

PETERSFIELD INFANT SCHOOL



ATTENDANCE POLICY

The senior leader responsible for attendance and punctuality at Petersfield Infant School is Crissy Hodgkinson, Headteacher.

If you need to contact the school about your child's attendance, please contact: School Office on 01730 263048 or email adminoffice@petersfield-inf.hants.sch.uk

SECTION 1- STATEMENT OF INTENT

For a child to reach their full educational achievement, a high level of school attendance is essential. At Petersfield Infant School, we are committed to providing an education of the highest quality for all our pupils and endeavour to provide an environment where all pupils feel valued and welcome. Parents and pupils play a part in making our school so successful. Every child has a right to access the education to which they are entitled. Parents and staff share the responsibility for supporting and promoting excellent school attendance and punctuality for all.

It is our duty to consistently strive to achieve a goal of 100% attendance for all children. Every opportunity will be used to convey to pupils and their parents/carers the importance of regular and punctual attendance. Therefore, for the pupils to take full advantage of the educational opportunities offered at this school, it is vital that they are at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. High attainment, confidence with peers and staff and future aspirations all depend on good attendance.

Good attendance is important because:

- statistics show a direct link between under-achievement and absence below 95%
- regular attenders make better progress, both socially and academically
- regular attenders find school routines, school work and friendships easier to cope with
- regular attenders find learning more satisfying
- regular attenders are more successful in transferring to between primary school, secondary school, and higher education, employment or training.

SECTION 2 - PROMOTING GOOD ATTENDANCE

The foundation for good attendance is a strong partnership between the school, parents and the child. Our Home School Agreement contains details of how we will work with parents and our expectations of what parents will need to do to ensure their child achieves good attendance.

To help us all to focus on this we will:

- provide information on all matters related to attendance in our newsletters
- report to you on how your child is performing in school, their attendance and punctuality
- celebrate good attendance on our newsletters
- celebrate good attendance by displaying class achievements

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The headteacher will:

- promote regular and improved attendance and will ensure the attendance policy is consistently applied throughout the school
- ensure that attendance is recorded accurately and analysed
- identify any attendance issues at an early stage
- arrange to put in support to deal with any difficulties

If absence is frequent or continuous, except where a child is clearly unwell, staff will discuss with parents/carers the need and reasons for their child's absence and will encourage them to keep absences to a minimum. A note or phone call from a pupil's home does not mean an absence will be automatically authorised. The decision whether or not to authorise an absence will always rest with the school.

Senior Leadership Team will:

- monitor attendance data each half term. The data will be analysed to identify pupils, cohorts or groups that require support with their attendance and put effective strategies in place.

Teachers will:

- ensure that all students are registered accurately
- promote good attendance with pupils at all appropriate opportunities
- liaise with headteacher on matters of attendance and punctuality
- communicate to the headteacher any concerns or underlying problems that may account for a child's absence
- support pupils with absence to engage with their learning once they are back in school

Responsibilities of parents/carers:

Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is a parent/carer's legal responsibility (Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act) and permitting absence from school that is not authorised by the school creates an offence in law.

Parents will:

- inform the school on the first day of absence and every day following this unless a set period of absence has been agreed
- notify the school office any planned absences well in advance
- support the school with their child in aiming for 100% attendance each year
- make sure that any absence is clearly accounted for by telephone or email on the first and subsequent days of absence
- avoid taking their child out of school for non-urgent medical or dental appointments
- only request leave of absence if it is for an exceptional circumstance

SECTION 3 - RECORDING ATTENDANCE

Legally the register must be marked twice daily. This is once at the start of the school day, 8.50 am and again at the start of the afternoon session at 1.00 pm.

Lateness/punctuality

It is important for your child to be on time at the start of the day. If your child is late, they may miss work, time with their class teacher gaining vital information and furthermore can cause disruption for other children. Children also can feel upset or embarrassed when they are late which may lead to possible further absence.

The school opens every day at 8.40am allowing the pupils to comfortably settle in to their classroom before registration begins at 8.50am. It officially closes at 9.00am. All lateness is recorded. (This

information will be required by the courts, should a prosecution for non-attendance or lateness be necessary).

