



Hemswell Cliff Primary School

Attendance Policy

<u>Policy Information</u>			
Status:	Statutory	Reviewed by:	Full Governors
Cycle of Review:	Annual	Policy Ratified:	September 2022
Signed as accepted:			

Purpose of this Policy

Good attendance at school is essential for children to enjoy learning, experience success, develop confidence and enable them to become lifelong learners who are prepared for life in the modern world. Learning early that attendance is the key to success enables them to access the broader curriculum, develop ownership of their learning and create a sense of aspiration for what life has to offer. *The greater the attendance, the greater the achievement.*

What does the law say?

The Education Act 1996 requires parents and carers to ensure their child receives efficient fulltime education, suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and any special needs they may have by regular attendance at school.

You should know that:

- All absence figures have to be reported to the Local Authority, Department for Education and the Governing Body.
- It is the responsibility of the parents, guardians or carers to be fully aware of the school's Attendance Policy.
- It is the responsibility of the parents, guardians or carers to manage their child's attendance in line with this policy.
- It is the responsibility of the parents, guardians or carers to inform the school of absence/lateness by 9.30am no later.
- Absence can have a huge impact on the confidence, self-esteem and friendship groups for child that can have long-term consequences.
- Everyone wants the best for their child, so why would you not support your child by ensuring that they are in School for the full entitlement of 190 days per year.
- This policy adheres to the Fixed Penalty Notices Code of Conduct (January 2014)

Processes and Procedures

The School Officer will monitor attendance weekly for patterns and trends.

Warnings, notifications, and fines will be administered on any retrospective period up to 18 weeks.

100% Attendance for the Year will be rewarded at the end of the Summer Term.

Lateness will be recorded in a separate record that will note the reason, date, time, and any other important information as recommended in the Lincolnshire Administration Handbook.

All attendance will be recorded on the School information management system.

Governing Body: Full Governors

Review Date: Annual

Each academic year all parents will be sent by post a named copy of the letter as in appendix 1.

As a School, we aim for 97% attendance and above for all pupils in the school. If a child's absence drops below 95% the situation will be monitored. If attendance dips below 90%, the child is considered as a persistent absentee and action by the School will commence

Penalty Notices

If a child has unauthorised absence recorded, it may lead to the issuing of a penalty notice and legal action being taken.

Section 23(1) Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2007:

- Penalty notices may be issued per parent, per child, who has unauthorised absence from school. The amount of the penalty is £60.
- If this is not paid within 21 days the amount rises to £120.
- If not paid within 28 days the Local Authority will prosecute under section 444(1) unless it comes to our attention that the penalty notice had been issued in error.

Section 444(1) Education Act 1996:

- "If you are the parent of a child of compulsory school age who fails to attend school regularly, you are guilty of an offence."
- The court can fine each parent up to £1,000 per child, order payment of the prosecution costs and/or make a Parenting Order.

Please note that:

Penalties and prosecutions are in respect of each parent for each child.

Parent includes any person who is not a parent of the child but who has parental responsibility for the child (and applies whether or not that person lives with the child) or who has care of him/her.

These prosecutions are criminal proceedings and could result in you having a criminal record.

Absence

All absences are classed unauthorised until a satisfactory reason for the absence is given; however, it is the school's responsibility and final decision to authorise any absence.

Satisfactory reasons for absence are:

- Observance of a recognised religious festival with a maximum of 2 days.
- Illness – children should be absent following recommended time scales as set by Department for Health/NHS/Health Protection Agency. If it is a mild illness (e.g. headache, stomach ache, etc) the pupil should still attend, parents should inform the class teacher and if the condition worsens, parents will be contacted to collect their child.
- The school reserves the right to request medical proof of illness such as Medical Certificate or ask parents to complete a MED3 form so that records can be requested from the General Practitioner.
- All appointments should be out of school time. If they are not, evidenced will need to be provided at the school office e.g. appointment card, letter, prescription, etc. Children should attend school before and after appointments where appropriate.

Lateness

School opens at 8.45, Registers open at 8.50am and close at 9.30am for morning sessions. However, children should be in school by 8.55am, when the children's entrance is locked. Registers open at 1.15pm until 1.45pm for afternoon sessions.

If your child arrives after the registers have closed they will be recorded as being late and it will be classed as unauthorised absence – a late slip will be issued see appendix 2.

