



Attendance Policy

Date: October 2020
Date for Review: October 2021

CONTENTS

- 1. Statement of Intent**
- 2. Aims of the Attendance Policy**
- 3. Parents'/Carers'/Childrens'/Staff Responsibilities**
 - 3.1 Parents/Carers'
 - 3.2 Childrens'
 - 3.3 Head Teacher and Governors
 - 3.4 Class Teachers
 - 3.5 Attendance Administrator
- 4. Registers**
- 5. Absence in School time**
- 6. Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN) for Unauthorised Holidays**
- 7. Authorised and Unauthorised Absence**
 - 7.1 Follow-up of Absence
 - 7.2 Follow-up of Unauthorised Absence
 - 7.3 Lateness and Punctuality
- 8. Monitoring and Encouraging Good Attendance**
- 9. Long-term Absence**
- 10. Links with other Agencies**
 - 10.1 Pupil Entitlement: Investigation
 - 10.2 Other Agencies

1. STATEMENT OF INTENT

Heene Church of England Aided Primary School believes that in order to reach their full potential, children need to attend school regularly and punctually. High levels of absence are associated with low academic achievement.

We aim to work together with parents to ensure that all children registered at the school attend both regularly and punctually.

We aim to work in partnership with parents to ensure good two way communications and sharing of information between home and school.

2. AIMS OF THE ATTENDANCE POLICY

- To support the general aims of the school;
- To help promote and maintain high attendance and punctuality, to reinforce that high levels of absence are associated with low academic achievement;
- To help promote the partnership between parents and school, to ensure good two way communications and sharing of information between home and school;
- To detail procedures for noting that children are absent and for appropriate follow up;
- To help clarify 'authorised and 'unauthorised' absence;
- To assist children whose attendance is a cause for concern and to assist the support of children returning to school after long periods of absence;
- To clarify responsibilities.

3. PARENTS'/CARERS'/STAFF RESPONSIBILITIES

3.1 Parents'/Carers' Responsibilities

Parents have a legal duty to ensure that children of compulsory school age attend on a regular and full-time basis and to ensure their child is punctual. It is recognised that lateness at a Primary School level is the fault of the parent and not the child.

Parents are responsible for ensuring that their child attends and stays in school unless alternative arrangements for their education are made.

Parents are responsible for notifying the school of external appointments and where possible will make appointments out of school hours, although this may not always be possible. Copies of Hospital/Doctor/Dentist appointments will be taken by the school office.

Parents are responsible for informing the school of any absence. This must be on the first day of absence. They can telephone the school and speak to a member of staff or leave a message on the school's answering service. They should state the nature of the illness and when the child is expected to return to school. If a child is absent and the school has not received any notification of the absence then the school's attendance administrator will contact the parent/carer. Parents need to keep us informed of continued absence.

Parents can be prosecuted under the Education Act of 1996 for failing to ensure their child's attendance at school with the following exceptions:

- The pupil was absent with permission from school;
- The pupil was ill or prevented from attending by an unavoidable cause;
- The absence occurred on a day exclusively set aside for religious observance by the religious group to which the family belongs and a completed request for absence was received in advance by school.

3.2 Childrens' Responsibilities

- To understand the need to attend school regularly and punctually
- To begin to take responsibility for themselves, to make the most of the opportunities available, to enjoy and achieve to the full, their time in school.

3.3 Responsibilities of Headteacher/Governors

- To monitor attendance data
- To ensure that school has a systematic approach to the promotion and maintenance of high attendance and the management of poor attendance
- To follow up the support available to children whose attendance is a cause for concern
- To ensure staff understand and follow procedures for registration and for dealing with absence and lateness
- To provide staff training as necessary for matters relating to attendance

3.4 Responsibilities of Class Teachers

- To mark registers in an appropriate manner
- To understand and implement the school's policy on attendance
- To encourage high attendance and punctuality

- To discuss with parents initial attendance/punctuality concerns at Consultation Appointments
- To provide opportunities for all children to succeed and which, as a result, encourage them to attend regularly
- To acknowledge excellent or improved attendance through praise/rewards
- To liaise with the Headteacher and Attendance administrator with regard to support for children whose attendance is a cause for concern and follow up as appropriate.

3.5 Responsibilities of Attendance Administrator

- To communicate with parents any matters regarding attendance/punctuality
- To monitor patterns of attendance
- To have fortnightly pastoral care meetings and discuss any support required
- To discuss strategies with the Headteacher/Senior Leadership team and to draw up action plans for persistent non-attenders
- To ensure that school has a systematic approach to the promotion and maintenance of high attendance and the management of poor attendance
- To follow up the support available to children whose attendance is a cause for concern
- To use Pupil Entitlement: Investigation and other agencies as necessary to assist with attendance matters
- To provide data and report regularly to the Headteacher and Governors.

