



Attendance Policy

Date Adopted:	September 2024
Next Review Date:	October 2025
Signature of Chair of Governors:	
Signature of Headteacher:	

This policy is based on the recommendations of the guidance “Working together to improve school attendance” September 2024 and the “Summary table of responsibilities for school attendance” August 2024.

Please read this policy alongside the following policies:

- Safeguarding policy
- SEN policy
- Behaviour policy



Introduction

Securing good attendance is not seen in isolation. Attendance interacts closely with curriculum, positive behaviour, bullying prevention, safeguarding, special educational needs and disabilities, medical needs support, mental health and wellbeing and effective use of resources. Hollingbourne Primary's foundation for securing good attendance is that school is a calm, orderly, safe and supportive environment where all pupils want to be and are keen and ready to learn.

Hollingbourne Primary promotes the benefits of good attendance for all pupils. It sets and expects high standards of attendance for every pupil, communicates those expectations both clearly and consistently to pupils and parents/carers and systematically analyses their data to identify patterns to target their improvement efforts. We are committed to working together with children and parents to promote 100% attendance wherever possible.

For some pupils the barriers to accessing education are wide and complex, both within and beyond the school gates, and are often specific to individual pupils and families. Some pupils find it harder than others to attend school and therefore at all stages of improving attendance, we will work with pupils and parents/carers to remove any barriers to attendance by building strong and trusting relationships and working together to put the right support in place.

Improving and supporting attendance is the responsibility of everyone in school. We believe that good attendance is essential for pupils to get the most out of their school experience, including their attainment, wellbeing, and wider life chances

Our attendance aims

We will ensure:

- We have a culture of good attendance which is underpinned by our school values
- A named governor is responsible for attendance
- Visible leaders who are ambitious and relentless in ensuring good attendance
- We prioritise attendance and punctuality
- An improved overall percentage of pupils at school
- Our registers and attendance data is accurate.
- There is a framework which sets out agreed roles and responsibilities and promotes consistency in carrying out designated tasks
- A first day response as part of our robust daily response to absence
- There is a senior leader who is responsible for attendance
- Attendance data is shared with governors
- Work takes place where necessary with families to address reasons for absence including in school barriers
- Processes for engagement with the Attendance Services are in place
- Engagement with multi agency professionals, early help assessment, special educational needs professionals
- Children's social care are involved where there are safeguarding concerns and built support into attendance planning.

More broadly, we aim to work with families and local partners to:

Expect

Aspire to high standards of attendance from all pupils and parents and build a culture where all can, and want to, be in school and ready to learn by prioritising attendance improvement across the school.

Monitor

Rigorously use attendance data to identify patterns of poor attendance / punctuality (at individual and cohort level) as soon as possible so all parties can work together to resolve them before they become entrenched.

Listen and understand

When a pattern is spotted, discuss with pupils and parents to listen to and understand barriers to attendance and agree how all partners can work together to resolve them.

Facilitate support

Remove barriers in school and help pupils and parents to access the support they need to overcome the barriers outside of school. This might include an early help or whole family plan where absence is a symptom of wider issues.

Formalise support

Where absence persists and voluntary support is not working or not being engaged with, partners should work together to explain the consequences clearly and ensure support is also in place to enable families to respond. Depending on the circumstances this may include formalising support through an attendance contract or education supervision order.

Enforce

Where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or not being engaged with, enforce attendance through statutory intervention: a penalty notice in line with the National Framework or prosecution to protect the pupil's right to an education

Expected attendance and legalities

The law entitles every child of compulsory school age to a full time education, suitable to their age, aptitude and any special educational need they may have. It is the legal responsibility of every parent to make sure their child receives that education either by attendance at a school or by education otherwise that at a school.

Where parents decide to have their child registered at school, they have an additional legal duty to ensure their child attends that school regularly. This means their child must attend every day that the school is open, except in a small number of allowable circumstances such as being too ill to attend or being given permission for an absence in advance from the school.

Parents may be recognised differently under education law, than under family law. Section 576 of the Education Act 1996 states that a 'parent', in relation to a child or young person, includes any person who is not a parent (from which can be inferred 'biological parent') but who has parental responsibility, or who has care of the child.



A person typically has care of a child or young person if they are the person with whom the child lives, either full or part time and who looks after the child, irrespective of what their biological or legal relationship is with the child.

There are 175 non school days in a year. In this time, we expect families to have family time, make visits, go on holidays, do shopping, complete household jobs, attend non urgent appointments. None of these should take place in school time.

Our expectation is 100% attendance. It is a central part of our school's vision, values, ethos, and day to day life. We recognise the connections between attendance, attainment, safeguarding and wellbeing.

