

# Highwood Primary School



*"Preparing today's children  
for tomorrow's world"*

# Attendance Policy

January 2016



## **Introduction**

At Highwood Primary School we are committed to achieving excellent levels of attendance for individual children. Underpinning this commitment is the belief that if children attend school regularly and punctually they will be best able to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them. We do all we can to encourage children to attend school.

- We believe that a child's chances of a successful future may be affected by not attending school regularly. They may not be able to keep up with school work and they miss out on the social side of school life. There is a proven link between academic attainment and good attendance.
- Setting good attendance and punctuality patterns from an early age helps children in their adult life.
- The school's ethos requires that students feel their presence in the school is important, that they will be missed if they are late or absent and that follow up action will be taken.

## **Responsibilities**

### **Parents:**

- i. Parents are responsible in law (Section 7 of the Education Act 1996) for ensuring that their children of compulsory school age receive an efficient education suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs that they may have. Most parents fulfil this responsibility by registering their children at a school. Parents whose children are registered at a school are responsible for ensuring that their children attend and stay at school.

Parents are also responsible for:

- ii. Working with the school to help their child develop an appreciation of the importance of attending school regularly.
- iii. Ensuring their child attends school every day during term time as long as they are healthy enough to do so.
- iv. Ensuring their child arrives at school on time, i.e. by 8.50 a.m.
- v. Notifying the school by telephone as early as possible on the first day and all subsequent days of their child's absence. Parents should provide an explanation for the absence by stating the exact reason for the absence. Using the term 'unwell' is not a sufficient explanation for an absence. This needs to be followed up in writing on their return to school using text, email or letter.
- vii. Avoiding, where possible, arranging medical/dental appointments during school hours.
- viii. Avoiding booking holidays during term time.

### **School is responsible for:**

- i. Working with parents to help their child develop an appreciation of the importance of attending school regularly.
- ii. Working in partnership with parents to resolve issues which may lead to non-attendance.
- iii. Employing a range of strategies to encourage good attendance.
- iv. Discussing with the Local Authority's Attendance Improvement Officer any concerns it may have about the attendance and/or punctuality of any child on the school roll.
- v. Keeping accurate attendance records for a minimum of three years.

### **The Local Authority is responsible for:**

- i. Monitoring attendance.
- ii. Writing to or visiting parents where there is concern about a child's attendance.
- iii. Liaising with other agencies to provide support for parents/families if that is thought appropriate.

- iv. Issuing a penalty notice or prosecuting parents if all other attempts to improve a child's attendance fail.

### **Punctuality**

Pupils are required to register in the morning at 8.50 am and in the afternoon at 1:15pm. They must be present at registration or have an acceptable reason for absence. Teachers complete registers prior to morning assembly at 9:10 and they officially close at 9:15am. Pupils who are late for registration in the morning are required to report to the school office, stating the reason for their lateness, and their time of arrival. Punctuality for lessons is also regarded as extremely important. Pupils who have poor punctuality should be referred to the Headteacher and this will be discussed with their parents or carers.

### **Authorised absence**

Only the school can authorise absence. Parents do not have this authority. Consequently, not all absences supported by parents will be authorised by the school. 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 guardian. Legitimate reasons for a child to be absent from school, and which will be authorised by the school, include:

- i. the child's illness
- ii. the child is attending a medical appointment
- iii. the absence occurred on a day set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the child's parent(s) belongs
- iv. a family bereavement
- iv. the child is attending an off-site activity or is receiving special off-site tuition, e.g. speech therapy
- v. the child is attending an **exceptional** special occasion, as determined by the school and as such leave of absence has been granted
- vi. leave of absence has been granted by the school

### **Unauthorised absence**

An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of **either** the school or a parent. Therefore, an absence is unauthorised if a child is away from school without what the school considers to be a good reason, even if the parent supports the absence. Reasons for absence being unauthorised include:

- i. no explanation has been received by the school
- ii. the school is not satisfied with the explanation
- ii. the child is more than 15 minutes late for school and does not have a satisfactory explanation for the lateness (the school will judge whether the explanation is satisfactory)
- iv. the child is absent due to an **unexceptional** special occasion, e.g. a birthday, collecting friends/relatives from an airport or having a day out with friends/relatives who are visiting the UK
- v. the child's parent or sibling is unwell
- vi. the child is on a holiday or visiting relatives in the UK or overseas that has not been authorised by the school

### **Important information about your child visiting school when marked as absent**

If your child is not in attendance and has been recorded as absent (authorised or unauthorised) they will not be permitted in school. This includes attending events such as Sports Day, parties, After School Clubs etc. and most importantly, it includes Sharing Assemblies.

