

HEATHERSIDE JUNIOR SCHOOL
POLICY FOR ATTENDANCE AND ABSENCE

Date of Policy	September 2026	Next renewal date	September 2027
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At Heatherside Junior School we aim to work closely with parents* to achieve and maintain high standards of attendance. For a child to reach their full educational achievement a high level of school attendance is essential. 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. Parents and pupils play a part in making our school so successful. Every child has a right to access the education to which they are entitled. Parents and teachers share the responsibility for supporting and promoting excellent school attendance and punctuality for all. Statistics show a direct link between underachievement and absence below 95%.

It is our aim 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 our children to take full advantage of the educational opportunities offered it is vital a child 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.

* A "Parent" is defined as: Any natural parent, whether married or not. Any parent who, although not a natural parent, has parental responsibility as defined in the Children Act (1989) for a child or young person. Any person who, although not a natural parent, has care of a child or young person.

Our attendance policy aims to give clear guidance to staff, parents, pupils, and governors who will:

- Promote a welcoming and positive atmosphere in school, where children feel safe and that their presence is valued.
- Promote parents' support of this policy as a vital contribution towards their child's education.
- Promote positive attitudes towards high standards of attendance and punctuality, which pupils should retain throughout life.
- Provide support for children and families, including through the school's Pastoral Support Worker.
- Ensure that attendance is maintained effectively and absences and lateness are followed up promptly.
- Meet legal requirements, with particular reference to identifying unauthorised absence, including persistent lateness.
- Keep accurate registration documents identifying authorised/unauthorised absences and check registers regularly, to note unexplained absences and identify patterns of absence and lateness if they are occurring.
- Report to parents on their child's performance and progress, what their attendance and punctuality rate is and how this relates to their attainment.
- Raise parental awareness of the importance of attendance and punctuality through a variety of strategies.
- Involve other agencies e.g. Family Help, Children's Services, Educational Psychologist etc when difficulties arise and further support is needed.
- Ensure all staff are aware of School policy and deal consistently with absence and punctuality.
- Ensure good liaison when a change of school occurs.
- Take account of national and local procedures and guidance including the latest statutory documents.

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Legal Framework

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](#). Information from Hampshire County Council can be found [here](#).

Section 7 of the 1996 Education Act states that parents must ensure that children of compulsory school age receive efficient full-time education suitable to their age, ability, and aptitude to any special educational needs they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise. A child is of compulsory school age at the beginning of the term following their 5th birthday. A child ceases to be of compulsory school age on the last Friday in June of the school year in which they reach the age of 16.

We recognise that attendance is a matter for the whole school community. Our Attendance Policy should not be viewed in isolation; it is a strand that runs through all aspects of school improvement, supported by our policies on safeguarding, prevention of bullying, behaviour, and inclusive learning. This policy also considers the Human Rights Act 1998, the Equality Act 2010, UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, and other relevant legislation.

Registration Procedures

- Pupils must be on the playground in time for the doors opening at 8.40am, registration is at 8.45am. School finishes at 3.05pm
- If a child is late and does not arrive before the doors/gates close they must enter the school **through reception, accompanied by an adult**. They will then be signed in as late before the register has closed.
- A child arriving after 9.00 a.m. will be marked late after Registers Close (this will be recorded as unauthorised if no acceptable reason is given.)

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, as amended by 2016 regulations, require schools to take an attendance register twice a day, once at the start of the morning session and then again during the afternoon session.

For the purpose of this policy, the school defines "Absence" as:

- Arrival at school after the register has closed (which is 9am)
- Not attending school for any reason.

We define "Regular" attendance as:

- Attendance at every session the school is open to pupils unless their absence has been authorised.

All lateness is recorded daily. This information will be required by the courts, should a prosecution for non-attendance or lateness be necessary. Children who are consistently late are disrupting not only their own education but also that of the other pupils. Repeated arrival after the close of registration will result in appropriate interventions being instigated and may also result in a penalty notice being issued or prosecution.(see section Legal Measures for tackling persistent absence or lateness in this policy.)

