Attendance Policy

1. Introduction

School attendance is subject to various education laws and this school attendance policy is written to reflect these laws and the guidance produced by the Department for Education and Hampshire County Council. This attendance policy is also consistent with the following school policies:

- admissions
- anti-bullying
- child protection
- curriculum
- Inclusion and special educational needs
- behaviour and discipline.

The level of attendance and punctuality expected from all our pupils is included in our school's Home School Agreement, which parents must sign following their child's admission to a school (statutory).
It is very important, therefore, that you make sure your child attends regularly and this policy sets out how together we will achieve this. This policy will be annually publicised in writing for all staff, parents and pupils via our website.

1.1 Why it is important for your child to have good 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 pupils 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 he/she is entitled. Parents and teachers share the responsibility for supporting and promoting excellent school attendance and punctuality for all.

It is our duty 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 your 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.

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, and higher education, employment or training.

2. Promoting good attendance

The foundation for good attendance is a strong partnership between the school, parents and the child.

To help us all to focus on this we will:

- provide information on all matters related to attendance in our regular newsletter and website.
- report to you on how your child is performing in school, what their attendance and punctuality rate is and how this relates to their attainments.
- celebrate good attendance by displaying individual and class achievements.
- reward good or improving attendance through class competitions, certificates and outings/ events.
- set targets for the school and for classes for attendance and display these in the school.

3. Roles and responsibilities

3.1 Responsibilities of the school's Attendance Officer

A member of the senior leadership team will oversee, direct and co-ordinate the school's work in promoting regular and improved attendance and will ensure the attendance policy is consistently applied throughout the school. This person will also ensure that attendance is both recorded accurately and analysed. (S)he will ensure that attendance issues are identified at an early stage and 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 parents/carers the need and reasons for their child's absence and will encourage them to keep absences to a minimum. 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.

3.2 Responsibilities of classroom staff

- Ensure that all students are registered accurately.
- Promote and reward good attendance with students at all appropriate opportunities.
- Liaise with the Attendance Officer on matters of attendance and punctuality.
- Communicate any concerns or underlying problems that may account for a child's absence.
- Support pupils with absence to engage with their learning once they are back in school.

3.3 Responsibilities of students

- Attend every day unless they are ill or have an authorised absence.
- Arrive in school on time.
- Go to all their registrations and lessons on time.
- Take responsibility for registering at the reception desk if they are late or are leaving the school site during school hours.

3.4 Responsibilities of parents/carers

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

Parents will:

- inform the school on the first day of absence before 9am.
- discuss with the class teacher any planned absences well in advance and apply to the Attendance Officer in writing requesting authorisation for this absence.
- support the school with their child in aiming for 100% attendance each year.
- make sure that any absence is clearly accounted for by telephone 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 leave of absence if it is for an exceptional circumstance.

4. Recording attendance

Legally the register must be marked twice daily. This is once at the start of the school day, 8.30am, and again during the afternoon session.

It is important to be on time at the start of the morning and afternoon school sessions and to lessons. The start of school/lessons is used to give out instructions or organise work. If your child is late they can miss work time with their class teacher getting vital information, cause disruption to the lesson for others, and it can be embarrassing leading to possible further absence.

- The school day begins at 8.40 am and all **pupils are expected to be in school at this time**. Morning registration is at 8.40 am and it closes at 9am.
- Our school gate is locked at 9.15am and re-opens at 3pm each day.
- If your child is late, you must ring the school to gain access into the school grounds and then report to the school office.
- All lateness is recorded daily. This information will be required by the courts, should a prosecution for non-attendance or lateness be necessary.
- Arrival after the close of registration will be marked as late in the register (L).
- If a pupil is late due to a medical appointment, they will receive an authorised absence, coded *M*. Please be advised that, where possible, doctors and dentists appointments are to be made outside of school hours or during school holidays.

5. Persistent lateness

Pupils who are consistently late are disrupting not only their own education but also that of the other pupils. Ongoing and repeated lateness is considered as **unauthorised absence will be subject to a fine of £50**.

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, guardians 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 unauthorised absence due to lateness recorded in any 10 week period, the school will issue a fine of £50. This is in the line with Portsmouth City Council Penalty Notice Protocol. More information

about this procedure can be found at https://www.portsmouth.gov.uk/ext/learning-and-schools/schools/school-attendance-and-home-educating.aspx

6. Collection at the end of the day

Please collect your child promptly at the end of the school day (not later than 3.45pm Mon-Thurs and 3.15pm Fri). The school has no arrangements, staff or supervised/safe places to keep children who have not been collected on time. 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 (social services).

7. What to do if your child is absent.

A child not attending school is considered a **safeguarding** matter. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required.

7.1 First day of absence:

If your child is absent you must:

- contact us before 9am on the first day of absence.

If your child is absent we will:

- telephone you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you by 9.30am – this is because we have a duty to ensure your child's safety as well as their regular school attendance.
- invite you in to discuss the situation with our attendance officer or other senior leaders if absences persist.
- refer the matter to the Portsmouth City Council School Attendance Service, if absence is persistant. This could be due to having 10 session (five days) of unauthorised absence in a term, parentally condoned absence or unauthorised leave of absence in term-time.

7.2 Third day of absence:

Please note: If your child is not seen and contact has not been established with any of the named parents/carers, after three days of absence the school is required to start *Child Missing Education* procedures as set down by Portsmouth City Council guidance. We will make all reasonable enquiries to establish contact with parents/carers and the child, including making enquiries to known friends, wider family. The Attendance Officer or a member of the senior leadership team will visit the child's home to try to establish contact.

