



# **Park Gate Primary School**

## **Attendance Policy**

This policy is written to reflect relevant Children's Acts, Education Acts, regulations and guidance produced by the Department for Education as well as guidance from Hampshire County Council in relation to school attendance. This policy is also consistent with the following school policies:

- Admissions
- Anti-bullying
- Child Protection
- Safeguarding
- Special Educational Needs
- Behaviour

### **Rationale**

For a child to reach their full educational achievement a high level of school attendance is essential. At Park Gate Primary School, we are committed to providing an education of the highest quality for all our children and endeavour to provide an environment where all pupils feel valued and welcome. It is our duty to consistently strive to achieve a goal of 100% attendance for all children and every opportunity will be used to convey to pupils and their parents or carers the importance of regular and punctual attendance.

Parents and pupils play a part in making our school so successful and 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.

For children to take full advantage of the educational opportunities offered it is vital they are 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:

- 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, school work and friendships easier to cope with.
- Regular attenders find learning more satisfying.
- Regular attenders are more successful in transferring between primary school, secondary school, higher education and employment or training.

## **SECTION 2**

### **Promoting Good Attendance**

The foundation for good attendance is a strong partnership between the school, parents and the child. The Home/School Partnership, which is issued to parents following their child's admission to school, clearly details the shared responsibilities of how we will work with parents/carers and our expectations of what parents will need to do to ensure their child achieves good attendance.

To help us to focus on this we will:

- Provide information on all matters related to attendance in our newsletter and on our website.
- Regularly review attendance for every child.
- Report to parents on how their child is performing in school, what their attendance and punctuality rate is and how this relates to their attainments.
- Celebrate good attendance by displaying class achievements.
- Reward good or improving attendance through individual programmes.
- Set targets for school attendance.

### **Responsibilities of the School's Attendance Leader**

A member of the Senior Leadership Team and Home School Link Worker will oversee, direct and co-ordinate the school's work in promoting regular and improved attendance and will ensure this policy is consistently applied throughout the school. These people will also ensure that attendance is both recorded accurately and analysed. They will ensure that attendance issues are identified at an early stage and where possible ensure 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 parent/carers the need and reasons for their child's absence and will encourage them to keep absences to a minimum. Support will be offered to families to help them improve attendance. The Home School Link Worker, Sherilee Osborn, can be contacted via the school telephone number should any parent/carer like to discuss their child's attendance and any possible support that may be needed.

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 school.

### **Responsibilities of Classroom Staff**

Ensure that all children are registered accurately.

Promote & reward good attendance at all appropriate opportunities.

Liaise with senior staff on matters of attendance and punctuality.

Communicate any concerns or underlying problems that may account for a child's absence to parents and senior staff/DSL.

### **Responsibilities of Parents and Carers**

Ensuring your child's regular and punctual attendance at school is a parent/carer's legal responsibility (section 444(1) AND 444(1a) of the 1996 Education Act) and permitting absence from school that is not authorised by the school creates an offence in law.

Parents will:

- Ensure their child arrives at school on time each day.
- Inform the school on the first day of absence.
- Discuss with the class teacher or a senior member of staff any planned absences well in advance.
- Support the school with their child in aiming for 100% attendance each year.
- Make sure that any absence is clearly accounted for by phone or email on the first and subsequent days of absence, or by letter if a phone is unavailable.
- Avoid taking their child out of school for non-urgent medical or dental appointments.
- Only request for leave of absence if it is for an exceptional circumstance and must be completed in advance.

## **SECTION 3**

## Recording Attendance

Legally the register of attendance must be marked twice daily. This is once at the start of the school day at 8.50am and again for the afternoon session at 1pm.

## Lateness /Punctuality

It is important to be on time at the start of the morning and afternoon school sessions. The start of the school day is used to share information about the day's learning and follow up on learning from the previous day. It is essential that every child is present for this crucial part of the school day.

The school day will begin at **8.40am** and all pupils expected to be in school at that time. Morning registration will be at 8.40 am and close at 8.50am. Pupils will receive a late mark 'L' if they are not in the classroom at 8.50am when registers close.

All lateness is recorded daily. This information will be required by the courts, should a prosecution for non-attendance or lateness be necessary

Children arriving after 9am will be marked as unauthorised absence code 'U' in line with county and Department for Education (DfE) guidance. This mark records a child as 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 all appointments are to be made outside of school hours or during school holidays. Evidence of medical appointments should be provided to ensure the correct coding is entered in the register.

Pupils who are consistently late are disrupting not only their own education but also that of the other pupils. On-going and repeated lateness is considered as unauthorised absence and could be subject to legal action.

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 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 late and/or unauthorised absence in the last 100 possible school sessions the school is required to act in accordance with Hampshire County Council's Code of Conduct for issuing Penalty Notices, unless the issuing of a Penalty Notice would conflict with other intervention strategies in place or other sanctions already being processed (See section 6 of this policy for further detail).

The school day ends at **2.55pm** for Year R and KS1, and at **3pm** for KS2. Parents are required to collect their child promptly at the end of the school day. Where late collection is persistent and/or significantly late, the school is obliged to take any uncollected pupil to a place of safety and share concerns as necessary with other agencies.

