



# Hotham Primary School

## Attendance and Punctuality Policy

### Autumn 2023

| Ownership and Consultation      |   |
|---------------------------------|---|
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| Consultation (role)             | ELT, Headteacher, Children Families and Community Committee |
| Approval                        | School policy   |

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At Hotham Primary School we expect the highest attendance and punctuality from all pupils, at all times. We support pupils and their families to ensure that excellent attendance is achieved. We are continuously working towards our goal of 100% attendance for all pupils.

## 1. Aims

The aims of this policy are:

- To ensure that every child is safeguarded and their right to education is protected.
- To ensure the school attendance target is achieved, through rewards and incentives for good attendance and punctuality.
- To raise standards and ensure every child reaches their full educational potential, through a high level of school attendance and punctuality.
- To ensure all the stakeholders, governors, parents, pupils and staff receive regular communication about the importance of good attendance and punctuality.
- To keep accurate, up-to-date records and have a robust and rigorous system for analysing attendance.
- To identify causes of low attendance/punctuality with individuals, classes and groups of pupils and address them.
- To work with external agencies, in order to address barriers to attendance and overcome them.

## 2. Rights and Responsibilities

### 2.1 The Legal Framework:

There are legal obligations on:

- The parent(s) to secure education for their children, whether at school or otherwise, to send them to school regularly once they are on the register
- The School to register attendance and notify the Local Authority of absence from school
- The Local Authority to provide education and to enforce attendance.

### 2.2 Headteacher:

- To be responsible for the overall management and implementation of the policy.
- To deal with parental requests for extended leave in line with Wandsworth policies and procedures.
- To consider the use of Penalty Notices, in line with Wandsworth policies and procedures.

### 2.3 Attendance Lead:

- To oversee the analysis of/analyse weekly/termly/yearly data and respond to findings.
- To organise termly meetings with outside agencies and parents of children with poor attendance and punctuality to put cross-agency measures in place to support attendance and punctuality.
- To work with families with poor attendance and punctuality, putting measures in place to help improve this
- To liaise with external agencies such as the Educational Welfare Service and make referrals where necessary.
- To liaise with and report to outside agencies such as the School Nurse and Wandsworth Early Help.
- Work with the teachers, to plan for the reintegration of pupils after long-term absence.
- To maintain clear communication with the staff regarding attendance and punctuality within their classes.

- To revise and amend the policy, as required.
- To report any instances of home-education and children moving abroad to the Local Authority.

#### **2.4 Administration Assistant:**

- To lead on/take responsibility for attendance/punctuality, on a day-to-day basis, including liaising with/responding to parental enquires.
- To carry out and record the outcome of first day calls, when a child doesn't arrive at school when no reason has been received.
- To monitor weekly attendance data for classes.
- To check the school answer phone and take messages from parents/carers about pupil absence.
- To promptly inform the DSL/Headteacher, if there are any concerns relating to attendance/punctuality
- To record reasons for absence on SIMS.
- To implement the daily checking of SIMS registers after the morning and afternoon registration sessions.
- To maintain SIMS attendance records in line with this policy.
- To report attendance in the termly census, as requested.
- To ensure staff are following the registration systems and structures in this policy.
- To keep parents informed of school procedures regarding attendance and punctuality.
- To produce weekly/termly/yearly data from SIMS for AHT/Headteacher to analyse

#### **2.5 Teachers and Classroom Staff:**

- To ensure quality first teaching every day; with lessons that are well planned and resourced so that they challenge, inspire and meet their learners' needs.
- To keep accurate and up-to-date daily records of pupil attendance through the SIMS register system.
- Take a formal register of all pupils twice a day. This is done on the school's SIMS system by 9:05am and 1:20pm.
- To regularly remind children and parents about the importance of good attendance.
- Provide a welcoming and safe environment, which encourages attendance and promotes the best performance from children.
- Establish good and effective communication links with parents/carers and work collaboratively in meeting the child's needs.
- If required, to work collaboratively with other agencies to assist them in fulfilling their statutory duties, regarding for example, child protection
- Work with pupils and their families where attendance is a concern, identifying barriers to good attendance and working to overcome these.
- To promptly inform the DSL/Headteacher of any attendance concerns.
- To feed back to parents about pupil attendance and punctuality regularly and at Parents Evenings.

