



Holme C of E Primary Academy Academy Attendance Policy

Date agreed: September 2023

Review date: September 2024 or earlier if appropriate

Introduction

Regular and punctual school attendance is important. Pupils need to attend school regularly if they are to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them by law. Holme C of E Primary Academy recognises its responsibilities to ensure pupils are in school and on time, therefore having access to learning for the maximum number of days and hours.

Our policy applies to all children registered at our schools and this policy is made available to all parents/carers of pupils via our school website.

This policy has been written to adhere to the relevant Children Acts, Education Acts, Regulations and Guidance from the Department for Education in addition to guidance from the Local Authority.

Although parents/carers have the legal responsibility for ensuring their child's good attendance, the staff and Governors at our schools work together with other professionals and agencies to ensure that all pupils are encouraged and supported to develop good attendance habits. Procedures in this policy are followed to ensure this happens.

Children who are persistently late or absent soon fall behind with their learning. Children who are absent from school frequently develop large gaps in their learning which will impact on their progress and their ability to meet age related learning expectations. A child whose attendance drops to 90% each year will, over their time at primary school, have missed two whole terms of learning.

Aims and Objectives

This attendance policy ensures that all staff and governors in our schools are fully aware of and clear about the actions necessary to promote good attendance.

We expect attendance at school to be 100%, unless there are exceptional or unavoidable reasons for absence.

Through this Policy we aim to:

- Improve pupils' achievement by ensuring high levels of attendance and punctuality.
- Create an ethos in which good attendance and punctuality are recognised as the norm and seen to be valued by the school.
- Raise awareness of parents, carers and pupils of the importance of uninterrupted attendance and punctuality at every stage of a child's education.
- Work in partnership with pupils, parents and staff so that all pupils realise their potential, unhindered by unnecessary absence.
- Promote a positive and welcoming atmosphere in which pupils feel safe, secure, and valued, and encourage in pupils a sense of their own responsibility.
- Establish a pattern of monitoring attendance and ensure consistency in recognising achievement and dealing with difficulties.

- Recognise the key role of all staff, but especially class teachers, in promoting good attendance.

We maintain and promote good attendance and punctuality through:

- Raising awareness of attendance and punctuality issues among all staff, parents and pupils.
- Ensuring that parents have an understanding of the responsibility placed on them for making sure their child attends regularly and punctually.
- Equipping children with the life skills needed to take responsibility for good school attendance and punctuality appropriate to the child's age and development.
- Maintaining effective means of communication with parents, pupils, staff and governors on school attendance matters.
- Developing and implementing procedures for identifying, reporting and reviewing cases of poor attendance and persistent lateness.
- Supporting pupils who have been experiencing any difficulties at home or at school which are preventing good attendance.
- Developing and implementing procedures to follow up non -attendance at school.
- Rewarding pupils with 100% attendance at the end of each term and academic year.

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 carer. For example, if a child has been unwell and the parent telephones the school to explain the absence.

Only the school can make an absence authorised. Parents do not have this authority. Consequently, not all absences reported by parents will be classified as authorised.

Unauthorised absence

An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of the school.

Therefore, the absence is unauthorised if a child is away from school without good reason, even with the support of a parent.

Procedures

Holme C of E Primary Academy will undertake to follow the following procedures to support good attendance:

- Maintain appropriate registration processes.
- Maintain appropriate attendance data.
- Communicate clearly the attendance procedures and expectations to all staff, governors, parents and pupils.
- Follow up absences and persistent lateness if parents/carers have not communicated with the school.

- Inform parents/carers what constitutes authorised and unauthorised absence.
- Strongly discourage unnecessary absence through holidays taken during term time and make requests for the issue of a penalty notice for unauthorised term time leave.
- Work with parents to improve individual pupils attendance and punctuality
- Make a request for a penalty notice or prosecution for unauthorised absence for any child whose attendance causes concern and where parents/carers have not responded to school initiatives to improve.

Responsibilities

All members of school staff have a responsibility for identifying trends in attendance and punctuality. The following includes a more specific list of the kinds of responsibilities which individuals might have.

