

Testwood School Attendance Policy



Key Responsibility area:	DM
Last Review:	February 2017
Next Review:	February 2018

A) National Guidance

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:

- 1) admissions
- 2) anti-bullying
- 3) child protection
- 4) exclusion
- 5) safeguarding
- 6) special educational needs
- 7) Teaching & Learning
- 8) Behaviour & Rewards

The level of attendance & 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.

It is very important therefore that you make sure that 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 school website.

B) Rationale:

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/ students 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 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.

C) Good attendance is important because:

- 1) Statistics show a direct link between under-achievement and absence below 95%
- 2) Regular attenders make better progress, both socially and academically
- 3) Regular attenders find school routines, school work and friendships easier to cope with
- 4) Regular attenders find learning more satisfying
- 5) Regular attenders are more successful in transferring between primary school, secondary school, and higher education, employment or training

D) Attendance Procedures

1. A register of pupils will be taken by a member of staff at the start of morning registration, within approximately the first five minutes of the registration period. Individual subject teachers will then electronically register each pupil in each lesson to be completed within the first 15 minutes of each lesson. Lesson 4 registers serve as our pm attendance data. Any unexplained absence will be reported by teachers/Progress Leaders and actioned accordingly.
2. All pupils must have a mark registered for every session. Latecomers must report to the school office for their attendance to be recorded if they are ten minutes or later in school from the beginning of registration.
3. Pupils arriving after the closure of registers with no authorized reason for this (which is normally 30 minutes after the start of school) will be officially marked absent, although their presence in school will be recorded.
4. Lateness will be tracked and persistent lateness sanctioned.
5. Parents and carers must contact the school on the first day of an absence indicating the likely period of non-attendance and the reason.
6. When a pupil has been absent for three days without an explanation, the parent will be contacted (by phone if possible).
7. Where a pupil is known to have attendance problems, the contact will be made at the beginning of the absence (first day call), rather than waiting 3 days.
8. All pupil absences should be confirmed by parent or carer. This can be by a telephone call to the office which will be noted, a note in the planner or a dated written note on the pupil's return, and the notes must go to a tutor. If a pupil returns without a note, the tutor will communicate this via the pupil planner. The tutor is to inform the Year Leader if notes are not forthcoming.
9. Attendance will be monitored regularly by tutors and Progress Leaders and parents/carers will be contacted where attendance is unsatisfactory or the pupil's non-attendance has not been satisfactorily explained.
10. 100% attendance will be celebrated by rewards arranged by Progress Leaders and promoted at curriculum evenings.
11. Persistent non-attendance or lateness and unsatisfactory explanations of absences will be referred to the Attendance Litigation Panel, typically at 90% attendance or below. Progress Leaders will meet with the Attendance Manager fortnightly to monitor and update the caseload. The Pastoral Support Worker and will work with these pupils and their parents/carers to improve their engagement with school life. Accurate records are kept regarding attendance, ensuring that the letters and meetings if concerns arise can take place in an evidence based, timely way.
12. Attendance will be reported to parents and carers in every progress check and profile, percentages related to academic progress.

13. Pupils who are persistent absentees (PA – 10% or more school sessions across the school year for any absence) will be closely monitored by tutors, Progress Leaders and SLT, ensuring the right support and meetings are in place and recorded.

14. SLT will report to Governors regularly on attendance targets and successes.

15. If a parent or carer needs to request a leave of absence during term time for exceptional circumstances, they should complete a request form available from reception and return to the headteacher.

16. In the event of a fire or other evacuations, the support staff member with oversight of attendance will provide paper registers for use in the evacuation. S/he will maintain the signing out book, of which pupils will be made regularly aware as essential when leaving site for any reason, and this will be checked against paper registers if the electronic data cannot be accessed in an evacuation.

E) Promoting Good Attendance and Punctuality

1. Promoting Good Attendance

The foundation for good attendance is a strong partnership between the school, parents and the child. The Home/School agreement will contain details of how we will work with parents and our expectations of what parents will need to do to ensure their child achieves good attendance.

