



Four Lanes Infant School

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<i>Review period:</i>	<i>1 year</i>
<i>Governing Committee Responsible:</i>	<i>Full Governing Board</i>

Attendance Policy

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 & disabilities
- Teaching & Learning
- Behaviour

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 the school.

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 school's website.

For a child to reach their full educational achievement a high level of school attendance is essential.

1. Rationale/statement of intent

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 children, and their parents or carers, the importance of regular and punctual attendance.

In order for our children to take full advantage of the educational opportunities offered, it is vital that children are 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

2. Promoting Good Attendance and Punctuality

2.1. Promoting Good Attendance

The foundation for good attendance is a strong partnership between the school, parents/carers and the child. The Home/School Agreement contains details of how the school will work with parents as well as our expectations of what parents will need to do to ensure their child achieves good attendance.

To help us all to focus on this the school will:

- provide information on matters related to attendance in school newsletters and on the school website
- report on how your child is performing in school, what their attendance and punctuality rate is and how this relates to their attainment
- report to you, on a termly basis, if your child has not achieved 95% attendance
- celebrate good attendance of individuals
- reward good or improving attendance through rewards and certificates
- set attendance targets for the school and provide regular updates on their achievement

2.2 Roles and Responsibilities

Responsibilities of the School's Attendance Leader

The Headteacher will oversee, direct and co-ordinate the school's work in promoting regular and improved attendance. He/she will ensure that the Attendance Policy is consistently applied throughout the school and that attendance is both recorded accurately and analysed. Any attendance issues will be identified at an early stage and support will be 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 parents/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.**

Other responsibilities include:

- provide appropriate systems for recording accurate and up to date attendance and absence data
- ensure that all pupils, including those with special educational needs, traveller pupils and pupils who speak English as an additional language, receive appropriate support with their attendance and learning
- report attendance figures to the governing body and provide the local authority/other statutory bodies with any information and data required

Responsibilities of classroom staff

- ensure that students are registered accurately
- promote and reward good attendance with pupils
- liaise with the attendance leader (Headteacher) on matters of attendance and punctuality
- communicate any concerns, or underlying problems, that may account for a child's absence
- provide help and support to pupils and parents where attendance is causing concern
- support children who have been absent to engage with learning once they are back in school

Responsibilities of Administrative Staff

- contact parents on the first day of absence if no explanation has been received from the parents
- keep accurate, on-going attendance records and provide clear information and data to appropriate staff, governors and other agencies as required

Responsibilities of Parents/Carers:

Ensuring children's regular attendance at school is a parent/carers legal responsibility (section 444 of the 1996 Education Act) and permitting absence from school, which is not authorised by the school, creates an offence in law.

Parents will:

- inform the school on the first day of their child's absence
- discuss with the class teacher any planned absences well in advance
- support the school, with their child, in aiming for 100% attendance each year
- make sure that any absence is clearly accounted for by phone on the first and subsequent days of absence, or by letter if a phone is unavailable
- 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
- request written permission by the Headteacher, for any absence that is not illness related, including medical appointments
- sign and support the Home-School Agreement
- ensure their child is in school before 9am every day

- work in partnership with the school on matters concerning their child's continued good attendance, including informing the school (in confidence) of any circumstances which may be affecting their child's attendance
- provide a doctor's note for any prolonged ill-health

3.1 Registration Procedures and recording absence

Legally the attendance register must be marked twice a day.

Morning

Children must be in class ready for registration by **9am**. A child arriving before the attendance register has closed (**between 9:10 and 9:30am**) will be marked as late. Those arriving after the attendance register has closed (**9:30am**) will be recorded as unauthorised unless the school has been notified in advance.

Afternoon

Children stay on the school site during lunchtime unless prior arrangements have been made. Y1 and Y2 children must be back in class for registration by **1:10pm**. Y1 and Y2 children arriving **up to 1:30pm** will be marked as late. YR children must be back in class for registration by **12:40pm**. Children arriving up to **1:00pm** will be marked as late. Those arriving after the attendance register has closed will be recorded as unauthorised unless the school has been notified in advance. The attendance register closes at **1:30pm** for Y1 & Y2 children and **1:00pm** for YR children.

3.2 Lateness and Punctuality

It is important to be on time at the start of the morning and afternoon school sessions. The start of school day is used to promote independence in self-help skills as well as being used as learning time. If a child is late they can miss work, time with their class teacher and peers as well as cause disruption to the lesson for themselves and others. In addition, it can be embarrassing arriving late and may lead to further absences.

- The classroom doors open at **8:50am** and registration is at **9am**. All children are expected to be in school before registration time begins. Pupils arriving late must enter via the main entrance and report to reception. They will then be marked present and sent to their classroom
- 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. **Parents/Carers will be seen to be failing to meet their legal responsibility to ensure that their child is receiving full time education.** On-going and repeated lateness is considered as **unauthorised absence and will be subject to legal action** (see section 6 for further detail).

Parents/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, they 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 Hampshire County Council, will be required to issue parents with a Penalty Notice in accordance with Hampshire's Code of Conduct: issuing Penalty Notices for unauthorised absence from schools (see section 6 of this policy for further detail).

