

# Highwoods Community Primary School



Attendance and Punctuality Policy

Reviewed Summer 2016

To be reviewed Summer 2018

# Highwoods Community Primary School

## **Pupil Attendance and Punctuality Policy**

### **Philosophy**

Highwoods community primary School is committed to providing a full and effective educational experience for all pupils. We believe that if pupils are to benefit from education, good attendance is crucial. As a school we do all that we can to ensure maximum attendance for all pupils. Any problems that prevent full attendance will be identified and addressed as speedily as possible. Our school will give high priority to conveying to parents and pupils the importance of regular and punctual attendance. We recognize that parents have a vital role to play and that there is a need to establish strong home-school links and communication systems that can be utilized whenever there is concern about attendance. The school has a new website and communication is available by email to the school.

If there are problems which affect a pupil's attendance we will investigate, identify and strive in partnership with parents and pupils to resolve those problems as quickly as possible. We will adopt a clearly focused approach aimed at returning the pupil to full attendance at all times.

### **Introduction**

Regular school attendance is essential and parents, pupils and teachers all have their part to play in ensuring this happens. The twice-daily requirement to register pupils is an opportunity for the school to receive children formally from home, and serves as an introduction to the session.

Children are expected to attend school for the full 190 days of the academic year, unless there is a good reason for absence. There are two types of absence:

- *Authorised*: the school approves pupil absence
- *Unauthorised*: the school will *not* approve absence

The school is responsible for children's attendance and ONLY the Headteacher can authorise absences.

If a child is absent, parents should call the school or message by school website, before 9.30a.m., stating a reason on the day of absence. Absences must be explained either by an acceptable written and dated note or by a personal telephone message, which will be recorded by the office and noted on the electronic register for the class teacher.

If contact explaining the child's absence fails to be made by parents or carers, then the school will contact the home by telephone on the initial day, following this with a letter after 3 days of unexplained absence. This contact needs to be recorded in the register by the class teacher.

Children with 95%+ attendance will be entered into a termly prize draw. Children with 100% attendance at the end of the school year will be recognised with a special certificate and prize.

## **Completing the Register**

The marking of registers can sometimes become so routine that its importance is lost. However, incomplete or inaccurate registers are unacceptable for several reasons. Registers provide the daily record of the attendance of all pupils; they are documents that may be required in a court of law, for example as evidence in prosecutions for non-attendance at school. They may also contribute to pupil's end of term reports and to records of achievement. For these reasons registers must be completed electronically morning and afternoon and saved and sent to school office. The school office will insert any notes where applicable.

## **What can parents do to help?**

- Let the school know as soon as possible why your child is away. Preferably before 9.30 am on the first day of absence
- Try to make appointments outside school time.
- Do not allow your child to have time off school unless it is really necessary.
- Provide medical evidence to support these absences, if applicable.

• Parents should be mindful of the *Life for Highwoods* sheet to be introduced in Sept 2013. This replaced the old home school agreement.

The school will consult with medical professionals should the need arise.

If you are worried about your child's attendance at school you should...

- Talk to your child; it may be something simple.
- Talk to the school attendance officer.
- Talk to the Headteacher and staff at the school.

If it continues...

• The School may refer to our independent Education Welfare Service Attendance Solutions Essex Ltd, who will work with you and the school to resolve the situation.

## **Attendance Solutions Essex Ltd:**

Attendance Solutions Essex Ltd are an Independent Education Welfare Service who are contracted by Highwoods C P School to resolve barriers in school attendance, they are accredited by Essex Police through the Community Safety Accreditation Scheme.

Parents are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any problems together. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, the school may refer the child to Attendance Solutions Essex Ltd. He/she will also try to resolve the situation by agreement but, if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed and unauthorised absences persist, these Officers can use sanctions such as Penalty Notices or prosecutions in the Magistrates Court. Further details of the options open to enforce attendance at school are available from [www.direct.gov.uk](http://www.direct.gov.uk) .