Class teacher

Class teachers are responsible for:

- Keeping an accurate record of attendance
- Informing the Headteacher where there are concerns regarding the attendance of pupils in their class.
- Emphasising with their class the importance of good attendance and promptness
- Discussing attendance issues at consultation evenings where necessary

Headteacher

The Headteacher holds the overall responsibility for attendance:

- Overall monitoring of school attendance
- Trends in authorised and unauthorised absence
- Contacting families where concerns are raised about absence including arranging meetings to discuss attendance issues
- Monitoring individual attendance where concerns have been raised
- Making requests for the issue of penalty notices for any unauthorised term time leave.
- Making requests for penalty notices or prosecutions for unauthorised absence for any child whose attendance causes concern and where parents/carers have not responded to school initiatives to improve.
- Sending out standard letters regarding attendance
- Liaising with other professionals to determine potential sources of difficulties and reasons for absence.

Administration staff

Staff in the School Office are responsible for:

- Taking and recording messages from parents regarding absence
- Ensuring the Absence/Late Book is completed

- Contacting parents of absent children where no contact has been made.
- Recording details of children who arrive late or go home

Parents/Carers

Parents/Carers are responsible for:

- Ensuring that their child attends school regularly and punctually unless prevented from doing so by illness or attendance at a medical appointment.
- Contacting the school office on the first morning of absence.
- Informing the school in advance of any medical appointments in school time. For the absence to be recorded as a medical absence we do require evidence from the doctor or dentist. (Appointment card/letter, copy of prescription or medication packaging with child's name)
- Talking to the school as soon as possible about any child's reluctance to come to school so that problems can be quickly identified and dealt with.

Parents/Carers are responsible for making sure that children of compulsory school age receive a suitable full-time education. A child reaches compulsory school age on or after their fifth birthday. If they turn five between 1 September and 31 December, then they are of compulsory school age on 31 December; if they turn five between 1 January and 31 March, they are of compulsory age on 31 March; if they turn five between 1 April and 31 August, they are of compulsory school age on 31 August.

Registration

The gate to the playground will be opened at 8:35am for children to line up on the playground in their classes. The Academy doors open at 8:40am and close at 8:45am. Children enter through the playground door and proceed quickly into their classrooms to complete their first learning activity. Registration is taken at 8:45am and any pupil who arrives after this time will need to enter through the main school office and will be marked as Late (L).

Each class teacher has the responsibility for keeping an accurate record of attendance. Any pupil who is absent must be recorded at the beginning of the morning and afternoon session. The electronic attendance register must be completed by the class teacher (or cover person taking the class).

All attendance records are documented using Pupil Asset. Attendance registers are legal documents and these must be kept secure and preserved for a period of three years after the date they were last used.

Lateness

It is important that children attend school on time every day; this is the parent/carer's responsibility to ensure this happens. It is very disruptive for a class and the teacher when a child is late after the lesson has begun and it is equally distressing for the child to enter the classroom late too.

From 8:45am - **Arrival at school after Registration closes (use of 'L' code starts)**

From 9:00am - **'U' code starts**

Time

A record is also kept of the amount of minutes a pupil is late, this is documented on Pupil Asset. On entry to the school, it is the responsibility of the parent to sign their child in at the front office, giving a reason for the child arriving late to school.

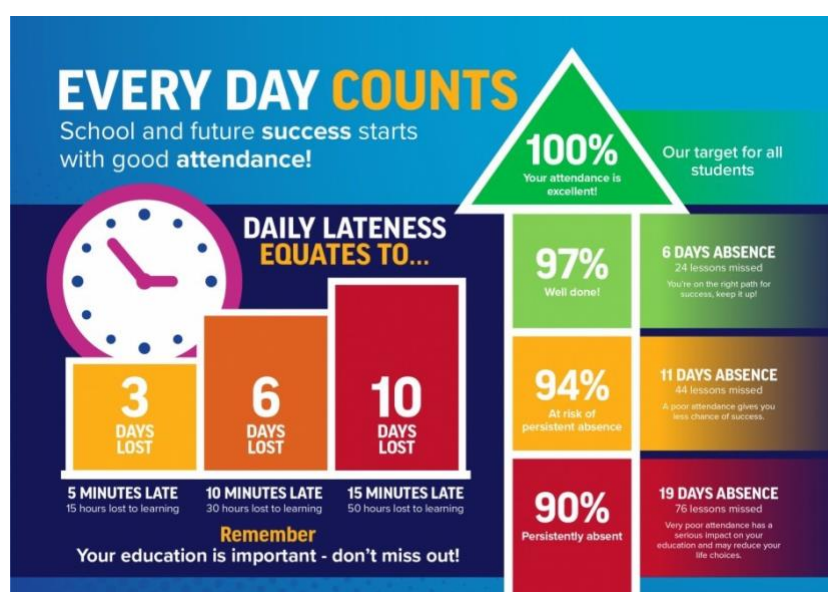
Where there have been persistent incidents of lateness parents/carers will receive a letter advising them of the concerns and the school will provide opportunities for parents/carers to seek support and advice to address these issues. If the persistent incidents continue a request will be made for the issue of a penalty notice for unauthorised absence.

