



# Handforth Grange Primary School

## Attendance & Punctuality Policy

<b>Policy Area</b>	Attendance Policy
<b>Policy Title</b>	Attendance Policy
<b>Policy Leader</b>	Leadership Team
<b>Policy Date</b>	September 2023
<b>Agreed by Governors</b>	September 2023
<b>Policy Review</b>	September 2024



**Frank Field**  
Education Trust

***Social Justice through Excellence in Education***

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# 1. Aims and objectives

## **Aims**

At Handforth Grange Primary School we believe that excellent attendance and punctuality is essential if pupils are to receive the greatest benefit from their education, raise attainment and gain the appropriate skills which will equip them for life. We are committed to meeting our obligation with regards to school attendance through our whole-school culture and ethos that values excellent attendance, including:

- Promoting excellent attendance
- Promoting excellent punctuality
- Reducing absence, including persistent and severe absence
- Ensuring every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled
- Acting early to address patterns of absence
- Building strong relationships with families to ensure pupils have the support in place to attend school

## **Our objectives are:**

- To involve the children in their school attendance.
- To communicate with parents about regular school attendance.
- All school staff to continue to take responsibility for children's attendance.
- To recognise the important role of class teachers, and the deputy heads and headteacher in promoting and monitoring excellent attendance.
- To ensure time and organisation within school enables the aims and objectives to be met.

# 2. Legislation and guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the [working together to improve school attendance](#) from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on [school attendance parental responsibility measures](#). These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- Part 6 of [The Education Act 1996](#)
- Part 3 of [The Education Act 2002](#)
- Part 7 of [The Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006 \(and 2010, 2011, 2013, 2016 amendments\)](#)
- [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)

This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the school census, which explains the persistent absence threshold.

### **3. Roles and responsibilities**

#### **3.1 The governing board**

The governing board is responsible for:

- Promoting the importance of school attendance across the school's policies and ethos
- Making sure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties
- Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data
- Monitoring attendance figures for the whole school
- Making sure staff receive adequate training on attendance
- Holding the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy
- Attendance will be discussed at full governor meetings and at the Governor education committee meetings
- The link Governor for attendance is Steve Burmester (Chair of Governors)

#### **3.2 The headteacher**

The headteacher is responsible for:

- Implementation of this policy at the school
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils
- Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies
- Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary

#### **3.3 The attendance officer and designated senior leader responsible for attendance**

The designated senior leader is responsible for:

- Leading attendance across the school
- Offering a clear vision for attendance improvement
- Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes
- Having an oversight of data analysis
- Devising specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data
- Arranging calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues
- Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families
- Monitoring and analysing attendance data (see section 7)

- Benchmarking attendance data to identify areas of focus for improvement
- Providing regular attendance reports to school staff and reporting concerns about attendance to the headteacher
- Working with education welfare officers to tackle persistent absence
- Advising the headteacher when to issue fixed-penalty notices

The attendance officer and designated senior leader responsible for attendance is Jessica Dolby (Deputy Head) and can be contacted via [jdolby@handforthgrange.com](mailto:jdolby@handforthgrange.com)

### **3.4 Class teachers/support teachers**

Class teachers and support teachers are responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the school office by each morning and by each afternoon.

They are also responsible for alerting the attendance officer (Jessica Dolby) if they have a concern about a child's attendance and/or notice any patterns for absence.

### **3.5 School office staff**

School office staff will:

- Take calls from parents about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the school system (SIMS)
- Transfer calls from parents to the attendance officer (Jessica Dolby) in order to provide them with more detailed support on attendance

### **3.6 Parents/carers**

Parents/carers are expected to:

- Make sure their child attends every day on time.
- Call or email ([admin@handforthgrange.com](mailto:admin@handforthgrange.com)) the school to report their child's absence before 9am on the day of the absence and each subsequent day of absence, and advise when they are expected to return
- Provide the school with more than 1 emergency contact number for their child
- Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day

### **3.7 Pupils**

Pupils are expected to:

- Attend school every day on time.

## 4. Routines

Pupils must arrive in school by 8:45am on each school day.

- Gates into the school playground are opened at 8.30am, and time should be allowed to enable children to manage their belongings and walk to their class by 8:45am. The gates are then locked at 8:45am.
- If a child arrives after 8.45am his/her parent/carer should report directly to the school office.
- Parents must ensure that if their child is to be absent that they contact the school via email ([admin@handforthgrange.com](mailto:admin@handforthgrange.com)) or telephone on the first morning of absence, and on each subsequent morning of absence.
  