Arrival after the close of registration will be marked as unauthorised absence and coded *U* in line with Hampshire County Council and Department of Education guidance. This mark shows them to be on site, but is legally recorded as an absence. If a pupil is late due to a medical appointment, they will receive an authorised absence, coded *M*. Please be advised that, where possible, doctors and dentists appointments are to be made outside of school hours or during school holidays. Pupils who are consistently late are disrupting not only their own education but also that of the other pupils. Ongoing and repeated lateness is considered as **unauthorised absence and will be subject to legal action** (see section 6 for further details).

Parents, guardians or carers of pupils who have patterns of lateness will be contacted to discuss the importance of good time keeping and how this might be achieved. If lateness persists, they will be invited to a meeting with the headteacher to discuss the problem. Support will always be offered, however if support is declined and a child has 10 or more sessions of unauthorised absence due to lateness recorded in any 10-week period, the school or Hampshire County Council will be required to issue parents with a Penalty Notice in accordance with Hampshire County Council's Code of Conduct: *issuing penalty notices for unauthorised absence from school* (see section 6 of this policy for further details)

WHAT TO DO IF MY CHILD IS ABSENT

A child not attending school is considered a **safeguarding** matter. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required.

First day of absence

If your child is absent you must contact us as soon as possible on the first day of absence. You should leave a message on the school's answering service, explaining the reason for the absence.

If your child is absent we will telephone/text you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you, this is because we have a duty to ensure your child's safety as well as their regular school attendance.

If absences persist, we will invite you in to discuss the situation with the headteacher or deputy headteacher. If absences are unauthorised and fall below 90%, we will refer the matter to the Hampshire County Council's Attendance Legal Panel.

Third day of absence

After three days of absence, if your child has not been seen and contact has not been established with the named parent/carer, the school is required to start **child missing in education** procedures as set down in the Hampshire County Council guidance. (We will first make all reasonable enquiries to establish contact with parents/carers, including making enquiries to known friends or the wider family).

Tenth day of absence

We have a legal duty to report the absence of any pupil who is absent without an explanation for 10 consecutive days. If the child is not seen and contact has not been established with the named parent/carer, then the local authority is notified that the child is **at risk of missing**. Children's Services staff will visit the last known address and alert key services to locate the child. So help us to help you and your child by making sure we always have an up to date contact number. There will be checks on telephone numbers throughout the year.

Continued or ongoing absence

If your child misses 10% (three weeks) or more schooling across the school year, they are defined as **persistent absentees**. Absence for whatever reason disadvantages a child by creating gaps in his or

her learning. Research shows that these gaps affect attainment when attendance falls below 95%. As such, we monitor all absence thoroughly and all attendance data is shared with the local authority and the Department for Education. If your child has had an absence and their attendance level is falling towards 90% we will contact you, and depending on the reasons for the absence we will arrange a meeting or have a conversation over the phone to ensure that absence is legitimate and unavoidable.

Children at this school are dependent on the parents/carers, who are responsible for their level of attendance and punctuality. It is vital that the children enjoy coming to school, and whilst being encouraged to arrive on time, will not carry blame or made to feel upset if their parents are not supportive or effective in these areas.

A Welcome Back

On return from an absence, all children are made to feel welcome. As far as possible, the child is will be brought up to date with any missed work.

SECTION 4 - REQUEST FOR LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Amendments to school attendance regulations were updated and enforced from September 2013: The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations state that headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time **unless** there are exceptional circumstances. It is important to note that headteachers can determine the length of the authorised absence, as well as whether absence is authorised at all. The fundamental principles for defining *exceptional* are rare, significant, or unavoidable, which means the event could not reasonably be scheduled at another time. **There are no rules on this** as circumstances vary from school to school and family to family. There is, however, no legal entitlement for time off in school term time to go on holiday and in the vast majority of cases, holiday will not be authorised. Parents/carers wishing to apply for leave of absence need to fill in an application form (available from the school office and the school website under letters and forms), in advance and before making any travel arrangements.

If term-time leave is taken without prior permission from the school, the absence will be unauthorised and if the number of sessions absent hits the thresholds set down in Hampshire County Council's *Code of Conduct*, parents/carers will be issued with a fixed-penalty fine or other legal action in accordance with the code (see section 6 for further details).

