



Highfield Hall Primary and Nursery School Attendance Policy

We believe that for our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend school regularly. Children should be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

It is very important therefore that parents make sure that their child attends regularly and this Policy sets out how we will achieve this.

School Attendance Champion

The school's Attendance Champion is Dr Bywaters who is a member of the Senior Leadership Team.

Attendance Contacts

In terms of contact and support, the school's Child and Parent Support Officer is able to set up any meetings or discussions surrounding attendance, lateness and any additional support a family may require. The provision offered by the school comprises of a tailored service to each family and local referrals made to support families when appropriate.

Child and Parent Support Officer

Sarah West

01246 273534

swest@highfieldhall.derbyshire.sch.uk

Why regular attendance is so important

Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any pupil's absence or lateness can disrupt teaching routines and may affect the learning of others in the class. Ensuring a child's regular attendance at school is a legal responsibility, an absence from school without a good reason is an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility - parents, pupils and all members of school staff.

How the school supports and promotes good attendance

In terms of support, any parent/guardian is able to access the provision of support through the Child and Parent Support Officer, should patterns of poor attendance or punctuality be identified, contact will be made with families to offer additional help and support and a tailor-made support plan will be created. Support plans will consist of any appropriate referrals to outside provisions and will utilise multiagency and partnership working. There will be the opportunity to have meetings within the school with the Teaching, Support Staff and Senior Leadership Team to identify any areas of additional support that the school may be able to provide.

Incentivising attendance and punctuality are areas that the school is committed to, however here at Highfield Hall we like to take a sensitive and considered approach where we provide reward and recognition for consistency and improvement of a pupil's attendance and punctuality record. This ensures that all pupils have the opportunity to achieve recognition for their journey and achievements.

The Law relating to attendance

Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 states that '*the parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him / her to receive efficient full time education suitable:- (a) to age, ability and aptitude and (b) to any special educational needs he/ she may have either by regular attendance at school or otherwise*'

Understanding types of absence

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school, as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason like illness, medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable cause.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no permission has been given. This type of absence can lead to legal proceedings, it includes:

- parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily
- absences which have never been properly explained
- children who arrive at school too late to get a mark
- shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- day trips and holidays in term time which have not been agreed.

Whilst any child may be off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. If a child is reluctant to attend, we encourage parents to talk to us rather than cover up the absence or to give in to pressure to excuse the child from attending.

Persistent absenteeism

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we expect parents' fullest support and co-operation to tackle this. Any child with an attendance of less than 50% will be determined as severely absent.

We monitor all absence thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the P.A. point or is at risk of moving towards it is given priority and parents will be informed of this immediately. All P.A. cases are automatically reported to the appropriate authorities.

Absence procedures:

