

Highwood Primary School



Promoting Resilience - Achieving Potential

Attendance Policy

Approved by: Full Governing Body

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1. Aims

We are committed to meeting our obligation with regards to school attendance through our whole-school culture and ethos that values good attendance, including:

- Promoting good attendance.
- Reducing absence, including persistent and severe absence.
- Ensuring every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled.
- Acting early to address patterns of absence.
- Building strong relationships with families to ensure pupils have the support in place to attend school.

We will also promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

2. Legislation and guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the [working together to improve school attendance](#) from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on [school attendance parental responsibility measures](#). These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- Part 6 of [The Education Act 1996](#)
- Part 3 of [The Education Act 2002](#)
- Part 7 of [The Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006 \(and 2010, 2011, 2013, 2016 amendments\)](#)
- [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)

This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the school census, which explains the persistent absence threshold

3. Roles and responsibilities

3.1 The governing board

The governing board is responsible for:

- Promoting the importance of school attendance across the school's policies and ethos.
- Making sure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties.
- Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data.
- Monitoring attendance figures for the whole school.
- Making sure staff receive adequate training on attendance.
- Holding the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy.
- The Inclusion team will also discuss and monitor attendance.

3.2 The headteacher

The headteacher is responsible for:

- Implementation of this policy at the school.
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors.

- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils.
- Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies.
- Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary.

3.3 The designated senior leader responsible for attendance

The designated senior leader is responsible for:

- Leading attendance across the school.
- Offering a clear vision for attendance improvement.
- Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes.
- Having an oversight of data analysis.
- Devising specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data.
- Arranging calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues.
- Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families.

The designated senior leader responsible for attendance is the Headteacher and Deputy Headteacher and can be contacted via admin@highwood.herts.sch.uk.

3.4 Attendance Management

The school is responsible for:

- Monitoring and analysing attendance data (see section 7).
- Benchmarking attendance data to identify areas of focus for improvement.
- Providing regular attendance reports to school staff and reporting concerns about attendance. This information is shared at Governing Body meetings.
- Working with education welfare officers to tackle persistent absence.
- Advising the Headteacher/Deputy Headteacher when to issue fixed-penalty notices.

From September 2022, the school day timings were changed. The changes were to work towards the DfE minimum expectation on the length of the school week. We will be adhering to a minimum of 32.5 hours. This includes breaktimes and lunchtimes.

Year Group	Classrooms Opening Time	End of School Day Time
Nursery fulltime	8.45	3.15
Nursery half day	8.45 or 12.10	11.45 or 3.15
Reception	8.45	3.15
Year 1	8.45	3.20
Year 2	8.45	3.20
Year 3	8.45	3.25
Year 4	8.45	3.25
Year 5	8.45	3.25
Year 6	8.45	3.25

3.5 Class teachers

Class teachers are responsible for recording attendance daily, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the school office on the same day.

3.6 School Administration and /office staff

School Admin and/ office staff will:

- Take calls from parents/ carers about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the school system.
- Transfer calls from parents/ carers to the senior leaders to provide them with more detailed support on attendance.

3.7 Parents/carers

Parents/carers are expected to:

- Make sure their child attends every day and on time.
- Call or email the school to report their child's absence before 9:00am on the day of the absence and each subsequent day of absence, and advise when they are expected to return.
- Provide the school with more than 1 emergency contact number for their child.
- Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day.

Parents/carers 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 each day unless there is an authorised reason why not.

Parents maybe requested to provide evidence for any medical appointments that their child needs to attend during the school day. This will enable us to ensure accurate registers during the school day.

Parents/carers also responsible for:

- Working with the school to help their child develop an appreciation of the importance of attending school regularly.
- Ensuring their child attends school every day during term time as long as they are healthy enough to do so.
- Ensuring their child arrives at school on time, i.e. by 8.50 a.m.
- Notifying the school by telephone, text or email by 9:00am on the first day on the day of the absence and each subsequent day of absence, and advise when they are expected to return. Parents/carers 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. A written confirmation of the reason for absence may be requested by the school via text, email or letter.
- Avoiding, where possible, arranging medical/dental appointments during school hours.
- Not booking holidays during term time.

