



Attendance letter

Dear Parents,

As we return to school, I wanted to remind parents about the importance of attending school every day and outlining the school's policy on attendance. Please see below the policy which sets out expectations on attendance.

It is recognised that children who have poor attendance struggle to catch up with lost learning, do not make as much progress as their peers, worry about what they have missed impacting on their well-being, miss their friends and in some cases their friendship groups are negatively impacted. Please see the following statement from research carried out by the DFE;

At primary school, children who attend school nearly every day (95-100% attendance) are 30% more likely to reach the expected standard in reading, writing and maths compared to similar pupils who attend 90-95% of the time.

This year there will be a couple of new things we will be implementing to support our drive for good attendance. Firstly, termly good attendance certificates for those children who have 95% or above attendance (we will ensure those children who are absent through genuine illness will not have their absence included). If your child is absent for any other reason than illness you will receive a postcard 'What your child has missed' to show what they have missed in school. We will also be sending attendance letters more frequently for children whose attendance drops into the 91% to 95% due to absence.

In terms of illness, we do recognise children do get common childhood illnesses and will be poorly. We will be monitoring the frequency of occasions this occurs for those children who are absent regularly due to sickness. These actions have been based on an analysis of attendance patterns last academic year.

Our school attendance was for the last academic year 93.6% which is below where it should be. It should be 95% or better. Attendance is a key judgement when we are externally monitored for example by Ofsted, so we all need to work together to support better attendance for our children.

Policy headlines

School opens: 8.50a.m.

Registration begins: 9.00a.m.

U code, un-authorised absence, applied after 9.20 a.m.

School closes: 3.00 p.m.

How to report when your child is absent either call on 02380474835 or send a message via my child at school.

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.

- Contact the school office for the attention of Mrs. Keep or Mrs. Harley as soon as possible on the first day of absence by 9.00 a.m. where possible.
- If contact is not made by the parent/carer, then the school will phone, email and/or text the contacts listed for the child to endeavour to make contact.
- If we are unable to make contact or ascertain sufficient reason for absence, a member of staff may make a home visit.
- Records of the above will be made available to social care in the event of any Missing in Education investigation.

If your child is absent, we will:

Telephone 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 are unable to reach you and do not hear from you by 10am, your child's absence will be recorded as unauthorised, and we will:

- Invite you into the school to discuss the situation with the headteacher if absences persist.
- Follow all DfE guidance and our graduated response if absence is unauthorized and attendance falls below 90%.

Please note after three days of absence, if your child is not seen and contact has not been established with any of the named parents/carers, the school is required to start child missing in education procedures as per the DfE guidance [Stat guidance template \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk). We will make all reasonable enquiries to establish contact with parents/carers and the child, including making enquiries to known friends and/or wider family.

We recognise that good attendance (above 96%) is key to good pupil outcomes. The links between regular attendance, reaching potential attainment and future life opportunities are well researched. For this reason, the school will encourage good attendance and be robust in monitoring attendance data and act when attendance falls below the expected level. Good attendance impacts significantly on progress, learning, friendship groups and the child's overall happiness at school.

Good attendance is important because:

- 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
- statistics show a direct link between under-achievement and absence below 95%
- regular attenders are more successful in transferring between primary school, secondary school and higher education and training.

We understand that there are many reasons why children may be absent or late for school. Please speak to staff about ways that we can support you with this

This policy adheres to Department of Education guidance found here [Working together to improve school attendance \(applies from 19 August 2024\) \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#). Parents are responsible for making sure that their children of compulsory school age receive a suitable full-time education as stated here [Summary table of responsibilities for school attendance \(applies from 19 August 2024\) \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

Parents and carers are responsible for ensuring that children attend and stay at school. It is the responsibility of the school to support attendance and to take problems seriously which may lead to non-attendance.

Penalty Notices may be used under the Local Authority's Code of Conduct for the use of Penalty Notices in Cases of Non-Attendance at school. A copy of this Code of Conduct can be obtained from the Attendance Officer at the school or the Local Authority following this link [School attendance and support \(southampton.gov.uk\)](#). Parents can also refer to Appendix 2-5.

Unauthorised absence of more than 10 sessions (a session being one morning or one afternoon) in a ten-week period can result in a penalty notice. A penalty notice can be issued per parent for each child that is absent. Only two penalty notices will be issued to the same parent for the same child within a 3-year period. Following this the Local Authority can consider instigating Court Proceedings via the Single Justice Procedure. Under the new national framework, all schools will be required to consider a fine when a child has missed 10 or more sessions (5 days) for unauthorised reasons. From August 2024, the fine for school absences across the country will be **£80 if paid within 21 days**, or **£160 if paid within 28 days**. This rate is in line with inflation and is the first increase since 2012. In the case of repeated fines, if a parent receives a second fine for the same child within any three-year period, this will be charged at the higher rate of £160. Fines per parent will be capped to two fines within any three-year period. Once this limit has been reached, other action like a parenting order or prosecution will be considered. If you're prosecuted and attend court because your child hasn't been attending school, you could get a fine of up to £2,500. Money raised via fines is only used by the local authority to cover the costs of administering the system, and to fund attendance support. Any extra money is returned to the government.