#### **2.6 Parents:**

If a child is absent from school for any reason parents should telephone the School Office as soon as possible to report the reason for this absence. If the child is arriving late at school for any reason, parents should let the office know, preferably the day before. Medical appointments should be confirmed with an appointment card or letter. If a child is absent for 5 or more school days then medical evidence is required. Parents should try to schedule appointments out of school hours if at all possible.

Therefore, parents are expected to:

- Ensure their child attends school and arrives on time every day.

- Promote a good attitude to learning by ensuring their children attend school in the correct uniform and with the basic equipment required for lessons.
- Not arrange medical and dental appointments in school time wherever possible.
- Telephone to inform the school on the first day of absence for their child.
- Provide a written explanation of absence, including dates of absence as soon as their child returns to school.
- Work in partnership with the school and other agencies in the best interests of their child; this includes informing the school about significant influences and changes in the child's life, which may impact on learning.

## **2.7 The Local Authority**

The LA, through the Attendance Team and Early Help Team, is expected to:

- Support the school in improving attendance, through whole school initiatives and individual pupil interventions
- Work with families and other agencies to remove barriers to good attendance.
- Ensure that parents are informed of their responsibilities in relation to attendance.
- Uphold and enforce the law in respect of attendance, child employment, and involvement in entertainment and child protection.

## **3. Strategies for promoting/rewarding excellent attendance:**

We aim to ensure that good attendance and punctuality (above 96%) is regularly promoted and supported and remains high profile across school. We aim to do this in the following ways:

### **3.1 Weekly Celebration Assemblies Celebration**

Assemblies are held every week on Friday. Classes with the highest attendance receive the Attendance Cup. Children who have 100% attendance that week are entered into a prize draw and someone is selected randomly to choose a prize from the Headteacher.

### **3.2 Weekly School Newsletter**

Each week, the school newsletter is used to highlight the importance of good attendance and punctuality. It regularly includes sections reminding parents of our school attendance target and what that means in terms of number of days absent. It also includes information about any initiatives, which the school is using, to promote attendance and punctuality.

### **3.3 Daily Breakfast Club**

The school offers a daily Breakfast Club. This supports parents by allowing them to drop their children off from 7:30am, ensuring they are on time for school.

### **3.4 The School Learning Environment**

A welcoming, organised learning environment that supports and celebrates its learners is a key factor in ensuring children enjoy school and attend regularly. All staff ensure that their learning environments are of a high quality. Regular, rigorous environmental audits are carried out by the SLT, to ensure this.

### **3.5 Staff Promoting Good Attendance**

It is important that teachers are regularly promoting good attendance with their classes. Good class attendance is attributed to good teaching and this is celebrated.

### **3.6 Sharing Attendance Data**

Pupils are informed on a weekly basis of attendance/punctuality achievements. This develops healthy competition between year groups to improve attendance. It also engages the teacher in conversation with their classes about attendance.

### **3.7 Parents Evenings**

This provides an opportunity for teachers to praise and recognise excellent attendance or share attendance concerns and discuss barriers to good attendance. Where necessary a target for improving attendance is set. The class teacher then monitors this. If there is no improvement in attendance/punctuality, the pupil is referred to the AHT/Headteacher

### **3.8 Text Messages**

Parents of children who arrive to school late are sent a text message, reminding them of the importance of arriving at school on time.