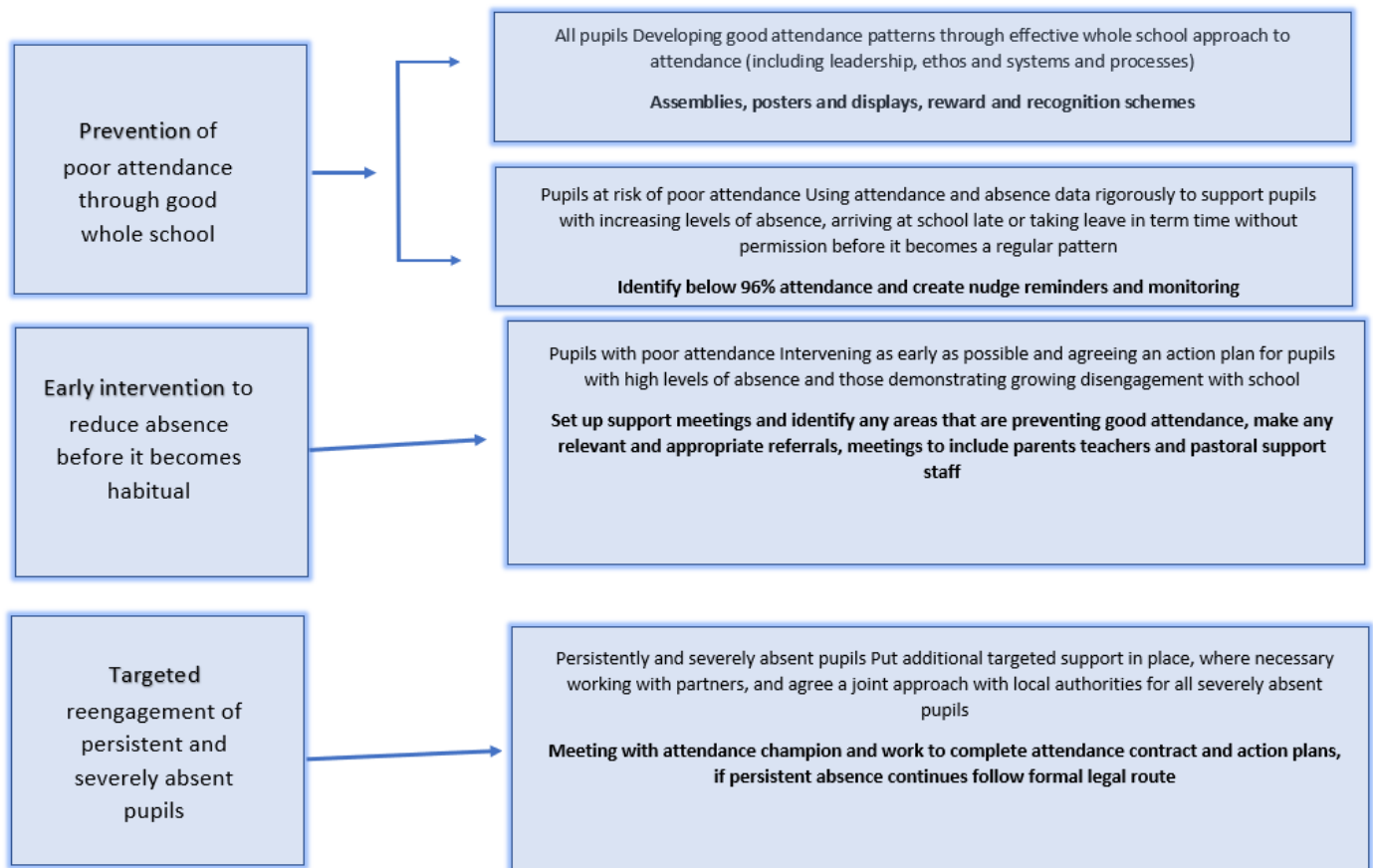
If a child is absent we expect Parents to:

Contact us as soon as possible on the first day of absence or send a note in on the first day they return with an explanation of the absence. Please contact the school in the first instance on absences@highfieldhall.derbyshire.sch.uk – the office number can be utilised if you need to discuss absence with the school (01246 273534).

In cases of long-term medical absences and/or if a child is persistently absent the school will request medical evidence to authorise the absence. Our attendance ambitions are the same for all pupils and we will provide support and reasonable adjustments where necessary.

If there has been no contact made with the school and a child is absent the school will contact parents/guardians to ascertain the reason for absence and offer any support if necessary. If absence continues and there is no specified reason or the school have not been able to make contact, the school will continue to attempt to make contact to ensure safeguarding of the pupil. This will include making safe and well checks where members of staff will visit the home where appropriate. The school will also liaise with the Local Authority and seek advices from all appropriate services including Children Missing in Education, Inclusion Advice Service and Children's Services Social Care.

Schools strategy for reducing persistent and severe absence



Lateness

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If a child misses the start of the day they can miss work and do not spend time with their class teacher getting vital information and news for the day. Late arriving pupils also disrupt lessons, can be embarrassing for the child and can also encourage absence.