- Children who arrive after 9.00am will be marked as 'late' (code L).
- Registers will close at 9.20am and 1.25pm. Any child arriving after that time will be recorded as 'late after close of register' (code U) which is then classed as an unauthorised absence for that session. The absence will only be authorised if a satisfactory explanation for the late arrival can be provided, for example, attendance at a medical appointment. Pupils who are late are disrupting not only their own education but that of others.
- Registers will be marked using the symbols advised by the DfE and Cheshire East Council.
- Should a pupil be absent at morning registration, unless a message has been received, the school will attempt to contact, by 10am, the pupil's parent or guardian.

## Recording attendance

### 4.1 Attendance register

We will keep an attendance register, and place all pupils onto this register. The register for the first session of each day will be taken by 8:50am promptly and will be kept open until 9:20am. The register for the second session will be taken at 1:00pm and will be kept open until 1:25pm.

It will mark whether every pupil is:

- Present
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity
- Absent
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

- The original entry
- The amended entry

- The reason for the amendment
- The date on which the amendment was made
- The name and position of the person who made the amendment

See appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes.

We will also record:

- Whether the absence is authorised or not
- The nature of the activity if a pupil is attending an approved educational activity
- The nature of circumstances where a pupil is unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

## **4.2 Unplanned absence**

The pupil's parent/carer must notify the school of the reason for absence on the first day of an unplanned absence and on each subsequent morning of absence by 9am or as soon as practically possible by calling the school office staff, or emailing [admin@handforthgrange.com](mailto:admin@handforthgrange.com). (see also section 7).

We will mark absence due to illness as authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness. If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may ask the pupil's parent/carer to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily. If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents/carers will be notified of this in advance.

## **4.3 Planned absence**

We encourage parents/carers to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the pupil's parent/carer notifies the school in advance of the appointment.

This can be done in person to the office staff, via a phone call or via an email to [admin@handforthgrange.com](mailto:admin@handforthgrange.com) with as much notice as possible but at least 1 day before the absence.

The pupil's parent/carer must also apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence. Go to section 5 to find out which term-time absences the school can authorise.

#### **4.4 Lateness and punctuality**

The Deputy Head and Office staff monitor lateness of pupils as being punctual for school is crucial. Lateness into school causes disruption to that individual's learning and to that of the other pupils in the class. It is paramount therefore that all pupils arrive at school on time. The gates open at 8.30 a.m. for all year groups and are closed at 8:45am allowing a window of 15 minutes where the children can come into school. After this time all pupil's will enter school via the school office.

A pupil who arrives late:

- Before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code (L)
- After the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code (U)
- If lateness occurs regularly, parents/carers will be contacted by the class teacher or Deputy Head to discuss why, explain which lessons and how many lessons they have missed and work together with parents/carers to ensure punctuality improves.
- If the concerns persist, the Deputy Head will write to the parents/carers about the pupil's punctuality, including a copy of the child's registration certificate, stating the total number of lessons missed
- If there is no improvement, the school will arrange a meeting with the parent/carer.
- In the event of persistent lateness, the school may make a formal referral to the Cheshire East Attendance Team.

#### **4.5 Following up unexplained absence**

Where any pupil we expect to attend school does not attend, or stops attending, without reason, the school will:

- Call or email the pupil's parent/carer on the morning of the first day of unexplained absence to ascertain the reason.
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not
- Identify the correct attendance code to use and input it as soon as the reason for absence is ascertained – this will be no later than 5 working days after the session
- Call the parent/carer on each day that the absence continues without explanation to ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary. If absence continues, the school will consider involving an education welfare officer.
- We will ensure we carry out all reasonable enquiries to ascertain where the child is. This may include the following: telephone calls to all known contacts (parents are asked to provide a minimum of two emergency contacts in the event of children not arriving at school without prior notification and also for other emergency purposes). • Emails or

letters home (including recorded delivery) • Contact with other schools where siblings may be registered • Possible home visits • Enquiries to friends, neighbours etc. through school contacts • Enquiries with any other Service known to be involved with the pupil/family. If we are unable to make contact then the Cheshire East Attendance Team will be notified and a form will be completed to log the child as missing in education.

