



## ATTENDANCE POLICY

### **STATUTORY RESPONSIBILITY FOR ATTENDANCE**

#### **Legal Framework**

Successive Education Acts and regulations set the legal framework governing school attendance. Schools must adhere to this legislation and ensure they follow the Education Pupil Registration England Regulations (DCSF 2006)

In summary, there are legal obligations on:

The parent to secure education for their children, whether at school or otherwise, to send them to school regularly once they are on the register.

The School to register pupil admissions, removals and pupil attendance and to notify the Local Education Authority (Education Welfare Service) of instances where absence from school is a cause for concern requiring investigation by the EWS.

The Local Authority to provide suitable education provision, and to regularly inspect school registers and where necessary enforce attendance through the resource of the Education Welfare Service.

#### **Introduction**

*Non-attendance at school for any reason is an important issue that must be treated promptly and seriously. Every case is different and there is no standard path that can be followed in applying intervention strategies. In all cases of non-attendance it is essential that early action is taken.*

*'Ensuring Children's Right to Education' DSCF 2008*

At Hawkesley Church Primary School we believe that regular attendance is essential if pupils are to achieve their full potential. It is important too, that children arrive and leave school on time. It is equally important that children should not be at school if they are unwell. As attendance is crucial to effective learning and the continuity of learning experiences, Hawkesley places great emphasis on this in its communication with parents. Parents need to know what their responsibilities are, what counts as a valid reason for absence, and what action can and will be taken by the school. Parents and pupils need to know that absence and lateness will be followed up. Good and improved attendance will be celebrated and rewarded. Pupils returning from absence will be welcomed back positively.

This policy is to be read in conjunction with the

- Child Protection Policy
- “Improving and Maintaining Pupil Attendance” (Education Welfare Service (EWS))
- Extended Leave and Absence During Term Time (Education Welfare Service 2008)
- Education Pupil Registration England Regulations, (DCSF 2006)
- Ensuring Children’s Right to Education 2008 (DCSF 2008)
- Legal Framework (see 1.4)

All of the above are available on the Attendance site on BGFL

<http://services.bgfl.org/services/attend/default.htm> then click on IMPA (improving and maintaining pupil attendance).

*‘The issues behind non-attendance may be complex, and the type of intervention required will depend on each individual case and an external agency assessment may be appropriate. The Common Assessment Framework (CAF) provides an appropriate framework for identifying the issues’.*

*‘Ensuring Children’s Right to Education’ DSCF 2008*

### **Aims of this policy**

- To Safeguard pupils and ensure they receive their right to education.
- To improve and maintain levels of attendance consistent with established targets.
- To ensure that there is common and consistent practice amongst staff.
- To raise parents and pupils awareness of the importance of good attendance and of the impact attendance has upon achievement.
- To have a system of incentives and rewards which encourage individual pupils, and whole classes, to attend regularly.
- To ensure that pupils are not removed from roll other than within the safeguarding procedures set out by the local authority.

Hawkesley is an average primary school with a full-time nursery. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds. A small number are of Black or mixed heritage. The number claiming free school meals is high (64%) because the school is located in an area of social deprivation with higher-than-average unemployment. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties, including those with statements, is above average.

Specific influences on pupil attendance for Hawkesley Church Primary School are:

- Illness and medical reasons are the main reason for absence.
- Holidays in term time account for 0.8% of absence.
- Persistent absence rates are higher than average.
- The percentage of children arriving later after registers are closed is higher than average.

**Deletions from the Registers** (Pupils being removed from school roll)

*(This is taken from Education Pupil Registration England Regulations, DCSF 2006)*

The regulations enable schools to delete compulsory school-age children ONLY in the following circumstances:

- the school is replaced by another school on a School Attendance Order;
- the School Attendance Order is revoked by the Local Authority;
- completion of compulsory school age education;
- permanent exclusion;
- death of the pupil;
- transfer between schools; and
- pupil withdrawn to be educated outside the school system.
- failure to return for an extended family holiday after both the school and the Local Authority have tried to locate the pupil;
- a medical condition prevents their attendance and return to the school before ending compulsory school-age;
- in custody for more than four months;
- 20 days continuous unauthorised absence and both the local authority and school have tried to locate the pupil;
- left the school but not known where he/she has gone after both the school and the local authority have tried to locate the pupil.