## **4. Monitoring and Recording Attendance & Punctuality**

### **4.1 Class Registers**

Class registers are recorded using SIMS. The system ensures that no children are missed and that pupil information can be shared quickly and securely. Registers are the only way of recording pupil attendance and must be completed accurately. This is the responsibility of whichever member of staff has been directed to take the register for that session. Registers can be re-submitted in the case of a mistake or a pupil arriving after submission, but registers must be accurate and submitted at key times (see below).

### **4.2 Morning Register**

Class registers close at 8.50am. At that point, the teacher may submit their final register and click 'save' on SIMS. At 8.50am the school playground gate is closed. Children arriving later than 08:50am are recorded as 'L' (late before register closed) in the register. The office staff check that the children who have arrived late have been marked in the registers and correct any mistakes or input codes for children who are known to be absent. The School Office then begin first day absence process. Children arriving after 09:30am are recorded as 'U' (late after register closed) in the register.

### **4.3 Afternoon Register**

Registers must be submitted by teaching staff straight after lunch before afternoon lessons commence. They should be completed by 1:20pm

### **4.4 School Attendance Letters**

The school sends out letters to communicate with parents about attendance and punctuality. (Copies of all standard letter formats are included at the end of this document.)

### **4.5 Punctuality**

Texts are sent daily to parents whose children arrive at school late. The Administration Assistant and DSL monitor punctuality regularly. This may involve speaking to parents directly, or via a phone call. Letters regarding the school's concern over lateness may also be sent; explain how much learning pupils are missing. If it does not improve, parents are invited in to school, to discuss the concerns with key staff and plan a way forward. If lateness does not improve following the meeting, the HT will arrange to meet the parents. The

family could then be referred to Wandsworth Educational Welfare Service who will contact parents warning them that further action may be taken.

**IMPORTANT:** Child Protection and Safeguarding concerns must be acted on immediately, in line with the school Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

#### **4.6 Monitoring First Day Absence**

If a child is absent from school and the school has not received a phone call or other message from the parent/carer, the first day absence process will be followed.

The Office Staff follow this system:

- Phone parents' contact number(s).
- Repeat this during the first morning of absence if no response.
- Phone emergency contact number(s) to get an up-to-date contact number for the parent/carer and update the school system accordingly.
- Speak to the parents face-to-face or by phone the next day and establish reasons for absence and update contact numbers.
- The parent/carer is asked to provide a reason as to why the child is not in school. The Office Staff must establish a reason for every absence. If a reason is not given then the absence will be recorded as 'unauthorised' (code O)
- If the Office Staff have not been able to make contact with a member on the contact list then the matter is treated as a safeguarding issue and must be referred immediately to the DSL.

#### **4.7 Attendance Meetings**

The AHT/Headteacher monitors individuals, classes, year groups, different ethnic groups, SEN and FSM pupils. They identify patterns and trends in absence/punctuality, including persistent absence. The systems and structures are then followed, to improve attendance for these individuals or groups. Letters are sent out to parents whose children's attendance is below 90% and parents who are concerned about their child's attendance, are invited to work in partnership with the school.

## **5. Exceptional Circumstances**

In line with Wandsworth Guidance, and the 2013 Amendment to the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations, leave for pupils during term time is authorised by the headteacher due to exceptional circumstances only. It is not a parental right to take leave during term time. Parents must make a request for leave during term time giving the exceptional circumstances for the request and it is at the headteacher's discretion to determine whether that request should be granted.

Examples of exceptional circumstances could include:

- Death of parent/carer or sibling of the pupil
- Life threatening or critical illness of parent or sibling of the pupil
- Parent/carer recuperation and convalescence from critical illness or surgery (leave request to be made within 6 months of recovery and medical evidence required)

Any parent requiring an absence for their child, for an exceptional reason other than for the purpose of a holiday, should make their application in writing at least two weeks prior to the time they wish to have leave.

Please note, holidays during term term will not be authorised, and could result in a Penalty Notice being issued by the Local Authority.