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 (Proof of evidence must be provided to the school office)
- 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 (one day authorised for travel – if a distance is involved - and one day authorised for the funeral)
- 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, for example, a graduation or wedding, as determined by the school and as such leave of absence has been granted. This will be one day authorised. (Proof of evidence must be provided to the school office).
- 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.

Absence will be marked as "U" on the register.

Please be aware that unauthorised absences are submitted towards a Fixed Penalty Notice, which will be issued.

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.

Reasons for absence being unauthorised include:

- i. no explanation has been received by the school by 9:30am
- 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 have electronically closed the register)
- iv. the child is absent due to an **unexceptional** special occasion, e.g. a birthday, concert, 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

We will mark absence due to illness as authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may ask the pupil's parent/carer to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents/carers will be notified of this in advance.

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, events held by Friends of Highwood PTA 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) of unauthorised absence in the previous and/or current term, including unauthorised holidays, the Headteacher will liaise with the school Attendance Officer and Local Authority Attendance Improvement Officer. A Fixed Penalty Notice will 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

- Parents 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.

Breakfast Club

Highwood Primary runs an established Breakfast Club. The aim of the club is to promote punctuality and good attendance. Breakfast Club may be a useful option for families where there are barriers to punctual attendance. Breakfast Club is run by trained school staff and is open from 8:00 am.

Late Collection of Pupils

Persistent late collections are monitored and the school attempts to support parents/carers with this by helping to develop strategies to improve their punctuality in collecting their children. Highwood Primary operates a Teatime Club which may be useful for families who are unable to collect their children on time from school however it is not a drop in facility and pupils must register to attend.

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

4. Recording attendance

4.1 Attendance register

We will keep an attendance register and place all pupils onto this register.

We will take our attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. It will mark whether every pupil is:

- Present.
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity.
- Absent.
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

- The original entry.
- The amended entry.
- The reason for the amendment.
- The date on which the amendment was made.
- The name and position of the person who made the amendment.

See appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes.

We will also record:

- Whether the absence is authorised or not.
- The nature of the activity if a pupil is attending an approved educational activity.
- The nature of circumstances where a pupil is unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

Pupils must arrive in school by 8:45am on each school day.

The register for the first session will be taken at 8.52 am and will be kept open until 9.00am.

4.2 Planned absence

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the pupil's parent/carer notifies the school in advance of the appointment.

However, we encourage parents/carers to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary. The pupil's parent/carer must also apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence. Go to section 5 to find out which term-time absences the school can authorise.

4.3 Lateness and punctuality

A pupil who arrives late:

- Before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code.
- After the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code.

- Pupils must state the reason for their lateness, and their time of arrival. Pupils who have poor punctuality should be referred to the Headteacher; this will be followed up via letter or a discussion with parents or carers

The school days begins at 8.50am.

Pupils are allowed into classrooms from 8.45am.

Class registers close at 9.00am so that the teaching and learning can commence.

If a child arrives after 9.00am to the school office, they will be marked late.

Afternoon Timings

- Nursery afternoon session drop off is at 12.10pm so that the teaching and learning can commence at 12.15pm
- Teaching and learning commence at 12.45pm EYFS,
- Teaching and learning commence at 1.15pm for KS1.
- Teaching and learning commence at 1.25pm for KS2.

4.4 Following up unexplained absence.

Where any pupil we expect to attend school does not attend, or stops attending, without reason, the school will:

- Call the pupil's parent/carers on the morning of the first day of unexplained absence to ascertain the reason. If the school cannot reach any of the pupil's emergency contacts, the school may e.g. contact the police or discuss the matter with the DSL, Inclusion team.
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not.
- Identify the correct attendance code to use and input it as soon as the reason for absence is ascertained – this will be no later than 5 working days after the session.
- Call the parent/carers on each day that the absence continues without explanation to ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary. If absence continues, the school will consider involving an education welfare officer.

4.5 Reporting to parents/carers

The school will regularly inform parents about their child's attendance and absence levels.

