



Hasland Infant School

Attendance Policy

Reviewed By	Charlotte Lavender
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Attendance Policy

Introduction

It is important for children to establish good attendance habits early on in their school career and we aspire to the highest standards of attendance for all children. Research shows a strong link between good attendance and increased attainment. It is the responsibility of the Headteacher and the Governors to support good attendance and to identify and address attendance concerns promptly. We rely upon parents/carers to ensure their child attends school regularly and punctually and therefore where there are concerns regarding attendance parents/carers are always informed of our concerns. We will work in partnership with parents/carers and other agencies to support strong attendance and punctuality for every child and we have clear and robust strategies in place to support this (see appendix1). The school's Senior Attendance Champion is Mrs Charlotte Lavender (info@hasland-inf.derbyshire.sch.uk).

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. Parents/carers have the legal responsibility for ensuring their child's regular attendance and failure to do so is a criminal offence under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996.

Aims and Objectives

This attendance policy ensures that all staff, Governors and parents/carers in our school are fully aware of and clear about the actions necessary to promote good attendance.

Through this policy we aim to:

- Maximise attendance rates and secure high levels of punctuality to ensure that all children are able to take advantage of the learning experiences available to them to ensure that each child meets his/her full potential.
- Provide consistent information to children and families (see child friendly policy appendix 2)

Definitions

Authorised absence

An absence is classified as authorised when a child has been away from school for a legitimate unavoidable 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 Headteacher can decide on whether an absence is authorised or not. Sometimes, even if absence is supported by parents/carers, an absence will be unauthorised.

Unauthorised absence

An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of the school even if the absence is supported by the parents/carers.

Procedures

To manage and promote regular attendance our school will:

- Monitor individual children's attendance.
- Rigorously use attendance data to identify patterns or poor attendance as soon as possible so all parties can work together to resolve them.
- Keep parents updated on attendance via letters home, newsletters and meetings
- Report to parents/carers on their child's progress and whether this has been affected by their attendance via parent's evening and individual conversations
- Celebrate and reward good attendance through a weekly acknowledgement to the class with the best attendance and a half termly award for the year group who has achieved the most attendance points.
- Celebrate any child whose attendance is improving each week despite being below the Government Target of 96%. A parent hub message will be sent home to acknowledge this improvement.

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:

- Recording the attendance of children.
- Monitoring of individual children's attendance.
- The day-to-day engagement of children with the curriculum and their happiness in school.
- Reporting to the Headteacher any unusual patterns of attendance

Headteacher

The Headteacher is responsible for:

- Making parents/carers aware of the benefits of good attendance
- The overall engagement of children in school.
- The overall happiness of children in school.
- Overseeing the policy on a day-to-day basis.
- Monitoring absence.
- Monitoring holidays.
- Reporting to Governors.
- Following Government guidelines on attendance.

Governors

- Governors are responsible of ensuring that the Headteacher follows the procedures outlined in the policy.
- Regularly review attendance data at Governor meetings and examine recent and historic trends at school level as well as bench marking to comparator schools within the local authority, region and nation-wide.

Administration staff

Administration staff are responsible for:

- Recording absences when informed by parents
- Following up on absences when not reported as per safeguarding requirements
- Complete administrative tasks as per policy

Family Support Worker (FSW)

The school's FSW is a role designed to support families who need additional help – including with attendance & punctuality. Our Family Support Worker is Nicki Boucher.

In this policy, the FSW is responsible for:

- Helping families achieve better attendance.
- Supporting good punctuality
- Engaging with and supporting families when it has been identified they need support with attendance.
- Reporting to the Headteacher on their findings.

Parents/Carers

Parents/Carers are responsible for:

- Ensuring their child attends school regularly.
- Ensuring their child attends school punctually.
- Informing school immediately if their child cannot attend school.
- Booking medical appointments where possible outside the school day
- Book holidays out of school term time unless exceptional circumstances have been agreed with the Headteacher
- Engaging with the school (e.g. FSW) if attendance / punctuality appears to be of concern .

Registration

The school doors open at 8:40am and children are expected to be in school by 8:50am – with registers closing at 8.55am. This gives plenty of time for all pupils to come into their classroom and be ready to learn when lessons start. Afternoon registration takes place at either 12.30 or 1pm inline with staggered lunchtimes. The school day ends at 3.20pm.

Each class teacher has the responsibility for marking the attendance register at the beginning of the morning and afternoon session.