Action the School will take:

- *5 lates/unauthorised in six weeks – a warning letter will be sent out*
- *10 lates/unauthorised in twelve weeks – Parents/carers will be called to an Attendance review meeting where supporting strategies will be offered e.g. Early Help Assessment, Learning Mentor Support, Attendance/Punctuality Contract and/or appropriate to the situation and context of each family and child*
- *15 lates/unauthorised in 18 weeks – a fixed penalty notice may be requested to be sent to parents by Lincolnshire County Council*

Persistent Absence

Persistent absence has a huge impact on learners, their potential and their success in School. Therefore, it is unacceptable.

Action the School will take:

- *4.5 days persistently absent in six weeks – a warning letter will be sent out*
- *9 days persistently absent in twelve weeks – Parents/carers will be called to an Attendance review meeting where supporting strategies will be offered e.g. Early Help Assessment, Learning Mentor Support, Attendance/Punctuality Contract and/or appropriate to the situation and context of each family and child*
- *13.5 days persistently absent in 18 weeks – a fixed penalty notice may be requested to be sent to parents by Lincolnshire County Council*

Leave of Absence (Holidays in term time)

You must apply in writing to the Headteacher at least four weeks in advance explaining:

- Date and number of days requested
- The nature of the absence
- What is the purpose of the holiday
- Why it cannot be taken in the school holidays

No leave of absence will be approved for assessment weeks throughout the school.

The Headteacher can only grant five days leave in an academic year, where the circumstances are exceptional, for example:

- Death of grandparent, parent or sibling;
- Life threatening or critical illness of grandparent, parent or sibling.

Weddings and funerals are at the discretion of the Headteacher.

Unless authorised, all other absence will be deemed as unauthorised and will trigger the same process as Persistent Absence.

Action the School will take:

- *4.5 days unauthorised absence in six weeks – a warning letter will be sent out*
- *9 days unauthorised absence in twelve weeks – Parents/carers will be called to an Attendance review meeting where supporting strategies will be offered e.g. Early Help Assessment, Learning Mentor Support, Attendance/Punctuality Contract and/or appropriate to the situation and context of each family and child*
- *13.5 days unauthorised absence in 18 weeks – a fixed penalty notice may be requested to be sent to parents by Lincolnshire County Council*

Honesty

Please be aware that any children who are absent because they are ill, but then tell friends or staff that they were on holiday, will have a witness statement taken and submitted as evidence. The absence will then be treated as unauthorised absence and the possibility of a fine is still likely. It is also important to consider the message this is sending to children; seeing responsible adults 'bending' the truth and does not provide an appropriate role model.

Emotionally Based School Avoidance

Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA) is a term used to describe children who experience challenges in attending school due to negative feelings (such as anxiety). EBSA is commonly associated with emotional and physical distress, and a reluctance to attend school, which can lead to reduced attendance and further anxiety regarding school.

At Hemswell Cliff, we use the term 'avoidance' rather than 'refusal'. 'Avoid' means "keep away from or stop yourself from doing something" whereas 'Refuse' means you are unable to give or accept something offered or requested (Waite, 2012). We use this term as some children are frequently looking to avoid something by not attending school (e.g. anxiety), rather than refusing to attend due to being defiant or unwilling.

At Hemswell Cliff, we take a preventative role around EBSA through adopting whole school practices that promote wellbeing and positive mental health in our children.

All staff are aware of the importance of early intervention and of the strengths-based approaches needed to gain a full understanding of the reasons for the pupil's absence or behaviour and the range of interventions that can be used to support them.

Where necessary, school will use the ATTEND framework to support children and families. This is an assessment tool that will enable the SENDCO and attendance lead to work with families to formulate a robust graduated approach to a growing area of need, that has been further exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic. Interventions may be needed at the level of the child, the family, peer and school and wider context.

Appendices to this policy:

1. Warning letter for all parents to be sent yearly of risk of FPN
2. Late slip to be sent for unauthorised absence i.e. after 9.30am
3. Leave of Absence approval due to exceptional circumstances
4. Leave of Absence declined due to no exceptional circumstances
5. Persistent Lateness/absence fine
6. Attendance/Punctuality Contract
7. Invite for attendance review

Appendix 1

Important attendance warning notice to all parents / carers

From 1st September 2022 a Fixed Penalty Notice may be issued for any pupil who has an unacceptable level of unauthorised absence and / or unauthorised holiday during term time.

