



*The*  
**Hawthorns**  
Primary School

# Attendance Policy

Agreed and Adopted by the Governing Body on: 19<sup>th</sup> September 2023

Signed : J Shepherd

The policy will be formally reviewed on: September 2024

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### 1. Aims

We are committed to meeting our obligation with regards to school attendance through our whole-school culture and ethos that values good attendance, including:

- Promoting good attendance
- 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

We will also promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

### 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

The Chair of the Learning and Teaching Committee has specific responsibility for overseeing attendance matters in the school.

### 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 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

The Designated Senior Leader responsible for attendance is the Headteacher who can be contacted via the school office: [office@hawthorns.wokingham.sch.uk](mailto:office@hawthorns.wokingham.sch.uk).

### 3.4 The Attendance Officer

The school Attendance Officer is responsible for:

- 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 designated senior leader responsible for attendance and the Headteacher
- Working with education welfare officers to tackle persistent absence
- Advising the Headteacher when to issue fixed-penalty notices

The Attendance Officer is Mrs Pippa West who can be contacted via the school office: [office@hawthorns.wokingham.sch.uk](mailto:office@hawthorns.wokingham.sch.uk)

### 3.5 Class teachers

Class teachers are responsible for recording attendance promptly at 08:55 and again at the start of the afternoon session; 13:00 in Early Years Foundation Stage, 13:10 in Key Stage 1 and 13:30 in Key Stage 2 and submitting this information to the school office.

### 3.6 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
- Direct parents to speak to class teachers, phase leaders or the SENDCo in order to provide them with more detailed support and advice on attendance
- Chase up unreported absences

### 3.7 Parents/Carers

Parents/Carers are expected to:

- Make sure their child attends school every day throughout the academic year
- Call the school to report their child's absence before 09:00 on the day of the absence and on each subsequent day of absence, and advise when they are expected to return. This can be done by phone or email to [absence@hawthorns.wokingham.sch.uk](mailto:absence@hawthorns.wokingham.sch.uk)
- Ensure that their child arrives punctually and prepared for the school day
- Provide the school with more than one emergency contact number for their child.
- Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day

### 3.8 Pupils

Pupils are expected to:

- Attend school every day
- Arrive at school on time
- Be appropriately prepared for the day

## 4. Recording attendance

### 4.1 Attendance register

We will keep an attendance register, and place all pupils onto this register.

We will take our attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. It will mark whether every pupil is:

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

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.

We have a soft start to the school day, whereby children can arrive in school from 08:45am to 08:55am. All pupils must be in school by 08:55am.

#### **4.2 Unplanned absence**

The pupil's parent/carer must notify the school of the reason for the absence on the first day of an unplanned absence by 09:00am or as soon as practically possible by calling or emailing the school office (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**

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.

However, 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.

The pupil's parent/carer must also apply for other types of term-time absence and a Leave of Absence form must be completed at least one month in advance of the requested absence. Forms are available from the School Office and can be downloaded from the school website.

Go to section 5 to find out which term-time absences the school can authorise.

#### 4.4 Lateness and punctuality

It is crucial that pupils arrive at school on time for registration at the beginning of the day. Lateness in to school causes disruption to that individual's learning and to that of other pupils in the class. The school opens at 08:45am for a regular school day.

Registration takes place at 08:55am and pupils who arrive late after that time will be recorded as late to school.

Registers close at 09:25am and after this, lateness is recorded as unauthorised absence.

Persistent lateness by a pupil will initially be followed up by the School Attendance Officer and, if not resolved, will be referred to the Education Welfare Service. A letter will be issued to parents following six late entries in the register.

#### 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 the pupil's parent/carer on the morning of the first day of unexplained absence to ascertain the reason. If the school cannot reach any of the pupil's emergency contacts, the school may consider contacting the police
- 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

#### 4.6 Reporting to parents/carers

Parents are able to check their child's attendance and absence levels via the Arbor Parent Portal interface.

The Hawthorns Primary School collects attendance and absence data daily and weekly from the registers and this information is forwarded to the Local Authority and Department of Education.

### 5. Authorised and unauthorised absence

#### 5.1 Approval for term-time absence

The Headteacher will only grant a leave 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 being:

- death of a close relative,
- attendance at a funeral of a close relative
- respite care of a looked after child
- a housing crisis which prevents attendance

- an absence from school recommended by a health professional as part of a parent or child's rehabilitation from a medical or emotional issue

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request.

