



High Meadow Infant School Attendance and Punctuality Policy

Here at High Meadow Infant School we believe that regular school attendance is the key to enabling children to maximise the educational opportunities available to them. This supports a child to develop emotionally resilient behaviours, confidence and eventually competent adults who are able to realise their full potential and make a positive contribution to their community.

High Meadow Infant School values all pupils. This policy explains how we will work with families to identify the reasons for poor attendance and try to resolve any difficulties as early as possible.

Regular attendance at school is essential to ensure uninterrupted progress and to enable children to extend their potential. We expect all children on roll to attend every day, when the school is in session as long as they are fit and healthy enough to do so. We do all we can to encourage children to attend, and to put in place appropriate procedures to support this. 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 in school
- relationships with other children and their ability to form lasting friendships
- confidence to attempt new work and work alongside others

Non-attendance is an important issue that is treated seriously. However each case is different and the school acknowledges that no one standard response will be appropriate in every case. Consideration is given to all factors affecting attendance before deciding what intervention strategies to apply.

- a) In every case, early intervention is essential to prevent the problem from worsening. It is essential that parents keep the school fully informed of any matters that may affect their child's attendance.
- b) Prior to the engagement of the Attendance Compliance Enforcement Service (ACE), the school may issue letters to parents clearly defining the concerns within school regarding a pupils' absence. It is hoped that a quick response and change in levels of absence will prevent the need for ACE involvement.

Statutory Duty of Schools

Under the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 1995, the governing body are responsible for making sure the school keeps an attendance register that records which pupils are present at the start of both the morning and the afternoon sessions of the school day. This register will also indicate whether an absence was authorised or unauthorised.

In accordance with the regulations relating to pupils' attendance, High Meadow Infant School keeps an electronic attendance register on which at the beginning of each morning and afternoon session, pupils are marked present or absent. An entry must be made on the electronic attendance register for all pupils of compulsory school age who are on the school's admission roll.

The Education Act 1996 requires parents or guardians to ensure their children receive efficient, full-time education, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

Categories of Absence

There are two categories of absence:-

- (i) Authorised (approved)
- (ii) Unauthorised (not approved)

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 guardian. For example, if a child has been unwell, the parent writes a note or telephones the school to explain the absence. We request that where possible, notification is received by 9.00am on the first day of absence.

Only the school can make an absence authorised. Parents and carers do not have this authority. Consequently, not all absences supported by parents and carers will be classified as authorised. For example, if a parent takes a child out of school to go shopping during school hours, this will not mean it is an authorised absence.

Unauthorised absence

An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of both the school and a parent. Therefore, the absence is unauthorised if a child is away from school without good reason, even with the support of a parent. Persistent lateness can constitute as unauthorised absence.

Lateness

The classroom doors open at 8.50am and close at 9.00am prompt. The school day begins at 9.00am and registration closes at 9.05am. Any child not present at registration will be marked absent and first day calling procedures will be started.

All late children must be brought to the school office and signed in using the late book. They will be marked as L (late) if they arrive after 9.05am. The class teacher may ask to discuss the issue with parents if lateness becomes a concern. If it does not improve then the matter will be escalated to the Head teacher.

If a child is absent

It is the responsibility of parents/carers to inform the school by 9.00am on the first day of their child's absence.

When a child is absent unexpectedly, the class teacher will record the absence in the register. If parents call in to say that their child will not be in school, it is recorded in SIMS. If a child is recorded as absent and notification of absence has not been received by the school as part of day to day monitoring, the following procedures will be adhered to:

First Day Calling - Calling will be completed by 9:30am. It is recorded in SIMS. This is so that we can monitor the impact of first day calling and keep a record of those parents who regularly do not inform us of absence.