The school day starts at 8.55 and we expect children to be in class at that time. Registers are marked by 9.00 and a child will receive a late mark if they are not in by that time. At **9.20 am** the registers will be closed. In accordance with the Regulations, if a child arrives after that time they will receive a mark that shows them to be on site, but this will **not** count as a present mark and it will mean they have an unauthorised absence in the form of a late mark. This may mean that parents could face the possibility of a Penalty Notice if the problem persists.

If a child has a persistent record of lateness parents will be asked to meet with the Headteacher and the Child and Parent Support Officer.

Schools strategy for using data to target attendance improvement efforts

The school will use data to identify attendance and punctuality trends, where attendance falls below 96% the school will follow the policy as outlined above to move towards providing support, intervention and as a final resort legal action. The data figures will be regularly analysed and shared with Teaching, Support Staff and Parents. You can always view your child's own attendance data, this is displayed on the eSchools Parent App home screen.

Absence leave requests in term time

Taking holidays or leaves of absence in term time affects a child's schooling as much as any other absence and we expect parents to help us by not taking children away in school time. The Government has recently made amendments and we consider leave requested in line with the National Framework outlined in the **Working Together to Improve School Attendance** which was recently updated on August 19th 2024. These regulations make it clear that Headteachers should not grant approval for any leave of absence during term-time, including holidays, unless there are exceptional circumstances.

Parents needing leave of absence for **exceptional circumstances** should complete a form at least two weeks before the anticipated start date. The reason for the request should be given in detail. Applications should be made before the leave is arranged as absences will not be granted retrospectively. These applications can be requested and emailed to info@highfieldhall.derbyshire.sch.uk – physical copies and returns are also available at the office.

In deciding whether to grant leave for exceptional circumstances the school will consider each application individually, including any previous pattern of leave in term time.

It is important that parents understand that leave in term time **cannot** be agreed by the school for the following reasons alone:

- availability of cheap holidays and cheap travel arrangements
- days overlapping with beginning or end of term

Any period of leave taken without the agreement of the school, or in excess of that agreed, will be classed as unauthorised and may attract sanctions such as a Penalty Notice. The school also has the powers to fine parents who take unauthorised holidays in term time. The Governing Body must by law use this sanction when necessary.

Details of the National Framework for Penalty Notices

Penalty notice

The Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 introduced legislation for local authorities to issue a penalty notice fine to the parent of a child who has unauthorised absences from school.

A penalty notice can be issued for the following reasons:

- if leave is taken during term time without the permission of the headteacher
- if a child has unauthorised absence from school and their parent fails to improve the situation
- if a child persistently arrives late after the close of register
- if a child who has been excluded is seen in a public place during school hours without adult supervision

Fines

A penalty notice fine offers a parent an alternative to prosecution. However, failure to pay a penalty notice will usually result in the original case being referred to a magistrates' court. The fine is £120, to be paid within 28 days but will be reduced to £60 if paid within 21 days. Penalty notice fines are issued per parent, per child and all fines issued must be paid.

Prosecution

If a parent is prosecuted this would take place in a magistrates' court under section 444 of the Education Act 1996. Prosecution could result in a fine of up to £2,500, a community order or a jail sentence of up to 3 months. The court can also issue a parenting order.

Prosecution in a magistrates' court would be via a Single Justice Procedure Notice (which removes the need for a formal hearing to take place) or by summons for a parent to appear at a magistrates' court in person.

Parents can be prosecuted for issues including:

- ongoing unsatisfactory school attendance
- repeated cycles of short-term improvements linked to the penalty notice process
- unauthorised leave of absence during term time (including holidays) which is excessive in length
- repeated periods of unauthorised leave of absence taken during term time (including holidays)
- non-payment of a penalty notice

HHPS Autumn 2024
Date of next review: Autumn 2025