

Heathfield Primary School



ATTENDANCE POLICY

Signed Head:
Signed Chair:
Date:

RATIONALE

With the intention of enabling all children to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them, Heathfield Primary School aims to encourage excellent levels of attendance and punctuality and is uncompromising in its pursuit of outstanding attendance for all of our families.

STATUTORY FRAMEWORK

Under the 1996 Education Act, a pupil is required to attend regularly at the school where they are a registered pupil.

The school is obliged by law to differentiate between authorised and unauthorised absence. A letter or telephone message from a parent does not in itself authorise an absence. Only if the school is satisfied as to the validity of the explanation offered by the letter/message will the absence be authorised.

RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Ensuring good attendance at Heathfield is the responsibility of everyone in the school community - pupils, parents and all staff.

Pupils

All pupils are expected to attend school regularly and punctually. Pupils who do experience attendance difficulties will be offered support. They will be encouraged to talk through any problems and, if necessary, parents will be contacted to come into school to discuss problems. Consistently good attendance and punctuality will be praised and rewarded by both individual and class rewards.

Parents

Parents are responsible for ensuring that their child attends school daily, punctually, properly dressed and equipped and in a fit condition to learn. Children who have been allowed to stay up very late at night and, therefore, are tired at the start of the day are **not** in a fit condition to learn. If a child is prevented for any reason from attending, or is late, parents are requested to notify the school as soon as possible - by phone or, preferably, in writing. A pupil's absence from school must be considered as unauthorised until a satisfactory explanation is forthcoming from the parent. Parents will be informed promptly of any concerns which may arise over a child's attendance. Parents should avoid, if at all possible, making medical/dental appointments for their child during school hours. If such appointments are unavoidable, these should only necessitate a maximum of half a day's absence and appointment cards must be shown. Absence for a whole day cannot be authorised and will not be authorised for siblings if the appointment relates only to one child.

School

Staff will endeavour to encourage good attendance and punctuality through personal example. Attendance is the responsibility of all school staff, not just the teaching staff. The school will employ a range of strategies (see below) to encourage good attendance and punctuality and will investigate promptly all absenteeism, liaising closely with parents. Staff will respond to all absenteeism firmly and consistently.

REGISTRATION

Registers will be called promptly at 9 am and 1pm/1.15 pm dependent on Key Stage. Registers will be marked in accordance with the regulations and list of symbols as set out by the DfE.

Registers will be sent to the office at 9.05 am and at 1.20 pm. Pupils who arrive after the registers have been sent to the office should report to the office. Children who arrive late, after the registers have closed at 9.10am, will be marked as unauthorised absence. This contributes to the triggers for penalty notices.

Registers are monitored daily by the school's business manager, Mrs Walsh, and shared with the school's School Social Worker, Anne Macdonald. Our Learning Mentor, Miss Burke, makes first day contact with parents of absent children who have not telephoned the school to give a reason for the absence. The business manager also ensures that correct procedures are being followed; she also calculates and enters totals.

Registers are checked regularly and independently by the school's School Social Worker. Cases causing concerns will trigger warning letters and parents may be invited in to school for interview. Mrs Macdonald also conducts home visits where children's absence is creating a pattern which causes concern.

AUTHORISED/UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE

It is very important that all staff adhere to the same criteria when deciding whether or not to authorise an absence.

Absence is to be recorded in accordance with the latest guidance from the Department for Education and Employment. This states that:

Absence can be **authorised** if:

- the pupil was absent with leave (defined as 'leave granted by any person authorised to do so by the governing body or proprietor of the school');
- the pupil was ill 'or prevented from attending by any unavoidable cause'; evidence will be requested, monitored families can only have absence authorised with evidence provided eg appointments/ doctors' notes. If the school does not accept illness as credible, then absence will be marked as unauthorised
- 'the absence occurred on a day exclusively set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parent belongs';
- the pupil is the child of Traveller parents and the conditions as stated in the Education Act 1996 Section 444 (6) are met;
- there is a family bereavement;
- the pupil is attending interview for a place at another school;
- the pupil is involved in an **exceptional** special occasion;
- leave of absence is granted by the school. Parents should be reminded these are only granted in exceptional circumstances as it is the school's policy not to authorise holiday absence in term time.

