



## Attendance Policy

Date approved by the Full Governing Body: - June 2023

Date of review: - June 2024

### **Introduction.**

The staff and governors at Alton Infant School 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, accepted and welcome. Parents and pupils play a part in making our school 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 for high attendance for all children. Every opportunity will be used to convey to pupils' parents or carers the importance of regular and punctual attendance.

For our children to take full advantage of the educational opportunities offered it is vital for pupils to be 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. A pupil's absence during term time can seriously disrupt their continuity of learning. Not only does the child miss the teaching provided on the days they are absent, they are also less prepared for the lessons after they return.

### **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, schoolwork 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.

### **Promoting Good Attendance.**

The foundation for good attendance is a strong partnership between the school, parents and the child. To help us all to focus on this we will:-

- Provide information on all matters related to attendance in our regular communications and newsletters.
- Report to parents about how their child is performing in school, what their attendance and punctuality rate is and how this relates to their attainments.
- Communicate with parents and carers about any concerns regarding low attendance and work with and alongside families in order to target and develop any detrimental attendance issues.

### **Roles and Responsibilities.**

#### The Headteacher.

The Headteacher will oversee, direct and co-ordinate the school's work in promoting regular and improved attendance and will ensure the attendance policy is consistently applied throughout the school. The Headteacher will also ensure that attendance is both recorded accurately and analysed. In partnership with the Deputy Headteacher, he will ensure that attendance issues are identified at an early stage and that support is 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 Headteacher.

#### Class teachers.

Class teachers will:-

- Ensure that all pupils are registered accurately.
- Liaise with the Headteacher and Deputy Headteacher on matters of attendance and punctuality.
- Communicate any concerns or underlying problems that may account for a child's absence.
- Support pupils with absence to engage with their learning once they are back in school.

#### Responsibilities of parents/carers.

Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is a parent/carer's legal responsibility (Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act) and permitting absence from school that is not authorised by the school creates an offence in law.

Parents will:

- Inform the school on the first day of absence.
- Discuss with the class teacher any planned absences well in advance.
- Support the school with their child in aiming for high attendance each year.

- Make sure that any absence is clearly accounted for by telephone or email on the first and subsequent days of absence, or by letter if appropriate.
- Avoid taking their child out of school for non-urgent medical or dental appointments.
- Only request a leave of absence if it is for an exceptional circumstance.

### **Recording Attendance.**

Attendance is marked within class registers twice a day. This is once in the morning from 8.45am – 8.55am and then once in the afternoon at 1.15pm.

It is important for children to arrive at school on time at the start of the morning and afternoon school sessions. The start of school is used to give out instructions and to begin the learning for the day. If children are late they will miss vital learning time with their class teacher and will cause disruption to lessons for others.

The school day begins between 8.45am and 8.55am and all pupils are expected to be in school at this time. Morning registration starts at 8.45am and closes at 8.55am. If pupils arrive after 8.55am and before 9.15am this will be recorded as late.

Any lateness is recorded daily as this information may be required by the courts, should a prosecution for non-attendance or lateness be necessary.

Arrival after 9.15am will be marked as unauthorised absence and coded U in line with Hampshire County Council and Department of Education guidance. This mark shows the pupil 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. Where possible, doctor and dentist 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. Ongoing and repeated lateness is considered as unauthorised absence and will be subject to legal action (see below for further details).

Parents, guardians 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, guardians or carers will be invited to attend the school and discuss the problem and support will be offered. If any such 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 County Council's Code of conduct: 'Issuing Penalty Notices for unauthorised absence from schools' (See Section 6 of this policy for further detail).

### **Absences.**

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

If a child is absent parents must:

Contact the school by telephone or email by 9.30am on the first day of absence to explain why their child is absent.

Further communication from parents is then required after two days of subsequent absence.

If a child is absent we will:

Telephone, email or message parents on the first day of absence if we have not heard from them. This is because we have a duty to ensure children's safety as well as their regular school attendance.

Invite parents in to discuss the situation with our Headteacher or Deputy Headteacher if absences persist.

Refer the matter to the Hampshire County Council's Attendance Legal Panels if absence is unauthorised and falls below 90%.