Taking holidays in term time will affect your child's schooling as much as any other absence and we expect parents to help us by not taking children out during school time.

SECTION 5 - UNDERSTANDING TYPES OF ABSENCE

Pupils are expected to attend school every day for the entire duration of the academic year, unless there is an exceptional reason for the absence. There are two main categories of absences:

Authorised absence

This is when the school has accepted the explanation offered as satisfactory justification for the absence or given approval in advance for such an absence. If no explanation is received, absences cannot be authorised.

Unauthorised absence

This is when the school has not received a reason for absence or has not approved a child's leave of absence from school after a parent's request. This includes:

- parents giving their child permission to be off school unnecessarily, such as for shopping or birthdays
- absences which have not been explained

A school can, if needed, change an authorised absence to an unauthorised absence and vice versa if new information is presented. Any changes will be communicated to parents/carers. An example of this would be where a parent states a child is unwell but on return to school there is evidence they have been on holiday.

SECTION 6 - PENALTY NOTICES FOR NON-ATTENDANCE AND OTHER LEGAL MEASURES

In education law, parents/carers are committing an offence if they fail to ensure the regular attendance of their child of compulsory school age at the school at which the child is registered, unless the absence has been authorised by the school.

Legal measures for tackling persistent absence or lateness

Hampshire schools and Hampshire County Council will use the full range of legal measures to secure good attendance. Legal measures will only be considered when there is unauthorised absence and:

- 1. the child or family do not require the support from any agency to improve the attendance.**
- 2. the child has 10 or more sessions of unauthorised absence and parents are complicit in the child's absence.**

The following legal measures will be used for pupils of **compulsory school age** who are registered at the school:

- Parenting contracts set at Education Planning Meetings
- Parenting orders
- Penalty Notices
- Education Supervision Orders
- Prosecution.

Where a child has unauthorised absence the school must enforce Hampshire County Council's **Code of Conduct: issuing Penalty Notices for unauthorised absence from schools** or follow its guidance on other legal measures for non-attendance. The **Code of Conduct** is a statutory document that ensures that powers for legal sanctions are applied consistently and fairly across all schools and their families within the authority. A copy is available from:

www.hants.gov.uk/education/hias/learning-behaviour-attendance/attendance-guidance-for-parents/possible-penalties

CODE OF CONDUCT

The **Code of Conduct** states that schools or Hampshire County Council will issue a Penalty Notice for any unauthorised absence where the pupil has been:

- absent for 10 or more half-day sessions (five school days) of unauthorised absence during any 100 possible school sessions – these do not need to be consecutive
- persistently late (coded *U*) for up to 10 sessions (five days) after the register has closed
- persistently late before the close of the register (coded *L*), but the school has met with parents and has clearly communicated that they will categorise as unauthorised any further lateness (code *O*), and where the threshold of 10 sessions (five days) has been met
- absent for any public examinations of which dates are published in advance
- absent for any formal school assessments, tests or examinations where the dates have been published in advance

unless the issuing of a Penalty Notice would conflict with other intervention strategies in place or other sanctions already being processed.

If a child's unauthorised absence meets any of the above criteria and the family or child do not require any agency support to improve the attendance, then a Penalty Notice is issued for either:

1. 10 sessions of unauthorised absence or lateness in any 10-week school period **or**
2. one or more sessions of unauthorised absence during a public exam, formal school assessment or testing where dates are published in advance.

This includes where a pupil has unauthorised absence due to either:

- non-approval of a parent/carer's request for leave of absence **or**
- a holiday that has been taken without permission.

Parents and carers will be warned of the likelihood of a Penalty Notice being issued for unauthorised absence through the leave of absence request form. The Penalty Notice is a fine that is issued to each parent/carer who condoned (or was responsible for the child) during the period of unauthorised absence for which the fine has been issued. For each case of unauthorised absence the school or Hampshire County Council will decide whether a Penalty Notice is issued to **one or more parents/carers** for each child.

NB: This could mean four Penalty Notices for a family with two siblings, both with unauthorised absence for a holiday, ie one Penalty Notice for each child to each parent.

