

Itchen Abbas Primary School



Attendance Policy

National Guidance

Section 175 of the Education Act 2002 places a duty on governing bodies to have regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State with regard to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and students under the age of 18.

DfE Guidance School Attendance (2014):

Schools should:

1. Promote good attendance and reduce absence, including persistent absence
2. Ensure every child has access to full time education
3. Act early to address patterns of absence

Parents must perform their legal duty by ensuring children of compulsory school age who are registered to a school attend regularly. All pupils must be punctual to their lessons.

The level of attendance & punctuality expected from all our pupils is included in our school's home-school agreement which parents must sign following their child's admission to a school (this is a statutory requirement).

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 annually publicised in writing for all staff, parents and pupils via the email. It will also be published on our school website

Section 1:

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 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 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:

2.1 Promoting Good Attendance & Punctuality

The foundation for good attendance is a strong partnership between the school, parents and the child. The Home/School agreement will contain 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 on our Website
- 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
- Meet with parents, pupils and staff on raising attendance levels where necessary

2.2 Roles and Responsibilities:

A member of the Senior Leadership Team (Mrs Aimee Dear) 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. She 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, we 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 & praise good attendance at all appropriate opportunities.
- Liaise with the Attendance Leader on matters of attendance and punctuality and
- Communicate any concerns or underlying problems that may account for a child's absence.

Responsibilities of Pupils:

- 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 Desk if they are late or are leaving the school site during school hours.

Responsibilities of Parents and Carers:

Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is a parent/carers legal responsibility (section 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.
- Discuss with the class teacher any planned absences well in advance.
- Support the school with your child in aiming for 100% attendance each year.
- Make sure that any absence is clearly accounted for by phone or email on the first and subsequent days of absence, or by letter if a phone is unavailable.
- Avoid taking your child out of school for non-urgent medical or dental appointments.
- Only request for leave of absence if it is for an exceptional circumstance
- Take responsibility for signing your child out if they are leaving the school site during school hours.

Section 3

3.1. Recording Attendance

Legally the register must be marked twice daily. This is once at the start of the school day at 8.30 am and again for the afternoon session at 12.50pm.

3.2. Lateness /Punctuality

It is important to be on time at the start of the morning and afternoon school sessions and to lessons. The start of school and lessons are used to give out instructions or organise work. If your child is late they can miss work, time with their class teacher getting vital information, cause disruption to the lesson for others, and this can be embarrassing leading to possible further issues.

- The school day begins at **8.30am** and all **pupils are expected to be in school at that time**. Morning registration is from 8.30am until 8.40am and it closes at 9.00am
- 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 will be marked as unauthorised absence code 'U' in line with county and Department for Education (DfE) 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. On-going and repeated lateness is considered as **unauthorised absence and will be subject to legal action** (see section 6 for further detail). At Itchen Abbas, this will *not* include late arrivals as a result of the school bus being delayed.

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, parents, guardians or carers will be invited to attend the school and discuss the problem and support offered. If support is not appropriate or 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 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. We understand that on occasions, parents are unavoidably delayed. Should this happen, please contact the school office.

3.3. 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.

If your child is absent you must:

- Contact us as soon as possible on the first day of absence via email (with a subject header of absence from school or similar) or telephone;
- Send a note in on the first day they return with an explanation of the absence – you must do this even if you have already telephoned us;

Or, you can call into school and report to reception.

If your child is absent we will:

- Telephone 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*
- Invite you in to discuss the situation with our Attendance Leader if absences persist;
- Refer the matter to the Hampshire's Attendance Legal Panels if absence is unauthorised and falls below 90%.

On the third day of absence, if a child is still away and there has been no contact via the parent/s, a letter will be sent asking parents to contact the school immediately.

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 a 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 enquires to known friends, wider family.

Ten Day's Absence

We have a legal duty to report the absence of any pupils who are 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 regular checks on telephone numbers throughout the year.