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Responsibilities of Parents and Carers

A parent has a legal responsibility to ensure that their child attends school regularly. If a child is unavoidably absent from school parents are expected to contact school by telephone call on the morning of the first day of absence and on each subsequent day, identifying the reason for absence and the expected date of return

- Telephone the school on the first day (before 9.00am) and subsequent days of absence on 01252 617928.
- Discuss with the school any planned absences well in advance. If it is known in advance that a child is going to be late or need to be collected early (due to an appointment) an email should be sent to adminoffice@heatherside-jun.hants.sch.uk to confirm this or a parent may come and speak to the Office staff directly to inform the school.
- Avoid taking their child out of school for routine or non-urgent medical or dental appointments.
- Work in partnership with the school if their child is experiencing difficulties with any aspect of their schoolwork or home and family life.
- Inform the school of any change in circumstances that may impact on their child's attendance.
- Support the school by becoming involved in their child's education, forming a positive relationship with school, and acknowledging the importance of children receiving the same messages from both school and home. Support the school with their child in aiming for 100% attendance each year.
- Maintain effective routines at home to support good attendance.
- Attend all meetings requested to discuss attendance issues.

Parents 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 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 or Hampshire County Council will be required to issue parents with a penalty notice in accordance with Working Together to Improve School Attendance 2026.

Absence Procedure .

- If a child is absent and a message/prior notification has not been received by 9.30 am at the latest, office staff will telephone parents to find out why the pupil is absent.
- If the absence is known in advance, notification is required, either by an absence request form or copy of a medical appointment.
- If a child has any unexplained absences a letter/email asking for an explanation of the absence may be sent to parents or a follow up call will be made. The attendance system used in school automatically records any unexplained absences as unauthorised absence.
- Attendance is monitored daily and where there are immediate concerns, the school will contact parents to discuss this. A list of children with less than 95% attendance is produced for the Headteacher at the end of each half term and a letter may be sent to parents informing them of their child's absence record and of the school's expectations. Support will be offered and, if appropriate, a plan put in place to secure improved attendance or punctuality.

Registers will be checked for regular attendance by the designated admin staff and Pastoral Support Worker. Teaching staff should also be aware and report any concerns to the Headteacher. The register is a legal document and may be used as evidence in a Court of Law. Where there is doubt

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about the authenticity of absence attributed to illness, school and the Locality Team can refer the matter to a school nurse or GP.

Medical and Dental Appointments

- Routine appointments should be made outside school hours.
- If an appointment is made in school time an explanatory email/letter should be sent to school on the date before the appointment.
- The pupil should only be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary for the appointment. In most circumstances, a child should not miss a whole day at school for an appointment.
- Parents (or authorised adult over 16 years) must check children out and back in at reception when attending appointments during the school day.

Reporting to parents

The school will regularly inform parents about their child's attendance and absence levels and will share attendance and absent rates at least once per term.

Support

At Heatherside Junior School we recognise that poor attendance can be an indication of difficulties in a family's life. This may be related to problems at home and or in school. Parents are encouraged to inform school of any difficulties or changes in circumstances that may affect their child's attendance and/or behaviour in school, for example: bereavement, divorce/separation, emerging health concerns. This will help the school identify any additional support that may be required.

We also recognise that some pupils are more likely to require additional support to attain good attendance. The school will implement a range of strategies to support improved attendance based on the individual needs and circumstances of the child. To plan the correct support, we will always invite parents and pupils to attend a meeting to discuss the concerns and devise a plan to support the child's regular attendance. Strategies we may use to support you include:

- Invite parents to discuss how school can support the family to make improvement, including with our Pastoral Support Assistant.
- Refer to Inclusion Support Service for support, guidance, and advice
- Refer the matter to an appropriate external agency for multi-agency support, such as implementing a Family Support Plan or consulting with the Children's Social Care or the police, where there are safeguarding concerns.

Leave of absence

Amendments to school attendance regulations were updated and enforced from August 2024: (Pupil registration) (England) mean that Headteachers can no longer authorise leave of absence unless there are exceptional circumstances. Generally, the DfE does not consider a need or desire for a holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure and recreation to be an exceptional circumstance. All absences associated with a holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure and recreation during term time will be marked as unauthorised within the register. Any parents known to have removed their child from school for the sole purpose of a holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure and recreation may be referred to the Local Authority and be issued with a penalty notice fine or referred to the Local Authority to consider prosecution.