Un-contactable Parents - All contacts are telephoned and every effort is made to make contact to discuss the child's absence. If we are unable to contact a parent/carer then we will undertake all 'reasonable steps' as detailed on page 13 of our Safeguarding Policy. If we are still unable to establish the child's whereabouts then we will make an immediate referral to the Local Authority. We ask that parents keep the school informed of all telephone number changes as this is a Health and Safety concern in the event of an emergency.

Illness and Medical Appointments

When a child is unwell, parents should contact the school by 9.00am on the first day of absence informing the school of the reason for absence.

When a child is absent, the class teacher will record the absence in the register. As part of our Safeguarding procedures, the school office will endeavour to contact the parent or carer and other emergency contacts if no message has been received regarding the reason for the absence to check on the safety of the child.

- a) Every effort should be made to arrange medical appointments outside school hours.
- b) An appointment card from the doctors/ dentist/hospital is required.
- 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.
- d) If your child is absent due to vomiting then they should not return to school for the next 48 hours after the last time that the child is sick. This is to reduce the risk of infection to other children and adults at the school.
- e) For more than three days of absence the school require an explanation of why the child was absent. The school office may request the reason in writing.

Long-term absence

When children have an illness that means they will be away from school for over five days, the school will do all it can to send material 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 support services, so that arrangements can be made for the child to be given some tuition outside school. However, medical evidence supplied by the parent may be required to authorise this absence and for a referral to the school nurse for support.

Monitoring Attendance

The Head teacher is responsible for monitoring pupils' attendance. A letter is sent to every parent every September to remind them about attendance thresholds as follows...

- 98% - 100% Pupil should be congratulated. High attendance levels should be maintained.
- 95% - 97% Attendance at this level is beginning to cause concern. Your child's class teacher will have a chat with you to see how we can work together to remedy any issues.
- 91% - 94% There are serious concerns over attendance at this level. You will be sent a first formal letter from the Head Teacher to attend a meeting to discuss any remedial actions that may need to be put in place.
- 85% - 90% A pupil with this level of attendance is in a high risk group and will be identified as persistently absent. You will be sent a second formal letter to put in place an action plan to address any underlying issues. The school may also send a referral to the ACE team.
- Below 85% A pupil with this attendance level will be monitored closely for six weeks. After six weeks of attendance at this level or below, the pupil will be referred to ACE who will apply intensive solution focused Casework/Legal Intervention

To help parents understand their own child's attendance record, a personalised attendance chart will be printed half-termly and a copy distributed to each class teacher and parent.

The administrative assistant will present the Head teacher with termly percentage attendance values for each class and specific groups (FSM, SEN, EAL) and for the school as a whole. Attendance data is shared with Governors at the termly Full Governing Body Meeting.

Parental Responsibility and/or Day-to-Day Care

Parents are responsible for ensuring their children receive education. Separated parents with whom the child has had regular contact may be prosecuted as well as the day-to-day carer. Each situation must be dealt with on an individual basis, always remembering the welfare and safety of the child is the paramount concern.

The term 'parent' also includes those who are not a natural parent but have parental responsibility for the child as defined by the Children Act 1989 or who have care of the child as defined by the Education Act 1996.

Legal Issues

By law, all children of compulsory school age (between 5 and 16) must get a proper full-time education. Parents are responsible for making this happen, either by registering the child at school or by making other arrangements, which provide an effective education. (The Education Act 1996 Section 7).

Persistent absences

At High Meadow Infant School, Persistent Absence is a term used to refer to absence of more than 10%, whether authorised or unauthorised.

Research highlights that pupils with persistent absence are often those unlikely to achieve well at school and stay in education after the age of 16 years. They are also significantly more likely to engage in anti-social behaviour and youth crime and are more at risk of other negative outcomes. Therefore schools and local authorities that focus on this high-risk group will be in a strong position to make progress in the range of outcomes for children and young people for which they are accountable.

Persistent Absence Process:

Parents will receive a concern letter from school when their child's attendance reaches 90%, and the school will that child's monitor attendance.