**School Policy:** Following guidelines, School has a strict policy regarding absence when School has not been notified of absence and/or cannot contact parent/ guardian.

Day 1 – Absence phone call and/or email to main contact held on SIMS

Day 2 – Phone call/email to main contact and all other emergency contacts held on SIMS

Day 3/4 – Home visit, carried out by Attendance Officer

Day 5 – Request for welfare check by EWO

Day 10 – Notification to Local Authority

Where a pupil has 10 consecutive school days of unexplained absence and all reasonable steps have been taken by the school to establish their whereabouts without success, the school will make an immediate referral to Cheshire East children out of school team at 01270 375 255 or via e mail to [CEChildrenMissingEducation@cheshireeast.gov.uk](mailto:CEChildrenMissingEducation@cheshireeast.gov.uk) or via the online referral form on <https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/schools/school-attendance/children-missing-education.aspx>

#### 4.6 Reporting to parents/carers

The school will regularly inform parents about their child's attendance and absence levels via half-termly records in the child's reading record, attached to their end of year report and via the teacher at 2 parents evenings throughout the year.

If the child's attendance is in danger of being classed as persistently absent, then the parents will be in regular contact with the Deputy Head.

### 5. Authorised and unauthorised absence

Every half day absence has to be classified by the school as either **AUTHORISED** or **UNAUTHORISED**. That is why information about the cause of absence is required.

Parents may not authorise a child's absence, only the school can do this on the basis of the explanation provided by the parents.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

- Illness
- Medical/dental appointments if they unavoidably fall in school time (see sections 4.2 and 4.3 for more detail)
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart



- Traveller pupils travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh gypsies, Irish and Scottish travellers, showmen (fairground people) and circus people, bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and new travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school, but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision
- Other possible 'exceptional circumstances' the headteacher or deputy head have agreed in advance at their discretion

**Unauthorised absences** are those which the school does not consider reasonable, such as absences which have not been explained, day trips, or holidays which have not been agreed. This type of absence can lead to legal proceedings.

Examples of unsatisfactory explanations for absence which will be unauthorised include but are not limited to the following:

- Holidays taken within term time
- A pupil's/family member's birthday
- A late night/Didn't sleep
- Having their hair cut
- Closure of a sibling's school for INSET (or other) purposes
- Slept in
- Illness where the child is considered well enough to attend school

The school does not have to authorise illness, and where illness leads to persistent absence medical evidence may be requested in the form of a medical appointment card, copy of consultant letter, prescription, or sight of medicine.

### **5.1 Approval for term-time absence**

In the event of planned absence, parents/carers should contact the school office to request permission as soon as it is anticipated and, where possible, at least 2 weeks before the absence. Parents/carers will then be given a leave of absence request form to complete.

Parents do not have the right to take their child out of school for the purpose of family holidays. The headteacher will only grant holidays or other leaves of absence to a pupil during term time if they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'. A leave of absence is granted at the headteacher's discretion, including the length of time the pupil is authorised to be absent for.

We define 'exceptional circumstances' as bereavement, exceptional family emergencies, or other unusual, rare events and unavoidable absences.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request. The headteacher may require evidence to support any request for leave of absence.

Any requests made for a holiday to be taken within school time which are not considered to be exceptional in circumstances, will be recorded as unauthorised, the local authority will be informed and they may issue a Fixed Penalty Notice.

## 5.2 Legal sanctions

The school or local authority can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age.

If issued with a fine, or penalty notice, each parent must pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the local authority.

Penalty notices can be issued by a headteacher, local authority officer or the police.

The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice may take into account:

- The number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year
- One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission
- Where an excluded pupil is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason

If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute or withdraw the notice.

## 6. Strategies for promoting attendance

Within Handforth Grange we aspire to ensure all children have at least 97% attendance. This will ensure that the children have every opportunity to receive the greatest benefit from their education, raise attainment and gain the appropriate skills which will equip them for life. To enable parents to understand what real attendance looks like we have created the table below.