We believe that children need to be in school for all sessions so that they can make the most progress possible. However, we do understand that there are times where a parent may legitimately request

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leave of absence for a child due to 'exceptional circumstances'. At Heatherside Junior School, leave of absence is only granted at the discretion of the Headteacher and shall not be granted unless there are 'exceptional circumstances'. Heatherside Junior School will respond to all applications for leave of absence in writing on the back of the Absence Request Form.

Parents wishing to apply for leave of absence need to fill in an application form available from the school office or via the website at least two weeks in advance and before making any travel arrangements.

The regulations stipulate that every request received must be considered on an individual basis. Even in the case of exceptional circumstances, the school must determine whether to approve the absence or not. In making this decision, primary consideration will be given to the child's attainment, attendance and ability to catch up on missed schooling, followed by the frequency of the request, the nature of the event for which leave is sought and whether the parent has given advance notice.

A penalty notice request or a referral for prosecution may be submitted to the Local Authority should:

- The parent fail to submit a leave of absence request in advance of taking the leave.
- An application for a leave of absence is not agreed by the Headteacher but is still taken.
- A longer period is taken more than the agreed number of days.

When absence is granted by the Headteacher, the parents will need to agree a date of return. If a pupil fails to return on the expected date and contact is not received from, or made with the parents, school will seek advice from the Local Authority. This could result in possible children missing from education procedures being instigated.

Absence for Year 6 pupils will not be authorised under any circumstances during SATs week in May or in the weeks preceding.

Absence during the first two weeks in September will not be authorised for any children even in exceptional circumstances* as this is an important settling in time for the children. (*Except for an immediate family bereavement.)

Understanding types of absence

Children 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: Absence will not be authorised unless parents have provided a satisfactory explanation, and it is accepted as such by the school. The decision to authorise absences is at the discretion of the Headteacher. Examples of unsatisfactory explanations include but are not limited to:

- parents giving their children permission to be off school unnecessarily such as for shopping for uniform
- haircuts
- pupil's birthday or that of a family member
- to look after siblings
- inability to attend due to inadequate family organisation

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- closure of a sibling school due to INSET etc
- a refusal to attend on health grounds but where the pupil is considered well enough to attend.

Absences which have not been explained: 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.

In line with Department for Education guidance, if we do have a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness, we may ask the parent to provide medical evidence, such as a prescription, appointment card, or other appropriate form of evidence. If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised.

Where a child has an emerging a pattern of non-attendance, we will discuss the reasons for absence with the child's parent. We will invite parents to attend a support meeting as an appropriate early intervention strategy. As part of this support, we may seek consent from parents and the pupil as appropriate to make a referral to the School Nursing Team and/or to liaise with the child's healthcare professional.

Where a pupil has a verified and chronic health condition, we will aim to work with parents to ensure children have access to education and provide appropriate support in line with [Supporting pupils with medical conditions at school](#) and Hampshire policies regarding supporting children with health issues. We will also consider whether an Individual Healthcare Plan is required.

Persistent Absence

At Heatherside Junior School we will investigate any pupils who are at risk of being persistently absent (PA) and will not wait until it is below 90% We define "Persistent absenteeism" (PA) as:

- Missing 10% or more of schooling across the year for any reason.

"Severe absence" (SA) is defined as:

- Missing 50% or more of schooling across the year for any reason.

Absence for the purposes of Religious Observance

Heatherside Junior School acknowledges the multi-faith nature of British society and recognises that, on some occasions, religious festivals may fall outside school holiday periods or weekends and is recognised as such by a relevant religious authority. Where this occurs, the school will consider either authorising the pupil absence or making special leave for religious observance. Parents are requested to give advance notice to the school.

Absence through child participation in public performances, including theatre, film or television work and modelling

Parents/carers 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 C1, an authorised absence.

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

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Parents of high performing sports' pupils 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 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.

Parent travelling for occupational purposes

The pupil is a mobile child and their parent(s) is travelling in the course of their trade or business and the pupil is travelling with them. A mobile child is a child of compulsory school age who has no fixed abode and whose parent(s) is engaged in a trade or business of such a nature as to require them to travel from place to place.