## Procedures for Reporting a Child as Absent

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 contact the school office before 9 am on the first day of absence to give an explanation. **Notification of absence is then also required for each day a child is absent.** If no explanation has been received in regards to a child's absence a text will be sent to the parent/carers as a reminder to notify the school of their child's absence. If no response is received by

9.30 am a member of staff will telephone the parent/carer. Please be aware that if no contact is made with the parent/carer we will call the 2<sup>nd</sup> named contact that we hold for the child. *This is because schools have a duty to ensure a child's safety and wellbeing as well as their regular school attendance.*

**The school will make all reasonable enquiries to establish contact with parents and the child including visiting the family home and making enquiries to sibling's schools, known friends and wider family.**

### ***Three Day's Absence***

If, after 3 days, a child has not been seen and contact has not been established with named parent/carer schools are required to start Child Missing in Education procedures, as set down by Hampshire County Council Guidance, **however, if we believe there to be a safeguarding concern, at any point prior to this, we would contact Children's services for advice and to report our concerns.**

### ***Ten Day's Absence***

The school has a legal duty to report the absence of any pupils 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.

### **Persistent Absence**

If a child misses 10% or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason they are defined as **persistent absentees**. Continued absence could result in a referral being made to the Legal Intervention Team.

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 the school will keep a record of all persistently absent children and their absence will be monitored regularly. Any absences will need to be supported by substantive evidence in order to be authorised, even when and if the child's attendance increases. All attendance data is shared with the Local Authority and the Department for Education.

Children at this school are dependent on their parents/carers, who are responsible for their level of attendance and punctuality. It is vital that children enjoy coming to school, and whilst being encouraged to attend well and on time, will not carry blame and be made to feel unhappy if their parents are not supportive or effective in these areas.

Parents/carers of children who are persistently absent will be asked to visit school to meet with the Head Teacher or Home School Link Worker to see if support can be offered to help improve their child's attendance. If school are unable to offer the support needed a referral will be made to the Legal Intervention Team who may be able to offer further interventions and strategies to support improved attendance.

## **SECTION 4**

### **Request for Leave of Absence**

Amendments to school attendance regulations were updated and enforced from September 2013. (Pupil registration) (England) regulations state that headteachers may not grant any leave of absence

during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. The fundamental principles for defining 'exceptional' are rare, significant, or unavoidable. It is important to note that, in rare, extenuating circumstances where absence may be authorised, headteachers can determine the length of the authorised absence. **Absence from school for holidays will not be approved.**

Parents/Carers wishing to apply for leave of absence need to fill in an Exceptional Circumstances Absence Request Form, available from the school office or school website. Wherever possible these should be submitted *at least a week* prior to the requested absence date and it is advised that no travel arrangements be made until the form has been returned.

**If term time leave is taken without prior permission from the school, the absence will be unauthorised** which could result in parent/carers will being issued with a fixed-penalty fine or other legal action taken in accordance with Hampshire County Council's Code of Conduct.

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:

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, birthdays, to look after siblings, used as a carer or family holidays
- school refusal or truancy before or during the school day
- absences which have not been explained
- Sickness of a parent or other family member
- Non urgent medical treatment
- Inadequate clothing for school

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.

**Absence due to illness either side of unauthorised absence will require evidence to support the absence being authorised.**

## SECTION 6

In circumstances where it has not been possible to resolve attendance issues through the use of supportive measures it may be deemed in the best interests of the child to apply legal sanctions.

### **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.

### **Legal Measures for tackling persistent absence or lateness**

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:

- Support from any agency to improve the attendance has been unsuccessful
- The child has 10 or more sessions of unauthorised absence and parents are complicit in the child's absence.
- A Penalty Notice has previously been issued but further unauthorised absences continue to happen.

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

- Parenting contracts set at Education Planning Meetings
- Parenting orders
- Penalty notices
- Education Supervision Orders
- Prosecution

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#step-7>.

### **Penalty Notices for non-attendance – Hampshire's Code of conduct**

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:

- 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 10 sessions (five days) after the register has closed.
- persistently late before the close of the register (coded *L*) where the threshold of 10 sessions (five days) has been met.
- absent for any public examinations of which dates are published in advance.
- absent for any formal school assessments, tests or examinations where the dates have been published in advance.
- Absent despite the non-approval of a parent/carer's

These conditions apply 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 does not require any agency support to improve the attendance then a single Penalty Notice is issued for either:

- 10 sessions of unauthorised absence or lateness in any 10 week school period
- 1 or more sessions of unauthorised absence during a public exam, formal school assessment of testing where dates are published in advance.

Parents and carers will be warned of the likelihood of a penalty notice being issued for unauthorised absence either via a letter, through the Exceptional Circumstances Absence Request Form or through the school's attendance policy and website. The penalty notice is a fine that is issued to each parent/carers 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. 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/carers.

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.

**Please note:** If a Penalty Notice has previously been paid and your child has further unauthorised absences additional legal action will be taken. E.G. If a Penalty Notice has previously been issued to a parent/carers due to unauthorised term time absence and unauthorised absence occurs again it will result in further legal action being taken 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 Councils website at: <https://www.hants.gov.uk/educationandlearning/behaviour-attendance-parents#step-7> .

**Date reviewed by governing body: 20<sup>th</sup> September 2022**

**Next Review Date: March 2024**