

Attendance Policy



South Farnborough
Infant School

Person responsible: Danielle Duffy

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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. School attendance and punctuality has a direct impact on children's learning and attainment. It is very important, therefore, that you make sure that your child attends regularly and this policy sets out how we will achieve this together.

This policy will be annually publicised in writing for all staff, parents and is via the school website and is available from the school office.

Our school will:

- Promote good attendance and reduce absence, including persistent absence
- Ensure every child has access to full time education, when appropriate
- Act early to address patterns of absence
- Develop and maintain a positive culture that promoted the benefits of good attendance

Parents must perform their legal duty by ensuring children of compulsory school age who are registered attend regularly and on time.

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 so 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 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. 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, schoolwork and friendships easier to cope with
- Regular attenders find learning more satisfying
- Regular attenders are more successful in transferring between primary school, secondary school, and higher education, employment or training

Promoting Good Attendance and Punctuality:

We expect all pupils to attend school, arriving punctually for each of the 190 days which constitute the school year. There must be a legitimate reason for all absences and the school must be notified of any absences in line with the procedures set out in this policy. The school will use opportunities as they arise to

remind parents/carers of their responsibilities and legal obligations to ensure that their children receive their full educational entitlement.

The foundation for good attendance is a strong partnership between the school, parents and the child.

To help us all to focus on this we will:

- Provide information on all matters related to attendance in our regular newsletters which are also on the school website
- Send letters re any drop in attendance or concern below 95% on a half term basis
- Report to you on how your child is performing in school, what his/her attendance and punctuality rate is, and how this relates to his/her attainment
- Celebrate good attendance in newsletters

Roles and Responsibilities:

The Headteacher 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.

The school's administration team will ensure that attendance is both recorded accurately, analysed and reported promptly to the Headteacher. This will ensure that attendance issues are identified at an early stage and that support is put in place to deal with any difficulties. The Headteacher will hold regular attendance review meetings with the Education Welfare Officer and where concerns are identified families will be invited to attend an attendance review meeting. 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. In the case of regular absence due to illness, the Headteacher has the right to request medical evidence is provided to support the absence.

Responsibilities of Classroom Staff:

- Ensure that all students are registered accurately and promptly
- Promote & reward good attendance at appropriate opportunities.
- Liaise with the Headteacher on matters of attendance and punctuality
- Communicate any concerns or underlying problems that may account for a child's absence
- Support children with absence to engage with their learning once they are back in school

Responsibilities of Pupils:

- Attend every day unless they are ill* or have an authorised absence.
- Arrive in school on time.
- *Guidance from NHS 'Is my child too ill for school?' <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/healthy-body/is-mychild-too-ill-for-school/>

Responsibilities of Parents and Carers:

Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is a parent/carers legal responsibility (section 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 the first day of absence.
- Complete a leave of absence request form prior to 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 Studybugs app on the first and subsequent days of absence, or by email if a phone is unavailable.
- Avoid taking their child out of school for non-urgent medical or dental appointments. To authorise the absence proof will be required if an appointment is attended during the school day.
- Only request for leave of absence if it is for an exceptional circumstance

Recording Attendance:

Legally the register must be marked twice daily. This is once at the start of the school day 8.50am and again for the afternoon session at 1.00pm for Year R, 1.15pm for Year 1 and Year 2.

Lateness /Punctuality:

It is important to be on time at the start of the morning and afternoon school sessions. The start of school is used for early morning work and instructions. 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 can be embarrassing leading to possible further absence.

- Classroom doors open between 8.40am and 8.50am. All pupils are expected to be in school by 8.50am. Morning registration closes at 8.50 am.
- 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 a late code 'L' up to 9:20am when it will be marked as an unauthorised absence code 'U' in line with county and Department for Education (DfE) 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'. Please be advised that where possible doctors and dentists appointments are to be made outside of school hours or during school holidays.

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 (see section 6 for further detail) and will be referred to our Education Welfare Officer.

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 by the school in line with the Education Welfare Officer. If support is not appropriate or is declined and a child has 10 or more sessions of unauthorised absence due to lateness recorded in any 10 week period the school or the Hampshire County Council will be required to issue parents with a penalty notice in accordance with Hampshire's Code of Conduct for issuing penalty notices for non-attendance (See section 6 of this policy for further detail).

Please collect your 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. First Day Absence A child not attending school is considered 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 by 8.50am on the first day of absence either in person at the school office, by telephone or email

If your child is absent and we have not been contacted, we will:

- Telephone or email you on the first 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
- If we cannot contact you, we will contact other nominated contacts from the contact list as it is important that we can ensure that children are safe.
- If we cannot contact anyone, a home visit will be carried out to ensure that an absent child is safe. When we receive the information an admin assistant will record this electronically on the child's class register.