Any request should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated and where possible, a Leave of Absence form should be completed at least one month in advance of the requested absence. Forms are available from the School Office and can be downloaded from the school website.

The Headteacher may require evidence to support any request for leave of absence.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments (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

## 5.2 Legal sanctions

Unauthorised absence of at least 10 sessions (5 days) or more, whether consecutively or not, in a 10 week school period, may result in the issuing of a penalty notice. The amount payable on the issue of a Penalty Notice is £60 per parent/carer, per child if paid within 21 days of receipt, rising to £120 if paid between 22 and 28 days. If a penalty notice remains unpaid after 28 days the matter may result in each parent/carer being liable for prosecution.

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

## 5.3 Pupils leaving during the school day

- Pupils are not allowed to leave the premises without prior permission from the school
- Pupils must be signed out at the School Office on leaving the school and signed back in on their return.
- When a pupil is being collected from school, parents/carers are requested to report to the School Office before the pupil is allowed to leave the site.
- If a pupil leaves the school site without permission their parents/carers will be contacted. Should the school be unable to make contact with the family it may be appropriate, in certain circumstances, to contact the Police and register the pupil as a missing person or contact

Social Services. Refer to the schools Safeguarding Policy, 'Missing pupils/Lost from the school'.

#### **5.4 Changing Schools**

It is important that if parents/carers decide to send their child to a different school that they inform The Hawthorns Primary School in writing as soon as possible. A pupil will not be removed from roll until the following information has been received and investigated:

- The date the pupil will be leaving the school and starting the new school
- The address of the new school
- A new home address is supplied if appropriate

#### **5.4 Elective Home Education**

All children have the right of fair access to a suitable and effective full-time education, however, there is no legal requirement for this to take place in a school setting. Families are permitted to provide an education for their children at home if they choose to do so, rather than sending them to school full-time (Section 7 of the Education Act 1996). This is referred to as Elective Home Education (ELE).

The school will not actively encourage parents to Electively Home Educate.

If the school receives information that a parent is considering Elective Home Education, then they must inform the Local Authority and arrange a meeting with the parent, school and Local Authority representative to ensure the parent is fully informed.

If a parent submits written application to remove a pupil from the school roll the school must notify the Local Authority at the point at which the regulation for removal has been met.

The Local Authority will then follow their policies and procedures in relation to Elective Home Education.

Where a pupil has an EHCP then the pupil can only be removed from roll with the Local Authority authorisation and therefore an emergency annual review should be called by the school to address placement.

### **6. Strategies for promoting attendance**

The school encourages good attendance by:

- Using clear and consistently applied systems and processes to improve attendance and address absences, making sure these systems are inclusive and appropriate for all pupils.
- Publicising good attendance in the termly Headteacher's Report to the Governing Body and if appropriate, occasionally to parents and pupils in newsletters and assemblies.

### **7. Attendance monitoring**



## 7.1 Monitoring attendance

The school will:

- Monitor attendance and absence data half-termly, termly and yearly across the school and at an individual pupil level
- Identify whether or not there are particular groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern

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

## 7.3 Using data to improve attendance

The school will:

- Encourage teachers and leaders to regularly use attendance data to facilitate discussions with pupils and families
- 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 is where a pupil misses 10% or more of school, and severe absence is where a pupil misses 50% or more of school.

The school will:

- Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence
- Issue a letter to parents/carers where a pupil's attendance has fallen below 90% and invite the parents/carers to a meeting at the school to agree an Attendance Action Plan if attendance does not improve within a specified time period
- 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 regular reports to the Education Welfare Service to raise awareness of emerging at-risk pupils.

## 8. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the Local Authority or DfE is updated, and as a minimum annually by the School Attendance Officer. 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>S</b>	Study leave	Year 11 pupil is on study leave during their public examinations
<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

U	Arrival after registration	Pupil arrived at school after the register closed
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Code	Definition	Scenario
X	Not required to be in school	Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
Y	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
Z	Pupil not on admission register	Register set up but pupil has not yet joined the school
#	Planned school closure	Whole or partial school closure due to half-term/bank holiday/INSET day