To ensure we can effectively support all our pupils, we ask that parents:

- Advise the school of their forthcoming travelling patterns as soon as these are known and before they happen; and
- Inform the school regarding proposed return dates.

Record preservation

Registers are legal records, and all schools must preserve every entry in the attendance or admission register for 6 years from the date the data was entered.

Monitoring and analysing attendance

The school will

- Monitor and analyse weekly attendance patterns and trends and deliver intervention and support in a targeted way to pupils and families.
- Undertake frequent individual level analysis to identify the pupils who need support and focus staff efforts on developing targeted actions for those cases.
- Conduct thorough analysis of half-termly, termly, and full year data to identify patterns and trends.
- Benchmark attendance data (at whole school, year group and cohort level) against local, regional, and national levels to identify areas of focus for improvement.
- Devise specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data.
- Monitor in the data the impact of school wide attendance efforts, including any specific strategies implemented.
- Provide data and reports to support the work of the governing body and local authority when appropriate.

Persistent absence, lateness, severe absence and the use of legal interventions

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' (PA) when their attendance drops to 90% and below for any reason. Over a full academic year this would be 38 sessions (19 days). Absence at this level could cause considerable damage to a child's educational outcomes.

A pupil becomes a 'severe absentee' (SA) when their attendance drops to 50% and below for any reason. Over a full academic year this would be 190 sessions (95 days). Absence at this level is causing considerable damage to a child's educational outcomes.

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The attendance of all pupils at our school are monitored to identify children who are PA, or are on track to becoming PA. Where emerging concerns are identified we will instigate appropriate and timely interventions as outlined in the section above.

Referrals may also be made to external agencies for targeted support. [Inclusion Support Service \(ISS\)](#) | [Education and learning | Hampshire County Council](#)

If parents fail to engage with support and their child continues to have unsatisfactory attendance/punctuality, a request may be made to the Local Authority to pursue legal proceedings either through a penalty notice, consideration of an Education Supervision Order or prosecution via the Magistrates' Court. Parents found guilty of failing to secure their child's regular attendance at school under the provisions of the Education Act 1996, will receive a criminal record and a maximum penalty of a £1000 fine under a Section 444 (1) offence or a £2500 fine or up to a 3-month prison sentence, under a Section 444 (1a) offence.

In line with Hampshire County Council guidance, we will notify the Inclusion Support Service of all reduced timetables as soon as a plan has been agreed.

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

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

The following [legal measures](#) are for pupils of compulsory school age who are registered at a school:

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

Legal Measures for absence taken when the Headteacher has declined parent/carers request for leave of absence: Where a pupil has unauthorised absence due to either:

1. non- approval of a parent/carers request for leave of absence or
2. a holiday that has been taken without permission and the unauthorised absence is for 10 or more sessions (5 days) in any 100 possible school sessions, then a penalty notice for non- attendance will be issued.

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 <http://www3.hants.gov.uk/education/hias/learning-behaviour-attendance/attendance-guidance-forparents/possible-penalties.htm>

PENALTY NOTICES AND OTHER LEGAL MEASURES

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As set down by the Department for Education, Penalty Notices can be issued for unauthorised absence. In Hampshire, Penalty Notices are issued when a pupil has had 10 or more half-day sessions (equivalent to five school days) of unauthorised absence, in the last 10 school week period, which may span different terms or school years. The authorised person retains the discretion to issue a Penalty Notice before the threshold is met under certain circumstances. If parents remove their child/ren for an unauthorised period and it is the belief of the school and Local Authority that they have done this in a way as to avoid being issued a Penalty Notice, the Local Authority reserves the right to authorise the issuing of a Penalty Notice before the national threshold is met. Unauthorised absence is absence not approved by the school and will be coded on your child's attendance record as one of the following:

O – unauthorised absence

U – late after close of registration

G – non-approved leave of absence (holiday).

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.

If your child has an ongoing pattern of unauthorised absence then parents will normally receive a **Notice to Improve** letter. This Notice will advise you about the extent of a child's absence and set out the support that is being offered. It will also warn you that if your child's attendance does not show a significant improvement within a three-week period and if this improvement is not maintained thereafter, a Penalty Notice may be issued without further warning.