4. ATTENDANCE REGISTERS

All registers are taken twice a day – electronically by the class teacher, at the start of the morning and afternoon sessions. Each child on the admission register receives an attendance mark for each half day session. The West Sussex codes for classification of absence are used.

Children are listed alphabetically in the register. Reasons for absence are recorded in SIMS and attached to a child's record. Notes explaining absence are filed in the office for the duration of the academic year.

In the event of any emergency it is essential to have accurate, up-to-date information on who is present in the school building.

- * Registers are closed 30 minutes after the start of the morning and afternoon sessions. Children are late if they arrive between 8.50-9.20am. After 9.20am the absence becomes unauthorised (U).

* See Appendix 1. COVID-19 Parent booklet

5. ABSENCE IN SCHOOL TIME

In September 2013 the policy changed following amendments to the Education Act 2006, references to family holiday and extended leave, as well as the statutory threshold of ten school days were removed. Time off school for family holidays is not a right and is now actively discouraged by the legislation.

If a request for leave is absolutely unavoidable parents should complete a 'Parental Request for leave from learning in school time', two weeks in advance of any planned absence. Each request for absence is dealt with on its own merits and all the available evidence/additional information is considered by the Headteacher/Governing Body.

Parents will be informed of the decision to authorise or unauthorise the absence in writing.

6. FIXED PENALTY NOTICE (FPN) FOR UNAUTHORISED HOLIDAYS

If a Parental Request for leave from learning in school time is made and subsequently denied and it is for a minimum of 10 sessions then a letter is sent to parents warning them of the Fixed Penalty consequences of taking the holiday, together with the current Attendance Policy and Fixed Penalty Notice Leaflet.

If this absence is taken the school will send a letter stating the request was unauthorised and with reference to the Attendance Policy and FPN leaflet sent previously. The Headteacher/Attendance administrator may refer to Pupil Entitlement: Investigation for advice, giving all the relevant information including: letters, attendance certificate, and records. If considered appropriate by the Team a Fixed Penalty Notice referral sheet and all the relevant information will be sent by school to Pupil Entitlement: Investigation – Fixed Penalty Notice Team.

The Fixed Penalty Notice Team will issue a FPN and a fine for £60 per parent/per child to be paid within 21 days of receipt of the notice. The fine increases to £120 per parent/per child if it is not paid within 28 days of receipt of the notice. If the penalty is not paid in full by the end of the 28 day period, and the notice has not been withdrawn, the Local Authority will prosecute for the non-attendance offence. The prosecution will not be for non-payment of the notice.

The prosecution will follow the usual procedures for any prosecution of parents over irregular attendance under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996.

7. AUTHORISED AND UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE

When a valid reason for absence is given by the parent or guardian, and is accepted by the school, the absence is authorised and the appropriate code is placed in the register. Grounds for authorisation include sickness, GP/Hospital/Dental appointments or other unavoidable cause, days of religious observance and exceptional circumstances granted by the school.

Holidays, birthday treats, looking after other children, waiting for deliveries within school hours will not normally be acceptable reasons for absence.

Requests for absence to attend funerals or associated events are responded to sympathetically and are normally authorised by the school.

If explanations for absence are not accepted then the absence is treated as unauthorised.

If, despite the school's efforts, no reason for absence is provided then the absence will be recorded as unauthorised.

7.1 Follow up of Absence

- Child is absent
- Absence is recorded
- If satisfactory explanation is given the absence is recorded as authorised
- If no reason is given, follow-up form sent home with a request for explanation
- If the form is not returned a second form is sent home stating the implications of absence from school and possible referral to Pupil Entitlement: Investigation.
- If there is no response from parents the absence is recorded as unauthorised. When a pupil has a minimum of 10 sessions recorded as unauthorised in a 10 week period the school can initiate the FPN procedure. A warning letter is issued by the LA and given 15 days to improve attendance. During this time there must be no unauthorised absences, if further absences occur the FPN is issued.

If a child has been continuously absent for 10 days without notification or any contact with the parents'/carers, a referral is made to Pupil Entitlement: Investigation. An officer will make further enquiries on behalf of the Local Authority.

If a child has been granted authorised absence but fails to return to school within 10 school days of the expiry of the agreed period of absence, and the failure is not due to sickness or any other unavoidable cause then the Pupil Entitlement: Investigation will be informed.

If a child fails to attend or appears to have disappeared and the period of absence is unusual, then the school must make every effort to trace the child. School should also inform the 'Children Missing in Education' team, at Pupil Entitlement: Investigation.