The SCHOOL WILL NOT remove a pupil from roll where there is no known destination without consultation with the EWS.

Registration Regulations state that a pupil's attendance begins on the first expected day after registering at the school. If they do not attend on that first day it is an absence, unless the family and school agree a new expected start date. (Registration Regulations.)

**Persistence Absenteeism (PA)**

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 20% or more schooling at any time within the school year for whatever reason. Absence at this level is most likely to cause considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we need parents' fullest support and co-operation to minimise absence from school.

We will monitor all absence thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA threshold or is at risk of moving towards that level will be given priority and parents will be advised immediately in writing.

PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully through our pastoral system and we also combine this with academic mentoring where absence affects attainment.

All our PA pupils and their parents are subject to an Individual Attendance Action Plan and the plan may include: allocation of additional support through a Mentor, Education Social Worker, or a Personal Advisor, use of in-school pastoral support, individual incentive programmes and/or participation in group activities around raising attendance. All PA cases are automatically referred for consultation with the Education Welfare Service.

### **Every Child Matters and Safeguarding**

Attendance is a key factor in attainment, safeguarding and the outcomes for Every Child Matters. The school is the place where pupils spend a large amount of their time and overcoming barriers to learning is one of the key focuses for a school.

### **Holidays/leave in term time and extended leave**

The Government, Local Authority, and schools actively discourage parents/carers from taking children on holidays or trips during school term time. Parents and carers who do so are challenged and where the holiday/trip is not authorised by the Head Teacher the issuing of Penalty Notices and court action are considered. (Please see specific guidance for this from the policy on BGFL).

### **Rights Roles and Responsibilities**

#### **The Parent/Carer has a responsibility to:**

- Ensure regular attendance of children of compulsory school age registered at School.
- Promote a good attitude to learning, by ensuring that any child in their care arrives at school punctually, in appropriate dress and willing to work to fulfil the expectations of the school with regard to rules and behaviour, learning and homework.
- Work in partnership with school and other agencies in the best interests of their child: this includes informing school about significant influences and changes in the child's life, which may impact on learning and attendance.
- It is expected that every time the school is open, children should be in attendance or authorised by the Head Teacher to be absent. Parents should inform school at the start of absence (and future absence if known) the reasons for that absence.

### **Responsibilities of School**

- The School's Governors, Head Teacher and Leadership Team have a responsibility to ensure that all staff work in partnership to support the School to fulfil its duties and responsibilities in relation to attendance in the following ways:

- Provide an education suitable to the child's age, aptitude, ability and any special educational needs
- Provide a welcoming and safe environment, which encourages attendance and promotes the best performance from children
- Work collaboratively together and with other agencies to assist them in fulfilling their statutory duties, regarding, for example, Child Protection
- Schools have legal duties to keep records of admission and attendance. In the event of concerns over attendance, schools have a legal responsibility to refer the matters to the Education Welfare Service. Schools are accountable for the levels of attendance of their pupils to ensure that children's right to education is not overlooked. They are required to publish attendance data for the preceding school year, in their prospectus and annual reports. Deciding whether an absence is authorised is the school's responsibility, not the parents. DCSF returns should be completed accurately and on time. The school will develop effective management systems and partnerships with parents and the Education Welfare Service, to positively influence pupil attendance levels.

### **Governing Body**

The Governing Body will be responsible for:

- ensuring that the school and staff meet legal responsibilities in relation to all Pupil Attendance and Registration Regulations.
- drawing up an Admission Policy for the school and ensure that all Admission Procedures are correctly followed.
- publishing a School Prospectus and related documents that will give clear statements of the value placed on high levels of attendance and of the school's expectations in this respect.
- being involved in the development and agreement of this policy, including the monitoring of attendance data at least termly.
- Ensuring that the school is able to provide the necessary resources for the implementation of this policy.

### **Head Teacher**

The Head Teacher is responsible to the Governing Body for ensuring that the school staff carry out their responsibilities for the day-to-day management of attendance matters within the school.