## 6. Penalty Notices

If a child is taken out of school without the Head Teacher's authorisation, it will be recorded as unauthorised absence. This may lead to the issuing of a penalty notice and legal action being taken by the Local Authority

**Section 23(1) Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2007:** Penalty notices may be issued to the parent of pupils who have unauthorised absence from school.

- The amount of the penalty is £80.
- If this is not paid within 21 days the amount rises to £160.
- If not paid within 28 days the Local Authority may prosecute under section 444(1) unless it comes to their 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.

## Appendix 1: Whole school attendance letter

Dear parents and carers,

### **Attendance at Hotham Primary School**

Now that half term is approaching and children have settled and returned to lessons, we would like to remind you of our approach to attendance at Hotham.

Our aim is for all children to attend school regularly. Higher levels of attendance lead to greater progress and higher attainment.

### **Daily absences**

If your child is absent from school we need you to contact school on each day of absence to let us know the reason for their absence. We will call or message you if we need further information to ensure that our school registers are accurate.

### **Medical appointments**

Where possible we would appreciate it if medical appointments could be made outside of school hours, but we are aware this is not always possible. If your child does have an appointment it is important that they attend as much of the school day as possible.

### **Addressing poor attendance**

We are always looking to improve the way that we communicate with you about your child's attendance.

- 1) We will regularly discuss your child's current attendance with you – at parents' evenings, by sharing attendance records at key points, and through regular dialogue. We can always send you your child's attendance records if you want to see them.
- 2) When attendance drops below 90% we will contact you to start a conversation about improving your child's attendance.
- 3) If there is no improvement we will contact you to arrange a meeting to discuss what we can do to improve your child's attendance
- 4) We will hold attendance review meetings to look at what is working and what next steps we can take to improve your child's attendance
- 5) If attendance does not improve, we will hold School Attendance Panel (SAP) meetings at school with the Assistant Head Teacher, the Community Wellbeing Mentor and parents/carers.

When we talk about school attendance and its impact we are referring to the amount of days/lessons missed (please see the diagram below).

When a child has less than 90% attendance they are considered 'persistently absent'. As a school we are obligated to act if a child's attendance falls below this level.

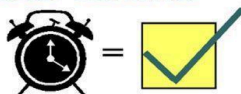


|  |      |                                   |
|--|------|-----------------------------------|
| 0 days off school in a year<br>0 lessons missed    | 100% | Perfect attendance                |
| 2 days off school in a year<br>10 lessons missed   | 99%  | Excellent attendance              |
| 5 days off school in a year<br>25 lessons missed   | 97%  | Good attendance                   |
| 10 days off school in a year<br>50 lessons missed  | 95%  | Slightly below average attendance |
| 14 days off school in a year<br>70 lessons missed  | 93%  | Poor attendance                   |
| 20 days off school in a year<br>100 lessons missed | 90%  | Very poor attendance              |

### Punctuality

Punctuality is also particularly important, as lessons and learning start as soon as children enter their classroom. If a child is late they may miss out on key teacher input or regularly miss parts of specific lessons. It can also be upsetting and embarrassing for pupils to walk into a classroom late and on their own.

### Every Minute Counts



| Lateness = Lost Learning                           |                |
|--|----------------|
| *(Figures below are calculated over a school year) |                |
| 5 minutes late each day                            | 3 days lost!   |
| 10 minutes late each day                           | 6.5 days lost! |
| 15 minutes late each day                           | 10 days lost!  |
| 20 minutes late each day                           | 13 days lost!  |
| 30 minutes late each day                           | 19 days lost!  |

### Leave Requests

Term time leave/absence must be requested in writing to the school at least 10 school days in advance of the leave via a term time leave request form. Only requests with exceptional circumstances will be considered and children with poor attendance will not have requests approved. Those parents who take their children out of school without prior consent put themselves at risk of receiving a penalty notice. Please note that term time holiday requests **will not** be authorised.