Absences

Parents/carers should contact the school on the first (and each subsequent) day of their child's absence. When parents/carers notify us of their child's absence it is important that they provide us with details of the reason for their absence.

All absences are recorded as either authorised or unauthorised electronically using Pupil Asset. It is important that we receive accurate information from parents with reasons for the child's absence. This information is used to determine whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised. The Headteacher, with support of the Assistant Headteacher, has the responsibility to determine whether absences are authorised or unauthorised.

Where we have not received reasons for a child's absence, we will seek an explanation from parents/carers. If an explanation is not forthcoming then the absence will be recorded as an unauthorised absence (Attendance Code O).



First Day Contact

Where a child is absent from school and we have not received any verbal or written communication from the parent, then we initiate a first day contact process. Office staff check all of the registers from 09.00 a.m. to 9.30 a.m. on a daily basis, to identify those pupils who are absent. There are occasions when we are unaware why the child is absent and we will contact the parent to check the reasons for the child's absence. This is to ensure school knows where the child is and that they are safe.

Where there are concerns for a child's whereabouts and the school has been unable to make contact with a parent/carer, the pupil's home will be visited by two members of school staff. A letter will be hand delivered, requesting that the parents contact the school to explain the pupil's absence. If the school fails to receive contact from a parent/carer then they will follow their Safeguarding and Child Protection protocols which may involve a referral to the Police or Children's Social Care.

Illness

If a child is unwell, it is the parent/carers responsibility to notify the school on the first day of absence and each morning during the illness. No child should attend school until 48 hours after they have suffered sickness and/or diarrhoea.

If a child becomes unwell during the school day, the school will make every effort to contact parents/carers so that the child can be collected. It is the parent/carers responsibility to ensure the school has up to date contact details.

When children have an illness that means they will be away from school long term, 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 the support services for advice.

Where over the course of an academic year, a child has repeated periods of illness, the school will write to parents to ask them to provide medical evidence for each future period of illness related absence. This evidence could be a Doctor's note, appointment card or copy of a prescription. We may seek written permission from you for the school to make their own enquiries.

Parental Request for Absence from School during term time (exceptional circumstances only)

With effect from September 2013 the government made it clear that Headteachers **may not** grant any leave of absence during term time unless 'exceptional circumstances' exist. Parents must complete an absence request form (exceptional circumstances only) if their child is to be absent from school for any other reason than illness. The form can be downloaded from the school website, found at the end of this policy or a paper copy collected from the school office. The school will then return the reply slip section of the form to parents to inform them whether their request has been authorised or not.

Penalty Notice or Prosecution

Unauthorised Absence

If you allow your child to miss school for at least 8 unauthorised sessions (4 days) over an 8-week period or their attendance is 90% and below being mostly unauthorised over a longer period of time, you may be issued with a penalty notice or made the subject of court proceedings under section 444 of the Education Act 1996. Penalty Notices may only be served in accordance with the County Council's code of conduct.

Unauthorised Term Time Leave

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, or made the subject of court proceedings under section 444 of the Education Act 1996. Penalty Notices may only be served in accordance with the County Council's code of conduct.