Continued or Ongoing Absence

If your child misses 10% (3 weeks / 30 ½ day sessions) or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason they are defined as **persistent absentees**. Where this absence is authorised the school will:

- Inform you that your child's absence is above the expected level
- Offer a meeting with the Attendance Leader to discuss how we can support you in raising your child's level of attendance or help you identify outside agencies who may offer further support

- Offer support for your child's learning
- If there is no improvement, refer you to the Attendance Legal Panel.

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 absence and their attendance level is falling towards 90% we will contact you and depending on the reasons for the absence will:

- Offer to meet with you and support you with raising your child's attendance
- Offer outside agency support
- Issue you with a warning of Penalty Notice

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.

Timeline of School Action for Persistent Absence

In all cases, our aim is to ensure that all children have good attendance and punctuality in school. We will work with you to support you in this aim at all stages. We will listen and offer support from within school or through external agencies. However, we will also be clear as to our expectations and our responsibilities. The below timeline details what actions we will take and when.

If, at any stage, you have any concerns regarding your child's attendance and / or punctuality, you are encouraged to make an appointment with your class teacher and / or the Attendance Leader.

Where absence is authorised we will:

- Monitor all children's attendance on a regular basis
- Inform you in writing if your child's attendance falls below 95% and offer a meeting with the class teacher to discuss how your child's attendance could be improved and how we can support you
- If your child's attendance fails to improve and is less than 95% on subsequent monitoring, a further letter will be issued and a meeting with the Attendance Leader offered. At this stage it may be appropriate to offer outside agency support
- If your child's attendance falls to 90% or below, no further absence will be authorised without medical evidence of illness such as a doctors' note or prescription. Non-urgent medical appointments will not be authorised.
- If your child's attendance fails to improve, a referral to the Attendance Legal Panel will be made. The panel will determine what actions should now be offered to support you in improving your child's attendance and may decide a Penalty Notice is the correct course of action.

Where absence is unauthorised we will:

- Issue a letter requesting reasons for any unauthorised absence where the reason is unknown.
- Once a child has reached 5 unauthorised half-day sessions within a 10 week period (this will include unauthorised late arrival after the register has closed at 9.00am), letter warning of a Penalty Notice will be posted to parents and a meeting with the Attendance Leader offered. Our aim is to ensure good attendance and we will always try to offer support in this meeting.
- If your child's attendance improves and remains above the threshold, but then deteriorates, a second warning will not be issued. It will revert straight to a Penalty Notice once the threshold has been breached within a 10 week period.

- Once a child has reached 10 unauthorised absence half-day sessions within a 10 week school period, a Penalty Notice will be issued.
- The request for leave of absence form which parents are expected to complete and hand in to the school office (available on our website or from reception) includes a warning of Penalty Notice. Should you choose to keep your child out of school, this will count as your warning and a Penalty Notice will be issued once the threshold has been breached.

Where a child is persistently late

- Once your child has been late 5 times before the close of the register at 9.00am, a letter will be sent home warning of your child's lateness and a meeting with the class teacher will be offered. We will try to ascertain any reasonable reasons for the lateness and offer support and intervention to help you get your child to school on time.
- If your child continues to arrive late before the close of the register, on the 10th late arrival, a meeting with the Attendance Leader will be offered and a letter sent home stating that **all** subsequent late arrivals **before** the close of register will be recorded as unauthorised unless there are exceptional reasons that have been previously agreed by the Headteacher.
- Once your child has reached 5 unauthorised half-day sessions within a 10 week period, letter warning of a Penalty Notice will be posted to parents and a further meeting with the Attendance Leader offered.
- If your child's punctuality improves and remains above the threshold, but then deteriorates, a second warning will not be issued. It will revert straight to a Penalty Notice once the threshold has been breached.
- Once your child has reached 10 unauthorised absence half-day sessions within a 10 week school period, a Penalty Notice will be issued.