All attendance records are documented using the school's management information system. Attendance registers are legal documents, and these must be kept secure and preserved in line with the relevant retention schedule

Lateness

Children who are persistently late after close of register soon fall behind with their learning. Any pupil who comes into school after 8.55 am will be marked as late. Records are kept of those pupils who are late; this is documented on the electronic register for each pupil (Attendance code L).

Any child who arrives after 9.05am will receive an unauthorised absence (Attendance code U). This is an unauthorised absence for the whole session and will affect parent/carer child's

overall attendance percentage and can be used to calculate absence thresholds for legal decision making.

Children who have attended a dentist or doctor's appointment and subsequently come to school later than 8:55am will have the absence recorded as a medical absence (Attendance code M). Proof of the appointment will need to be shown.

All late marks are monitored daily and weekly by the Headteacher and office staff (see appendix 3)

Where there are concerns about punctuality, parents/carers will be contacted, and support will be offered to overcome any home or school barriers there are to attendance. If your child receives numerous unauthorised lates (U) this may result in a penalty notice for each parents/carers.

Absences

Absences are recorded in the school's management information system. A report is compiled each week and analysed by the Headteacher to investigate if there are any patterns of absence or any absences that have not been explained or where the reasons provided cause concern. Contact may be made to discuss any concerns.

National Framework for penalty notices

To provide consistency, the Government have introduced a new national framework for when schools and Local Authorities believe that they have exhausted all offers of support and the parent/carer is not engaging with the attempt to improve their child's attendance at school.

The threshold for when a school should consider next steps is 10 sessions (5 school days) of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks. A school week means any week in which there is at least one school session. This can be made up of any form of unauthorised absence including late after close (attendance code U) of register and odd days of unauthorised absence (attendance code O) which add up to 5 days within a 10-week period.

Unauthorised leave that does not meet the threshold

In the first instance where there is a period of unauthorised leave in term time for less than 5 days the school will formally notify the parents/carers in writing that whilst a penalty notice will not be issued on this occasion, that the absence will be marked with a G code and that any further periods of unauthorised absence may result in a penalty notice being requested regardless of the length.

Escalation process

In line with the new Government guidance Derbyshire County Council's new code of conduct states that the Local Authority will not issue more than two penalty notices within a 3-year period, consequently a third request will automatically result in consideration of a straight to court prosecution.

Challenge letters

Where a child is absent with no reason or the reason provided gives the Headteacher grounds to believe that the child is/has been on holiday then the Headteacher will challenge this absence and apply for a penalty notice to be issued.

Education Penalty Notices are issued to parents of statutory school age children. They can be issued to each parent or carer who is deemed liable for the child's absence from school. The new costs and process is outlined below:

First Offence

The first time a Penalty Notice is issued for Term Time Leave or Irregular Attendance the amount will be:

£160 per parent, per child paid within 28 days.

Reduced to £80 per parent, per child if paid within 21 days.

Second Offence (within 3 years)

The second time a Penalty Notice is issued for Term Time Leave or Irregular Attendance the amount will be:

£160 per parent, per child paid within 28 days.

Third Offence and Any Further Offences (within 3 years)

The third time an offence is committed for Term Time Leave or Irregular Attendance a Penalty Notice will not be issued, and the case will be presented straight to the Magistrates' Court.

Informing school of a child's absence including first day contact

Parents/Carers are expected to inform the school of their child's absence by phoning (01246234745 or emailing info@hasland-inf.derbyshire.sch.uk) by 8.55 am.

Registers are completed by the class teacher by 8.55 am. Once the registers have been completed the office staff check for any missing children. If a child is not attending and no reason has been given the 1st contact on the child's records will be contacted to find out why that particular child is not in school. If the phone is not answered then a message is left or, if appropriate, the 2nd contact on the child's record will be contacted. If we have not received a response by 10 am, two members of staff will carry out a home visit (see appendix 4) If the home visit is unsuccessful, we may contact other agencies including social care.

By law, schools must take a morning and afternoon register and record the attendance or absence of every pupil. Attendance codes are used in line with DfE guidance and best practice.

To enable the appropriate coding of attendance or the authorisation of absence, the school will request additional information or evidence, e.g. in relation to medical appointments or illness. (Medical evidence may include: an appointment letter, a GP appointment card signed / stamped by a receptionist, a prescription, prescribed medication.)

