

Portway Junior School

Attendance Policy

Section 1

Rationale:

At Portway Junior School, we believe that good attendance is essential if our children are to get the most from our school. It is our statutory duty to strive to achieve high attendance for all of our children.

For our children to take full advantage of the educational opportunities we offer, it is vital that children arrive at school on time every day 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

Good attendance is important because:

- Statistics show a direct link between high achievement and attendance above 95%.

Children who attend regularly:

- make better progress, both socially and academically;
- find school routines, school work and friendships easier to cope with;
- find learning more satisfying;
- are more successful in transferring between primary school and secondary school.

Section 2:

Operating the Policy

1. Promoting Good Attendance

The foundation for good attendance is a strong partnership between our school, parents and our children. The Home/School agreement contains 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:

- Set annual attendance targets for our school.
- Monitor school attendance each term
- Report to parents annually on how their child is performing in school and what their attendance and punctuality rate is;
- Monitor the attendance and punctuality of each child and speak with parents at parents consultations if individual attendance falls below 95% or lateness to school is having a detrimental impact on the child or others in the child's class.
- Send follow up letters where attendance and punctuality do not show signs of improvement.
- Arrange face to face meetings with parents when the attendance continues to be below the 95% expectation without indications that it is improving.

2. Roles and Responsibilities:

Responsibilities of the School's Attendance Leaders (Headteacher/SENCo)

A member of the Senior Leadership Team, supported by members of our school's admin team will oversee, direct and co-ordinate the school's work in promoting regular and improved attendance and will ensure the Attendance Policy is consistently applied throughout the school. This person will also ensure that attendance is both recorded accurately and analysed. (S)he will ensure that attendance issues are identified at an early stage and that support is put in place to deal with any difficulties. The Family Support Worker will also be involved in this process and may attend the meetings, as needed.

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.**

Responsibilities of Office Staff:

- Record all absences accurately twice per day
- Record any contact from parents about absence
- Liaise with staff regarding attendance as needed
- Produce individual and group reports when needed

Responsibilities of Classroom Staff:

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

Responsibilities of Children:

- Attend every day unless they are ill or have an authorised absence.
- Arrive at school on time.
- Attend all registrations and lessons on time.
- Take responsibility for registering at the school office if they are late

Responsibilities of Parents and Carers:

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

Parents will:

- Inform the school on the first day followed by a note when the child returns to school.
- Inform the school of any planned absences well in advance.
- Support the school's aim for their child to gain attendance that is at least 95% each year.
- Make sure that any absence is clearly accounted for by phone on the first and subsequent days of absence
- Avoid taking their child out of school for non-urgent medical or dental appointments.
- Only request for leave of absence if it is for an exceptional circumstance

Section 3

3.1. Recording Attendance

Legally, the register must be marked twice daily. This is once at the start of the school day at 8.50am and again for the beginning of the afternoon session at 1.00 pm.

3.2. Lateness /Punctuality

It is extremely important that children arrive at school on time so that they can begin their learning alongside their peers. The start of lesson is often a time when new learning takes place and activities are explained. Lateness can be detrimental, not only to the child, but also to the rest of the class who can become distracted from their learning.

- The school day begins at 8.50am and all **pupils are expected to be in school at this time**. Morning registration is at 8.50am and the register closes at 9.05am.
- All lateness is recorded daily. This information will be required by the courts, should a prosecution for non-attendance or lateness be necessary
- Arrival after the close of registration will be marked as unauthorised absence code 'U' in line with Local Authority and Department for Education (DfE) guidance. This mark shows them to be on site, but is legally recorded as an absence.
- If a child is late due to a medical appointment, they will receive an authorised absence coded 'M'. Please be advised that, where possible, doctors and dentists appointments are to be made outside of school hours or during school holidays.

On-going and repeated lateness is considered as **unauthorised absence and will be subject to legal action**. (see section 6 for further detail).

Parents of children 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 will be invited to attend the school and discuss the problem. Support may be offered as appropriate.