As a whole school community, we are committed to providing an education of the highest quality for all our pupils. Research shows that high attainment requires good attendance.

Recently, there has been a substantial increase in families taking their children out of school, for holidays during term time.

We have also been made aware that some parents have advised the school that their child is poorly, whilst they are in fact away on holiday – we do encourage and appreciate honesty, and we may challenge parents if we have reason to believe a child is on holiday.

Amendments (2013) to previous regulations (2006) removed references to family holidays and extended leave. Holidays during term time are not generally allowed and, in each case, there must be a written application made to the headteacher. The regulations also make it clear that parents do not have any right or entitlement to take a child out of school for the purposes of a term time holiday.

The amendments also make it clear that head teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are ***exceptional circumstances***.

Requesting the Local Authority to issue a Fixed Penalty Notice is a strategy used by schools to address issues around attendance of children attending their school under the following legal framework:

- **Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 places upon parents a duty to ensure that their child receives efficient full-time education either by regular attendance at school or otherwise**
- **In cases where this duty is not being fulfilled Section 444B of the same Act empowers the Local Authority to issue a Fixed Penalty of either £60.00 or if this is not paid with 21 days, the amount rises to £120.00**
- **if not paid within 28 days, the Local Authority may prosecute under section 444(1)**

As a governing body, we understand the pressures put on all families at this time but can no longer allow such levels of absence to continue, unchallenged.

Please be advised that in line with central and local government, we are encouraging the school to issue Fixed Penalty Notices, for holidays during term time, that are **not** deemed ***exceptional circumstances***.

Medical, Dental and Hospital Appointments

Where possible, we encourage these appointments to take place out of school time, in order not to disrupt the child's education; every effort should be made to arrange medical appointments outside school hours. Whilst we appreciate that medical appointments are unavoidable and the times not always flexible, such absences usually only take up part of a day so children, for example, could be brought into school for morning registration and return to school following the

appointment. School should be informed of such absences in writing in advance, and we also require proof i.e. copy of appointment letter / text message reminder.

Absence due to illness

Where a pupil is absent due to sickness and is genuinely unable to attend school, then the school, after being informed, may authorise a child's absence.

It is important to keep the school office informed if your child is going to be absent at the start of the day. Schools will monitor and engage with parents as soon as a pattern of absence becomes apparent. If your child is frequently absent due to illness the school may request permission to contact your GP for confirmation that they are too ill to attend school. Any absence where no reason has been provided will automatically be recorded as unauthorised.

The decision to authorise an absence can only be taken by the headteacher, or the person designated by the headteacher to take this decision (The Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 1995 as amended). If the school decides that the reason given is not valid and your child does not attend school, the absence will be unauthorised.

Where a child has high levels of unauthorised absence further legal action by the local authority could be considered. This letter should be considered as a formal legal warning that school may request a Fixed Penalty Notice is issued if the unauthorised absence % meets the criteria as set out under Lincolnshire County Council FPN Code of Conduct and in line with DFE guidance.

If you require any further information regarding this, please do not hesitate to contact the school's Full Governing Body, via the school office.

Yours faithfully

Full Governing Body

Please see below from the government: <https://www.gov.uk/school-attendance-absence>

Our Attendance Policy can be found on the school website

Appendix 2

Late Slip

To be on Headed Paper of the School

Date

Address

Dear (Parents or Carers),

Your child arrived late today at _____ on _____.

Regularly arriving late has a huge impact on your child, the staff and other children trying to learn. Should this be recorded for 10 sessions, you will be invited to attend an attendance review meeting to see how this can be improved. However, I should point out, should the situation not improve and 15 sessions be recorded you are likely to receive a fixed penalty notice from Lincolnshire County Council.

Yours Sincerely,

Headteacher

Appendix 3

Leave of Absence Request Approval

To be on Headed Paper of the School

Date

Address

Dear (Parent/Carer),

Re: Application for Leave of Absence for: _____

Thank you for your application for leave, which has been approved. The dates you asked for are as follows: _____ to _____.

Your child must return to school on: _____.

On this occasion, your request for leave has been approved as your child's attendance is ____%, which is above the required 97%, and the circumstances for the leave are considered to be very exceptional. Please note however, that if your child does not return on the agreed date, any absence after this time will be recorded as unauthorised and a penalty notice will be issued. Your child may be removed from the school roll and will have to reapply for a school place. It is very important that your child attends regularly on return so that they do not fall further behind with their work.

