



Attendance Policy

'Every Child, Every Chance, Every Day'

1. Vision

Regular school attendance is recognised by our school as key to good pupil outcomes. The links between regular attendance, reaching potential attainment and future life opportunities are well researched. For this reason, the school will encourage good attendance and be robust in monitoring attendance and take action when attendance fails.

Absence can be a symptom of:

- ❖ Wider safeguarding issues – domestic violence, hidden harm etc.
- ❖ Low aspirations and/or disaffection
- ❖ Generational trend
- ❖ Economic climate
- ❖ Health or medical needs
- ❖ Lack of regard of the importance of regular attendance

2. Aims

- To maximise our attendance rates across schools in the Hamwic Education Trust by encouraging, recognising and rewarding good attendance.
- To investigate individual absences and ensure that pupils and parents are clear that unauthorised absences are not acceptable.
- To work closely with pupils and parents/carers, along with other professional agencies, to help them overcome problems which may prevent students from attending regularly.

3. The Legal Framework

- Parents/carers are responsible for ensuring that children attend and stay at school. It is the responsibility of the school to support attendance and to take problems seriously which may lead to non-attendance.
- Penalty notices may be issued under the Local Authority's (LA) Code of Conduct for the use of Penalty Notices in Cases of Non-Attendance at School. A copy of this Code of Conduct can be obtained from the Attendance Officer or the Education Welfare Service.

4. Monitoring approach to Attendance in the Hamwic Trust

Attendance is checked on a twice daily basis. Parents/carers of pupils who are absent without explanation will be automatically contacted mid-morning by the School Office. All schools have a 'first day contact policy' in relation to pupil's absence. Parents/carers should expect to be contacted on the first day of their child's absence.

Upon return to school, parents/carers must provide a letter of explanation for the absence if a satisfactory reason has not already been discussed with the Attendance Officer. Those pupils whose attendance is causing concern may be asked to provide medical notes for absence; this could be by means of a prescription or doctor appointment confirmation from the receptionist. Teaching staff will collect the notes and send them to the Attendance Officer.

The authorisation of any absence is at the Headteacher's discretion. If a pupil is regularly absent due to illness, the school reserves the right not to authorise the absence and to request parents provide medical evidence. With parent/carer permission, the school may also contact the pupil's GP.

In the case of those pupils whose level of attendance is causing concern, the school's Attendance Officer will send home letters and a copy of the child's attendance to date. In some cases, the school may choose to meet with parents/carers or conduct a home visit. If there is no improvement the pupil will be referred to the Senior Attendance Support Officer (SASO) who visits each school on a regular basis to monitor student attendance.

All unauthorised absence will put parents/carers at risk of being issued with a Penalty Notice, or of legal proceedings being instigated for failing to ensure their child's attendance at school.

5. Strategies to Encourage Good Attendance

We believe that pupils who do achieve good attendance should be recognised and rewarded; thus providing them with positive reinforcement and providing other pupils with further incentives to improve their attendance.

Rewards are issued for excellent attendance weekly or half termly, both for individuals and or class groups. Recognition can be made through:

- Personal congratulations from Headteacher
- Marvellous Me badges
- Notices in the Newsletter

Positive messages about good attendance are always delivered in class time, tutor times, assemblies and meetings with parents/carers. Up-to-date attendance data is always available from the Attendance Officer or school office.

6. Responsibility of Parents/Carers

- Parents/carers have a legal duty to ensure their children attend school regularly and arrive on time. In June 2017 the Supreme Court delivered judgement in relation to the Isle of Wight Council's appeal which sought clarification on what is meant by "fails to attend regularly" in the context of a prosecution for un-authorised non-attendance at school. The Supreme Court said that "regular" means "in accordance with the rules published by the school" and rejected the view that regular meant "sufficiently frequently". The rules of the school can be viewed in our School Attendance Matters Leaflet: A Guide to Attendance at School.
- To notify the school on the first day of absence as soon as possible of the reason for a pupil's absence. Parents can report an absence by telephoning the school office.
- To contact the school by telephone on each day of absence.
- To refer any in-school problems with the appropriate member of Teaching Staff or Headteacher at the earliest opportunity so that a joint effort can be made to address them. This is in an attempt to resolve problems without any adverse effect on attendance.
- If the school have not previously been notified, a letter should be provided on return to school, explaining the absence or parents should personally contact the School Office.
- To keep up to date with our expectations regarding attendance from the school prospectus, website, newsletters and other correspondence.

