Attendance Policy

The Old School Henstead

Reviewed : September 2026
By D.Speakman
Next review due by : September 2027

Attendance Policy 2026-2027

Introduction

For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend school regularly and punctually and this policy sets out how we, together, will achieve this. In order for any attendance and punctuality policy to be effective it must be consistently applied throughout the whole school, by its staff, pupils and parents.

Why regular attendance is so important

Any absence affects the pattern of your child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any pupils' absence disrupts teaching routines which may affect the learning of others in the same class. Our teaching methods also make it difficult to catch up with learning and work missed, or for it to be done at home.

Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is your legal and parental responsibility, permitting absence from school without good reason is an offence in law and may result in a Penalty Notice being issued or Court action/prosecution. Research has shown that regular attendance and good punctuality are key factors in children achieving their full potential at school.

Attendance and Punctuality in the Early Years

Establishing good habits from the start will help your child to settle more quickly and build good habits for later life. Coming to school on time, every day helps to develop confidence.

Research has shown that, even at the earliest age, children with poor attendance and punctuality are at a disadvantage later in life. They generally find it harder to make and maintain friendships, they achieve less and they often suffer from poor self-esteem.

The school keeps a register of attendance for every child. This is a legal document and record and classifies every half-day attendance and/or absence. Absences are classified as either authorised or unauthorised. For this reason, the school will ask parents/carers for the reason for each absence.

Promoting regular attendance

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility – parents, pupils and all members of school staff.

Children and families want to attend our school and our website and digital newsletter promotes the active engagement of all our community.

Expectations of the School

Every pupil of compulsory school age is entitled to an efficient full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude, and any special educational need they may have. Old School Henstead School expects high standards of attendance and punctuality from all its pupils and will work together with families to achieve this.

Develop and maintain a whole school culture that promotes the benefits of high attendance and punctuality.

Fulfil their legal responsibility in the completion of pupil registers:

- Ensure good level of Attendance (95+%)
- Ensure good level of Punctuality (95+%)
- Monitor attendance within the school, identify issues and put procedures in place to work with families and the Local Authority to support children in accessing their right to a high-quality education.

Safeguarding

Effective attendance procedures are integral to ensuring all children are kept safe. Your child may be at risk of harm if they do not attend school regularly. Safeguarding the interest of each child is everyone's responsibility and within the context of this school, promoting the welfare and life opportunities for your child encompasses: - Attendance, Behaviour Management, Health and Safety, Access to the Curriculum and Anti-Bullying.

Failing to attend school on a regular basis will be considered as a safeguarding matter.

The Law Relating to Attendance

Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 states that 'the parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him/her to receive efficient full-time education suitable': - a) To age, ability and aptitude
b) To any special educational needs, they may have either by regular attendance to school or otherwise.

If you wish to find out more information about the legislation around attendance, please visit:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65f1b048133c22b8eecd38f7/Working_together_to_i mprove_school_attendance applies_from_19_August_2024_.pdf

The school has been guided by the Government guidance document "Working together to improve school attendance: Guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools, and local authorities Published: 29 February 2024 and applied from August 2024 in formulating the policies and procedures in place at school.

Understanding Types of Absence

Every-half day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by the parents), as either authorised or unauthorised. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required, preferably in writing.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason such as illness, medical/dental appointments which cannot be made outside of school time or unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies, or other unavoidable causes.

To enable the school to authorise an absence due to illness, parents/carers are requested to:

● Provide medical evidence to the school. This can be in the form of GP / Hospital / Medical / Dental Appointment letters / cards, Copies of prescriptions/antibiotics issued (providing the child's name is indicated there on).