We make every effort to safeguard all our children. We will follow up all concerns about an absence for vulnerable children if no message has been received to explain an absence. Any concerns will be reported to MASH for support and logged in accordance with our Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

7.2 Follow up of Unauthorised Absence

Children's absences, without the school's prior approval, are treated as unauthorised until a satisfactory explanation is provided.

The school will phone the parent on the first day of absence and on any subsequent day that the child fails to appear without prior notification of absence. This will be done by the Attendance administrator.

Discussion will take place in school as to the reasons for the absenteeism. Parents are encouraged to discuss their concerns with school at any time and the Learning Mentor/TA trained with regard to attendance is available in school to support both child and family if required.

Fixed Penalty Notice for Unauthorised Absence

If a pupil has a minimum of 10 sessions recorded as unauthorised in a 10 week period the school can initiate the FPN procedures. The Headteacher makes the decision to refer to the Local Authority to issue a FPN. During this time there must be no unauthorised absences, if further absences occur the FPN is issued.

7.3 Lateness and Punctuality

Children arriving late may seriously disrupt not only their continuity of learning but also that of others. Late arrival must be signed in at the office, where the time of arrival and reason for lateness is recorded. *Registers are closed 30 minutes after the start of each session. When children arrive after this period and fail to provide an adequate explanation they are marked as unauthorised for that session.

In dealing with lateness we take account of individual circumstances, particularly when they are genuinely unavoidable.

Class teachers with concerns about individual's lateness should approach the Headteacher or Attendance administrator. Standard letters to parents are available. It is recognised that lateness at Primary School level is the fault of the parent and not the child. Liaison with Pupil Entitlement will be made as appropriate.

* See Appendix 1. COVID-19 Parent booklet

8. MONITORING AND ENCOURAGING GOOD ATTENDANCE

Good attendance is the responsibility of all staff, parents, children and governors.

Termly attendance data is included in the Headteachers report to Governors', and discussed at fortnightly meeting with Attendance administrator. Children needing support are identified and closely monitored.

- Certificates are awarded on a termly basis for children with 100% attendance and who have never been late. Certificates are presented to recognise this achievement during family assemblies.
- £5 book voucher at the end of the summer term for those receiving a Gold Certificate
- Certificates for those that have never been late but who may have had time off due to illness are presented
- Each child receives an individual Attendance certificate with their full school report at the end of the school year
- The Learning Mentor and a TA trained in behaviour and attendance, are available to support individual children.

EBSA (Emotionally Based School Avoidance) is a broad umbrella term used to describe a group of children and young people who have severe difficulty in attending school due to emotional factors, often resulting in prolonged absences from school. The impact of EBSA on young people and schools is far reaching. We know that young people who display EBSA can have poor academic attainment, reduced social opportunities and limited employment opportunities. We recognise EBSA and have a pastoral team that we can access to support the partnership between home and school to help close the gap.

9. LONG TERM ABSENCE

During a long absence contact should be maintained on at least a weekly basis by phone or by sending a card or letter from the class, and by encouraging short visits. School will normally set work for long term absentees (extended absences for medical reasons must be corroborated by a health professional). Support and strategies are available for emotionally based school refusal. Such procedures will help the individual child feel he/she has a place in school and may help in the process of re-integration when it occurs.

- A reintegration visit prior to return to overcome initial fears
- Preparation for the class for the child's return
- A welcoming attitude from staff and children
- Part time attendance or reduced timetable to ease the child back into routine
- Learning Mentor support throughout the school day
- Rewards for achievement in school

10. LINKS WITH OTHER AGENCIES

10.1 Pupil Entitlement: Investigation

The Pupil Entitlement: Investigation, have legal duties when individual children are persistently absent from school. They can help the school:

- Carry out random immediate response visits to pupils' homes when absence is unauthorised
- Liaise with Social Services
- Alerting school of aspects of schooling which may cause disaffection to individual pupils
- Provide information about prosecution procedures
- Provide in-service training on a range of attendance related issues

Once it has been decided to refer a child to Pupil Entitlement: Investigation, a county A6 form of referral is completed by the Attendance Administrator and sent to Pupil Entitlement: Investigation. Once the referral is accepted, the allocated officer will make a visit to advise the parent of their legal responsibility regarding their child's school attendance and feedback information from the visit to the school. The officer will maintain regular contact with the school and update the relevant member of staff on all progress and any decision to pursue legal action.

10.2 Other Agencies

Referrals will be made to the School Nursing team and/or other agencies as necessary.

This policy will be reviewed annually.

Appendices

Appendix 1 COVID-19 Parent Booklet, Request for Absence in School time (Appendix i), FPN leaflet (Appendix ii), WSCC Code of Conduct for FPN (Appendix iii), FPN referral sheet (Appendix iv), + Attendance Codes (Descriptions and Meanings) (Appendix v)