Third Day Absence:

If your child is absent for three days, then you must:

- Contact the school to provide further information. If your child is not seen and contact has not been established with you any of 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. We will make all reasonable enquires to establish contact with parents and the child including making enquires to known friends, wider family.

Ten Day's Absence:

We have a legal duty to report the absence of any pupils 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 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. So 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.

Continued or Ongoing Absence If your child's misses 10% (3 weeks / 21 sessions) or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason they are defined as persistent absentees. Where this absence is authorised, the school will:

- Write to you and make you aware of your child's attendance, inform you that it is persistent absence and invite you to come in and discuss this with us and the Education Welfare Officer. We will always ensure that we are aware of individual circumstances linked to absences, such as medical conditions.
- We will complete an attendance action plan and insist that each absence from this time on are supported by a medical letter/certificate, so that we can continue to authorise any absences.
- We will continue to monitor your child's attendance.

Request for Leave of Absence:

The Education Regulations state that Head teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. It is important to note that Head teachers 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 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 South Farnborough Infant School) 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.

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

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 that the child has been on holiday.

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. Children of non-compulsory school age 'once admitted' to a school must comply with the attendance policy. 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 through a referral to Hampshire's Attendance Legal Panels where:

1. The child or family do not require the support from any agency to improve the attendance
2. The child has 10 or more sessions of unauthorised absence in any continuous 100 session period, and parents are complicit in the child's absence.

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

- Parenting contracts set at Education Planning Meetings
- Parenting orders
- Penalty notices
- Education Supervision Orders
- Prosecution Legal Measures for absence taken when the headteacher has declined parent/carers request for leave of absence

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 and the unauthorised absence is for 10 or more sessions (5 days) in any 100 possible school sessions then a penalty notice for non-attendance will be issued 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-forparents/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 (codes G, U, or O on the register)
- Absent under threshold - if you remove your child for an unauthorised period and it is the belief of the school and Local Authority that you have done this in a way as to avoid being issued a Penalty Notice, the Local Authority reserves the right to authorise the issuing of a Penalty Notice before the national threshold is met. This can include inset days, bank holidays and half days e.g. collecting your child after the afternoon registration to avoid an absence.
- 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 has other types of unauthorised absence (coded O and U) and the family or child do not require any agency support to improve the attendance, then a single Penalty Notice is issued for either:

1. 10 sessions (5 days) of unauthorised absence or lateness in any 100 possible school sessions/10-week school period
2. 1 or more sessions of unauthorised absence during a public exam, formal school assessment of testing where dates are published in advance.

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 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 parent/carers for each child. N.B This could mean four penalty notices for a family with two siblings both with unauthorised absence for holiday i.e. one PN for each child to each parent. Each penalty notice carries a fine of £80 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 £160 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. For further information parents/carers can request a leaflet from their school and should visit Hampshire County Councils website at: <http://www3.hants.gov.uk/education/hias/learning-behaviourattendance/attendance-guidance-for-parents/possible-penalties.htm>

What can I do to encourage my child to attend School?

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 your child's class teacher immediately and openly discuss your worries. Your child could be avoiding school for a number of reasons –difficulties with schoolwork, 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.

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. Be interested in what your child is doing in school, chat to them about the things they have learnt, what friends they have made and even what they had for lunch! For many parents, your child attending school may be your first experience of being separated from them. This can seem daunting at first for both of you, but consistency and a caring, supportive home and school life will make the transition a quick and easy experience for you both.

Absence through child participation in Public Performances, including theatre, film or TV work & 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 Head teacher 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 Head teacher'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 Head teacher'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 Head teacher 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.

Gypsy Roma Traveller Showman 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 T code. Distance Learning packs for traveller children are not an alternative to attendance at school. School registers are legal documents. We will ensure compliance with attendance regulations by keeping attendance records for at least 3 years. Computer registers will be preserved as electronic back-ups or microfiche copies.

Persistent Lateness and Fines

Parents and carers are reminded that timely collection of children is essential to maintaining safe staffing ratios. Where a child is collected late on a persistent basis, the school may issue a fine of £5 for every 15-minute block after the scheduled pick-up time. Decisions regarding the issuing of fines will be at the discretion of the Headteacher, taking individual circumstances into account. Continued lateness may also result in the withdrawal of a child's place in after-school clubs or wraparound care, as we must ensure supervision can be safely and appropriately provided for all pupils.