Rewards for Good Attendance

At the end of the school term and, year certificates are presented to children with excellent attendance (100%). Children whose attendance or punctuality shows a marked improvement during the course of a term are also recognised for their achievement in Attendance Assemblies.

5. Authorised and unauthorised absence

5.1 Approval for term-time absence

The headteacher will only grant a leave of absence to a pupil during term time if they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'. A leave of absence is granted at the headteacher's discretion, including the length of time the pupil is authorised to be absent for.

We define '**exceptional circumstances**' as covers things like attending the funeral of a member of the immediate family, the family becoming homeless unexpectedly, serious illness of a close relative or similar.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request.

Any request should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated and, where possible, at least 5 weeks before the absence. The headteacher may require evidence to support any request for leave of absence.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments (see sections 4.2 and 4.3 for more detail).
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart.
- Traveller pupils travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh gypsies, Irish and Scottish travellers, showmen (fairground people) and circus people, bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and new travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school, but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision.

5.2 Legal sanctions

The school or local authority can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age.

If issued with a fine, or penalty notice, each parent must pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the local authority.

Penalty notices can be issued by a headteacher, local authority officer or the police.

The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice may take into account:

- The number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year.
- One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission.
- Where an excluded pupil is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason.

If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute or withdraw the notice.

6. Strategies for promoting 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.

7.1 Monitoring attendance

The school will:

- Monitor attendance and absence data half-termly, termly and yearly across the school and at an individual pupil level.
- Identify whether or not there are particular groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern.

Pupil-level absence data will be collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the

national statistics. The school will compare attendance data to the national average and share this with the governing board.

7.2 Analysing attendance

The school will:

- Analyse attendance and absence data regularly to identify pupils or cohorts that need additional support with their attendance, and use this analysis to provide targeted support to these pupils and their families.
- Look at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence, and then develop strategies to address these patterns.

7.3 Using data to improve attendance

The school will:

- Provide regular attendance reports to class teachers/phase leaders, and other senior school leaders, to facilitate discussions with pupils and families.
- Use data to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place in order to modify them and inform future strategies.

7.4 Reducing persistent and severe absence

Persistent absence is where a pupil misses 10% or more of school, and severe absence is where a pupil misses 50% or more of school.

The school will:

- Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence.
- Hold regular meetings with the parents of pupils who the school (and/or local authority) considers to be vulnerable, or are persistently or severely absent, to discuss attendance and engagement at school.
- Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance.

8. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the local authority or DfE is updated, and as a minimum each year by the Headteacher. At every review, the policy will be approved by the full governing board.

9. Links with other policies

This policy links to the following policies:

- Child protection and safeguarding policy
- Behaviour policy

Appendix 1: attendance codes

The following codes are taken from the DfE's guidance on school attendance.

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	Pupil is present at morning registration
\	Present (pm)	Pupil is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Pupil arrives late before register has closed
B	Off-site educational activity	Pupil is at a supervised off-site educational activity approved by the school
D	Dual registered	Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
J	Interview	Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
P	Sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
V	Educational trip or visit	Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised, or approved, by the school
W	Work experience	Pupil is on a work experience placement

Code	Definition	Scenario
Authorised absence		
C	Authorised leave of absence	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
E	Excluded	Pupil has been excluded but no alternative provision has been made
H	Authorised holiday	Pupil has been allowed to go on holiday due to exceptional circumstances
I	Illness	School has been notified that a pupil will be absent due to illness
M	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment
R	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance
S	Study leave	Year 11 pupil is on study leave during their public examinations
T	Gypsy, Roma and traveller absence	Pupil from a traveller community is travelling, as agreed with the school

Unauthorised absence		
G	Unauthorised holiday	Pupil is on a holiday that was not approved by the school
N	Reason not provided	Pupil is absent for an unknown reason (this code should be amended when the reason emerges, or replaced with code O if no reason for absence has been provided after a reasonable amount of time)
O	Unauthorised absence	School is not satisfied with reason for pupil's absence
U	Arrival after registration	Pupil arrived at school after the register closed



Good Attendance means...

...being in school at least 96.6% of the time. This means having no more than 6.5 days off!

