

**High Clarence Primary School**

**Attendance Policy**

Date Reviewed: September 2022

Next Review: September 2023

**Statement of Intent**

The aim of High Clarence Primary School is to ensure that all children are able to enjoy, participate in and fulfil their potential at school. A good level of attendance is crucial to us achieving this aim. Parents/carers, teachers, governors and the children themselves all have key roles to play in achieving this aim.

This policy outlines what is expected.

The Headteacher is responsible for leading the school approach to tackling absence and supporting improvements in attendance. The school’s Attendance Officer is Mrs Anne-Marie Cartwright, and she can be contacted via school reception or contact@educationfive.co.uk. Staff and parents/carers can contact the Attendance Officer for queries or concerns about attendance.

**The Importance of Regular Attendance**

The importance of regular attendance cannot be overestimated. If a child does not attend school regularly this will have a significant impact on both their academic learning and their emotional/social well-being.

If a child does not attend school regularly this could pose a safeguarding issue as poor attendance could mean a child may be at risk of harm. Safeguarding is everybody’s responsibility and at High Clarence Primary we take this duty very seriously. We will always endeavour to ensure all children are safeguarded appropriately by working closely with our families and local support agencies were necessary.

**Expectations**

All children should attend school each day that the school is open unless they are unable to do so due to reasons of illness, other unavoidable cause notified to the school or due to pre-agreed authorised absence.

**Parents/carers Responsibilities**

* To ensure that their child/ren attend school on time each day that the school is open unless they are prevented from doing so by reason of illness or other unavoidable cause.
* Must notify school by 9 a.m. on the first day of any absence by telephone, in writing or person of the reason for their child’s absence. The school will then decide on the information provided whether to authorise or unauthorise the absence.
* In cases of absences lasting more than one day notify the school each day of the reason for absence and expected date of return to school.
* Provide, where requested copies of dental and medical appointment cards and prescriptions in order that the school can authorise the absence of the child.
* Avoid taking their child out of school for holidays during term time.
* Approach any member of staff to discuss any concerns they have about their child’s attendance at an early stage.
* To support and work with the school staff to make improvements where there are concerns about school attendance or punctuality.

**School Responsibilities**

* Will take the school register promptly at the start of each session and ensure that any absence is coded in line with the DFE guidance for marking registers.
* Will provide a ‘First Day Response’ service and contact all parents of absent children where a reason for absence has not been received.
* Will provide advice and support to any parent or child that are experiencing difficulties in attending school.
* Will ensure that parents are regularly informed of their child’s attendance rate, through celebration assemblies, letters, telephone calls and home visits and where attendance is becoming a concern by the involvement of the schools Attendance Officer.

**Children’s Responsibility**

* To follow the school rules
* To attend school each day they are well enough to and fully participate in each lesson
* To talk to any member of staff if they have any worries about their time in school or coming to school.

**Registration**

The school use an electronic registration system to take the register each day. This is also used to analyse attendance data, trends in absence for individual and groups of children. This attendance and absence data is used to target school resources to improve attendance. There is a legal requirement upon schools to keep an attendance registration register on which, at the beginning of each morning and afternoon sessions, pupils are marked present or absent. At High Clarence School the registers are taken electronically via the schools SIMS electronic registration system.

The Education (Pupils’ Attendance Record) Regulations 1991 introduced a further requirement that attendance registers must show whether an absence of a pupil of compulsory school age is authorised or unauthorised.

The registers are taken in each class at the start of the first session at 8.45 a.m. and the start of the second session at 1 p.m. Teachers complete the registers in the first 5 minutes of the two sessions. Registers are saved after they are taken. Pupils present are marked by a diagonal line. Pupils absent will be marked by an N. The registers are then checked by the office staff by 9 a.m. and 1.15 p.m. respectively.

**First Day Response**

Parents are expected to contact the school by telephone, in writing or in person on the first day of absence of their child. Should this not happen the school office staff will conduct first day response and telephone the contact numbers on the schools computer system in an attempt to establish the whereabouts of the child and the reason for absence. Should no contact be made, attempts to contact the parent will be made throughout the day and to all other known contacts. If no contact can be made a home visit will be completed to ensure the child/ family are well. If a child continues to be absent without any contact with parents, the home visit was unsuccessful and there are safeguarding concerns then the following action will be taken:

* A request for any other information from any other professionals working with the family e.g. health visitor, school nurse
* Report to Social Services and/or Police and a request for a welfare check
* Make a Child Missing from Education (CME) referral which will be investigated by Stockton Local Authority

If a child returns to school and the parent/carer does not provide an acceptable reason for the absence this will be noted and the absence recorded as unauthorised.