If the support offered is declined or not taken seriously and a child has 10 or more sessions (equivalent to 5 days) of unauthorised absence due to lateness recorded in any 10 week period, 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 (See section 6 of this policy for further detail).

3.3. What to do if my child is absent?

First Day Absence

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

If your child is absent **you must**:

- Contact us as soon as possible on the first day of absence; (Messages can be left at any time on the school answerphone service.)
- Or, you can call into school and report the absence directly to office staff.
- If no contact is made then this will be recorded on the school attendance system.

If your child is absent we will:

- Contact you 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
- Invite you in to discuss the situation if absences persist;
- Refer the matter to the Hampshire's Attendance Legal Panels if unauthorised absence falls below 90%

Third Day Absence

Please Note: If your child is not seen and contact has not been established with you or any of the named parent/carers after three days of absence the school is required to start a 'child missing in education' procedure, as set down by Hampshire County Council Guidance. We will make all reasonable enquires to establish contact with parents and the child.

Ten Day's 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. We ask parents to support us to help you and your child by making sure we always have an up to date contact number.

Continued or Ongoing Absence

If your child misses 10% or 3 weeks or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason they are defined as **persistent absentees**. Where this absence is authorised the school will:

- Monitor the attendance and punctuality of each of these children during the following academic year and speak with parents at parent consultations if individual attendance has fallen below 90% or lateness to school has had a detrimental impact on the child or the child's class.
- Send follow up letters where attendance and punctuality do not show signs of improvement.
- Arrange face to face meetings with parents when the attendance continues to be below the 90% expectation.

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 support you to take steps to improve this ongoing situation.

For national guidance refer to:

1. 'School attendance' 2015 located at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-attendance>
2. National Association of Headteachers guidance document on '**Authorised Absence**' 2014
<http://www.naht.org.uk/welcome/news-and-media/key-topics/parents-and-pupils/naht-issues-new-guidance-on-authorised-absence/>

For county advice and guidance refer to:

1. Guidance on recording absence <http://documents.hants.gov.uk/childrens-services/HIAS/Promotingpupilattendanceandrecordingabsence-maindocument.pdf>
2. Guidance on approval of '**Extended leave of absence**' see county guidance <http://www3.hants.gov.uk/education/hias/learning-behaviour-attendance/lba-resources-for-schools/atten-guidance/attendance-guidance-for-schools.htm>

Section 4:

Request for Leave of Absence

Request for Leave of Absence:

Amendments to school attendance regulations were updated and enforced from September 2013:

The regulations state that Head teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances.

Exceptional circumstances are principally defined as rare, significant, or unavoidable and that the event could not reasonably be scheduled at another time. E.G. A parents is the armed forces and is on tour during the school holidays

The Head teacher can determine the length of the authorised absence as well as whether absence is authorised at all.

There is 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 in advance and before making any travel arrangements. As authorised absence will only be approved in very exceptional circumstances then as much detail needs to be recorded. If needed, parents will be asked to attend a meeting to discuss the request.

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, parents will be issued with a fixed-penalty fine, or other legal action in accordance the code (see section 6 for detail).

We expect parents to support us by not taking children out during school time.

Section 5:

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:

- **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, an absence cannot be authorised.
- **Unauthorised Absence:** is when the school has not received a reason for absence or has not approved a child's leave absence from school after a parent's request.

The headteacher 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.

Section 6:

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.

Legal Measures for tackling persistent absence or lateness

Hampshire County Council will use the full range of legal measures to secure good attendance. Legal measures will only be considered through a referral by our school 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:

- Parenting contracts set at Education Planning Meetings
- Parenting orders
- Penalty notices
- Education Supervision Orders
- Prosecution

Legal Measures for absence taken when the head teacher 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** our 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>

The code of conduct states that:

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

- 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
- persistently late (coded *U*) for up to 10 sessions (five days) after the register has closed
- 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
- absent for any public examinations of which dates are published in advance
- 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 of 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, 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 penalty notice 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, 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>