Section 4:

Request for Leave of Absence:

Amendments to school attendance regulations were updated and enforced from September 2013: **(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 holidays will not be authorised.** Parents/Carers wishing to apply for leave of absence need to fill in an application form (available from the school website or Reception) 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's Code of Conduct parent/carers will be issued with a fixed-penalty fine, or other legal action in accordance 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. This includes:
 - parents giving their children permission to be off school unnecessarily such as for shopping, birthdays, to look after siblings
 - 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.

The Isle of Wight Council – v – Platt legal case (13.05.16) has been referred to the Supreme Court for appeal, which will take some months to be heard. Hampshire County Council have therefore reviewed their position on what legal steps are open to them to address attendance rates, pending the judgment of the Supreme Court.

HCC will adopt the following temporary position from September 2016 until the end of the autumn term or until a judgment is made in the Isle of Wight Council – v – Platt case.

Under our extended temporary position we advise schools that:

- Penalty notices *can* be issued if a pupil has **40** or more unauthorised sessions within a rolling calendar year (equating to a 90% (or lower) attendance rate for the 12 month period). Authorised absence will not be included in this total.
- The 12 month rolling period is calculated from the last day of unauthorised absence once the 40 session threshold has been met and may inevitably straddle academic years, particularly at the start of the autumn term.

So for example, a pupil returns to school in September and then parents request leave of absence for term time holiday early in the autumn term. In this circumstance schools need to look back over the previous academic year to calculate up to a 12 month period of possible school attendance and re-run the SIMs report from that date to recalculate to ensure that there are 40 sessions of unauthorised absence.

In another example, a pupil may have had poor attendance last academic year and the pattern continues in the autumn term. In this circumstance the school may wish to monitor carefully and

review regularly, when the pupil reaches a 90% threshold over a 12 month period, then a penalty notice may be issued. In this situation it would be advisable that parents are warned that legal intervention may be forthcoming and that the pupil's absence is being carefully monitored.

- The issuing of penalty notices solely for non-attendance by a pupil at a statutory assessment or formal examination has been withdrawn. Schools should code absence when a pupil should be sitting an examination as unauthorised (code 'O'). This unauthorised session will contribute to the 40 or more sessions required for penalty notice issue.

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 through a referral to Hampshire's Attendance Legal Panels where:

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/carers 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 any 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's Code of Conduct for issuing Penalty Notices 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 <http://www3.hants.gov.uk/education/hias/learning-behaviour-attendance/attendance-guidance-for-parents/possible-penalties.htm>

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 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 single Penalty Notice is issued for either:

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

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, 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.

For further information parents/carers can request a leaflet from their school and should visit Hampshire County Councils website at: <http://www3.hants.gov.uk/education/hias/learning-behaviour-attendance/attendance-guidance-for-parents/possible-penalties.htm>

Section 7:

7.1 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 and the child. If your 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 clothes and properly equipped. 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.

7.2 Leavers

If your child is leaving our school (other than when transferring to the junior school/secondary school or leaving at the end of Year 6) parents are asked to:

Give the reception comprehensive information about your 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.

7.3 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. Any absence recorded as part of a child's participation in a public performance is recorded as C an authorised absence.

7.4. 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 headteachers discretion whether to authorise this and they will wish to discuss 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.

7.5 Gypsy Roma Traveller Showman 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 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 or microfiche copies.

If there is any bit of this policy, which is not clear, please contact the office for clarification. A summary sheet is available from the school office. For further guidance on the Penalty Notice, please refer to the Hampshire County Council produced leaflet, Penalty Notices - advice to parents and carers.

Person(s) responsible for implementing and monitoring the policy:

At Itchen Abbas Primary School, the named Attendance Lead is the Headteacher, Mrs Aimee Dear. In her absence, it is the DSL, Mr R Bogan.

Approved: October 2019

Due for review: October 2020

To be reviewed annually.