To enable the school to authorise an absence due to an emergency or unavoidable cause, parents/carers/guardians are requested to:

- Complete the absence request form which can be requested from the school office.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no "authorised leave of absence" has been given. This type of absence can lead to the use of sanctions and/or referring to the Local Authority for legal intervention. Unauthorised absences are:

● Parents/carers/guardians keeping children off school unnecessarily

● Parents/carers not communicating the reason for absence the school

● Absences which have never been properly explained or evidenced

● Parents should provide medical evidence to the school to support the absence as being due to ill health if the absence is longer than 2 days or the absence will be unauthorised.
● Child who arrive at school after the Registration period has ended
● Truancy before or during the school day
● Shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
● Day trips, holidays, or overseas trips in term time

Whilst any child may be off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to

attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents and the child. If your child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or to give into pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and usually makes things worse.

Absence in Term Time

All schools can grant a leave of absence when a pupil needs to be absent from school with permission. All schools are expected to restrict leaves of absence to the specific circumstances set out in regulation 11 of the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 and schools maintained by a local authority and special schools not maintained by a local authority must do so. These circumstances are:

● Taking part in a regulated performance or employment abroad: in line with a licence issued by a local authority or Justice of the Peace or a body of persons approval (BOPA). (For full details please see code C1)

● Attending an interview: for entry into another educational institution or for future employment where requested in advance by a parent the pupil normally lives with.

● Study leave: for public examinations, as agreed in advance with a parent the pupil normally lives with. Please note this does not include any internal examinations such as mocks as study leave should not be granted in such cases.

● A temporary, time-limited part-time timetable: where the pupil is of compulsory school age, both the parent who the pupil normally lives with and school agree the pupil should temporarily be educated on a part-time basis for exceptional reasons and have agreed the times and dates when the pupil will be expected to attend school as part of that timetable. (For full details please see part-time timetable.

● All schools are also able to allow pupils of non-compulsory school age to be absent for sessions they are not timetabled to attend

● If a pupil is over compulsory school age (e.g. in sixth form) leave can be requested or agreed by the pupil or a parent they normally live with.

Education off site

As well as the above leaves of absence, all schools can also allow pupils to be absent from the

school site for certain educational activities or to attend other schools or settings:

- To attend an offsite approved educational activity.
- To attend provision arranged by the local authority. e.g. alternative provision or as part of an education, health and care plan.
- To participate in an approved sporting activity.
- To attend an educational visit or trip arranged by the school.
- To attend work experience.

As these circumstances are part of delivering a full-time education they are not classified as absences for statistical purposes.

Holidays or overseas trip absences in term time will affect your child's schooling as much as any other absence and we expect parents to support the school by not taking students away in school time.

Government guidance is very clear that "All schools can grant a leave of absence for other exceptional circumstances at their discretion. 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. Leave of absence should not be granted for a pupil to take part in protest activity during school hours. "

Persistent Absenteeism (PA)

A child becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% (26 sessions or 13 days) or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason (this includes authorised and unauthorised absences). Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we need parent's fullest support and cooperation to tackle this.

We monitor all absences thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority and you will be informed of this immediately.

Children are tracked and monitored carefully through our attendance system. Where the school is concerned regarding attendance levels the Headteacher will meet with the family and an intervention programme to support attendance will be put in place. To support family's advice from CAMHS or the Educational psychologist will be sought or other relevant multiagency.

When a situation does not resolve, this could lead to a Fixed Penalty Notice or Pre-Court

Conference where a discussion may be made to prosecute if a child's attendance is of a continuing concern.

Absence Procedure
Unplanned absence

If your child is absent, you must:

● Contact the Prep School office either by telephone call or email office@theoldschoolhenstead.co.uk

- A phone call will be made to parents each time the child has been marked with an unauthorised code and no reason has been given for absence.

● Contact the school on the subsequent days of absence as necessary.

Planned absence

● Fill in the absence request form.

What School will do if Attendance is a Concern

● Letters will be sent to parents to alert them to the concerns the school has about their child's attendance and/or punctuality.
● Invite you into the school to discuss the situation with the Headteacher of Prep
● Home visits.
● Pre-referral meetings and where appropriate, the offer of an early help assessment.
● Referral to Attendance Advisory Service if your child's [attendance is 90% and below] unauthorised absence reaches 10% or more.
● Inform the Local Authority if a child has been absent for 10 consecutive days.

