



**Calmore Infant School
Attendance Policy**

**Written by N Cowcher
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Section 1

Rationale

For a child to reach their full educational achievement a high level of school attendance is essential. Every pupil has a right and entitlement to the highest quality of education and we create an environment where all pupils feel valued and welcome. Parents and pupils play a part in making our school so successful. 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 and every opportunity to convey to pupils and their parents or carers, the importance of regular and punctual attendance is utilised.

It is essential that children arrive at school on time every time 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 attendance below 95%
- regular attenders make better progress, both socially and academically.
- regular attenders find school routines, school work and friendships easier to manage.
- regular attenders find learning more satisfying.
- regular attenders are more successful when they transition between schools and when they go on to junior school and then, secondary school, higher education, employment or training.

Section 2 – Operating the Policy

2.1 Promoting good attendance and punctuality

The foundation for good attendance is a strong partnership between the school, parents and the child. The Home School Agreement that is given to all parents when their child starts school 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.

To help us to all focus on this we will:

- provide information on all matters related to attendance in our weekly newsletter
- report to you on how your child is performing in school, share their attendance and punctuality rate and how this relates to their attainments in our termly ‘traffic light’ letters, at the end of each term and during parents evenings and in our formal report.
- celebrate good attendance by displaying individual and class achievements such as ‘Cool to be in School’ award
- reward 100% with a special trophy/ stickers and certificates.

2.2 Roles and responsibilities

The school’s headteacher and 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.

The headteacher will support the school admin officer to ensure that attendance is recorded accurately and analysed. The headteacher 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, the class teacher or headteacher will discuss with parents/carers the need and reasons for their child’s absence and will encourage them to keep absences to a minimum. Parents will also be invited to meet with the classteacher or Headteacher so that the school can put systems into place to support children with ‘red’ attendance on the termly ‘traffic light’ letters

A note or explanation from a pupil’s home does not mean an absence becomes authorised. The decision to authorise or unauthorise a child’s absence rests with the headteacher.

Responsibilities of classroom staff

- Ensure that all pupils are registered accurately.
- Promote and reward good attendance with pupils
- Liaise with the headteacher and home school link workers on matters of attendance and punctuality.
- Communicate any concerns or underlying problems that may account for a child's absence.
- Support pupils 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 at school on time.

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 the first day of absence before 9.00 am

- take responsibility for registering at the office if their child is late or need to leave school during the school day.
- notify the school of 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, or by letter/email if a phone is unavailable.
- avoid taking their child out of school for non-urgent medical or dental appointments beforehand
- provide evidence of medical and dental appointments during the school day
- only request leave of absence if it is for an exceptional circumstance.

Section 3

3.1 Recording attendance

Legally the register must be marked twice daily. This is once at the start of the school day, 9.00am, and again for the afternoon session at 1.00 pm.

3.2 Lateness/punctuality

It is important that all children are on time at the start of the school day

- The school day begins at 8.45 am and the bell will go at 8.40 giving all pupils the time to get into class ready to start learning at 8.45. All pupils are expected to be in school at 8.45.
- Morning registration is at 9.00am and it closes at 9.10 am.
- All lateness is recorded daily. This information will be required by the courts, should a prosecution for non-attendance or lateness become necessary.
- Arrival after the close of registration will be marked as late in line with Hampshire County Council and Department of Education guidance.
- 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. 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.

Parents are expected 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.

3.3 What to do if my child is absent?

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 as soon as possible on the first day of absence by phone ☎ call in to the school office and let us know.

If your child is absent we will: telephone 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. We will call daily until we are able to make contact with you.

- invite you in to discuss the situation with Headteacher if absences persist
- refer the matter to the Hampshire County Council's Attendance Legal Panels if absence is unauthorised and falls below 90%

Third day absence

Please note: If your child is not seen and contact has not been established with any of the named parents/carers, after three days of absence the school is required to start child missing in education procedures as set down by Hampshire County Council guidance. We will make all reasonable enquiries to establish contact with parents/carers and the child, including making enquiries to known friends, wider family. A visit to the home address may be made by the Headteacher/Deputy Headteacher.

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

If your child has had absence and their attendance level is falling towards 90% we will contact you and depending on the reasons for the absence will take further action as detailed in the policy. Where necessary the Headteacher will issue a penalty notice.

Children at this school are dependent on their parent/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

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:
 1. parents giving their children permission to be off school unnecessarily, such as for shopping, birthdays, to look after siblings
 2. 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 they have been on holiday. A penalty notice may then be issued.

Section 5

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 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 vast 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.

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.

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 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 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
- Education Supervision Orders
- prosecution.

Where a child has unauthorised absence the school must enforce Hampshire County Council's Code of conduct by :

1. issuing Penalty Notices for unauthorised absence from schools or
2. 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

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
- 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:

- 1 10 sessions of unauthorised absence or lateness in any 10 week school period
- 2 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**, ie 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 nonattendance. 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 and or an Education Supervision Order.

For further information parents/carers can request a leaflet from the school office and should visit Hampshire County Council's website at: www.hants.gov.uk/education/hias/learning-behaviour-attendance/attendance-guidanceforparents