If you wish to attend a school event and have a child who is absent from school you are required to make arrangements for them as they will not be allowed into school. This does not include dropping off or picking up siblings at the start and the end of the day.

### **Holidays**

The Government have determined that schools may no longer authorise absence for the purpose of a holiday unless in exceptional circumstances such as the parent being a member of the armed forces and being on leave of absence. Parents do not have a legal right to take their child out of school for a holiday.

The school will not provide homework for children to complete during any unauthorised absence.

### **Extended trips overseas**

As schools may no longer authorise absence for holidays any such extended trip overseas a parent takes against this policy will be unauthorised. A parent is still required to notify the school of any such trip, its duration, a date for return and how a parent will be responsible for ensuring a child catches up with any work missed. If any parent removes their child for a period of more than six weeks without authorisation they may be removed from the school roll.

### **Failure to return**

The law states that children who do not return to school within 10 days of the agreed date following an extended trip overseas may be removed from the school roll unless there are exceptional circumstances, the school has been informed and supporting evidence has been provided (e.g. illness which prevents the child or other family member from travelling). A pupil may be removed from the school roll if their absence exceeds 30 days.

### **Fixed Penalty Notices**

If a pupil has at least 15 sessions (half day = 1 session) unauthorised absence in the previous and/or current term, including unauthorised holidays, the Headteacher can apply for a Fixed Penalty Notice to be issued by the Local Authority. A fine of £60 is issued if paid within 21 days of receipt of the notice or £120 if paid within 28 days. Failure to pay the fine may result in prosecution for the offence.

The Local Authority retains the revenue from penalties in order to finance the scheme and any subsequent prosecutions.

The school may ask parents to provide medical confirmation (from a GP or other medical professional) of their child's absence from school if they are at risk of having legal action taken against them for their child's non-attendance. Parents will be responsible for any costs incurred.

Fixed Penalty Notices will be issued as a last resort when the school feels it has exhausted all other strategies to assist the child to attend school regularly.

### **Penalty Notices Regulations**

The parent cannot be prosecuted for the offence for which the notice was issued until after the final deadline for payment has passed and cannot be convicted of that offence if he pays a penalty in accordance with the notice. Penalties are to be paid to local education authorities.

These procedures apply to the parents of children of compulsory school age who are registered at a maintained school, academy, pupil referral unit (education support centre) or City Technology College, or any other alternative educational provision arranged under s19 of The Education Act 1996.

All those defined as a parent under section 576 of the Education Act are parents for the purposes of these provisions. As with prosecutions under section 444 Education Act 1996, a penalty notice may be issued to each parent liable for the offence.

### **Rewards for Good Attendance**

- i. Attendance data is published, class by class on a regular/termly basis in school newsletters
- ii. At the end of the school term certificates are presented to children with excellent attendance (100%) and to children whose attendance or punctuality shows a marked improvement during the course of the term.

### **Monitoring Attendance**

The school works closely in partnership with parents/carers in order to achieve excellent levels of school attendance and punctuality for pupils. Regular reminders of the importance of good attendance appear in newsletters. Letters are written home where problems are identified and meetings with parents/carers are held to discuss strategies to improve attendance levels. If problems cannot be resolved in this way the school will refer pupils to the attendance improvement officer at the local authority.

Pupils must attend the official registration periods twice a day and these attendance registers are legal documents. The school maintains them accurately and produces reports on request to parents/carers or to authorised outside agencies such as the attendance improvement officer. An individual attendance figure is included in the annual report to parents.

All teachers and support staff have a responsibility for monitoring and promoting good attendance and should report any concerns to the Headteacher.

Policy updated by Cathy Cox

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