**Telephone Numbers**

Updates of telephone numbers will take place regularly by the School Business Manager in order to ensure communication with parents however it is parent’s responsibility to let school know as soon as possible of any change in details including mobile phone numbers and home address. School will always endeavour to obtain emergency contact details for more than one person per child.

**Longer Term Absence**

After three days of absence an update will be obtained by telephone or home visit. The school may request medical evidence be provided by the parent in order that the absence can be authorised. This is usually the case where absence is longer than three days.

On the sixth day of absence the school will meet with parents/carers to assess the needs of the child and access to education. In some cases it may be appropriate to offer additional support in school, a phased return, part time timetable or home/school support.

Our Attendance Officer and school staff are available to discuss any problems that parents may be having getting their children to school regularly.

**Absence**

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by parents/carers), as either authorised or unauthorised. (See Absence Codes Appendix 1).

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason such as illness, medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable causes. The appropriate symbol will be entered into the register.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider is a good reason and therefore, ‘leave’ has not been granted, or, if parent/carers have failed to provide a valid explanation for their child’s absence. This type of absence can lead to sanctions and/or legal proceedings. Unauthorised leave includes:

* Absences which have not been properly explained/ no reason provided
* Taking time off for haircuts, shopping, birthdays
* Holidays in term time which have not been authorised

# Children with SEND and/ or health related absences

The school recognises that children with SEND and/or health conditions, including mental health issues, may face greater barriers to attendance. The school will put into place robust procedures and support plans to help children who find attending school difficult.

The school will ensure that reasonable adjustments are made for disabled pupils to reduce barriers to attendance, in line with any EHC plans or IHPs that have been implemented. The school will endeavour to secure additional support from external agencies to help improve attendance and secure the child’s access to regular education.

**Punctuality**

It is very important for the smooth running of the school and for pupil wellbeing that all children arrive at school on time each day. If a child misses the start of the day they can miss important work and this can also affect a child emotionally. Children may be reluctant to enter a class late or may not want to come into school if they have slept in. Whilst registration is open children who are late will be marked with an ‘L’ code, after close of registration a child should be marked absent with code ‘U’. The U code is used when children arrive more than 30 minutes after the start of the school day.

If a pupil has a persistent late record parents/carers will be notified in writing and may be asked to meet with the School Business Manager/Headteacher to discuss the problem. A report is looked at termly by the School Business Manager showing how many minutes in total individual children are late. This information is then relayed to parents/carers by letter.

The Attendance Officer may be involved if the incidents of poor punctuality are serious.

Parents/carers are welcome to contact school at any time if there are problems with attendance and punctuality.

**Monitoring Attendance**

Monitoring attendance is an integral part of the School Business Manager’s role. They have primary responsibility for monitoring the attendance of pupils in each registration group, for collecting information to explain absences, for maintaining an accurate register and for contacting home to obtain reasons for attendance and punctuality. The School Business Manager works closely with our Attendance Officer who may make unannounced home visits to parents were there is some concern over levels of attendance. Parents will be regularly reminded throughout the school year of their children level of attendance and invited into school at an early stage to discuss any concerns.

**Persistent Absenteeism (PA)**

A pupil becomes a ‘persistent absentee’ when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to a child’s education and it is important that school works pro-actively with parents/carers to remediate this situation.

All absence is closely monitored and any case that is seen to be approaching Persistent Absenteeism levels (90%) will be given priority and parents/carers will be invited into school to discuss the situation. The school’s Attendance Officer will also be informed and if required an action plan will be organised and implemented.

**Attendance 50% or below – Severely Absent (SA)**

It is rare that children would have such low attendance and when it does happen there are often very complex reasons. Families with children with this level of attendance can expect a multi agency response to improving attendance and engagement in education. This can, for example involve agencies such as social care.

