

HITHERFIELD PRIMARY SCHOOL AND CHILDREN'S CENTRE



Attendance and Punctuality Policy

Creation date: 14/07/2017
Reviewed November 2020

Our Vision Statement

'Our vision is to create a school community where everyone feels valued, has the opportunity to explore and develop their strengths and is able to participate in new experiences. We aim to become an inspirational school to produce good citizens for the future in an atmosphere that promotes confidence, high academic achievement, physical health and emotional well being!'

Document Control

Change Record

Date	Author	Version	Change Reference
			No Previous Document
Feb-08	Laura	Attendance and Punctuality.001_(D)	Created new draft document
Sept-08	Laura	Attendance and Punctuality.002_(D)	Changed name and format and e-mailed to Chris
Nov - 08	Chris	Attendance and Punctuality.003_(D)	Totally rewritten and sent to PP+C committee for approval
Nov-08	Laura	Attendance and Punctuality.003.1_(D)	Made changes
Sept - 09	Chris	Attendance and Punctuality.003.2_(D)	Changes made and reviewed by PP+C
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July - 17	John	Attendance and Punctuality 006	Reviewed by LAPD
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November 2019	Jenni		Reviewed by LAPD
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Distribution

Reviewers	Approvers	Distribution
LAPD Committee	Full Governing Body	Whole School

Reviewing the policy

The school and its Governors will review this policy each year in consultation with the school's assigned Education Welfare Officer (EWO).

1. Introduction

At Hitherfield Primary School, we aim to create a positive, safe and secure environment where children value their education and strive not to miss a day of school. Our school community recognises that regular and punctual school attendance is important and we want to ensure that no child is disadvantaged by low attendance.

100% attendance is important, without it children cannot get maximum benefit from the opportunities for learning which are available to them. At Hitherfield children are rewarded for 100% attendance per term.

This policy outlines how, where pupils have had high rates of absence, our staff will support parents and carers to ensure that children's attendance rises quickly to our target.

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.

1.1 Parental Responsibility

The legal responsibility for ensuring a child (of compulsory school age) attends school regularly and punctually rests with a child's parents or carers. This means any adult who is recognised as having parental responsibility for that child whether they live with that parent/carer or not. It is essential that parents and carers support the school in ensuring their child is not disadvantaged by low attendance or poor punctuality.

2. Punctuality

Hitherfield's school day starts at the designated 'start time' for each bubble and all children are expected to be on site by this time. It is important that **all** children arrive for school on time, as children who are persistently late miss a significant amount of learning.

2.1 Registration

All teachers will complete their class register using Sims within ten minutes after the designated start time for each bubble . Teachers will also complete a class register after the lunch break. In the event of Sims not being available, or if a supply teacher is covering a class, then a paper register will be completed and returned to the school office to be entered onto Sims.

2.2 Recording late arrivals

Registers will close ten minutes after the designated 'start time' for each bubble. The attendance administrator will phone each class to identify and record on Sims any children who arrived after this time. Any child who arrives after the registers close will be recorded as 'late' (attendance code L). Those that arrive more than 30 minutes after the registers close will be marked as having an 'unauthorised' absence for the morning session (attendance code U).

2.4 Addressing punctuality concerns

Where there are repeated incidents of lateness, parents/carers will receive a letter highlighting the concerns and the school will provide opportunities for parents/carers to seek support and advice to address these issues.

If a pupil is persistently 'late after registration' the school will ask Lambeth Education Welfare Service to serve a Penalty Notice of £60 per child, to each adult with parental responsibility on the school's behalf.

3. Attendance

3.1 Rewarding attendance

Hitherfield expects all children to strive for 100% attendance. To encourage this, the following reward system is in place:

- **100% attendance for one term** - Children receive a certificate and are entered into an end of year prize draw.
- **100% attendance for one year** - Children receive a certificate and are entered 3 times into the end of year prize draw.

Attendance will continue to have a very high profile at Hitherfield Primary School and parents will be regularly reminded in newsletters and meetings about the importance of good attendance.

3.2 Unexpected absence

It is the responsibility of the parent/carer to contact the school if their child is absent from school. On the first morning of absence, parents/carers should telephone the school's absence line and leave a message stating their child's name, class and the reason for their absence. It is important that the school receives accurate information from parents/carers as this information is used to determine whether or not the absence is authorised or unauthorised by the school. If absence is due to circumstances relating to COVID-19, this needs to be made clear in order that the appropriate attendance code is given. Unless the duration of the absence is known and has been reported, parents/carers should phone the school's absence line each morning the child is absent.

Absences could be **authorised** for the following reasons:

- Illness
- Unavoidable medical/dental appointments
- Exceptional family circumstances such as bereavement
- Days of religious observance (this does not include days travelling to visit family)
- Transport arranged by the LA has failed
- Prior authorisation has been granted by the headteacher

Note: If a child has more than 10 sessions of illness during an academic year parents/carers may be required to provide medical evidence such as a note from a GP or a copy of a prescription. If a child has 3 continuous days of absence, medical evidence will be required in order to authorise the absence. Failure to do so may result in the absence being **unauthorised**.

3.3 Not attending in circumstances related to coronavirus (COVID-19)

Although school attendance is mandatory from the start of the autumn term, there are some circumstances where pupils cannot attend school due to coronavirus (COVID-19). It is important to note that this new category of non-attendance will not count as an absence (authorised or unauthorised) for statistical purposes.