Absence will be **unauthorised** if:

- no explanation is forthcoming;
- the school is dissatisfied with the explanation;
- the pupil stays at home to mind the house or to look after siblings. The guidance suggests that absence in such cases should only be granted in exceptional circumstances;

- the pupil is in a public place during school hours without justification accepted by the school;
- the pupil is absent for **unexceptional** special occasions (eg a birthday, a sibling being ill, treatment for headlice, transport issues, non-immediate family weddings);
- the pupil is away from school on a family holiday for a period of time longer than that negotiated with the school;
- the pupil is on a family holiday without permission or if the parents have failed to apply for permission in advance of the holiday and, instead, seek retrospective approval on their return;
- the pupil is taken out to go on holiday at a time which the school has notified parents will always be counted as unauthorised, i.e. the beginning of the school year and assessment weeks in May.
- School had reason to question credibility of reason presented by parent

HOLIDAYS

Note, changes to local council legislation around authorised leave changes from September 18 And penalty notice triggers are reduced to 10 sessions (5 days). Parents are urged strongly to avoid taking family holidays during term time. Indeed, parents do **not** have the right to take their child out of school for such a holiday. If, however, parents apply to the school in advance, the school may grant term-time absence of up to a maximum of 5 days in any year to go this will only be in **exceptional circumstances**. Apart from this, leave in term time can only be given in exceptional circumstances.

Occasionally, holidays of more than one week to visit family living overseas may be planned. Parents are urged to discuss with school staff the most appropriate time of year and point in the child's education career for this visit to take place. Parents are also notified that exceeding the 5 day limit will lead to unauthorised absences on their child's records. This may then lead to a penalty notice and prolonged absence can result in a child being removed from the school's role.

PROCEDURES FOR FOLLOWING UP ABSENCE

- The school's Learning Mentor makes first day contact with parents of absent children who have not already informed school of the reason for absence. Attempts will be made by phone and text. If a child is under absence monitoring, a home visit may also be conducted by the School Social Worker.
- If a pupil returns to school after a period of absence and fails to bring a note, or if the explanation offered by a note is unsatisfactory, the attendance officer will contact the parent again.
- If the pupil is persistently absent (or late) and the school's efforts to effect an improvement have been unsuccessful, the situation will be picked up by the School Social Worker immediately. Warning letters will be sent home to advise the parents that absence is being closely monitored and parents may be invited in to school to attend a meeting with the Learning Mentor and Attendance Officer.
- Notes from parents will be initialled by the class teacher and placed in the class register. All telephone messages regarding absence/lateness are recorded.

- Trends within absence will be monitored both on an individual basis and within groups. Steps will be taken to target groups falling below average attendance levels by the School Social Worker and leadership team.
- Where absence goes unimproved, an EHA will be opened to investigate further contextual factors affecting attendance. This will also consider wider support available for families who may be struggling to support their child attending school. This work will be documented in the CAM cycle and updated on CPOMS; the school record keeping system.
- Unauthorised absence **exceeding five days** will trigger a penalty notice.

STRATEGIES FOR PROMOTING ATTENDANCE

- Heathfield will offer an environment in which pupils feel valued and welcomed. The school's ethos must demonstrate that pupils feel that their presence in school is important, that they will be missed when they are absent/late and that follow up action will be taken.
- A varied and flexible curriculum will be offered to all pupils. Every effort will be made to ensure that learning tasks are matched to pupils' needs.
- Every effort will be made to resolve any issues of 'bullying', in accordance with the school's Anti-Bullying Policy.
- Attendance data will be regularly collected and analysed in order to help identify patterns, set targets, correlate attendance with achievement, and support and inform policy/practice.
- Good attendance will be recognised and rewarded in the form of individual certificates and class treats. Attendance is referred to weekly in the celebration assembly and is high profile in display in the school hall.
- Parents will be reminded regularly (via newsletters, the school brochure, parents' evenings, etc) of the importance of good attendance.
- The attendance officer will have regular meetings with the school's Social Worker in order to identify and support those pupils who are experiencing attendance difficulties.
- The headteacher reports on attendance termly to the school's governing board.

TARGETS

The school has identified targets for the school year 2018/19. We aim to attain the national average attendance figure and work on reducing persistent absenteeism to raise attendance to 96%.