7. Interventions to Address Poor Attendance

The Hamwic Education Trust employs a range of strategies in an attempt to support pupils who have unacceptably low levels of attendance. The Pastoral Team and Attendance Officers in each school, who are responsible for attendance, keep detailed records of concerns and regularly analyse the data in order to target resources. Records show the routes of intervention, progressing from the Tutor/Teacher, to Head of House/Year and finally the Headteacher. We believe that early intervention is key. Strategies include telephone calls and letters home, meetings with the pupil and parents in school and/or home and visits by the Senior Attendance Support Officer (SASO). Parents/carers will automatically be contacted by the school if their child's attendance starts to fall.

Following these initial interventions and if the problem has still not been successfully dealt with, the pupil's case will be referred to the SASO. Schools work closely with the SASO to support the pupil and parents/guardians in discussing a suitable action plan to get the pupil back into full time education. Through the referral the SASO would be best placed to make an assessment of the issues presented.

As a final measure, where the non-attendance of a pupil is not resolved, the SASO will refer to the Local Authority (LA) who will seek legal advice and may pursue legal action to enforce attendance through the courts.

Where there have been issues of long-term absence we also work closely with the SASO and parents/carers to ensure the pupil is re-integrated back into school.

The Local Authority convenes annual attendance conferences and network meetings and is working closely with Health Service professionals to improve attendance across the city.

8. Legal interventions - Fixed Penalty Notices

Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs) are an alternative to prosecution. All students who have 10 instances of unauthorised attendance (i.e. 5 days) may be liable (as outlined in section 11)

However, the LA's Code of Conduct states the following:

*Use of Penalty Notices will normally only be issued for 2 separate periods of non-attendance **pupil** in any twelve-month period.*

If two penalty notices have been issued and paid in relation to a particular child and poor attendance is an ongoing problem, except in exceptional circumstances, information will then be gathered to support a prosecution under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 rather than a further Penalty Notice being issued. The Council, though, reserve the right, in appropriate circumstances, not to issue a Penalty Notice for any period of non-attendance and instead commence criminal proceedings.

A full copy of the Local Authorities Code of Conduct for the use of Penalty Notices in Cases of Non-Attendance at School can be obtained from the school.

9. The Importance of Registration

All schools must keep an attendance register in which, at the beginning of each morning and afternoon session, students are marked present or absent. Children arriving more than 5 minutes after the school door has closed will be indicated with an 'L'. Absence must also be denoted as authorised or un-authorised. Class teachers should only enter a pupil as present '/' or absent 'N' code.

It is essential that the registers are accurate and secure.

10. Registration and Punctuality

In order to receive a present mark, pupils should arrive in time to attend registration.

Pupils arriving within 10 minutes of the school door closing at 8.50am, will be marked as present but must be signed into school in the office.

The registers will remain open for 30 minutes after the school door closes. Pupils arriving between 10 and 30 minutes after door closure will be indicated with an 'L' code and the number of minutes late will be recorded.

Registers will remain open for 30 minutes. Pupils who arrive after this time, must also sign in at the school office. The late arrival will be marked present with a 'U' and statistically this code counts as an unauthorised absence for the whole morning session.

Persistent lateness will result in strategies to address the lateness; consequently, persistent lateness also places parents at risk of a Penalty Notice being issued.

11. Leave of absence

All schools will not automatically authorise requests for leave of absence. **There is not an automatic entitlement for any family holidays or leave of absence during term time as these should be taken during the 13-week school holiday period**

The Headteacher will consider each request on its merits **but will usually only agree to leave in exceptional circumstances**. The most important considerations are:

- Whether the leave of absence could be taken during periods of normal school holiday
- Whether the student is subject to any examinations during the academic year concerned and achievement may be adversely affected
- Whether due consideration has been given to the timing of the leave of absence, e.g. at the start of a new term
- The pupil's current level of attendance
- No authorised absence will be given during Year 11, KS1 or KS2 SAT's periods, this will include all siblings within the family
- Parents/carers are required, as before, to complete a leave of absence request form – which is available from the office – for any absence other than illness. Please remember a separate form should be completed for each child
- This must be received by the school no later than 4 weeks in advance of when you intend to take the leave of absence
- If the absence is for a period of more than 3 days, parents will be invited in to school to discuss the leave of absence with our Attendance Officer. You may be asked to provide supporting documentation at this time, for example confirmation of flight bookings and/or medical documentation
- If the documentation requested is not provided and/or a discussion has not taken place, the leave of absence will be automatically declined and marked as unauthorised
- A decision will be made based on the information provided and you will be notified in writing

In cases where overseas travel has been booked in advance of a request, the school may request sight of travel documentation and where no return travel arrangements have been made, the student maybe removed from the school roll on the last day of their attendance.