Thank you for your continued efforts to maintain good attendance for your child.

Yours Sincerely,

Headteacher

Appendix 4

Leave of Absence declined

To be on Headed Paper of the School

Date

Address

Dear (Parent/Carer),

Re: Application for Leave of Absence for: _____

Thank you for your application for leave for the following dates: _____
to _____

Unfortunately, on this occasion your request has been refused as (*insert reason*)

Parents/carers have a legal duty to ensure the regular and full time attendance at school of registered pupils (Education Act 1996). If you decide to take your child regardless of this decision the absence will be unauthorised. Any unauthorised absence has to be reported to the Local Authority and the Education Welfare Service may be asked to call at your home to discuss matters further.

The Local Authority and the School Policy is very clear that a penalty notice will be issued per parent per child for absence due to unauthorised leave.

Yours Sincerely,

Headteacher

Appendix 5

Persistent Lateness

To be on Headed Paper of the School

Date

Address

Dear (Parent/Carer),

As a result of your child's unauthorised absence, marked with the code 'U' on the registration certificate enclosed, we have started the process of a penalty notice, as outlined in the Local Authority and the School Attendance Policy.

This is a fine of at least £60 per parent per child. There is also a risk that [*insert child's name*] may be removed from the school roll and will have to reapply for a school place. It is very important that your child attends regularly on return so that they do not fall further behind with their work.

Yours Sincerely,

Headteacher

Appendix 6

Attendance and Punctuality Contract

We recognise the good work that our families do to get their children to school on time, every day. Children get certificates and rewards and parents are informed through general newsletters and personal letters in the post.

However, as a result of circumstances beyond their control, it would be impossible for some children to achieve 100% attendance throughout their school life.

In the main, these circumstances relate to acute, diagnosed medical conditions. This contract will support the child to get recognition of good attendance and prevent inappropriate investigation or communication. We ask parents to sign this agreement and adhere to it.

Name of child:

Medical condition:

Doctor/clinic involved:

As the parent/carer of: I will:

- Make every effort to make appointments out of school times and if not attend school before or after these appointments;
- Let school know of appointments and hospital stays well in advance;
- Provide medical documentation of these appointments, etc.;
- Sign the appropriate forms to allow school professionals to medicate in school time;
- Ensure that medical professionals contact school with information / communication, especially hospital school;
- Attend hospital school or ask school for a work pack to be sent home for an absence longer than three days is anticipated;
- Negotiate with school a part time timetable should a full day of school be inappropriate;
- Continue to send my child to school on time, every day for the rest of their school time.

Signed..... Date.....

The school will:

- Complete registers with the appropriate codes:
 - **M** medical appointment
 - **I** illness
 - **B** educated off site (if at hospital school)
 - **C** other authorised circumstances
- Analyse data with this information in mind, when calculating percentage attendance and organising rewards, letters, etc.
- Inform the school nurse of this contract and offer further support for you and your child;
- Arrange work packs for children to complete whilst absent due to their medical condition.

Signed..... Date.....

The child will:

- Come to school every day, on time;
- Complete work set by school or at the hospital school;
- Be aware of their medical conditions and tell school adults their needs.

Signed..... Date.....

Appendix 7

Invite for Attendance Review meeting

To be on Headed Paper of the school

Date

Address

Dear (Parent/Carer),

I am writing to you to make you aware of your child, [*insert name*], attendance percentage. In a recent review of registers, the overall rate of attendance has fallen below 95% and is falling close to 90%, it is at this point further investigation and monitoring begins.

This is due to:

- Persistent lateness
- Persistent absence
- Unauthorised absence

We recognise that there are very genuine reasons for these absences and we thank all parents who tell us why their children are away or late for school. However, even with this information, we have to enforce the school's policy which is available on our website.

The Governing Body and Local Authority oversee our Attendance Policy that aims to increase the percentage attendance, in particular for children with less than 90% attendance.

Therefore, I would like you to attend an attendance review meeting;

On: _____

At: _____

Please continue to make every effort to get your child to school on time, every day. If you are concerned about attendance or need any advice/support please contact me at school on the above number.

Yours Sincerely,

Headteacher