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 £80 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 £160 if paid within 28 days. If the fine remains unpaid the Hampshire County Council will consider prosecution for the nonattendance. 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 you receive two Penalty Notices in a rolling three-year period and your child has further unauthorised absences, legal action may be 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 [here](#)

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Staff Roles and Responsibilities

Role	Name	Contact details
Senior Attendance Lead	Mrs Dunn (Headteacher)	01252 617928 adminoffice@heatherside-jun.hants.sch.uk
Attendance Officer (Registers/Absence requests)	Mrs Soldat (Admin Assistant)	01252 617928 adminoffice@heatherside-jun.hants.sch.uk
Pastoral Support Assistant	Mrs Allchurch	01252 617928 adminoffice@heatherside-jun.hants.sch.uk
Named Governor for Attendance	Mrs Susie Lewington	01252 617928 adminoffice@heatherside-jun.hants.sch.uk

The Governors of Heatherside Junior School recognise the importance of school attendance and promotes it through the school's ethos and across its policies by

- Setting high expectations of all leaders, staff, pupils, and parents so that children attend school every day and are safeguarded.
- Identifying a member of the governing body/trustee to lead on attendance matters and ensuring that there is a named senior manager to lead on attendance.
- Prioritising attendance in strategies, such as raising attainment, behaviour and combatting bullying, special educational needs and disabilities, wellbeing, and safeguarding.
- Ensuring school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties by rigorously evaluating the effectiveness of the school's attendance procedures so that consistent attendance support is provided for all pupils.
- Ensuring the schools' attendance management processes are delivered effectively, and that consistent attendance support is provided for pupils who require it most by prioritising the staff and resources needed. This includes ensuring schools engage and work effectively with the local authority School Attendance Support Team and wider local partners and services.
- Regularly reviewing attendance data, discussing, challenging trends, and helping school leaders focus improvement efforts on the individual pupils or cohorts who need it most.
- Ensuring high aspirations are maintained for all pupils and processes for support are adapted to the individual needs of pupils including those with long term illnesses, special educational needs and disabilities, pupils with a social worker, those pupils under the Virtual School and pupils from cohorts with historically lower attendance such as those eligible for free school meals.
- Ensuring all school staff receive adequate training on attendance and that relevant staff have access to opportunities to share and learn from good practice in other schools.
- Ensuring that attendance data is shared with the Local Authority or Department for Education in line with statutory reporting deadlines.
- Reviewing the school's Attendance Policy on at least an annual basis, ensuring that the required resources are available to fully implement the policy, which is published and publicised regularly so that it is easily accessible to pupils, parents and staff.

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- Ensure that there is a named Senior Attendance Champion to lead on attendance and allocate sufficient time and resource.

The Leadership Team will

- Ensure that there is a whole school approach which reinforces good school attendance, with good teaching and learning experiences, with a whole school culture that encourage all pupils to attend and to achieve.
- Make sure all teaching and non-teaching staff know the importance of good attendance, are consistent in their communication with pupils and parents, and receive the training and professional development they need.
- Have a clear school attendance policy which all staff, pupils and parents understand. Monitor the implementation and effectiveness of the Attendance Policy and ensure that the policy is reviewed annually.
- Ensure the school have accurate, complete admission and attendance registers and have effective day to day processes in place to follow-up absence.
- 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.
- Share information and work collaboratively with other schools in the area, local authorities, and other partners where a pupil's absence is at risk of becoming persistent or severe.
- Attend the termly school attendance supporting meetings with the local authority, focusing on those pupils with severe absence, making sure a regularly reviewed plan is in place.

All staff will:

- Actively promote the importance and value of good attendance to pupils and their parents.
- Form positive relationships with pupils and parents.
- Contribute to a whole school approach which reinforces good school attendance; with good teaching and learning experiences that encourage all pupils to attend and to achieve.
- Know the importance of good attendance, are consistent in their communication with pupils and parents, and receive the training and professional development they need.
- Make sure registers are completed on time and accurately.

This policy has been devised in accordance with the following legislation and guidance:

- [Working together to improve school attendance, DfE, \(July 2026\)](#)
- [Children missing education, DfE \(September 2025\)](#)
- [Keeping children safe in education, DfE \(September 2026\)](#)
- [Working together to safeguard children, DfE \(July 2026\)](#)

Approved by Governors 17th September 2026