At 85% a letter will be sent to parents letting them know that we are monitoring their attendance and that no further absences will be authorised without medical evidence.

Parents will be invited to school to meet with the Head teacher to discuss any issues the child may have and school will attempt to support the child. If a parent refuses to attend these meetings or a child's attendance does not show significant improvement, the school will have no option but to refer to the Attendance Compliance Enforcement Service (ACE).

The governors, supported by the LA, reserve the right to consider taking legal action against any parents or carers who repeatedly fail to accept their responsibility for sending their children to school on a regular basis.

If a child has a repeated number of unauthorised absences, the parents or carers will be asked to visit the school and discuss the problems.

Attendance Targets

The school sets attendance targets every year and these are discussed at the first Governing Body Meeting of the year. The targets are challenging yet realistic and based on attendance figures achieved in previous years. The school considers carefully the attendance figures for other similar schools when setting its own targets. The target for 2016/17 is 97%.

Review

It is the responsibility of the governors to monitor overall attendance. The governing body also has the responsibility for this policy, and for seeing that it is carried out. The governors will therefore examine closely the information provided to them, and seek to ensure that our attendance figures are as high as they should be.

The school will keep accurate attendance records on file for a minimum period of three years. The rates of attendance will be reported annually on the school website and in any future school prospectus.

Class teachers will be responsible for monitoring attendance in their class and for following up absences in the appropriate way. If there is concern about a child's absence, they will work closely with Head teacher and within current policy in order to resolve any issues.

Requests for leave of absence

At High Meadow Infant School, we believe that children need to be in school for all sessions, so that they can make the most progress possible. However, we do understand that there are circumstances under which a parent may legitimately request leave of absence for a child to attend, e.g. hospital appointments. Wherever possible, non-urgent appointments should be made outside of the school day. If a child is to be absent for medical reasons, e.g. hospital appointment, dental appointment, or to attend an out of school activity, e.g. music/dance examination, parents need to provide evidence from the hospital, dentist or music/dance examination board. This should be handed into the school office as soon as possible before the day the absence occurs.

Once a letter is received by the office, the Head teacher will consider the evidence to see if it is possible to authorise the absence or not. If the absence is unauthorised, the school office will write to the parent informing them of the Head teacher's decision.

If no letter is received by the office, the absence will be unauthorised.

If a child's attendance levels are low and beginning to be a concern, the school may ask for appointment cards before authorising absence for these appointments.

Appointments will not be authorised for an all-day absence, unless it can be proven that the appointment is exceptional.

Term Time Holidays

The Government have issued new regulations in September 2013 regarding Leave of Absence; The Education (Pupil Regulations) (England) Regulations 2006 as amended by Education (Pupil Regulations) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013

- Head teachers **shall not grant any Leave of Absence during term time** unless they consider there are exceptional circumstances relating to the application.
- Parents do not have any entitlement to take their children on holiday during term time. Any application for leave must establish that there are exceptional circumstances and the Head Teacher must be satisfied that the circumstances warrant the granting of leave.
- Head teachers will determine how many school days a child may be absent from school if the leave is granted.
- Applications for Leave of Absence must be made in advance and failure to do so will result in the absence being unauthorised.
- Applications for Leave of Absence which are made in advance and if refused will result in the absence being unauthorised which may result in legal action against the parent, by Fixed Penalty Notice, if the child is absent from school during that period.
- If a Fixed Penalty Notice is issued and is not paid within the timeframe set out in that Notice, the matter will be referred to Warwickshire County Council's Legal Services to consider instigating criminal prosecution proceedings under S444 of Education Act 1996.

Each application for a Leave of Absence will be considered on a case by case basis and on its own merits.

Date established by the Governing body: Wednesday 13th May 2015

Date for review: May 2018

Signed: Head teacher... *Mrs DY Hughes*.....

Signed: Chair of Governors..... *Mr Jonathan Smith*.....