



Bidbury Infant School

Attendance Policy

Rationale

The law entitles every child of compulsory school age to an efficient, full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude, and any special educational need they may have. It is the legal responsibility of every parent to make sure their child receives that education either by attendance at a school or by education otherwise than at a school.

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

For a child to take full advantage of the educational opportunities offered, it is vital he/she is 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:

1. Statistics show a direct link between under-achievement and attendance below 95%;
2. Regular attenders make better progress, both socially and academically;
3. Regular attenders find school routines, school work and friendships easier to cope with;
4. Regular attenders find learning more satisfying;
5. Regular attenders are more successful in transferring between primary school, secondary school, and higher education, employment or training.
6. For the most vulnerable pupils, regular attendance is also an important protective factor and the best opportunity for needs to be identified and support provided.

Section 2: **Operating the Policy**

2.1 Promoting Good Attendance

The foundation for good attendance is a strong partnership between the school, parents and the child. The Home/School Agreement will contain details of how we will work with parents and our expectations of what parents will need to do to ensure their child achieves good attendance. We ask each parent and child to sign that they agree on entry to the school.

To help us all to focus on this we will:

1. Develop and maintain a whole school culture that promotes the benefits of high attendance;
2. Have a clear school attendance policy which all staff, pupils and parents understand;
3. Accurately complete admission and attendance registers and have effective day to day processes in place to follow-up absence;
4. Regularly monitor and analyse attendance and absence data to identify pupils or cohorts that require support with their attendance and put effective strategies in place;
5. Build strong relationships with families, listen to and understand barriers to attendance and work with families to remove them;
6. Share information and work collaboratively with other schools in the area, local authorities, and other partners when absence is at risk of becoming persistent or severe.

2.2 Roles and Responsibilities:

Responsibilities of Students:

1. Attend every day unless they are ill or have an authorised absence;
2. Arrive in school on time;
3. Go to all their classroom on time;

Responsibilities of Parents and Carers:

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

Parents will:

1. Inform the school on the first day of absence;
2. Take responsibility for registering at the Reception Desk if they are late or their child is leaving the school site during school hours.
3. Support the school with their child in aiming for 100% attendance each year;
4. 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;
5. Avoid taking their child out of school for non-urgent medical or dental appointments;
6. Only request leave of absence if it is for an exceptional circumstance.

Responsibilities of Classroom Staff:

1. Ensure that all students are registered accurately;
2. Promote and reward good attendance at all appropriate opportunities;
3. Liaise with the Attendance Leader on matters of attendance and punctuality;
4. Communicate any concerns or underlying problems that may account for a child's absence.

Responsibilities of the School's Attendance Leader:

In this school, the Headteacher is the School's Attendance Leader, supported by the Home School Link Worker. They will:

1. Oversee, direct and co-ordinate the school's work in promoting regular and improved attendance;
2. Ensure the Attendance Policy is consistently applied throughout the school;
3. Ensure that attendance is recorded accurately;
4. Ensure parents receive reports on how their child is performing in school, what their attendance and punctuality rate is and how this relates to their attainment;
5. Regularly monitor and analyse attendance and absence data to ensure any issues are identified at an early stage and that effective strategies are put in place to support;
6. Build strong relationships with families, listen to and understand barriers to attendance and work with families to remove them;
7. Share information and work collaboratively with other schools in the area, local authorities, and other partners when absence is at risk of becoming persistent or severe.

Responsibilities of the Governing Body:

1. Recognise the importance of school attendance and promote it across the school's ethos and policies;
2. Ensure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties;
3. Regularly review attendance data, discuss, and challenge trends, and help school leaders focus improvement efforts on the individual pupils or cohorts who need it most;
4. Ensure school staff receive adequate training on attendance.

Section 3: **Recording Attendance**

3.1 Registers

Legally the register must be marked twice daily. This is once at the start of the school day at **8:55am** and again for the afternoon session at **1:00pm**.

3.2. Lateness /Punctuality

It is important to be on time at the start of the morning and afternoon school sessions and to lessons. The start of school/lessons are used to give out instructions or organise work. If a child is late they can miss work, time with their class teacher getting vital information and cause disruption to the lesson for others. This can be embarrassing, leading to possible further absence.

1. The school day begins at 8.45am and all pupils are expected to be in school at this time.
2. The register officially closes 30 minutes after the start time.
3. All lateness is recorded daily. This information will be required by the courts, should a prosecution for non-attendance or lateness be necessary.
4. 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.
5. If a pupil is late after the close of registration due to a medical appointment, they will receive an authorised absence coded 'M'. Please be advised that where possible doctors and dentists appointments should 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. On-going and repeated lateness **will be subject to legal action** (see section 6 for further detail).

Parents or 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, parents or carers 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 will be required to issue parents with a Penalty Notice in accordance with Hampshire County Council's Code of Conduct for issuing Penalty Notices for non-attendance (see section 6 of this policy for further detail).

3.3. Absences

A child not attending school is considered a **safeguarding** matter. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required.

If a child is absent, parents must:

1. Contact the school office (02392 483336) as soon as possible on the first day of absence (there is an option to leave a message on this number);
2. Provide detail regarding the reason for the absence in a written form if this is requested.

If a child is absent the school will:

1. Contact parents during the morning session on the first day of absence if we have not heard from them; *this is because we have a duty to ensure the child's safety as well as their regular school attendance;*
2. Invite parents in to discuss the situation if absences persist (see continued ongoing absence below).