Each Penalty Notice carries a fine of £60 if paid within 21 days of the Penalty Notice being posted. If the fine is not paid within 21 days, the penalty is automatically increased to £120 if paid within 28 days. If the fine remains unpaid, Hampshire County Council will consider prosecution for the non-attendance. Payment methods are detailed on the Penalty Notices themselves. Penalties are to be paid to Hampshire County Council and revenue resulting from payment of penalties is used by the County Council to help cover the costs of issuing Penalty Notices and/or the cost of prosecuting recipients who do not pay.

Please note: If you pay the Penalty Notice and your child has further unauthorised absences additional legal action will be taken. For example, in the event that a Penalty Notice has previously been served to you due to unauthorised holiday, should your child have any further unauthorised leave this will result in further legal action for you, such as prosecution or an Education Supervision Order. For further information, parents/carers can request a leaflet from the school and should visit Hampshire County Council's website at: <https://www.hants.gov.uk/education/hias/learning-behaviour-attendance/attendance-guidance-for-parents/possible-penalties>

SECTION 7 – My child is trying to avoid coming to school. What should I do?

Children are sometimes reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents/carers and the child. If a child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and may make things worse. Contact your child's class teacher, immediately and openly discuss your worries. Your child could be avoiding school for a number of reasons – difficulties with school work, bullying, friendship problems, family difficulties. It is important that we identify the reason for your child's reluctance to attend school and work together to tackle the problem. In some cases, you may find it helpful to discuss the circumstances of your child's difficulties with another professional.

What can I do to encourage my child to attend school? Make sure your child gets enough sleep and gets up in plenty of time each morning. Ensure that he/she leaves home in the correct school uniform. Show your child, by your interest, that you value his/her education. Be interested in what your child is doing in school, chat to them about the things they have learnt, what friends they have made and even what they had for lunch! For many parents, your child attending school may be

your first experience of being separated from them. This can seem daunting at first for both of you, but consistency and a caring, supportive home and school life will make the transition a quick and easy experience for you both.

LEAVING PETERSFIELD INFANT SCHOOL

If a child leaves our school (other than when transferring to the junior school), parents/carers are asked to give the school office comprehensive information about their plans, including any date of a move, their new address and telephone numbers, your child's new school and the start date when known. If their child leaves the school and the school does not have the above information, then the child is considered to be a ***child missing in education***. This requires the school and the local authority to then carry out an investigation to try and locate the child, which includes liaising with Children's Services, the police and other agencies. By giving the school the above information, these investigations can be avoided.

ABSENCE THROUGH CHILD PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC PERFORMANCES, INCLUDING THEATRE, FILM OR TELEVISION WORK OR MODELLING

Parents/carers of a child performer can seek leave of absence from school for their child to take part in a performance. They must contact the headteacher to discuss the nature and frequency of the work, whether the child has a valid performance licence and whether education will be provided by the employer during any future leave of absence. It is, however, down to the headteacher's discretion as to whether to authorise this and they will wish to discuss with you the nature and frequency of the absence and how learning will continue if absence occurs. Any absence recorded as part of a child's participation in a public performance is recorded as *C*, an authorised absence.

ABSENCE THROUGH COMPETING AT REGIONAL, COUNTY OR NATIONAL LEVEL OF SPORT

Parents of able sports children can seek leave of absence from school for their child to take part in regional, county, national and international events and competitions. It is, however, down to the headteacher's discretion as to whether to authorise this and they will wish to discuss with the parents/carers the nature and frequency of the absence and how learning will continue if absence occurs. Permission for your child to leave early or arrive late to attend coaching and training sessions is also at the discretion of the headteacher and is not likely to be approved if it is a regular event.

GYPSY, ROMA, TRAVELLER AND SHOWMAN FAMILIES

For advice and guidance on attendance and Gypsy, Roma, Traveller and Showman families, see Hampshire County Council guidance at:

<http://documents.hants.gov.uk/childrensservices/HIAS/Promotingpupilattendanceandrecordingabsence-Section6.pdf>.

RECORD PRESERVATION

School registers are legal documents. We will ensure compliance with attendance regulations by keeping attendance records. Computer registers will be preserved as electronic back-ups.

Staff: Sept 2023

Ref: TS/Policies Non statutory / annually / resources /web