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
- 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

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 to discuss the situation with a member of our Senior Leadership Team or Headteacher if absences persist
- refer the matter to the Hampshire County Council's Attendance Legal Panels if absence is unauthorised and falls below 90%

Third Day of Absence

If your child has not been seen and contact has not been established with parents/carers after three days of absence, the school is required to start a '**child missing in education**' procedure as set down by Hampshire County Council guidance. The school will make all reasonable enquires to establish contact with parents/carers and the child including making enquires to known friends and wider family.

Tenth Day of Absence

We have a legal duty to report the absence of any pupil who is absent without an explanation for ten 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% (three weeks) or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason, they are defined as **persistent absentees**.

Any persistent absentee pupils, and their parents, may be subject to an Attendance Plan or have a Home-School Contract.

Absence for whatever reason disadvantages a child by creating gaps in 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 a child has had absence and their attendance level is falling towards 90%, the school will contact parents/carers. Depending on the reasons for the absence, an invitation to school will be issued in order to meet with the Headteacher, or member of the Senior Leadership Team, to discuss ways to improve the child's attendance. This discussion will also include the legal implications of failing to do so.

Parents/carers will be offered support by the school. If there are further factors which concern parents about their child, referrals may be suggested, such as the Early Help Hub to request additional support.

If siblings are absent due to illness at the same time, measures will be taken to ascertain that they are genuinely unwell and not kept at home for convenience. Measures may include a request for a medical certificate.

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.

4. Request for Leave of Absence:

Amendments to school attendance regulations were updated and enforced from September 2016: the Education Regulations (Pupil registration; England) 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 most cases **holiday will not be authorised**. Parents/carers wishing to apply for leave

of absence need to fill in an application form, available from the school office, *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 Council Council'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.

5. Understanding types of Absence - Authorised and Unauthorised

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 of 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.

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. *Note that compulsory school age is starting school full time the term after the child's fifth birthday.*

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 when 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/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 (coded G) or
2. A holiday that has been taken without permission and the unauthorised absence is for ten or more sessions (five 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 County Council's Code of Conduct: 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 :

<http://www.hants.gov.uk/education/hias/learning-behaviour-attendance/attendance-guidance-for-parents/possible-penalties.htm>

The code of conduct states that:

Schools or Hampshire County Council will issue a Penalty Notice for any unauthorised absence where the pupil has been:

- absent for ten or more half-day sessions (equivalent to five school days) of unauthorised absence during any 100 possible school sessions these do not need to be consecutive (codes G, U, or O on the register)
- persistently late (coded U) for up to ten sessions during any 100 possible sessions (equivalent to five school 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 ten sessions in any 100 possible school sessions (five days) has been met
- absent for any public examinations of which dates are published in advance (i.e. one or more sessions during examination period)
- 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.

Legal measures for absence taken when the Headteacher has declined parents/ 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 (coded G) is for 10 or more sessions (five days) in any 100 possible school sessions/10 week period then a Penalty Notice for non-attendance will be issued.

If a child has other types of unauthorised absence (coded O and U) 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. Ten sessions (five days) of unauthorised absence or lateness in any 100 possible school sessions/ten week school period
2. One or more sessions of unauthorised absence during a public exam, formal school assessment of 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. **NB** This could mean four Penalty Notices for a family with two siblings both with unauthorised absence for holiday i.e. one Penalty Notice for each child to each parent.

Each Penalty Notice carries a fine of £60 if paid within twenty-one days of the Penalty Notice being posted. If the fine is not paid within twenty-one days, the penalty is automatically increased to £120 if paid within twenty-eight 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.

NOTE: If you pay the Penalty Notice fine 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: <http://www.hants.gov.uk/education/hias/learning-behaviour-attendance/attendance-guidance-for-parents/possible-penalties.htm>

7. Advice and Guidance for Parents/Carers

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/carers 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 the child's class teacher immediately and openly discuss any worries. A child could be avoiding school for a number of reasons - difficulties with school work, bullying, friendship problems, family difficulties etc. It is important that the reason for your child's reluctance to attend school is identified so that school and home can work together to tackle the problem. In some cases, discussions with another professional may be helpful.

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) 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.

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. 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.

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 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.

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.

8. Record preservation

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

Person responsible for implementing and monitoring the policy: J. Mallaby - Headteacher

Appendices

The law

The Education Act 1996, Part I, Section 7 states:

"The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him to receive efficient full-time education suitable:

- a) to his age, ability and aptitude and*
- b) to any special needs he may have*

either by regular attendance at school or otherwise."

For educational purposes the term *parent* is used to include those that have parental responsibility and/or those that have the day-to-day care of the child.

The legislation that appertains to children who are of compulsory school age and are registered at school is contained within this Act.

Part VI, Section 444 contains the details of when an offence is committed if a child fails to attend school.

Register and admission roll keeping

The legal requirements are found in: The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006.

Guidance documents on attendance

The following Department for Education documents are used to guide attendance recording:

- *Absence and attendance codes* (guidance for schools and local authorities)
- *Keeping pupil registers* (guidance on applying the Education Pupil Registration Regulations).

These and other guidance documents are available on the Department for Education website.

Hampshire County Council guidance is available on Hantsweb at:
www.hants.gov.uk/education/hias/learning-behaviour-attendance/lba-resources-for-schools/attendance-guidance/attendance-guidance-for-schools.