The amount of a Penalty Notice is £60 per parent per child if paid within 21 days, increasing to £120 per parent per child if paid after 21 days and before 28 days. Should a parent or carer on whom a notice is served fail to pay the fine in full within the specified time he/she will be liable to prosecution in a Magistrates court where on conviction a sentence of a fine up to £2,500 or up to three months in prison may be imposed.

Addressing Attendance Concerns

The schools expect attendance at school to be 100%, unless there are exceptional or unavoidable reasons for absence.

It is important for children to establish good attendance habits early on in their primary school career. It is the responsibility of the Headteacher, Senior Leadership Team and the Governors to support good attendance and to identify and address attendance concerns promptly. In primary school we rely upon parents to ensure their child attends school regularly and punctually and therefore where there are concerns regarding attendance parents are always informed of our concerns. Initially concerns about attendance are raised with parents via letters which are sent home. There will be opportunities for the parent/carers to discuss reasons for absence and support to be given by the school with the aim to improve attendance. Where a child's attendance record does not improve over a period of time then the school has a responsibility to make a request for a penalty notice or prosecution for unauthorised absence.

Monitoring Attendance

The Headteacher, Assistant Headteacher and our office staff have the responsibility for ensuring that all of the attendance data is accurately recorded on Pupil Asset. Regular meetings are held with the Headteacher and Assistant Headteacher to discuss all attendance concerns and appropriate actions are taken such as letters sent to parents or meetings arranged to discuss attendance concerns with parents.

Absence Letters - informing parents of a child's poor attendance.

The school follows the Local Authorities three-letter system for addressing poor attendance:

Initial Absence Letter – will be sent to the parents/ carers of any child who has recorded an absence rate of less than 95%, where the attendance is of concern or mostly unauthorised, over a six-week period.

2nd Absence Letter – will be sent when attendance has not improved satisfactorily after letter 1. A meeting will be held to discuss the child's poor attendance and SMART targets will be set to be monitored weekly.

3rd Absence Letter - If the target is not met satisfactorily, the school will make a request for an urgent meeting and set further SMART targets will be set to be monitored for a period of 4 weeks. If no improvement is recorded then the school will make a request for a penalty notice or prosecution for unauthorised absence for any child whose attendance causes concern and where parents/carers have not responded to school initiatives to improve.

Late Letter – lateness will be monitored alongside attendance and where a child is deemed to be missing a significant amount of learning time due to lateness, a late letter will be issued to parents/carers.

Suspected Holiday Letter – If school receive information from other sources that cause us to believe that your child's absences is due to a family holiday a suspected holiday letter will be issued to parents/carers. If we do not hear from parents/carers within 7 days or we do not agree with the information given the absence will be recorded as 'G' denoting an unauthorised family holiday. If unauthorised absences are recorded a Penalty Notice can be issued.

Rewards

Headteacher awards are a part of the schools culture of celebration. From time-to-time children will be rewarded for excellent attendance (100%) e.g., for a whole year. This may involve receipt of a special attendance certificate or a specific reward for the group/class/individual with the best attendance record.

Monitoring and reviewing attendance

The Local Governing Body and Trustees

The Local Governing Body are responsible for monitoring attendance figures for the whole school on at least a termly basis and reporting this to the Trustees who have overall responsibility for all Trust school's attendance figures. The Local Governing Body also hold the Headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy.

The Headteacher

The Headteacher is responsible for ensuring this policy is implemented consistently across the school, and for monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to Governors. The Headteacher also supported other staff in monitoring the attendance of individual pupils and issues fixed-penalty notices, where necessary.

The Headteacher also:

- Monitors attendance data at school and individual pupil level.
- Works with Educational Welfare Officers to tackle persistent absence.
- Arranges calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues or delegates this to appropriate members of the SLT.
- Supports staff in promoting importance of punctuality and good attendance.

The school keeps accurate records on file. Parents receive a copy of their child's annual attendance alongside the written annual report in July. Attendance records are kept on file for a minimum period of three years. Class teachers are responsible for monitoring attendance in their class. If they are aware of any unexpected absence during the school day, they will alert the school office and/or Headteacher as soon as possible.

Policy agreement and review

This policy will be reviewed annually or sooner, should there be changes to the DfE legislation and/or guidance.