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/Carers will:

- Inform the school on the first day of absence
- Discuss with the class teacher or attendance staff any planned absences
- Discuss with the class teacher or attendance staff if they need any support to help their child to attend.
- Support the school with their aim to improve attendance
- Make sure that any absence is clearly accounted for by either calling on 02380474835 or sending a message via my child at school on the first day and subsequent days of absence
- Avoid taking their children out of school for non-urgent medical or dental appointments.
- Only request leave of absence in very exceptional circumstances.

- **100% attendance:** This is excellent attendance
- **99.9% - 96% attendance:** Your child's attendance is good, and you are giving them the best chance of success.
- **95.9% - 91.1% attendance:** Attendance at this level is becoming a concern and may trigger an intervention listed below.

Attendance **below 95%** will be monitored closely and may result in the following:

- Contact home to discuss how to support the child back into school.
- Request for evidence if your child is unwell where appropriate.
- Referral to the education welfare service

Below 90% attendance: Your child is considered a **Persistent Absentee** and attendance is a serious concern. If your child misses 10% (three weeks/30sessions) 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 their 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 is still absent, has had absence and their attendance level is falling towards 90%, we will contact you and, depending on the reasons for the absence, will contact you to inform you of our next steps. Our persistent absentee pupils and their parents are subject to an Attendance contract written in co production with the school and home.

Our aim is to support with reintegration, and this might include the following: offering breakfast club, use of the attendance minibus for families living in Harefield, Portswood or St Denys, certificates, in school incentives, reward systems, support from family support worker or ELSA and support with transport by applying for bus passes.

Below 50% attendance: Your child is considered a **Severe Absentee** and will be subject to intervention from the Local Authority, legal interventions, statutory action including fixed term penalties, court proceedings and possible referral to other outside agencies for a supported return.

Absence Due to Illness

It is recognised that children can become ill and may occasionally need to have time off school. If the school feel that the pupil may need further support with maintaining good health or there are concerns around the number of times the pupil is ill, school will request parents to provide medical evidence to support the family and school in implementing effective support.

Letters and recommendations from medical professionals will be considered on a case-by-case basis but will not automatically be seen as a reason to authorise an absence.

Absences due to parents/carers health or medical procedures will not be authorised as standard.

If your child is unwell and you are unsure of whether to send them in to school a useful site to check is <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/healthy-body/is-my-child-too-ill-for-school/>

The school may be able to administer some over the counter medications with parental consent, to help your child manage minor illness when in school. This will be decided on a case-by-case basis.

Request for leave of absence

The DfE states: ‘Head teachers should only authorise leave of absence in exceptional circumstances. If a head teacher grants a leave request, it will be for the head teacher to determine the length of time that the child can be away from school. Leave is unlikely, however, to be granted for the purposes of a family holiday as a norm.’

Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are **exceptional** circumstances only and this is not the norm. It is important to note that Headteachers can determine the length of the authorised absence as well as whether the absence is authorised at all.

The fundamental principles for defining ‘exceptional’ are rare, significant, or unavoidable circumstances (which means the event could not reasonably be scheduled at another time). Circumstances will vary from family to family.

There is no legal entitlement for time off in school time to go on holiday and, in most cases, holiday will not be authorised.

Parents/Carers wishing to apply for a leave of absence need to fill in an application form (available on request from the school office) in advance and before making any travel arrangements. If term time leave is taken without prior permission from the school, the absence will automatically be unauthorised and if the number of sessions absent exceeds 10 sessions, the school may request the Local Authority to consider issuing a fine or a warning letter.

Taking holidays in term time will affect your child’s schooling as much as any other absence and as such, we expect parents to help us by not arranging holidays during school time.

Unauthorised absence of more than 10 sessions (a session being one morning or afternoon) in a ten-week period can be issued with a penalty notice.

School work for pupils that are absent will only be provided during exclusions or long-term medical absences and not during unauthorised absences.

Religious Observance

We recognise that pupils of certain faiths may need to participate in days of religious observance. Where a day of religious observance:

- falls during school time and
- has been exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil belongs.

The absence will be authorised. We ask that the parents/carers notify the school in advance.

If you need any support with your child’s attendance or have any worries about your child - myself, Mrs Jones and Mrs Tucker, our family support worker, are always available to help. Please contact the school office on 02380474835 or email info@townhill-inf.net and ask for one of us to contact you. Alternatively, please come to the school office and ask to speak to us.

I hope that, together, your child will have good attendance this academic year and I look forward to being able to celebrate this by giving your child a good attendance certificate each term.

Beverly Corbin- Headteacher