**Involvement of the Local Authority and other agencies**

The school works in partnership with a number of agencies to support parents/ carers and children at our school. We know that from time to time parents/ carers and children need some extra support and where we are aware of this we will always do our best to help. Where attendance concerns have not been able to be resolved despite the involvement and support of the school and our Attendance Officer a referral may be made to the local authority.

The local authority can organise and invite parents to attend formal Attendance Case Conferences, issue Penalty Notice fines and ultimately where all other intervention has not secured regular attendance of the children prosecute parents/ carers for their child’s absence from school. The court may decide to impose fines, community service or custodial sentences.

**The Attendance Officer**

The Attendance Officer will contact parents/carers if attendance or punctuality is becoming a concern. Pupils are expected to have an average attendance of 96% in any full academic year, attendance should not fall below 96% unless there are extenuating circumstances. Attendance which falls below 96% will be monitored and parents/carers will be notified of this in writing. Further absences will not be authorised unless supported by medical evidence. (See Exemplar Attendance Monitoring Letters Appendix 4).

Parents/carers are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the Attendance Officer in resolving any problems together through an Action Plan. The aim is always for us to work together to improve a child’s attendance however where this does not happen despite continued efforts the Attendance Officer will consider using sanctions mentioned earlier such as referral to the local authority for penalty notice fines to be issued or in the most serious cases prosecution of parents.

**Appointments during the school day**

Parents/carers are asked to minimise time missed due to routine medical appointments. Where appointments during school time cannot be avoided the child should attend school and then be signed out at the school office. Parents/carers should show evidence of an appointment card/letter or text and if possible the child should return to school after the appointment.

Frequent or regular absence for appointments without evidence will trigger attendance monitoring procedures.

**Holidays in Term Time**

Taking holidays in term time will affect a child’s schooling as much as any other absence and school expects parents/carers to support us by not taking their child on holiday in term time.

A Form for leave of absence must be completed (See Absence Request Form Appendix 6) and all applications for leave of absence must be discussed fully with the headteacher prior to a decision being made.

All requests for leave of absence during term time for holidays will be unauthorised unless there are exceptional circumstances. Each application for leave of absence will be considered on its own merits and on the information provided by the parent.

Please note that even if this absence request is authorised parents/carers may still receive letters of concern from either the school or Attendance Officer if the child’s attendance drops below a level that the school deems acceptable.

If an application is returned with a Penalty Warning Notice and the absence goes ahead, copies of the application and the Warning Notice will be submitted to Stockton Local Authority and a request made to issue the parent(s) with a penalty notice fine.

**School targets, projects and special initiatives**

The school has targets to improve attendance (See School Improvement Plan 2022/23) and all staff, parents/carers, governors and children have an important part to play in meeting these targets. The whole school target is 96%.

As an initiative for children to reach this target school has introduced half-termly certificates and prizes for children with 100% attendance. School also presents Annual Attendance Awards at the end of year in the Leavers Service.

**Staff responsible for attendance in school are:**

Mrs Sue Wastell (School Business Manager)

Mrs Nicola Caraher (Headteacher)

Mrs Anne-Marie Cartwright (Attendance Officer)

The school has a duty to publish its absence figures to parents/carers and to promote attendance. Equally, parents/carers have a legal duty to make sure their children attend school. All school staff are committed to working with parents/carers and pupils in a positive and encouraging way in order to ensure that every child has excellent attendance which supports both their academic and emotional and social well-being.

Nicola Caraher

September 2022

**Appendix 1**

**Symbols for Marking the Register**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Present (a.m.) | / |
| Present (p.m.) | \ |
| Educated off-site | B |
| Other authorised circumstances | C |
| Dual registration (attending other establishment) | D |
| Excluded (no alternative provision made) | E |
| Family holiday (not agreed) | G |
| Family holiday agreed | H |
| Illness (not appointment) | I |
| Interview | J |
| Late (before the close of register) | L |
| Medical or dental appointment | M |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Reason Not Yet Provided | N |
| Unauthorised absence | O |
| Approved Sporting Activity | P |
| Religious observance | R |
| Study Leave | S |
| Traveller Absence | T |
| Late (after the close of registers) | U |
| Educational Visit | V |
| Work Experience | W |
| Non-compulsory school age absence | X |
| Enforced closure/ unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances | Y |

**LETTER 1**

Date

Dear <Parents Name>

Re: Attendance of <Child’s Name>

On checking our records I note that <childs name>’s attendance is currently …..%. Please find attached a copy of your child’s current attendance record.

