

Attendance and Punctuality Policy
ABBOTSWOOD JUNIOR SCHOOL
Approved by the Senior Leadership Team: January 2024
Review date: 2 years (January 2026)

National guidance

School attendance is subject to various education laws and this school attendance policy is written to reflect these laws and the guidance produced by the Department for Education and Hampshire County Council. This Attendance Policy is also consistent with the following school policies:

- Admissions
- Anti-bullying
- Safeguarding
- Child protection
- Special educational needs
- Teaching & Learning
- Positive Behaviour Management

We have high expectations for attendance & punctuality. It is very important therefore that you make sure that your child attends regularly and this policy sets out how together we will achieve this. This policy will be publicised for all staff, parents and pupils via the school website.

Section 1

Rationale/Statement of Intent:

For a child to reach their full educational achievement a high level of school attendance is essential. We are committed to providing an education of the highest quality for all our pupils/ students 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 he/she is entitled. Parents and teachers 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 or carers the importance of regular and punctual attendance.

For our children to take full advantage of the educational opportunities offered it is vital that your child is at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. The routines children develop around attendance and punctuality at school are the same as the expectations of any future employer in the world of work. High attainment, confidence with peers and staff and future aspirations 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 between primary school, secondary school, and higher education, employment or training

Section 2

Promoting Good Attendance and Punctuality

The foundation for good attendance is a strong partnership between the school, parents and the child. To help us all to focus on this we will:

- provide information on all matters related to attendance in our regular newsletters
- report to you on how your child is performing in school, what their attendance and punctuality rate is and how this relates to their attainments;
- celebrate good attendance by displaying class achievements;
- reward good or improving attendance through weekly whole school competitions.

Roles and Responsibilities:

Responsibilities of the School's Attendance Leader

A member of the Senior Leadership Team will oversee, direct and co-ordinate the school's work in promoting regular and improved attendance and will ensure the Attendance Policy is consistently applied throughout the school. This person will also ensure that attendance is both recorded accurately and analysed. They will ensure that attendance issues are identified at an early stage and that support is put in place to deal with any difficulties.

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

Responsibilities of Classroom Staff:

- Ensure that all students are registered accurately
- Promote & reward good attendance at all appropriate opportunities.
- Liaise with the Attendance Leader on matters of attendance and punctuality
- Communicate 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.
- Liaise with the office team to ensure letters are sent to families where there are concerns so the family are aware at an early stage

Responsibilities of Students:

- Attend every day unless they are ill or have an authorised absence.
- Arrive in school on time.
- Go to all their registrations and lessons on time.
- Take responsibility for registering at the Reception if they are late.

Responsibilities of Parents and Carers:

Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is a parent/carers' 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:

- make sure that any absence is clearly accounted for by phone, text or email before 9.30am on the **first and subsequent days** of absence, or by letter if a phone is unavailable.
- support the school with their child in aiming for 100% attendance each year.
- avoid taking their child out of school for non-urgent medical or dental appointments.
- only request for 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 at 8.55 am and again for the afternoon session at 1.05pm (Years 3 and 4) and 1.15 pm (Years 5 and 6). It is important to be on time at the start of the morning and afternoon school sessions. The start of school is used to give out instructions or organise learning. If your child is late they will miss learning, time with their class teacher getting vital information, cause disruption to the lesson for others and this can be embarrassing, leading to possible further absence.

- The school day begins between 8.40 and 8.55 am and all **pupils are expected to be in school by 8.55am**.
- Pupils are marked 'L' after 8.55 am showing they are late for school.
- All lateness is recorded daily. This information will be required by the courts, should a prosecution for non-attendance or lateness be necessary
- Arrival after the close of registration (morning registration is at 8.55 am and it closes at 9.15 am) will be marked as unauthorised absence code 'U' in line with Hampshire County Council and Department for Education (DfE) guidance. This mark shows them to be on site, but is legally recorded as a half-day 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.

Lateness and punctuality

Pupils who are consistently late are disrupting not only their own education but also that of the other pupils. On-going and repeated lateness is considered as **unauthorised absence and will be subject to legal action** (see section 6 for further detail).

Parents 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, parents, guardians or carers will be invited to attend the school and discuss the problem and support offered. If support is not appropriate/effective or is declined and a child has 10 or more sessions of unauthorised absence due to lateness recorded in the last 10 week period, the school or the Hampshire County Council will be required to issue parents with a penalty notice in accordance with Hampshire's Code of Conduct for issuing penalty notices for non-attendance (See section 6 of this policy for further detail).

Please collect your child promptly at the end of the school day. Where late collection is persistent and/or significantly late, the school is obliged to take any uncollected pupil to a place of safety and share concerns as necessary with other agencies such as Children's Services.

What to do if my child is absent?

First Day Absence

A child not attending school is considered a **safeguarding** matter. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required. If your child is absent you must contact us by 9.30 am on the day of every absence by telephone, or by calling in to reception.

If your child is absent we will:

- Telephone or 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;*
- Analyse each child's attendance and offer support as necessary from our:
 - Welfare and Health Officer
 - Parent Support Advisor
 - ELSA
- If absences persist, invite you in to discuss the situation with our Deputy Headteacher who may suggest a voluntary parent contract
- Refer the matter to the Hampshire's Attendance Legal Panel if absence is unauthorised and falls below 90%. (Persistent absence).

