



## **Highfield Primary School** **Attendance and Punctuality Policy**

### **Introduction**

This Policy has been agreed by the Governors, Staff and Pupils of Highfield Primary School. It represents our commitment to striving for 100% attendance, which is achievable, and achieved by many children. It sets out the principles, procedures and practice the school will undertake. Strategies, sanctions and possible legal consequences of poor Attendance and Punctuality are also detailed, as well as rewards for, and benefits of good attendance. This policy will be reviewed, amended as necessary and published annually in accordance with current legislation and guidance.

### **Principles**

- Receiving a full-time, suitable education is a child's legal entitlement.
- It is parents'/carers' legal responsibility to ensure this happens.
- Attending school regularly aids intellectual, social and emotional development
- Attending school regularly safeguards the welfare of children whilst they are not in the care of their parents. All children whose attendance is poor will be treated as vulnerable.

Parents of registered pupils have a legal duty under the Education Act 1996 to make sure that children of compulsory school age attend school on a regular and full-time basis.

### **Aims of the Policy**

- To ensure that all children attend as near full-time as possible, in order to maximise their educational achievement and social development.
- To discharge the school's duty to safeguard its pupils to the best of its ability
- To ensure that all those responsible for children's education, including parents, carers, staff and governors understand and accept their responsibilities in relation to attendance.
- To minimise absence from school, thereby reducing levels of persistent absence.
- To improve the life chances of children and young people and prepare them to be fully contributing citizens when they reach adulthood.

### **Policy Objectives**

- To safeguard the welfare, health, social and emotional development of children
- To reduce persistent absence
- To eliminate term time holidays/leave of absence
- To promote commitment to education and high achievement
- To maximise the potential of every individual pupil

## **Promoting Attendance**

The Governors, Headteacher and staff will use all possible opportunities to promote the importance of good attendance and punctuality. These will include the home/school agreement, newsletters, rewards and incentives for good or significantly improving attendance.

The Governors, Headteacher and Staff are keen to ensure that all our children attend school regularly and punctually so that they receive the best education possible in order that they fulfil their potential. To fulfil this purpose, parents will be informed of the school policy and encouraged to understand the importance of good attendance and punctuality. The school uses the SIMS Attendance register on the computer which helps us monitor attendance.

## **Understanding Types of Absence:**

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by the parents) as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of each absence is always required, preferably in writing.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason like illness or other unavoidable cause. Medical / dental appointments should always be made outside of school hours.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been given. This type of absence can lead to the Local Authority (Participation Team) using sanctions and / or legal proceedings. This includes:

- parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily
- truancy before or during the school day
- absences which have never been properly explained
- children who arrive too late to get a mark
- shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- day trips and holidays
- excessive illness without medical evidence

Whilst any child may be off school because they are ill, sometimes absence can be due to reluctance to attend school. If a child is reluctant to attend, it is counter productive 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. Parents are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving problems together. This is nearly always successful.

If problems cannot be sorted out in this way, the school may refer the child to the Participation Team from the LA. They will also try to resolve the difficulties by agreement but, if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed, this officer can use Penalty Notices or court proceedings to prosecute parents or to seek an Education Supervision Order on the child.

Alternatively, parents or children may wish to contact the Participation Team themselves to ask for advice. They are independent of the school. Their telephone number is available from the school office or by contacting the LA 01895 250858.

You can support your children by:

- ensuring regular and early bed times
- helping with homework
- having uniform and equipment prepared the night before
- providing a healthy breakfast
- reporting any academic or social concerns promptly
- retaining open & honest communications with the school
- being positive about school (even if your own experience was less than positive)
- encouraging your child to invite children home for play dates

## Procedures

The school applies the following procedures in deciding how to deal with individual absences:

### Illness and Other Legitimate Reasons

If a pupil is unfit for school, parents are asked to contact the school on the first day of absence **by 9am**. When the pupil returns, he or she must bring a written note, signed by the parent for each period of absence or the parent must inform the school by telephone. Absences will not be authorised without this procedure. In exceptional circumstances, further evidence of a child's illness, such as a doctor's note, may be requested. **For absences of more than 3 days a doctor's note is required.**

### Other reasons for absence

These must be discussed with the school each time; notes will not necessarily be accepted as providing valid reasons.

If a parent does not make contact with the school regarding their child's absence the following occurs:

- the school attendance officer will attempt to contact parents on the first day of absence
- if they have been off and not notified us on return, the reason for absence, by the end of the week, we will send a letter asking for an explanation.
- if we do not receive a reply we will send a second letter.
- if this still does not get a response we will then send a third letter notifying the parents that this is an unauthorised absence and it will be highlighted to the Participation Team at the borough.

If a pupil is absent at morning registration and the school has been informed that this pupil walks to school, the Welfare assistant will contact the parents by telephone by 9.15am.

### Vulnerable children

Identified children who are vulnerable (including Looked After Children) will be contacted on the first day of absence.

### Lateness

Pupils must attend on time to be given a mark for that session, unless the lateness is unavoidable. Parents are expected to ensure that pupils are present at registration. A late mark is awarded if pupils are not present for registration. An unauthorised mark is given if arrival is after 9.15am.

## Exceptional Leave

Any Exceptional Leave in term time is at the discretion of the Headteacher and Governing Body. Parents also need to make an appointment to see the Head, to discuss the purpose of the absence and the impact on the child's learning.

In line with the LA guidelines:

- Leave will be refused where children have already missed a lot of work or at crucial times of the year (eg. during examinations).
- absence may be refused if more than 2 requests have been made during the child's attendance at Highfield and/or the child is in year 2 or in 6.

Any pupil who does take leave in term time will be expected to complete extra work to make sure they do not fall behind. The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 clearly states that Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances.

**The Participation Team *may issue a penalty notice for unauthorised Exceptional Leave which is currently £60 rising to £120 per child per parent or a summons to Uxbridge Magistrates Court.***

## Registers

School registers will be inspected regularly by the headteacher and attendance officer. Parents will be contacted in the event of:

- a) unauthorised absence
- b) frequent short absences, particularly where a pattern emerges; e.g. every Friday
- c) persistent lateness.

Contact will be made by:

- a) a letter sent by the office informing parents of the school's concern
- b) a letter or telephone call inviting parents to meet with the headteacher to discuss the problem.
- c) referral to the school Participation Team, who visits the school regularly (highlighting if the child has been identified as vulnerable)

## Attendance Panels

Highfield and the LA follow the Department for Education guidelines for Attendance Panels and penalty notices for parents of children who have continuing poor attendance. A summons to appear at Uxbridge Magistrates Court can also be given if appropriate.

A record of all concerns, correspondence and meetings will be kept in the school office.

### **Recognising good attendance**

A weekly record of attendance percentages will be kept. The three top classes of the week will be celebrated in the Monday morning assembly and details displayed in the main Reception area.

At the end of each half term, the children with 100% attendance names are put into a hat and drawn out in an assembly. The eight children that are chosen are presented with an Argos gift voucher for £10.

We, at Highfield School, believe that this is an appropriate incentive to highlight the importance of good attendance and punctuality to young children and their parents. As a school we are very active in improving attendance overall, so that our children receive the best possible education that they are entitled to by law.

#### Useful Information for parents:

##### Understanding absence percentages

You may wonder why a school would be concerned if your child's attendance is 95%. This may make it easier to understand:

95% equates to half a day off every two weeks

90% equates to a day off every two weeks

85% equates to one and a half days off every two weeks

80% equates to one whole day off every week

A secondary age child whose attendance is 80% will have missed ONE WHOLE YEAR of education by the time they leave school