended 200 sessions in a rolling 12-month period to be able to request leave for work purposes.

Further support and guidance is available from Hampshire County Council’s Ethnic Minority and Traveller Achievement Service (EMTAS).

**Study leave**

We believe that pupils/pupils’ needs are best met if they attend school every day in the period leading up to examinations. **No study leave will be granted during this period**, therefore, and pupils/pupils will be expected to attend school in the usual way.

Study leave will only be granted to Year 11 pupils/pupils during the time of the GCSE examination period. Should any pupils/pupils wish to attend school (or should their parents wish them to) on the days and at times when they are not sitting examinations, arrangements will be made for them to do so. The school will work within the legal requirements:

* Study leave should only be granted to Year 11 pupils and never to those in other year groups
* It should never exceed 15 school days in a year and is most appropriately granted during the examination period itself, i.e. not before the beginning of that period
* It should always be granted sparingly, taking account of an individual pupil/student’s ability to manage and benefit from unsupervised study
* Any pupil has the right to attend school during study leave and a parent has the right to insist he/she does so
* Any session given to pupils as study leave has a statistical meaning of authorised absence (it is not an *approved educational activity* as it is unsupervised) and should be recorded and reported on by the school as such.

**Teenage pregnancy**

Support will be directed to keeping a pupil in school and, wherever possible, her return to full-time education as soon as possible after the birth. A pupil who becomes pregnant should be allowed no more than 18 weeks’ authorised absence to cover the time immediately before and after the birth of the child. After that time, any absence should be treated as unauthorised.

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