The Head Teacher is responsible for:

- meeting with the school Educational Social Worker and the school's Attendance Officer (AO) to create the Individual School Action Plan (ISAP)
- the AO attending appropriate training.

- communicating information about attendance to governors, staff, parents and the community.
- identifying resources to support staff development and training. Informing staff that it is an offence not to maintain accurate registers.
- pupil incentive schemes and other initiatives in relation to attendance.
- supporting staff in the development of initiatives to improve whole school attendance.
- assessing requests for holiday and extended holidays in school time under exceptional circumstances.

### **Class Teachers**

All school staff are expected to question when/why pupils are away. Prompt action by vigilant class teachers is the essence of good practice. If a child is regularly late for school, or often absent, the class teacher should discuss their concern with the Attendance Officer who will contact the parent concerned to have an informal discussion about this. The teacher should note their concern on the weekly call out sheet on the clipboard which is returned to the School Office after registration in the morning.

**Attendance Officer** monitors lateness and attendance levels and reasons for absence. The attendance officer and Learning Mentor offer support to parents who are having difficulty getting their children to school regularly and on time. They meet with parents in school to discuss attendance issues. They may make a home visit.

**School Secretary/Attendance Officer** makes notes of telephone calls, recording reasons for absence and requests medical evidence where appropriate.

The joint responsibilities are best approached in partnership between all involved. This includes the school, the parents, the child, the LA or any other relevant agencies with an interest in the welfare of the child. Negotiated agreements will be attempted wherever possible. In order to fulfil our specific duties and responsibilities each 'partner' needs to develop strategies for achieving regular and punctual school attendance of all pupils.

### **Schools**

#### **Individual Schools Attendance Plan**

A copy of the current ISAP which is completed by the HEAD TEACHER, and attendance team with the Educational Social Worker is attached (See Appendix 2).

#### **Procedures – Who does what and when**

- **Communication**

It is our policy at Hawkesley to give priority to encouraging parents to support their children's education and towards this end we must encourage effective communication about absence from school.

Parents receive information about their responsibilities and legal obligations regarding their children's attendance at school, in the school prospectus. The importance of this is brought to the parents' attention at the admissions meeting with the Head Teacher. The attendance officer is introduced as the person who will follow up reasons for absence and support parents who are having difficulties getting their child to school. A reminder letter is sent out at the start of each academic year detailing the parents' responsibilities.

Parents should inform the school when their child is not attending and let the school know the reason why. Parents are regularly reminded of the need to communicate with the school promptly to explain non attendance. It is the school's intention to try to resolve any problems regarding a pupil's attendance as early as possible. Parents should be informed quickly when the school has concerns regarding absence or lateness. The attendance officer keeps a record of attendance concerns, intervene promptly and record actions taken to resolve the problems. The Head Teacher should then be informed. Parents of children whose attendance record is particularly worrying, even after intervention, will receive further communication detailing the school's concerns.

An unsatisfactory response, or no response from parents will result in the involvement of the Educational Social Worker who will need to be made aware of the action already taken. The ESW meets the attendance officer and Learning Mentor twice a month.

Data is trawled to identify children with attendance below 85%. The ESW decides whether to monitor and review or refer for inclusion in the Spotlight on Attendance Project.

Names of pupils who arrive late for school are recorded in the late book kept by the attendance officer.

- **Procedures for registration**

Registers are an essential legal document. Official Registers are kept on the school premises and are preserved with school records for seven years from the date of completion. Attendance is recorded on OMR sheets which are read at the end of the week by an Optical Mark Reader. The data is recorded directly onto the SIMS computer system. Registers are marked by the class teacher at the beginning of each half-day session. Registration should be a significant expression of care for the children and used to reinforce the importance of punctuality and attendance.

Registers must be marked daily for each half session, using the black felt-tip pen provided. Pupils are marked either Present or Absent. Registers are kept in the school office and sent to each class as needed. The absence sheet is a print out of absence data from the SIMS system for each class. Absence codes are completed by the attendance officer using information from the weekly call out sheets.

- **Authorised and Unauthorised Absence**

It is essential to be consistent in the definitions used of authorised and unauthorised absence throughout the school. There is a standard system for recording absences, especially the codes entered to indicate on what grounds absences have been authorised by the school.