Subsequent Absence

Please contact us each day your child is absent.

Please Note: If your child is not seen and contact has not been established with you or any of the named parent/carers after three days of absence the school is required to start *child missing in education* procedures as set down by Hampshire County Council Guidance. We will make all reasonable enquires to establish contact with parents and the child including making enquiries to known friends or wider family.

Ten Days' Absence

We have a legal duty to report the absence of any pupils 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*. Hampshire 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.

Continued or Ongoing Absence

If your child misses 10% (3 weeks) or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason they are defined as **persistent absentees** (PA). Absence for whatever reason disadvantages a child by creating gaps in his or her learning. Research shows 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 will take any further action as detailed in this policy.

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

A Welcome Back

When pupils return from an unavoidable absence we ensure they are made to feel welcome. We ensure that the pupil is helped to catch up on missed work and brought up to date on any information that has been passed to the other pupils.

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 time to go on holiday **and in the majority of cases holiday will not be authorised.** Parents/carers wishing to apply for leave of absence need to fill in an online application form in advance and before making any travel arrangements. Please complete the leave request form from the link below:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSc8mUNwCSq_N8DYldXIWmIxGryiXWA2iuyZQ3fT9o6gZhWyeA/viewform?usp=sf_link

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's Code of Conduct, parent/carers will be issued with a fixed-penalty fine, or other legal action in accordance with the code (see section 6 for detail).

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: 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: is when the school has not received a reason for absence or has not approved a child's leave absence from school after a parent's request. It will be coded on your child's attendance record as one of the following:

- O – unauthorised absence
- U – late after close of registration
- G – non-approved leave of absence (holiday).

This includes:

- parents giving their children permission to be off school unnecessarily such as for shopping, birthdays, to look after siblings
- parents allowing children to stay at home without a justified medical reason
- truancy before or during the school day
- 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 where 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 are for pupils of compulsory school age who are registered at a school:

- parenting contracts set at Education Planning Meetings
- parenting orders
- penalty notices
- education Supervision Orders
- prosecution

Legal Measures for absence taken when the Headteacher has declined parent/carer request for leave of absence

Where a pupil has unauthorised absence due to either:

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

and the unauthorised absence is for 10 or more sessions (5 days) in the last 100 possible school sessions then a penalty notice for non-attendance will be issued.

Where a child has **unauthorised absence** the school must enforce Hampshire County Council's *Code of Conduct for 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:

<https://www.hants.gov.uk/educationandlearning/behaviour-attendance-parents>

The code of conduct states that:

Schools or Hampshire Local Authority 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 in the last 100 possible school sessions – these do not need to be consecutive
- persistently late (coded *U*) for 10 or more half-day sessions after the register has been closed at 9.15 am – these do not need to be consecutive.
- persistently late before the close of the register (coded *L*), for 10 or more school sessions (these do not need to be consecutive) - 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 single Penalty Notice is issued for:

- **10 sessions of unauthorised absence or lateness in the last 10 week school period**

Parents and carers will be warned of the likelihood of a penalty notice being issued for unauthorised absence either via a letter, through the leave of absence request form, or through the schools' attendance policy and website. 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 parent/carers** for each child. **N.B** This could mean four penalty notices for a family with two siblings both with unauthorised absence for holiday i.e. one PN 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 the 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 future 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 their school and should visit Hampshire County Councils website at:

<https://www.hants.gov.uk/educationandlearning/behaviour-attendance-parents>

Section 7:

What can I do to encourage my child to attend school?

Children are sometimes reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents 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 or 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.

- 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 clothes and properly equipped.
- Show your child, by your interest, that you value his or her education.
- Be interested in what your child is doing in school, read with them, 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.

Leavers

If your child is leaving our school (other than when transferring to the secondary school) parents are asked to:

Give the attendance officer comprehensive information about their plans including any date of a move and your new address and telephone numbers, your child's new school and the start date when known. This should be submitted to our school in writing.

If pupils leave and we do not have the above information, then your child is considered to be a 'Child Missing in Education'. This requires schools and Local Authorities to then carry out investigations to try and locate your child, which includes liaising with Children's Services, the Police and other agencies. By giving us the above information, these investigations can be avoided.

Absence through child participation in Public Performances, including theatre, film or TV work & Modelling.

Parents 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 for sport

Parents of able sportsmen and women can seek leave of absence from school for their child to take part in a regional, county, national and international events and competitions. It is, however, down to the Headteacher's discretion 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. Permission for your child to leave early or arrive late to attend coaching and training sessions are also at the discretion of the Headteacher and are not likely to be approved if it is a regular event, unless the sports club or association are providing an education tutor as part of their coaching.

Gypsy Roma Traveller and Showman families

Absence of a child from a traveller family that has left the area may be authorised if the absence is for **work purposes or for cultural education only** and it is believed that the family intends to return. To ensure the continuity of learning for Traveller children, dual registration is allowed. That means that a school cannot remove a Traveller child from the school roll while they are travelling. When the Traveller is away the home school holds the place open and records the absence as authorised through the T code. Distance Learning packs for traveller children are not an alternative to attendance at school.

Section 8

Record preservation

School registers are legal documents. We will ensure compliance with attendance regulations by keeping attendance records for at least 3 years. Computer registers will be preserved as electronic back-ups.