Promoting good attendance

We aim to build strong relationships with families, listen to and understand barriers to attendance and work with families to remove them. They will be provided with support, advice and guidance where required. We will establish an effective and efficient system of communication with pupils, parents/carers and appropriate agencies to provide mutual information, advice and support. We are committed to working together with children and parents to promote 100% attendance wherever possible.

We visibly demonstrate the benefits of good attendance throughout school life. This may include in displays, assemblies or through curriculum content. This will be done sensitively and without discrimination and may also include praising and rewarding improvements in attendance at whole school, key stage, year group, class and individual level. Praise and rewards systems can be found in the protocols.

When a pupil has not attended school for a significant period, we will recognise the needs of the individual pupil and carefully plan re-integration.

Understanding Types of Absence

Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any pupil's absence or late arrival disrupts teaching routines and so may affect the learning of others in the same class. Ensuring a child's regular attendance at school is a parental responsibility and allowing absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

Every half-day absence from school must be classified by the school (not by the parent), as either authorised or unauthorised. Therefore, information about the cause of any absence is always required. Each half-day is known as a 'session'.

Authorised absences are morning or afternoon sessions away from school for a genuine reason such as illness (although you may be asked to provide medical evidence for your child before this can be authorised), medical or dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies, or other unavoidable cause.



Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no 'leave' has been granted. This type of absence can lead to the school referring to the Local Authority for penalty notices and/or legal proceedings. It is the headteacher not the parent, who can authorise the absence.

Unauthorised absence can include:

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily e.g., because they had a late night or for noninfectious illness or injury that would not affect their ability to learn
- Absences which have never been properly explained children who arrive at school after the close of registration are marked using a 'U'. This indicates that they are in school for safeguarding purposes, however, is counted as an absence for the session
- Shopping trips
- Looking after other children or children accompanying siblings or parents to medical appointments
- Their own or family birthdays holidays taken during term time
- Day trips
- Illness of a parent or sibling
- Visits to family abroad
- Surprise trips or trips booked without knowledge

However, this list is not exhaustive

Persistent Absenteeism (PA)

A pupil is defined by the Government as a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year for any reason; this can be authorised or unauthorised absence.

Severe absence occurs when a child misses 50% or more of school sessions. Absence at these levels will cause considerable damage to any pupil's education and we need the full support and co-operation of parents to resolve this. Parents of persistently and severely absent children will be expected to engage with the school and other professionals to remove barriers and improve attendance

Reporting absence

The Headteacher has overall responsibility for attendance in school. Responsibilities of the senior leader who has this responsibility include championing and improving attendance in school, offering a clear vision for attendance improvement, evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes, oversight of data analysis, and communicating messages to pupils and parents.

School requires first day contact for a child's absence. The procedures for when first day contact is not received are recorded in the attendance protocols.



All other absences will be marked as unauthorised unless prior arrangement has been agreed with the Headteacher.

With regards to unexpected absence during term time, parents and carers should:

- Call the school office by 8.45am for each day of absence to the school office 01622 880270. This should clearly state the name of child, child's class, the name of the person reporting the absence and the reason why the child is absent. If no one is available, a message should be left on the answer phone.
- Contact the school on every further day of absence, again before 8.45.
- Ensure that your child returns to school as soon as possible and you provide any medical evidence, if requested, to support the absence.
- If you know that your child will be absent / late on a certain day please let us know beforehand by email.

If your child is absent, we will:

- Telephone or text you on the first, and every subsequent day of absence, if we have not heard from you, however it is your responsibility to contact us.
- If we are unable to contact parents by telephone, we will telephone emergency contact numbers, send letters home and a home visit may be made in the interests of safeguarding.
- A referral will be made to Local Authority if no contact has been made with parents by the 10th day of absence (or sooner if deemed appropriate), at which point your child will be "missing from education."
- Continue to seek a reason for any absence. If we do not receive a reason within five working days despite numerous attempts to do so then it will be marked as an unauthorised absence.

If absence continues, we will:

- Write to you if your child's attendance or punctuality is a concern
- Invite you into school to discuss the situation with our Headteacher if absences persist
- Create a personalised attendance contract to address any barriers to attendance
- Offer signposting support to other agencies or services if appropriate
- Refer the matter to the Local Authority for relevant sanctions if attendance deteriorates following the above actions

Lateness

Poor punctuality is not acceptable and can contribute to further absence.

Good timekeeping is a vital life skill which will help children as they progress through their school life and out into the wider world.