Absences for which no reason has been ascertained are recorded as unauthorised.

The authorisation codes to be used are as follows.

^	Present	B	Educated off site
C	Other Authorised circumstances	D	Dual registration
E	Excluded	F	Extended Holiday (agreed)
G	Family holiday (not agreed)	H	Family holiday (agreed)
I	Illness	J	Interview
M	Medical appointment	N	No reason
O	Unauthorised absence	P	Approved sporting activity
R	Religious observance	S	Study leave
T	Traveller absence	U	Late (after register closed)
V	Educational Visit	W	Work experience

The main categories of authorised absence are:

When the pupil is prevented from attending by sickness (with medical evidence if attendance levels are below 85%).

When the pupil is sent home from school during the school day.

Parental illness, alleged bullying, going shopping, visiting family, head lice or not wanting to go to school are not acceptable reasons to be absent. These are unauthorised absences.

- **Spotlight on Attendance Project**

This is a joint partnership project between the Education Welfare Service and the school which identifies the poorest attenders and monitors them as part of an Action Group.

All parents are sent a letter in September:

- Reminding them of their responsibilities to ensure their children attend school regularly.
- Explaining that only the Head Teacher can authorise absence.
- Outlining what are not acceptable reasons to be absent.
- Explaining that unauthorised absence may result in legal action being taken.

Spotlight on Attendance identifies the poorest attenders and monitors them as part of the Action Group. These families are asked to provide medical evidence for absence, for example, a stamped appointment card or copy of a prescription.

- **Extended Leave/Holidays in Term Time**

Holidays in term time are discouraged as they are damaging to a child's continuity of learning.

Parents do not have an automatic right to withdraw pupils from school for a holiday and, in law, have to apply for permission in advance.

Permission will only be given where holiday dates are beyond a parent's control eg, factory shut down, and a child's previous attendance level is 95% or above.

No more than ten school days will be granted in any one school year.

- **School strategies for maintaining high profile good attendance and punctuality**

We will make every effort to find out why pupils are absent or late and deal with parents and pupils in a sensitive, supportive manner.

We will provide incentives and rewards eg,

- 100% term/year attendance certificates
- Excellent attendance certificates
- Best class attendance of the week award
- Positive comments about attendance on reports and letters to parents.

- **Monitoring, Evaluation and Feedback**

The class teachers will be given weekly class percentages to enable them to monitor levels of attendance.

The governors will be given termly data by the Head Teacher in her report.

Parents of children whose levels of attendance/punctuality are a concern will be given half-termly percentages to celebrate improvement or raise continuing concern.

The attendance officer will meet with the Head Teacher monthly to discuss strategies and progress towards meeting attendance targets.

Recommended by the Curriculum and Standards Committee July 2009

Accepted by the Governing Body .....

Date for Review Summer 2010.

September 2009

## APPENDIX 1

### **Attendance Policy - Parent Version**

Schools need to have an attendance policy so everyone knows their role and responsibility and students are cared for properly. At our school we know there is a definite link between high attendance and high achievement where children feel involved and making progress. Our school is here to support pupils achieve the very best they can in all aspects in their time at school. This is our policy.

We all have a part to play in improving attendance:

- Parents/Carers have a legal responsibility to make sure their children attend school every day of term.
- Parents/Carers are also responsible for making sure their child is on time to school every day.
- Parents/Carers should ensure their child(ren) are in school by 8.50am
- Parents/Carers should plan trips/ holiday and appointments outside of school time to support their child in getting the most from their educational opportunities.
- Parents/Carers should be prepared to work with outside agencies to help their child.
- The school's Governors, Head Teacher and staff have a responsibility to provide a suitable education, a welcoming safe environment and to work with outside agencies to support students. They should also tell parents about the attendance and punctuality of their child.
- The Education Welfare Service has a responsibility for supporting families, students and the school to have a high level of attendance. The Education Welfare Service will also uphold the law around attendance and make sure parents/carers know their legal responsibilities.

The school has a highly skilled team to support its pupils and their families. We want to work with families and we are always willing to listen and take advice to help us improve.

If you would like more information about attendance, please contact  
..... who is our school's Attendance Officer.