### **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 any absence is always required, preferably in writing.

**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 "leave" has been given. This type of absence can lead to the Authority using sanctions and/or legal proceedings. This includes:

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily
- truancy during the school day
- 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

Whilst any child may be off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be 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 helpful 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 usually make things worse.

### **Absence Procedures:**

#### **If your child is absent we will:**

- Telephone you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you;
- Invite you in to discuss the situation with our Attendance Solutions Essex Ltd and/or Headteacher if absences persist, in a School Attendance Meeting.
- Refer the matter to Attendance Solutions Essex Ltd if attendance moves below 90%.
- If your child's attendance does not improve following the School Attendance Meeting, and/or your child has an accumulation of absences, you may be issued with a Penalty Notice of £60 to be paid within 21 days. If the penalty is not paid within the time scale the penalty will increase to £120. If the higher penalty is not paid the Local Authority may then institute legal proceedings against you in the Magistrates' Court under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 for failing to ensure your child attends school regularly.
- Penalty Notice payments go to Essex County Council, there is no financial gain for Highwoods C P School or Attendance Solutions.

### **Persistent Absenteeism :**

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% (90% absenteeism) or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason. See Web site for Pupil Attendance Target Setter. Absence at this level is causing considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we need parent's fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

We monitor all absence thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority and you will be informed of this immediately.

PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully through our pastoral system.

All our PA pupils and their parents are subject to a School Action Plan and the plan may include: allocation of additional support through a TA, use of circle time and participation in group activities around raising attendance. All PA cases are also automatically made known to Attendance Solutions Essex Ltd & Essex County Council.

### **Telephone numbers:**

There are times when we need to contact parents about lots of things, including absence, so we need to have your contact numbers at all times. So help us to help you and your child by making sure we always have an up to date number – if we don't then something important may be missed.

### **Lateness:**

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If your 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.

### **How we manage lateness:**

The school day starts at **8.45am for the juniors and 8.50am for the Infants**. We expect your child to be in class at that time.

Registers are marked by **8.55am in the juniors and 9.00am in the Infants** and your child will receive a late mark if they are not in by that time.

The registers will be closed at **9.30am**. In accordance with the Regulations, if your 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. This may mean that you could face the possibility of a Penalty Notice if the problem persists.

School keep a detailed receipt of all children who are late during the academic year.

If your child has a persistent late record you will be asked to meet with the Head teacher and/or Attendance Solutions to resolve the problem, but you can approach us at any time if you are having problems getting your child to school on time.

Children who are punctual for 95% of the term will be entered into a termly draw to win a prize. There will be one prize for each class.

## **Absence due to exceptional circumstances:**

**There is no automatic entitlement in law to time off in school time unless in exceptional circumstances, as defined by Highwoods Primary School, following DFE guidance.**

A pupil's absence during term time can seriously disrupt their continuity of learning. Not only do they miss the teaching provided on the days they are away, they are also less prepared for the lessons building on that after their return. There is a consequent risk of underachievement, which we, and you, must seek to avoid. Requests for absence due to exceptional circumstances must be submitted in writing to the school office for the Head Teachers consideration.

Any period of leave taken without the agreement of the school, or in excess of that agreed, will be classed as unauthorized and will attract sanctions such as a penalty notice from Sept 2013.

## **School targets**

The school has targets to improve attendance and your child has an important part to play in meeting these targets.

The attendance target for this school is 97.2% as at 2015/2016 and we will keep you updated regularly about progress to this level and how your child's attendance compares.

Our target is to achieve better than this however because we know that good attendance is the key to successful schooling.

## **Reporting Attendance**

Annually parents will be informed of their child's attendance annually with their child's report.

Outstanding – 100% is rewarded with a certificate during a celebration assembly

Good 99% – 97%

Requires Improvement 97 – 93%

Cause for concern - less than 93%

## **Summary:**

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents and to promote attendance. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend.

All school staff is committed to working with parents and pupils as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible.

OFSTED will check attendance data in line with inspection guidelines.