Parents/carers must use the school's absence line to inform school if their child is 'not attending due to circumstances related to coronavirus (COVID-19)'. They should provide details as to what the circumstances are and the expected date of return.

3.4 Requesting a leave of absence in term time

Leave of absence during term time is discouraged. Parents and carers will be reminded of the effect that absence can have on a pupil's potential achievement. The school will consider any application for leave of absence and will only agree to authorise the absence in exceptional circumstances; the Headteacher will determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted. Parents and carers must apply in writing by submitting an absence request form, available from the main school office and on the school's website, at least two weeks prior, where possible, to the proposed absence. It is important to note:

- No authorisation will be granted in retrospect.
- Holidays during term time will not be authorised.

- Authorisation may not be granted if the child concerned has had a high level of absence in the preceding 12 months, even if the reasons were unavoidable.
- Authorisation may not be granted if the school believes the disruption to a child's learning and progress will result in further learning difficulties.

3.5 Absence around a holiday

If absence occurs directly on either side of a school holiday, school will require medical evidence to authorise the absence. Failure to provide evidence could lead to the absence being unauthorised and a Fixed Penalty Notice being issued for each child and for each parent with parental responsibility .

3.6 Unauthorised absence

If a child is absent from school without an acceptable reason, or prior authorisation, this will be considered an **unauthorised absence**. Examples of unacceptable reasons include, but are not limited to:

- Holidays
- Birthday treats
- Attending a sibling's appointment
- Closure of sibling's school
- Oversleeping

Parents who take their children out of school without permission may receive a Penalty Notice and will be liable to pay £60 per child per parent with parental responsibility .

3.7 Addressing Attendance Concerns

Within the school it is the responsibility of the Assistant Headteacher who oversees attendance to be aware of and highlight any emerging attendance concerns.

In cases where a pupil begins to develop a pattern of absences, the school will seek to resolve the problem as soon as possible through intervention and support.

Interventions to resolve Persistent Absentees

Pupils whose attendance level falls below 94%, or is approaching 93%, will be subjected to an attendance intervention. This intervention will be set up by the **Assistant Headteacher** with responsibility for attendance, and will include all parties who can support the pupil's attendance. A typical course of intervention to address persistent absenteeism would include:

i) Warning letters

These will highlight the attendance concerns and potential future interventions.

ii) School Attendance Panels (Saps)

The school may invite parents/carers to a School Attendance Panel (Sap) to discuss the reasons for the absences. Agreed plans should be put in place between the school and parents/carers to resolve any difficulties and improve the attendance within a specified time limit – usually no more than 6 weeks. It will be explained to parents/carers that any future absences may be unauthorised unless there is clear evidence of a good reason for them. During a Sap a review date will be agreed in order to measure progress. Parents and carers are expected to attend the review meeting.

iii) Referral to the Educational Welfare Officer

If there continues to be unauthorised absences by the end of the specified time (or sooner if necessary), the matter will be referred to the Educational Welfare Officer. This may result in a penalty notice or court referral.

iv) Joint home visits conducted by the Education Welfare Officer and the school

v) Penalty Notices*

Section 23 of the Anti Social Behaviour Act 2003 empowers designated Local Authority Officers, Headteachers and the Police to issue penalty notices in cases of unauthorised absence from school.

The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2004 came into force on 27 February 2004. A Penalty Notice is a fine* that is payable to Lambeth Local Authority not the school.

Penalty Notices are issued in the following circumstances:

- (a) overt truancy (including pupils caught on truancy sweeps)
- (b) parentally-condoned absences
- (c) unauthorised holidays in term time
- (d) excessive delayed return from extended holidays without prior school agreement
- (e) persistent late arrival at school (after the register has closed)

The Headteacher may request a penalty notice to be issued in any of the above circumstances.

Penalty Notices will be issued per child and per person with parental responsibility.

On receipt of the Notice, the penalty will be £60 if paid within 21 days, rising to £120 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days. Failure to pay the penalty in full by the end of the 28 day period may result in prosecution by Lambeth Local Authority.

Fast Track

Pupils will be Fast Tracked to the local authority to consider legal escalation, without Saps, in cases where any of the following occur;

- A pupil has unsatisfactory attendance and the school deem there is poor engagement from parent/carer
- A pupil has been referred to the local authority on 2 occasions for missing 10 consecutive days of schools
- A pupil has been identified as being a “persistent absence” pupil in the previous academic year

Before initiating the Fast Track process, Hitherfield will issue the Court Warning letter along with a cover letter listing what intervention has been or is taking place along with an attendance print out of the current and previous academic year.

3.8 Absence without notification

As stated in section 3.2, if a child is absent from school, it is the parent’s/carer’s responsibility to contact the school to explain their absence. If the school does not receive notification on the first day of a child’s absence, a

member of staff may contact the child's parent/carer to seek an explanation.
In this event a note will be added to the child's attendance record that the child's parent/carer did not make initial contact with the school.

Three Day Absence: If a child is absent for three days without contact from a parent or carer then the school will issue a warning letter or may conduct a homevisit.

Continued Absence: Should the child's absence persist without contact from a parent or carer then a Court Warning letter will be sent to the child's parents/carers.

Ten Days Absence: The Local Authority will be notified of any pupil who is absent, without an explanation, for 10 consecutive days. This notification will be in the form of a CME (Child Missing in Education) referral to the Educational Welfare Officer detailing the action already taken by Hitherfield. The Education Welfare Service will conduct investigations which may include home visits or contacting social care and other external agencies. Failure to return to school could result in the child being off-rolled.

5. Comments from parents and carers