Parents are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the school staff in resolving any problems related to attendance together. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be resolved this way, and unauthorised absences continue, the school pastoral team will try to resolve the situation by agreement but, if other ways of trying to

improve your child's attendance have failed and unauthorised absence persist the local authority can use sanction such as Penalty Notices or prosecutions in the Magistrates Court.

Lateness

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If your child misses the start of the day they can miss spending time with their class teacher, getting vital information and news for the day. Late arrival of children also disrupt lessons, can be embarrassing for your child and can also encourage absence

How we manage lateness

The school day starts at 8.20am

Registers will be marked at 8.20 am. Your child will receive a late mark if they are not in on time.

Poor punctuality is classified as 'irregular school attendance' and action will be undertaken to address it, following the same procedure. If your child has a persistent late record, you will be asked to meet with the Head Teacher to resolve the problem, but you can approach us at any time if you are having problems getting your child to school on time.

● Fill out a "Leave Request Form", which will be provided by the office on demand, if your child is going to be absent for an entire day or more. Once completed please return the form to the office. Following this thePrep School Headteacher will complete her part of the form stating whether she authorises the absence or not. A letter will be sent to parents which will explain to parents why the absence has been authorised or unauthorised.

● The school abides by DFE regulations and also by Suffolk guidelines with regard to reporting persistence non-attendance. This could result in a fixed penalty being issued by the authority. This could be triggered by the following events.

● Where a child's attendance falls below 85% in a given period (5 weeks) of which 50% are without reasonable justification;

● A holiday/leave of absence to be 5 days or more unauthorised absence (concurrent or separate absences within a 4 month/ a term period);

● Where a child's attendance falls below 90% in a given period (8 weeks is proposed) without reasonable justification and a specific issue is involved e.g. unauthorised term time holiday.

School Targets

The school has targets to continually improve attendance and punctuality and your child has an important part to play in meeting targets.

We know that good attendance is the key to successful schooling and through the school

year we monitor absences and punctuality to show us where improvements need to be made.

Child Missing Education (CME)

Any child who ceases to attend school, without notification as to their new address and/or the school they are transferring to, becomes a 'Child Missing in Education'. Any child in this category is reported to the Child Missing in Education Officer at the Local Authority, who will follow up the matter under section 436A of the Education Act 1996 and Safeguarding legislation, as necessary.

The attendance procedures are crucial to ensuring the safety of all children. If a child has been absent from school for 20 consecutive days without good reason and their whereabouts are unknown, the school has a legal obligation to report the child as missing education to the relevant local authority. In accordance with DFE regulations the child may be removed from the school roll.

Communication

Telephone Numbers: there are times when we need to contact parents about lots of things, including absence, so we need to always have your contact numbers. Help us to help you and your child by making sure we have always got up-to-date phone numbers.

Home Address: let us know when you move address.

Removing a Pupil from Our School: if you make the decision to transfer your child to another school, for whatever reason and have given the relevant notice period to the school, as a matter of priority you need to provide the school with all the necessary details.

We will email you to ask if you can provide us, your new address (if relevant) and the school your child is transferring to. If we do not receive this information and your child ceases to attend our school, they become a 'Child Missing in Education'.

Elective Home Education: if you make the decision to educate your child at home and have given the relevant notice period, you are required to advise us of this in writing.

Once the letter is received, we will remove your child from the school roll and advise the Elective Home Education Officer of the Local Authority, who will contact you regarding this matter.

If a letter is not received, your child remains on the school roll and their absence is treated as

unauthorised and action as detailed above.

Points of Contact for Attendance at school
Deborah Speakman – Preparatory School Head Teacher Attendance Champion

Summary
The school has a legal duty to ensure procedures are in place to support good attendance and punctuality. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend

school. All school staff are committed to working with parents and pupils as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible and that every child's welfare and life opportunities are promoted.

Related Policies
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Confidentiality Policy
- Supervision of Students policy and missing pupils' checklist
- Registration Policy

Written: *Deborah Speakman*

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Ratification: *Chair of Board*