High Clarence Primary School is dedicated to academic achievement and success for all students; regular school attendance is an integral part of that success.

An absence of 10 days over the course of one whole school year will result in attendance of below 95%, which below the national average of 96%. I am bringing this matter to your attention to ensure that you are aware of the implications of your child being absent from school.

Please ensure you contact school to advise them of your child’s absence and the reason for absence. If your child is absent due to illness could you please provide medical evidence such as an appointment card or prescription. If medical evidence is not possible would you please send in a parental note to explain the reason for absence.

If you require any advice or support to ensure that your child attends school regularly then please do not hesitate to make an appointment to speak to myself.

A good attendance record is crucial if children are to achieve at school and reach their full potential. I look forward to your co-operation and understanding in this matter and to noting an improvement in your child’s attendance over the course of the next two weeks.

Yours sincerely,

Headteacher

**LETTER 2**

Date

Dear <Parents Name>

Re: Attendance of <Child’s Name>

Further to my previous letter on <insert date of Letter 1> I am concerned at the continuing number of absences that <child’s name> has had from school. Please find enclosed your child’s attendance record which clearly shows the % of absences, both authorised and unauthorised.

Unfortunately there has been no improvement in your child’s attendance at school since this letter and your child’s attendance is currently <…%>. This is significantly below the national average and our target of ….%.

I am keen to address these attendance concerns with you promptly to minimise the loss of learning for your child in school.

I would therefore like to invite you to a meeting in school on …………………….…at ……………………..…am/pm. The purpose of the meeting is to put together a plan to support and improve <childs name>’s attendance.

If this date / time is not convenient, please telephone me on 01642 to re-arrange.

I look forward to meeting with you to begin this improvement to your child’s attendance at school.

Yours sincerely,

Headteacher

**LETTER 3**

Date

Dear <Parents Name>

Re: Attendance of <Child’s Name>

Further to my previous letter of <insert date of Letter 2>, I am sorry that you were unable to attend the meeting today regarding <childs name>’s absence at school. In your absence a plan was formulated to support <childs name>’s improved attendance. I have enclosed a copy for your records.

It is the duty of those with parental responsibility to secure the regular attendance of their child at school; failure to do so is an offence under the Education Act 1996.

<childs name>’s attendance will be closely monitored in school and will be reviewed on <date>. If <childs name> has further unauthorised absences from school we may refer to the local authority to commence legal proceedings.

If your child is experiencing any problems in school or medical issues affecting their attendance I would be grateful if you could contact me on 01642 so I can offer my support and advice.

Yours sincerely,

Headteacher

**LETTER 4**

Date

Dear <Parents Name>

Re: Attendance of <Child’s Name>

Following my letter of the <date> and after reviewing our reports I note that <childs name>’s attendance is currently …..%. Please find attached a copy of your child’s current attendance record.

I am very pleased to see that there has been an improvement over the course of the previous ……. weeks.

Can I please remind you that if your child is absent due to illness you should provide school with medical evidence such as an appointment card or prescription. If medical evidence is not possible would you please send in a parental note to explain the reason for absence.

We will continue to monitor <childs name>’s attendance over the coming weeks and look forward to its continued improvement.

Thank you for your help and understanding in this matter.

Yours sincerely,

Headteacher

**Appendix 6**

**ABSENCE REQUEST FORM (exceptional circumstances only)**

To: ***The Headteacher of High Clarence Primary School.***

*I wish to apply to have an absence authorised for*:

Child’s name …………………………………………………. Class/Year …….

Child’s name …………………………………………………. Class/Year …….

Child’s name …………………………………………………. Class/Year …….

Date from …………………………… date to ……………………………………………………(inclusive)

Name of Parent(s)/Carer(s): …………………………………………………………………………………...

Address: …………………………………………………………………...………………………………………

………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………

Please fully explain the **exceptional circumstances** that you would like the school to consider. This section must be completed. Please continue on a separate sheet if needed.

Signature of Parent(s)/Carer(s) ……………………………………………………………………………………………

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Office use only | | 🞏Absence authorised Code \_\_\_\_  🞏Absence unauthorised  Signed \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Headteacher |
| Date form received | No of school days absence requested |
|  |  |

✂-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

**This portion to be returned to parents/carers**

Please note that even if this absence request is authorised you may still receive letters of concern from either the school or Local Authority if your child’s attendance drops below a level that the school deems acceptable.