All absences and persistent lateness are investigated. Attendance data is held on the school's information system. This is used to conduct checks on individual children and provides comprehensive attendance records.

The Headteacher monitors the attendance of children each week and parents/carers are contacted and sent a letter each half term informing them of their child's attendance (see appendix 5)

Attendance Letters:

These stages are not necessarily chronological; you may go immediately to stage 2 if your child's attendance falls below 90%.

Stage 1 – 95.9%-90% attendance. You will receive a letter informing you of your child's attendance and how many sessions they have missed.

Stage 2 – Below 90% attendance. You will receive a letter informing you of your child's attendance and how many sessions they have missed. You will be provided with contact details of support you may wish to access.

If attendance remains below 90% following a Stage 2 support letter then you will receive a Stage 3 support letter.

Stage 3 – Informal support meeting with the Family Support Worker or the Class teacher to listen and understand barriers to attendance and agree how all partners can work together to resolve them.

If attendance remains below 90% following a stage 3 support letter then you will receive a Stage 4 support letter.

Stage 4 – Where absence persists and voluntary support is not working or not being engaged with a formal support meeting will take place with a member of the Senior Leadership Team or the Family Support Worker. A representative from the Local Authority may also attend this meeting to support your child's attendance. An attendance plan will be created and reviewed every 20 school days (see appendix 6)

Stage 5 – Legal action considered. Where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or being engaged with it may be necessary to enforce attendance through statutory intervention: a penalty notice inline with the National Framework for Prosecution to protect the pupil's right to an education.

Applications for Leave of Absence in Term Time

In September 2013 the Government introduced new regulations making it clear that Headteachers must not give approval for any leave of absence during term time, including holidays, unless there are exceptional circumstances.

Any requests for term time leave should be made on an Absence Request Form available from the school office and handed in at least two school weeks before the first date of the

requested absence whenever possible. You must have received written authorisation before your child can be absent from school.

Parent/carers may be issued with a penalty notice fine or prosecution should leave of 5 days or more be taken which is not authorised by the Headteacher, or where repeated incidents of leave in term time for less than 5 days occur or where the unauthorised absence contributes to wider poor attendance that meets the legal threshold. Absence deemed for the reason of unauthorised leave in term time will be marked in the register with the Attendance code G. You may be issued with a Penalty Notice should leave be taken which is not authorised. If unpaid this could lead to prosecution under section 444(1) of The Education Act 1996.

Leave of absence for any reason will not be granted for any child if they fall into any of the following categories:

- Any absence requested in the first two weeks of a new academic year.
- Any absence requested for a child whose attendance is already below 90%.

Absence

The Government has set clear expectations for all schools to promote high levels of attendance and punctuality. Good attendance is broadly described as 96% and we will monitor any child whose attendance falls below this. However, we do understand that there will be times when children are unwell and unable to attend. A child's health and wellbeing will always be a priority, and genuine illness is a valid reason for absence.

However, it is important that children attend school every day when they are well enough to do so. Regular attendance supports learning, friendships, routines, and overall development.

Illness:

Not all illnesses require an absence from school. For minor childhood ailments such as coughs, colds, earaches we would not expect the child to be absent. However, when a parent/carer makes the assessment that their child is unfit for school, they should inform the school by 8.55 am. It is a school's decision whether to accept the reason for the child's absence and whether to authorise that absence. In most cases, a parent/carer's explanation of their child's illness can be accepted without question or concern. In circumstances where there are concerns about a child's attendance or reason for absence, further evidence of a child's illness may be requested.

Medical evidence may be requested if:

- The child is absent and there are frequent odd days absences due to reported illness
- The child is absent and the same reasons for absence are frequently repeated
- The child is absent and attendance is below expected levels and there is a concerning pattern of absence/reasons for absence

Persistent & Severe Absence

Persistent absence is where a child misses 10% or more of school (and therefore has an attendance score of less than 90%), and severe absence is where a child misses 50% or more of school (and therefore has an attendance of below 50%).

The school will use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence. School will follow the flow chart found as an appendix to this policy for those children at risk of persistent or severe absence. In extreme cases, this may result in Local Authority involvement and may result in a fine or even prosecution.

We will monitor & track very carefully those children who fall into persistent or severe absence and as previously mentioned will send out letters each half term.

Monitoring will continue at the end of each year and from the Infant School to the Junior School.

Safeguarding our children is our priority and this will always be considered when looking at children's attendance.