The times of the start and close of the school day for all pupils at Hollingbourne Primary School are: Doors open: 8.40 am School day starts and registration: 8.45am Registration closes: 9.15 am Afternoon register: 1pm End of the school day: 3.15pm

How we manage lateness:

- The school day starts at 8.40am when children can begin to come into school
- Registers are taken at 8.45am and your child will receive a late mark 'L' if they are not in by that time
- Children arriving after 8.45am are required to come into school via the school office.
- Parents/carers must sign them into our 'Late Book' and provide a reason for their lateness which is recorded
- At 9.15am the registers will be closed. In accordance with the Regulations, if your child arrives after that time, they will receive a mark that shows them to be on site - 'U', but this will not count as a present mark, and it will mean they have an unauthorised absence

If your child has a persistent late record, you will be asked to meet with the headteacher, but you can approach us at any time if you are having difficulties getting your child to school on time.

We expect parents and staff to encourage good punctuality by being good role models to our children and celebrate good class and individual punctuality.

Being late for school has many negative consequences:

- Gets the day off to a bad start;
- Increases stress and upset for the child;
- Can lead to the child feeling embarrassed and singled out;
- Affects the child's overall confidence;
- Disrupts the learning of other class members;
- Creates bad habits which could lead to poor attendance;
- Confusion for your child as work or activities might have been started



Understanding barriers to attendance

Whilst any child may occasionally have time off school because they are too unwell to attend, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any barriers preventing regular attendance are best resolved between the school, the parents, and the child. If a parent thinks their child is reluctant to attend school, then we will work with that family to understand the root problem and provide any necessary support. We can use outside agencies to help with this, such as the school nurse, or we can complete a request for support. Where outside agencies are supporting the family, you may be invited to attend a meeting to consider what is working well and what needs to improve. An individualised attendance contract will be agreed and reviewed.

Some pupils may face greater barriers to attendance than their peers which leads to persistent and severe absence. These can include pupils who suffer from long-term physical and / or mental health conditions or who have special educational needs and disabilities, or other vulnerabilities. High expectations of attendance remain however, we will work with families and pupils to support improved attendance whilst being mindful of the additional barriers faced. We can discuss reasonable adjustments and additional support from external partners where appropriate.

Schools now have a duty to complete a sickness return to the local authority if a pupil is recorded in the attendance register as absent using code I (unable to attend because of sickness) and there are reasonable grounds to believe the pupil will have to miss 15 consecutive school days or more for illness or the pupil's total number of school days missed during the current school year because of illness (whether consecutive or cumulative) will reach or exceed 15 school days.

Local Authority attendance support services

Local Authority Attendance Specialists work strategically by offering support to schools, families, and other professionals to reduce persistent absence and improve overall attendance. Parents are expected to work with the school and local authority to address any attendance concerns.

Leave of Absence

All schools can grant a leave of absence when a pupil needs to be absent from school with permission. All schools are expected to restrict leaves of absence to the specific circumstances set out in regulation 11 of the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024.

These circumstances are:

- **Taking part in a regulated performance or employment abroad:** in line with a licence issued by a local authority or Justice of the Peace or a body of persons approval (BOPA).
- **Attending an interview:** for entry into another educational institution or for future employment where requested in advance by a parent the pupil normally lives with.

- **Study leave:** for public examinations, as agreed in advance with a parent the pupil normally lives with. Please note this does not include any internal examinations such as mocks as study leave should not be granted in such cases.
- **A temporary, time-limited part-time timetable:** where the pupil is of compulsory school age, both the parent who the pupil normally lives with and school agree the pupil should temporarily be educated on a part-time basis for exceptional reasons and have agreed the times and dates when the pupil will be expected to attend school as part of that timetable.
- **Exceptional circumstances:** All schools can grant a leave of absence for other exceptional circumstances at their discretion. In the case of schools maintained by local authorities and special schools not maintained by local authorities, it must be requested in advance by a parent who the pupil normally lives with. Schools are then expected to consider each application individually taking into account the specific facts and circumstances and relevant background context behind the request.

If a leave of absence is granted, it is for the school to determine the length of the time the pupil can be away from school.

Generally, the DfE does not consider a need or desire for a holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure and recreation to be an exceptional circumstance.

We will not consider applications for leave during term time:

- At any time in September. This is very important as your child needs to settle into their new class at the start of the academic year as quickly as possible.
- During formal assessment and test periods in the school's calendar affecting your child.
- If your child is already deemed a persistent absentee (ie with an attendance record below 90%)

Education Supervision Orders (ESO)

Where a voluntary early help plan, or formal attendance contract has not been successful, an Education Supervision Order (ESO) can be a useful alternative to provide formal legal intervention without criminal prosecution. ESOs are made through the Family or High Court, rather than Magistrates Court. They give the local authority a formal role in advising, helping and directing the pupil and parent(s) to ensure the pupil receives an efficient, full-time, suitable education. The order initially lasts for one year, but extensions can be secured within the last 3 months for a period of up to 3 years at a time. Where parents persistently fail to comply with the directions given under the ESO, they may be guilty of an offence. Local authorities can prosecute in the Magistrates Court for persistent non-compliance with the order and parents (upon conviction) will be liable to a fine of up to £1,000

Attendance Prosecution

If a child of compulsory school age fails to attend regularly at a school at which they are registered their parents may be guilty of an offence and can be prosecuted by the local authority.