Kind regards,

Hotham Primary School

## Appendix 2: Attendance below 90% letter

Dear <Parent's name>

### **Attendance below 90%**

I am writing to remind you of the importance of regular attendance for all pupils and to seek your continued support in working with the school to minimise pupil absence levels.

The target attendance level for Hotham Primary School, and for each individual pupil is 96%. The Department for Education consider any child whose attendance drops below 90% as a **persistently absent pupil**.

Presently, <Child's name> attendance is XXXX which is below both national and school expectations.

Parents and carers have a legal duty to make sure that their children receive appropriate full time education. In addition to the legal requirements, school attendance is a crucial factor in a child's educational and social development. Poor attendance affects attainment which can have an impact on future prospects. Good routines are important at this stage because they help to prepare children for the future. Please find your child's attendance certificate enclosed which shows this year's attendance so far.

At Hotham, we always make parents and carers aware if their child is a persistently absent pupil. Please be aware that we will be monitoring your child's attendance carefully between now and <date>. If we continue to have concerns we will be asking you to attend a School Attendance Panel to discuss your child's absence.

**As your child's attendance is now below 90% we will require evidence for any further medical/illness absences to be authorised.**

I would like to offer you the opportunity to discuss any concerns you may have about <Child's name> attendance by contacting Miss Oddy on 020 8788 6468.

Yours sincerely,

Rebecca Oddy  
Assistant Head Teacher

## Appendix 3: Punctuality letter

Dear <Parent's Name>

### School Punctuality

<Child's Name> has arrived late to school on XXXX occasions since the start of the start of the academic year. A copy of the attendance report is attached for your information.

Please ensure that <Child's Name> punctuality improves in the next half term. If not, the school may have to make a referral to the Wandsworth Attendance Team.

Late attendance has an impact on your child's learning and on the smooth running of the class. Please cooperate with this request in the best interests of your child and the school as a whole.

If you have any questions or wish to discuss the contents of this letter further please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Thank you for your cooperation in this matter.

Yours sincerely,

Rebecca Oddy  
Assistant Head Teacher

## Appendix 4: Unauthorised absence – FPN letter

Dear <Parent's Name>

### Unauthorised Absence – Fixed Penalty Notice

I am writing to remind you of the importance of regular attendance for all pupils and to seek your continued support in working with the school to minimise pupil absence levels.

The target attendance level for Hotham Primary School, and for each individual pupil is 96%.

A certificate of your child's attendance illustrating a period of unauthorised absence is attached.

Please be aware that pupil absences from school for any reason other than illness, which have not been agreed by the Headteacher, are unauthorised. A medical certificate is required for any medical absence at the start or end of a holiday period.

**As this absence comprised X days of unauthorised absence, I must advise you that this has been referred to the Local Authority for the issue of a Fixed Penalty Notice.**

If you have any questions or wish to discuss the contents of this letter further please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Thank you for your cooperation in this matter.

Yours sincerely,

Rebecca Oddy  
Assistant Head Teacher

## Appendix 5: Ongoing poor attendance at school letter

Dear <Parent's Name>,

### **Ongoing poor attendance at school**

I'm writing to express my concern at your child's ongoing poor attendance at school.

Your child has been absent from school for a total of X unauthorised sessions (X days) between <date> and <date>. Please see your child's attendance record attached.

This level of absence is unacceptably high and has not improved despite <list support>.

I must now let you know that your child's attendance will be monitored closely for a period of 15 school days from <date> to <date>.

If your child's attendance does not improve during this period, I will be making a referral to the Legal Education Welfare Officer at the local authority.

**I must warn you that this could result in the local authority taking legal action against you.**

You can find more information in our school attendance policy. Copies of the policy are on the school website, or available from the school office.

I am copying this letter to the Governing Board for information.

Yours sincerely,

Richard Byrne-Smith  
Headteacher