To help us all to focus on this we will:

- I. Provide information on all matters related to attendance in our regular school newsletter, through the termly Testwood Review and through our website
- II. Report to you on your child is performing in school, what their attendance and punctuality rate is and how this relates to their attainments;
- III. Celebrate good attendance by displaying individual and class achievements;
- IV. Reward good or improving attendance through class competitions, certificates and outings/events.
- V. Set targets for the school and for classes for attendance and display these in the school.
- VI. Run events when parents, pupils and staff can work together on raising attendance levels across the school

2. Roles and Responsibilities:

2a) Responsibilities of the School's Attendance Leader

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. 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 parent/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.**

2b) Responsibilities of Classroom Staff:

- I. Ensure that all students are registered accurately
- II. Promote & reward good attendance at all appropriate opportunities.
- III. Liaise with the Attendance Leader on matters of attendance and punctuality and
- IV. Communicate any concerns or underlying problems that may account for a child's absence.

2c) Responsibilities of Students:

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

2d) Responsibilities of Parents and Carers:

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

Parents will:

- I. Inform the school on the first day of absence.
- II. Discuss with the tutor/class teacher any planned absences well in advance.
- III. Support the school with their child in aiming for 100% attendance each year.
- IV. Make sure that any absence is clearly accounted for by phone or text on the first and subsequent days of absence, or by letter if a phone is unavailable.
- V. Avoid taking their child out of school for non-urgent medical or dental appointments.
- VI. Only request for leave of absence if it is for an exceptional circumstance.

F) Recording Attendance

Legally the register must be marked twice daily. This is once at the start of the school day 8.30am and again for the afternoon session at 12:10pm.

G) Lateness/ Punctuality

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 are 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 can be embarrassing leading to possible further absence.

- I. The school day begins at 8:30am and all **pupils are expected to be in school at this time.**
- II. All lateness is recorded daily. This information will be required by the courts, should a prosecution for non-attendance or lateness be necessary.
- III. Arrival after the close of registration will be marked as unauthorised absence code 'U' in line with county and Department for Education (DfE) guidance. This mark shows them to be on site, but is legally recorded as an absence.
- IV. If a pupil is late due to a medical appointment, they will receive an authorised absence coded 'M'. Please be advised that where possible doctor's and dentist's appointments are to be made outside of school hours or during school holidays.

Pupils who are consistently late are disrupting not only their own education but also that of the other pupils. On-going and repeated lateness is considered as **unauthorised absence and will be subject to legal action.**

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 or the Hampshire County Council will be required to issue parents with a penalty notice in accordance with Hampshire's Code of Conduct for issuing penalty notices for non-attendance.

H) First Day Absence

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

If your child is absent you must:

- I. Contact us as soon as possible on the first day of absence;
- II. Send a note in on the first day they return with an explanation of the absence – you must do this even if you have already telephoned us;

Or, you can call into school and report to reception.

If your child is absent we will:

- I. Telephone you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you; This is because we have a duty to ensure your child's safety as well as their regular school attendance
- II. Invite you in to discuss the situation with our Pastoral Leaders and/ or Assistant Headteacher if absences persist;
- III. Refer the matter to the Hampshire's Attendance Legal Panels if absence is unauthorised and falls below 90%.

Please Note: If your child is not seen and contact has not been established with you any of the named parent/carers after three days of absence the school is required to start a child missing in education procedures as set down by Hampshire County Council Guidance. We will make all reasonable enquires to establish contact with parents and the child including making enquires to known friends, wider family (if schools have employed staff who would visit the family home to try establish contact such as a Home School Link worker this should be added as an action here.)

I) Ten Days Absence

We have a legal duty to report the absence of any pupils who is absent without an explanation for 10 consecutive days. 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 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.

J) Continued or Ongoing Absence

If your child misses 10% (3 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 absence and their attendance level is falling towards 90% we will contact you and depending on the reasons for the absence will inform the Attendance Litigation Panel.

K) Request for Leave of Absence

Amendments to school attendance regulations were updated and enforced from September 2013: **(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 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 our Reception 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 down in Hampshire's Code of Conduct parent/carers will be issued with a fixed-penalty fine, or other legal action in accordance the code.

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.

L) Understanding 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:

- I. 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.
- II. 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:

- a) parents giving their children permission to be off school unnecessarily such as for shopping, birthdays, to look after siblings
- b) truancy before or during the school day
- c) 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.