Parenting Orders

Parenting orders are an order that can be imposed by the court following conviction for non-attendance alongside a fine and/or community order. Parents' agreement is not required before an order is made. They may be appropriate where the parent has not engaged in support to improve their child's attendance.

Penalty Notices

Penalty notices are issued to parents as an alternative to prosecution where they have failed to ensure that their child of compulsory school age regularly attends the school where they are registered. Penalty notices can be used where the pupil's absence has been recorded with one or more of the unauthorised codes and that absence(s) constitutes an offence. A penalty notice can be issued to each parent liable for the offence or offences.

Penalty notices must be issued in line with the Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007, as amended and can only be issued by a headteacher or someone authorised by them (e.g. an assistant headteacher), a local authority officer or the police.

The threshold is 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks. A school week means any week in which there is at least one school session. This can be met with any combination of unauthorised absence (e.g. 4 sessions of holiday taken in term time plus 6 sessions of arriving late after the register closes all within 10 school weeks). These sessions can be consecutive (e.g. 10 sessions of holiday in one week) or not (e.g. 6 sessions of unauthorised absence taken in 1 week and 1 per week for the next 4 weeks). The period of 10 school weeks can also span different terms or school years (e.g. 2 sessions of unauthorised absence in the Summer Term and a further 8 within the Autumn Term).

Only 2 penalty notices can be issued to the same parent in respect of the same child within a 3 year rolling period and any second notice within that period is charged at a higher rate:

- The first penalty notice issued to a parent in respect of a particular pupil will be charged at £160 if paid within 28 days. This will be reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days.
- A second penalty notice issued to the same parent in respect of the same pupil is charged at a flat rate of £160 if paid within 28 days.
- A third penalty notice cannot be issued to the same parent in respect of the same child within 3 years of the date of issue of the first. In a case where the national threshold is met for a third time (or subsequent times) within those 3 years, alternative action should be taken instead. This will often include considering prosecution, but may include other tools such as one of the other attendance legal interventions.

Every local authority has a Local Code of Conduct for issuing fixed penalty notices which must be adhered to by all schools. Please note that the recovery of penalty notice fines is managed by the Local Authority. The Local Authority retains monies recovered, **not** the school.



Notice to Improve

A Notice to Improve is a final opportunity for a parent to engage in support and improve attendance before a penalty notice is issued. If the national threshold has been met and support is appropriate but offers of support have not been engaged with by the parent or have not worked, a Notice to Improve should usually be sent to give parents a final chance to engage in support.

Deletion from Roll

For any pupil leaving Hollingbourne Primary School, other than at the end of Year 6, which is a standard transition point, parents/ carers are required to inform the school office in writing.

The parent /carer must provide the school with the following information: child's name, date of leaving, new home address (if applicable), name of new school, address of new school. This information is essential to ensure that we know the whereabouts and appropriately safeguard all of our pupils, even those who leave us.

It is crucial that parents keep school updated with current addresses and contact details for key family members in case of emergency.

Under Pupil Regulations 2006, all schools are legally required to notify their Local Authority of every new entry to the admission register within five days of the pupil being enrolled. In addition to this, every deletion from the school register must also be notified to the Local Authority, as soon as the ground for deletion has been met in relation to that pupil, and in any event no later than the time at which the pupil's name is deleted from the register.

Attendance data and records

Our attendance is recorded in a timely manner at the beginning of each session- morning and afternoon. We record our attendance using SIMS. We use the registration codes as set out in [Working together to improve school attendance \(applies from 19 August 2024\) \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

We use data to monitor, identify and support individual pupils or groups of pupils when their attendance needs to improve. Persistently absent pupils are tracked and monitored daily and weekly. We also combine this with academic tracking as increased absence often affects attainment. We now have a duty to share our attendance data with the DFE and we will work collaboratively with other linked schools, local authorities, and other partners when absence is at risk of becoming persistent or severe. Data can also be used to demonstrate the positive effect of support or interventions for pupils who are persistently or severely absent. Schools must now keep attendance data for six years.

The Headteacher will provide monitoring reports for Governors.

All school staff and the Governors at Hollingbourne Primary School are committed to working with parents and pupils as this is the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance at our school as possible.