7.3 Ten days' absence:

We have a legal duty to report the absence of any pupil who is absent without an explanation for 10 consecutive days to the Child Missing Education Officer at Portsmouth City Council. 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. So please help us to help you and your child by making sure we always have an up-to-date contact number. There will be regular checks on telephone numbers throughout the year.

7.4 Continued or ongoing absence:

If your child misses 10% (three weeks/sessions) or more schooling across the school year, for whatever reason, they are defined as *persistent absentees*. 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, we monitor all absence thoroughly and all attendance data is shared with the local authority and the Department for Education.

If your child has had an absence and their attendance level is falling towards 90% we will contact you and, depending on the reasons for the absence, will arrange an attendance meeting with you and a member of the senior leadership team. This may result in you signing a home school contract for attendance or being taken off the roll for our school.

8. Requests for leave of absence.

Amendments to school attendance regulations were updated and enforced from September 2013: The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations state that headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. It is important to note that headteachers can determine the length of the authorised absence, as well as whether absence is authorised at all. The fundamental principles for defining *exceptional* are rare, significant, or unavoidable, which means the event could not reasonably be scheduled at another time. There are no rules on this as circumstances vary from school to school and family to family. There is, however, no legal entitlement for time off in school term time to go on holiday and in the majority of cases holiday will not be authorised.

Parents/carers wishing to apply for leave of absence need to fill in an application form (available from the school office) in advance and before making any travel arrangements.

If term-time leave is taken without prior permission from the school, the absence will be unauthorised and if the number of sessions absent hits the thresholds set out by Portsmouth City Council Penalty Notice Protocol, parents/carers will be issued with a fixed-penalty fine of £ 50 per parent payable to the school.

Taking holidays in term time will affect your child's schooling as much as any other absence and we expect parents to help us by not taking children out during school time.

9. 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, truancy before or during the school day and 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.

10. Information on penalty notices for unauthorised absences.

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.

10.1 Legal measures for tackling persistent absence or lateness

Portsmouth City Council School Attendance Service will use the full range of legal measures to secure good attendance. The school attendance service will always aim to ensure schools, parents and carers work together to improve pupil attendance. However, we do have the responsibility to issue penalty notices in the following situations where unauthorised absence occurs:

- following 10 sessions (five days) of unauthorised absence in a term
- parentally-condoned absences
- unauthorised leave of absence in term-time
- late arrival at school after the register has closed

Parents and carers will always be issued with a formal written warning of the intention to issue a penalty notice, before the notice is sent out. The only exception to this is if you have a leave of absence in term time without permission of the school, as a penalty notice can be issued immediately in those circumstances.

On receipt of the warning, you will have 30 school days to improve your child's attendance. In that time your child must have no unauthorised absences from school. If your child's attendance improves and there are no further unauthorised absences, you will not receive a penalty notice. Please be aware that there is no legal right of appeal once a notice has been issued against you.

More information can be found at https://www.portsmouth.gov.uk/ext/learning-and-schools/schools/school-attendance-and-home-educating.aspx

My child is trying to avoid going to school. What should I do?

Children are sometimes reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents/carers and the child. If a child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and may make things worse.

Contact your child's class teacher, immediately and openly discuss your worries. Your child could be avoiding school for a number of reasons difficulties with school work, bullying, friendship problems, family difficulties. It is important that we identify the reason for your child's reluctance to attend school and work together to tackle the problem. In some cases, you may find it helpful to discuss the circumstances of your child's difficulties with another professional.

11.1 What can I do to encourage my child to attend school?

Make sure your child gets enough sleep and gets up in plenty of time each morning. Ensure that he/she leaves home in the correct clothes and properly equipped. Show your child, by your interest, that you value his/her education.

11. What to do if your child is leaving the school

If your child is leaving our school (other than secondary school) parents are asked to:

1. Give the attendance officer comprehensive information about their plans, including any date of a move and your new address and telephone numbers, your child's new school and the start date when known. This should be submitted to our school in writing.

1. Make sure that any payments still outstanding for school fees are paid to the school office before your child's last day.

If pupils leave and we do not have the above information, then your child is considered to be a *child missing in education*. This requires schools and local authorities to then carry out investigations to try and locate your child, which includes liaising with Children's Services, the Police and other agencies. By giving us the above information, these investigations can be avoided.

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

Parents of a child performer can seek leave of absence from school for their child to take part in a performance. They must contact the Attendance officer 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 *C*, an authorised absence.

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

Parents of able sportsmen and women 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 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. 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.

14. Gypsy, Roma, Traveller and Showman families.

Absence of a child from a Traveller family that has left the area may be authorised if the absence is for work purposes only and it is believed that the family intends to return. To ensure the continuity of learning for Traveller children, dual registration is allowed. That means that a school

cannot remove a Traveller child from the school roll while they are travelling. When the Traveller is away, the home school holds the place open and records the absence as authorised through the *T* code. Distance learning packs for Traveller children are not an alternative to attendance at school.

15. Record preservation

School registers are legal documents. We will ensure compliance with attendance regulations by keeping attendance records for at least three years. Computer registers will be preserved as electronic back-ups or microfiche copies (if schools are not SIMS centrally hosted and do not have secure electronic server back-up they must print hard copies of the official registers and bind into annual volumes).

Proprietor/Governor signed: L Rahman

Date reviewed: 1st September 2026.