Percentage Attendance	Number of days off school
99%	2 days
98%	4 days
97%	6 days
96%	8 days
95%	10 days (2 weeks)
90%	19 days (4 weeks)

- 1.) To promote excellent attendance we will initially contact parents via a phone call if their child has more than 5 days (10 sessions) of absence within a half term or if their child's attendance falls below 98%.
- 2.) Once a child's absence reaches 10 days (20 sessions) 95%, school will send a letter out to parents detailing the importance of good attendance and the process involved should attendance not improve.
- 3.) If it reaches 14 days (28 sessions) 93% parents will be invited in to school to meet with the Deputy Head or Head teacher to discuss support that could be put in place and a home-school agreement created.
- 4.) If a child's attendance is 90% or below it will be discussed with the Education Welfare Officer for Cheshire East to produce a support plan. Cheshire East may issue penalty notice letters and fines if the situation does not improve.

**Others ways we promote excellent attendance include the following:**

\* attendance which is above 97% will be promoted and celebrated with certificates in assembly every term

\*The school will provide a curriculum that meets the needs of each child and includes ignition and fun

\*Events will be planned on days within a partial school week to encourage attendance

\*School dates are discussed annually and the number of partial weeks is limited where possible

\* Excellent attendance and punctuality will be promoted, celebrated and conveyed to the whole school community by newsletter

\*Attendance in each class will be celebrated in assembly weekly

\* The school minibus will be used to bring some vulnerable children or those with a high rate of absence to school

\*Individual children will be invited to Mrs Dolby's breakfast club to help reduce absence rates

\* Individual attendance data will be shared with parents every half term as well as during parents evenings and on the end of year report

\*Home-school agreements will be created to identify any support needed to improve attendance

**Partnerships**

At Handforth Grange Primary we very much value the partnership we share with parents, children, staff, governors, the community and the Education Welfare Officer in matters of attendance and punctuality.

Whilst any child can be off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school for a variety of other reasons. Experience has taught us that such problems are most effectively resolved within the secure partnership between school, parents and child. If a child is reluctant to attend, or parents are worried for any reason, then they should contact the Deputy Head or Headteacher. The pastoral resources in school can help to support difficult times.

## **7. Attendance monitoring**

### **7.1 Monitoring attendance**

The school will :

- Monitor attendance and absence data weekly, half-termly, termly and yearly across the school, and at a class and individual pupil level
- Identify whether or not there are particular groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern. Groups looked at include: boys/girls, pupil premium, SEN, EHCP and EAL.
- The school will log conversations with parents on CPOMS about attendance to assist in the monitoring of attendance and the offering of support.
- The school will share attendance data with the Governing Body termly and discuss actions taken each term to improve attendance

Pupil-level absence data will be collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. The school will compare attendance data to the national average, and share this with the governing board.

### **7.2 Analysing attendance**

The school will:

- Analyse attendance and absence data regularly to identify pupils or cohorts that need additional support with their attendance, and use this analysis to provide targeted support to these pupils and their families
- Look at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence, and then develop strategies to address these patterns
- The school sets attendance targets each year. These are agreed by the Senior Leadership Team and Governors at the first Full Board meeting of the school year. Targets are challenging yet realistic, and based on attendance figures achieved in previous years.

### **7.3 Using data to improve attendance**

The school will:

- Provide attendance reports to class teachers to facilitate discussions with pupils and families when needed
- Use data to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place in order to modify them and inform future strategies

#### **7.4 Reducing persistent and severe absence**

Persistent absence (PA) is where a pupil misses 10% or more of school for any reason, and severe absence is where a pupil misses 50% or more of school. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we need the full support and co-operation of parents to address this.

The school will:

- Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence
- Make phone calls and write letters to parents to discuss how we can work together to improve attendance
- Hold regular meetings with the parents of pupils who the school (and/or local authority) considers to be vulnerable, or are persistently or severely absent, to discuss attendance and engagement at school
- Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance
- Create home-school agreements with parents

We monitor all absence thoroughly and this is combined with academic tracking. Any child seen to have reached the PA mark of 10%, or, who is at risk of moving towards it, will be prioritised for referral. If this arises the deputy head or headteacher will contact the parent/carer about their concerns which may lead to an Action Plan. Persistently absent pupils are tracked and monitored carefully and all cases of persistent absenteeism are automatically made known to the Education Welfare Officer at Cheshire East to produce a support plan. Cheshire East may issue penalty notice letters and fines if the situation does not improve.