Third Day Absence

If a child is not seen and contact has not been established with parents or any of the named 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. We will make all reasonable enquiries to establish contact with parents and the child, including making enquiries to known friends and/ or wider family.

Ten Days Absence

We have a legal duty to report the absence of any pupil who is absent without an explanation for 10 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.

Parents are asked to ensure we always have an **up to date contact number**. There will be regular checks on telephone numbers throughout the year.

Continued or Ongoing Absence

Where absence escalates and pupils miss 10% or more of school (equivalent to 1 day or more a fortnight across a full school year), schools and local authorities are expected to work together to put additional targeted support in place to remove any barriers to attendance and re-engage these pupils.

Absence for whatever reason disadvantages a child by creating gaps in his/her learning. As such we monitor all absence thoroughly and all attendance data is shared with the Local Authority and the Department for Education.

Research shows that attainment is affected when attendance falls **below 95%**. Where this is the case, these pupils are classed as '**at risk of becoming persistently absent**'. Where attendance falls **below 90%**, these pupils are classed as being '**persistently absent**'.

Where pupils are identified as being at risk of poor attendance, we will contact parents to discuss the reasons and offer support if needed.

A staged approach is used for this:

Stage 1 – Discussion with the Home School Link Worker

Stage 2 (if insufficient improvement) – Meeting with the Home School Link Worker, targets for improvement set and support put into place if required

Stage 3 (if insufficient improvement) – Meeting with the Headteacher and a Voluntary Parenting Contract drawn up (NB Medical evidence will often be requested for authorised absences due to illness at this stage.)

Stage 4 (if insufficient improvement) – Referral made to the Local Authority Attendance Legal Intervention Team and/or possible legal measures (see Section 6).

Section 4: **Request for Leave of Absence**

Pupil registration (England) regulations 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 the majority of 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’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 a child’s schooling as much as any other absence and we expect parents to help us by not taking children out during school time.**

Section 5: **Understanding types of absence:**

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:

1. 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.
2. 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:
 1. parents giving their children permission to be off school unnecessarily such as for shopping, birthdays, to look after siblings, sickness of a parent, problems with transport
 2. family holidays
 3. school refusal or truancy

4. absences which have not been explained
5. lateness after the register has closed (coded 'U')

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.

Section 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.

6.1 Legal measures for tackling persistent absence or lateness

Where a child has **unauthorised absence** the school ***must*** enforce Hampshire's Code of Conduct for issuing Penalty Notices 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 <https://www.hants.gov.uk/educationandlearning/behaviour-attendance-parents>

The code of conduct states that:

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

1. absent for 10 or more half-day sessions (five school days) of unauthorised absence in the last 100 possible school sessions – these do not need to be consecutive unauthorised absences;
2. persistently late after the register has closed (coded *U*) for up to 10 sessions in the last 100 possible school sessions;

unless the issuing of a Penalty Notice would conflict with other intervention strategies in place or other sanctions already being processed.

Hampshire Schools and Hampshire County Council will use the full range of legal measures to secure good attendance. Legal measures will only be considered through a referral to Hampshire's Attendance Legal Intervention Teams where:

1. The child or family do not require the support from any agency to improve the attendance;
2. The unauthorised absences meet the thresholds above.

The following legal measures are for pupils of compulsory school age who are registered at a school:

1. Parenting contracts set at Education Planning Meetings
2. Parenting orders
3. Penalty Notices
4. Education Supervision Orders
5. Prosecution

6.2 Issuing of Penalty Notices

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.

N.B 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 21 days of the penalty notice being posted. If the fine is not paid within 21 days the Penalty is automatically increased to £120 if paid within 28 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.

For further information parents/carers can request a leaflet from school and should visit Hampshire County Councils website at: <https://www.hants.gov.uk/educationandlearning/behaviour-attendance-parents>

6.3 Other Legal Measures

Where a Penalty Notice has already been issued, **even if this was at a previous school**, further periods of unauthorised absence meeting the thresholds (see above) will result in a referral being made to the Local Authority Legal Intervention Team, where further action / support will be discussed, to include:

1. Parenting contracts set at Education Planning Meetings
2. Parenting orders
3. Penalty Notices
4. Education Supervision Orders
5. Prosecution

In some cases, where it is felt that a Penalty Notice would not be the right course of action, a referral will be made to the Local Authority Legal Intervention Team without a previous Penalty Notice being issued.

Section 7:

Additional Information for Parents

Children are sometimes reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents 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 your child's class teacher or the Home School Link Worker immediately and openly discuss your worries. Your child could be avoiding school for a number of reasons – difficulties with school work, bullying, friendship problems, family difficulties. It is important that we identify the reason for your child's reluctance to attend school and work together to tackle the problem. In some cases you may find it helpful to discuss the circumstances of your child's difficulties with another professional.

7.1 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 their 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!

7.2 Leavers

If your child is leaving our school (other than when transferring to secondary school) parents are asked to give the school office comprehensive information about their plans including:

1. any date of a move and your new address and telephone numbers;
2. your child's new school;
3. the start date when known.

This should be submitted to the 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 and 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. 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. Absences for approved sporting activities are recorded as P, an approved educational activity.

7.5 Gypsy Roma Traveller 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.

Section 8: Record preservation

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