Pupil(s) name(s)………………………………………………………..………………………………………...

Class/Year ……………………………………………………………………………………………………….

🞏 Absence authorised from ………………………to ….………………..………. (Inclusive)

🞏 Absence unauthorised current attendance ………… % as of ………/………/20……

Signed ………………………………………..…… (Headteacher) Date………………………..……………………..…

**NOTES TO PARENTS/CARERS**

The law does not grant parents/carers an automatic right to take their children out of school during term time. If the request is for an absence in term time you must have Parental Responsibility and be the parent/carer with whom the child normally lives. Permission **must** be sought in **advance.** If the circumstances relating to this request are considered exceptional and the absence is authorised by the school, the authorising of the absences will be conditional on the child(ren) attending satisfactory up to the date covered by this request.

**WARNING TO PARENTS**

If the school refuses your request and the child is still taken out of school, this will be recorded as an unauthorised absence. A significant amount of unauthorised absence may make you liable to a Penalty Notice for each child (£60 - £120), payable by each parent/carer, or the subject of court proceedings which could result in a fine of up to £2,500 and/or a term of imprisonment of up to 3 months.

**AVOIDABLE ABSENCE IN TERM-TIME**

**IMPORTANT: Please read carefully the information below.**

**WARNING: If you allow your child to miss school in term time for an avoidable reason without obtaining the prior approval of the school, you may be issued with a Penalty Notice\* per parent per child, or made the subject of court proceedings under section 444 Education Act 1996.**

**As a parent/carer, you can demonstrate your commitment to your child’s education by not allowing your child to miss school for anything other than an exceptional and unavoidable reason.**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **THE FACTS** | **THE LAW** |
| School aged pupils in maintained schools are expected to attend punctually on the 190 days that the school is open. Whilst there are a number of unavoidable reasons why a pupil might be away from school (illness, medical appointments, exclusions etc.), the legislation is clear that any avoidable absence may only be authorised by a school if there are exceptional circumstances.  **WHAT YOU SHOULD CONSIDER**  Research suggests that children who are taken out of school may never catch up on the learning they have missed. This may affect test results and can be particularly harmful if the child is studying for final year examinations.  Children who struggle with English or Mathematics may also find it even harder to cope when they return to school, while younger children may find it difficult to renew friendships with their classmates.  If the school is unable to authorise the absence and the child is still taken out of school, this will be recorded as **unauthorised absence** and you may receive a £60\* fine per parent for each child. | The law allows schools to consider individual requests to authorise a future avoidable absence. However before the school can authorise any such requests, they must satisfy themselves that there are exceptional circumstances which justify such a decision. It is entirely the responsibility of the parent submitting the request to provide sufficient information/evidence in order to establish this fact. The request for leave must come from a parent with whom the child normally resides  If a child then stays away from school for more than the authorised period this must be recorded as unauthorised absence and could be quoted in a prosecution for poor attendance.  If the child is away from school for a total of four weeks or more, the school may have the option to take the child off roll subject to the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006.  In the case of unexpected extended absence, it is advisable that the parent fully informs the school as to the reasons. If a child is removed from roll, there is no guarantee that the child will regain a place at the school. |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Unavoidable absence from school will be authorised if it is for the following reasons:**   * + - Genuine illness     - Unavoidable medical / dental appointments (but try to make these after school if at all possible)     - Days of religious observance     - Seeing a parent who is on leave from the armed forces     - External examinations     - When a child of GRT heritage travels in connection with their parents business and the child is not registered at another school | **Other examples of absence from school that will not be authorised:**   * + - Any type of shopping     - Looking after siblings or unwell parents     - Minding the house     - Birthdays     - Resting after a late night     - Relatives visiting or visiting relatives |
| Please contact your child’s head teacher if you wish to discuss this issue.  **The law requires parents to ensure their children receive an efficient full time education, and every minute of every day is important. Please help them not to miss any of this valuable time.**  We hope that when you have read this leaflet you will consider that your child’s education is too important to allow them to miss school for avoidable reasons. | |

\*Penalty Notice £60 if paid within 21 days, increasing to £120 if paid after 21 days and before 28 days