When a leave of absence is requested for siblings in different schools, parents should be aware that schools will liaise prior to a decision being made for any leave of absence requests.

Any requests for leave of absence that have not been agreed by the school, but are subsequently taken will put parents at risk of a Penalty Notice or prosecution.

In cases where a leave of absence request is declined the school will enter a "G" code in the register which denotes an unauthorised absence.

An offence occurs if a parent/carer fails to secure a child's regular attendance at the school at which they are a registered pupil, of compulsory school age and that absence is not authorised by the school.

The issuing of a Penalty Notice may be considered appropriate in the following circumstances:

- Pupils identified on more than one **external truancy sweep** in a public place in an academic year, without the absence being authorised by the school and the absence being parentally condoned or pupils returned to school by the Police, having been caught truanting. By definition, an external truancy sweep is held in a public place and carried out by a member of Hampshire Constabulary and a Local Authority Officer. The school must ensure that the parents/carers are fully notified regarding the exclusion
- Failure by a parent to ensure the child is not in a public place whilst being excluded from school on more than one occasion.
- **Unauthorised Absence of 10 or more sessions (5 school days) a singular or combination of the following codes O, U and G during any 80 possible school sessions (8 school weeks).** These do not need to be consecutive days. Southampton City Council will review each penalty notice request but will use its discretion for each case.
- **Unauthorised Leave of Absence 10 or more consecutive school sessions (G code only) within the academic year.** In addition, where a parent with whom the pupil normally resides has not made a prior application for a leave of absence and there are no exceptional circumstances that warrant the granting of a leave of absence in those particular circumstances. A Penalty Notice will not be issued unless the unauthorised leave of absence is at least 10 sessions (5 school days) consecutively. The Council will ignore any half term school holiday and any end of term school holiday in the calculation of consecutiveness so that if the unauthorised absence occurs before and after a half term or end of term, this will be regarded as consecutive.
- **Late arrival**, after the close of registration, on **10 occasions or more during any 80 possible school sessions (8 school weeks).** School registers will be closed after the registration period in accordance with the School Attendance Policy. A "**U**" code will then be used which denotes an unauthorised absence.

12. Truancy

Pupils who truant will be placed on attendance report and a letter is sent home. Pupils will be required to make up the lost time and persistent truancy will result in the student being referred to the SASO.

The Police conduct truancy sweeps throughout the city. Pupils may be brought back to school and letters sent to parents. Those conducting the sweep may visit the pupil's home if they are absent without explanation.

Pupils identified on truancy sweeps, or returned to school by the Police having been caught truanting, place their parent(s) at risk of a Penalty Notice being issued.

In cases where a parent has contacted the school and reported their child to be absent due to sickness and the absence has been authorised, but the pupil is subsequently identified on a truancy sweep, or, the pupil is returned to school by the Police, the school reserve the right to de-authorise the absence. This would then place parents at risk of a Penalty Notice being issued or legal proceedings being instigated, as the absence would be unauthorised.

If a parent has phoned their child in absent due to sickness, the parent is responsible that their child will remain at home during school hours, unless visiting the Doctor's surgery.

13. SASO Referrals

Schools work closely with the SASO to support pupils whose attendance is causing concern. This includes the reintegration into school of pupils with long term absence. The SASO may instigate home visits and, therefore, will be able to assess a non-attender's problems in the wider family context, offering advice and solutions where possible.

14. School Attendance Policy

This policy is monitored as a matter of course by those responsible for its day-to-day operation and is reviewed periodically.

15. Criteria for Success

- Attendance rate increases
- Authorised absence rate decreases
- Unauthorised absence rate decreases
- Improvement in individuals' attendance
- The profile of good attendance within the school community

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| Date written: | March 2012, Hazel Hayter, Lara Jordan and Lyn Zammit |
| Date ratified | June 2013, Hamwic Education Trust Board |
| Reviewed: | October 2016, Emma Fay/Lyn Zammit |
| Reviewed: | September 2017, Emma Fay/Lyn Zammit |
| Reviewed: | December 2020, Lyn Zammit/Claire Shaw |

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| SHIRLEY INFANT & JUNIOR SCHOOL | |
| Attendance Officer | Richard Lomath |
| Senior Lead responsible for Attendance | Cate Gregory/Annette Hixon |
| Registration begins | 8:55am |
| Present mark given until | 9:00am |
| Late mark given between | 9:00am and 9:20am |
| U code, un-authorised absence, applied after | 9:20am |