**Deletions from the register:** School will seek to make reasonable enquiries to establish the whereabouts of the child, jointly with the local authority. The local authority should be notified in advance of the deletion, when the school becomes aware that the deletion will be made. School must notify their local authority when they are about to remove a pupil's name from the school admission register under any of the grounds set out in the CME 2016 guidance. When removing a pupil's name, the local authority must be notified of:

- a) The full name of the pupil;
- b) The full name and address of the parent with whom the child normally resides;
- c) At least one telephone number of the parent;
- d) The pupil's future address and destination school (if known);
- e) The reason(s) why the pupil name has been removed from the admission register.

Local authorities have a duty to put in place arrangements for identifying (as far as it is possible) those children of compulsory school age in their area who are not school registered or receiving education otherwise than at a school. Local authorities should trace those children and ensure that they receive full-time education.

\*Under section 436A of the Education Act 1996

Where a pupil has not returned to school for ten days following an authorised absence or is absent from school without authorisation for twenty consecutive school days, the pupil can be removed from the admission register when the school and local authority have jointly made reasonable enquiries to establish the whereabouts of the child. This only applies where the school does not have reasonable grounds to believe that the pupil is unable to attend because of sickness or unavoidable cause.

### **Home Educated Children**

Parents have a duty to ensure their child of compulsory school age receives suitable full time education but this does not have to be at a school. On receipt of written notification to home educate, school will inform the pupil's local authority that the pupil is to be deleted from the admission register. School will not seek to persuade parents to educate their children at home as a way of avoiding excluding the pupil or because the pupil has a poor attendance record. There is no requirement for parents to obtain the school or local authority's agreement to educate their child at home. However, if parent/ guardian fails/ refuses to provide notification, a referral will be made to the Local Authority with immediate effect.

### **Child relocates**

When a child moves, attempts will be made by School to contact local schools to provide a setting for the child where they will be educated. If no provision is available, support will be offered to complete a transfer request. The Local Authority will be notified to ensure suitable support can be offered to provide education. When a child transfers both into and out of School, a form must be filled in and returned to the Local Authority notifying the pupil movement.

### **Exclusion and Permanent Exclusion**

School must arrange full-time education for excluded pupils from the sixth school day of a fixed period exclusion. If a permanent exclusion has been put in place, the Local Authority will be notified with immediate effect.

## **8. Monitoring arrangements**

To ensure that it is effective, this policy will be reviewed as guidance from the local authority or DfE is updated, and as a minimum annually by Jessica Dolby (Deputy Head). At every review, the policy will be approved by the full governing board.

## 9. Links with other policies

This policy links to the following policies:

- Child protection and safeguarding policy
- Behaviour policy

### Appendix 1: attendance codes

The following codes are taken from the DfE's guidance on school attendance.

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	Pupil is present at morning registration
\	Present (pm)	Pupil is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Pupil arrives late before register has closed
B	Off-site educational activity	Pupil is at a supervised off-site educational activity approved by the school
D	Dual registered	Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
J	Interview	Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
P	Sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
V	Educational trip or visit	Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised, or approved, by the school
W	Work experience	Pupil is on a work experience placement

Code	Definition	Scenario
<b>Authorised absence</b>		
<b>C</b>	Authorised leave of absence	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
<b>E</b>	Excluded	Pupil has been excluded but no alternative provision has been made
<b>H</b>	Authorised holiday	Pupil has been allowed to go on holiday due to exceptional circumstances
<b>I</b>	Illness	School has been notified that a pupil will be absent due to illness
<b>M</b>	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment
<b>R</b>	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance
<b>T</b>	Gypsy, Roma and traveller absence	Pupil from a traveller community is travelling, as agreed with the school
<b>Unauthorised absence</b>		
<b>G</b>	Unauthorised holiday	Pupil is on a holiday that was not approved by the school
<b>N</b>	Reason not provided	Pupil is absent for an unknown reason (this code should be amended when



		the reason emerges, or replaced with code O if no reason for absence has been provided after a reasonable amount of time)
<b>O</b>	Unauthorised absence	School is not satisfied with reason for pupil's absence
<b>U</b>	Arrival after registration	Pupil arrived at school after the register closed

<b>Code</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Scenario</b>
<b>X</b>	Not required to be in school	Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
<b>Y</b>	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances	School site is closed, there is disruption to travel as a result of a local/national emergency, or pupil is in custody
<b>Z</b>	Pupil not on admission register	Register set up but pupil has not yet joined the school
<b>#</b>	Planned school closure	Whole or partial school closure due to half-term/bank holiday/INSET day