M) Penalty Notices for Non Attendance and other Legal Measures:

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.

N) Legal Measures for tackling persistent absence or lateness

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

- 1. The child or family do not require the support from any agency to improve the attendance
- 2. 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:

- I. Parenting contracts set at Education Planning Meetings
- II. Parenting orders
- III. Penalty notices
- IV. Education Supervision Orders
- V. Prosecution

O) 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/carer's 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-for-parents/possible-penalties.htm>

Schools or Hampshire Local Authority will issue a Penalty Notice for any unauthorised absence where the pupil has been:

- a) absent for 10 or more half-day sessions (five school days) of unauthorised absence during any 100 possible school sessions – these do not need to be consecutive
- b) persistently late (coded U) for up to 10 sessions (five days) after the register has closed
- c) persistently late before the close of the register (coded L), but the school has met with parents and has clearly communicated that they will categorise as unauthorised any further lateness (code O), and where the threshold of 10 sessions (five days) has been met
- d) absent for any public examinations of which dates are published in advance
- e) absent for any formal school assessments, tests or examinations where the dates have been published in advance unless the issuing of a Penalty Notice would conflict with other intervention strategies in place or other sanctions already being processed.

If a child's unauthorised absence meets any of the above criteria and the family or child do not require any agency support to improve the attendance then a single Penalty Notice is issued for either:

1. 10 sessions of unauthorised absence or lateness in any 10 week school period
2. 1 or more sessions of unauthorised absence during a public exam, formal school assessment or testing where dates are published in advance.

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. 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 PN for each child to each parent

Each penalty notice carries a fine of £60 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 £120 if paid within 28 days. If the fine remains unpaid the Hampshire County Council will consider prosecution for the non-attendance. 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.

For further information parents/carers can request a leaflet from their school and should visit Hampshire County Councils website at: <http://www3.hants.gov.uk/education/hias/learning-behaviour-attendance/attendance-guidance-for-parents/possible-penalties.htm>

P) Leavers

If your child is leaving our school other than when leaving at the end of Year 11 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
2. 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.

Q) Absence through child participation in child performances

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 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. Any absence recorded as part of a child's participation in a public performance is recorded as C an authorised absence.

R) 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 a regional, county, national and international events and competitions. It is however, down to the headteachers 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 are also at the discretion of the Headteacher and are not likely to be approved if it is a regular event, unless the sports club or association are providing an education tutor as part of their coaching.

S) Gypsy Roma Traveller Showman 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.

T) Study Leave

We believe that students' needs are best met if they attend school every day in the period leading up to examinations. No study leave will be granted during this period, therefore, and pupils / students will be expected to attend school in the usual way. Study leave will only be granted to Year 11 students during the time of the GCSE examination period. Should any students wish to attend school (or should their parents wish them to) on the days and at times when they are not sitting examinations, arrangements will be made for them to do so. The school will work within the legal requirements of:

- 1) study leave should only be granted to Year 11 pupils and never to those in other year groups;
- 2) it should never exceed 15 school days in a year and is most appropriately granted during the examination period itself, i.e. not before the beginning of that period;
- 3) it should always be granted sparingly taking account of an individual student's ability to manage and benefit from unsupervised study;
- 4) any pupil has the right to attend school during study leave and a parent has the right to insist he/she does so;
- 5) any sessions given to pupils as study leave has a statistical meaning of authorised absence (it is not an 'approved educational activity' as it is unsupervised) and should be recorded and reported on by the school as such.

U) Teenage Pregnancy

Support will be directed to keeping a pupil in school and wherever possible her return to full time education as soon as possible after the birth. A pupil who becomes pregnant should be allowed no more than 18 weeks authorised absence to cover the time immediately before and after the birth of the child. After that time, any absence should be treated as unauthorised.

V) Record preservation

School registers are legal documents. We will ensure compliance with attendance regulations by keeping attendance records for at least 3 years. Computer registers will be preserved as electronic back-ups or microfiche copies

This policy was approved by the Governing Body and will be reviewed annually.

Date Policy agreed: 08.02.17

Date of review: February 2018

Signature of Chair of Committee:

Date: 29.03.17

Signature of Chair of Governors:

Date: 29.03.17

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. W. Bushrod". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line extending to the right.