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

### **Ten days' 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. Parents are asked to make sure that the school has an up-to-date contact number. There will be regular checks on telephone numbers throughout the year.

### **Continued or ongoing absence.**

If a child misses 10% (three weeks/sessions) or more schooling across the school year, for whatever reason, they are defined as persistent absentees. Absence for whatever reason disadvantages a child by creating gaps in his or her 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 absences and their attendance level is falling below 90% we will contact parents in order to support and increase attendance levels. In the first instance this support will be offered through meeting with our Deputy Headteacher. If the child's attendance levels remain low (below 90%) or does not significantly increase, parents will then be asked to meet with the

Headteacher to set actions and targets to improve attendance. Should attendance levels continue to remain low or decrease, parents will be sent a formal letter that outlines the details of any further actions, including possible legal action that could be taken.

### **Request for leave of absence.**

Amendments to school attendance regulations were updated and enforced from September 2022:

The Education (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 the Headteacher can determine the length of the authorised absence, as well as whether the absence is authorised at all.

The fundamental principles for defining exceptional circumstances 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 term 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, which is 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 County Council's Code of conduct, parents/carers will be issued with a fixed-penalty fine or other legal action in accordance with the code (see below for detail).

Taking holidays in term time affects pupils' schooling as much as any other absence and we expect parents to not take children out during school time.

### **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:

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 absence from school after a parent's request. This includes:

Parents giving their children permission to be off school unnecessarily, such as for shopping, or birthdays.

Truancy before or during the school day

Absences which have not been explained.

The 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.

### **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.

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 :

The child or family do not require the support from any agency to improve the attendance.

The child has 10 or more sessions of unauthorised absence and parents are complicit in the child's absence.

The following legal measures will be used for pupils of compulsory school age who are registered at the school:

Parenting contracts and actions set at Education Planning Meetings.

Parenting orders.

Penalty Notices.

Education Supervision Orders

Prosecution.

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:

[www.hants.gov.uk/education/hias/learning-behaviour-attendance/attendance-guidance-forparents/possible-penalties](http://www.hants.gov.uk/education/hias/learning-behaviour-attendance/attendance-guidance-forparents/possible-penalties).

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 10 or more half-day sessions (five school days) of unauthorised absence during any 100 possible school sessions – these do not need to be consecutive.

Persistently late (coded U) for up to 10 sessions (five 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 10 sessions (five days) has been met.

Unless the issuing of a Penalty Notice would conflict with other intervention strategies in place or

Other sanctions already being processed.

If a child's unauthorised absence meets any of the above criteria and the family or child do not require any agency support to improve the attendance then a Penalty Notice is issued for 10 sessions of unauthorised absence or lateness in any 10 week school period.

This includes where a pupil has unauthorised absence due to non-approval of a parent/carer's request for leave of absence, or a holiday that has been taken without permission.

Parents and carers will be warned of the likelihood of a Penalty Notice being issued for unauthorised through the leave of absence request form. 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 parents/carers for each child. NB: This could mean 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 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.

Please note: If a Penalty Notice is paid and the child has further unauthorised absences, additional legal action will be taken. For example, in the event that a Penalty Notice has previously been served due to unauthorised holiday, should the child have any future unauthorised leave this will result in further legal action, 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 Council's website at:

[www.hants.gov.uk/education/hias/learning-behaviour-attendance/attendance-guidance-forparents/possible-penalties](http://www.hants.gov.uk/education/hias/learning-behaviour-attendance/attendance-guidance-forparents/possible-penalties).

### **Absence through child participation in public performances, including theatre, film or television 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. 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.

### **Absence through competing at regional, county or national level for sport.**

Parents can seek leave of absence from school for their child to take part in regional, county, national and international events and competitions. 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. Permission for your child to leave early or arrive late to attend coaching and training sessions is also at the discretion of the Headteacher and is not likely to be approved if it is a regular event, unless the sports club or association is providing an education tutor as part of their coaching.

### **Gypsy, Roma, Traveller and Showman families.**

Absence of a child from a Traveller or Showman 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 and Showman children, dual registration is allowed. That means that the 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 and Showman children are not an alternative to attendance at school.

### **Record preservation**

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

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