

Freegrounds Junior School

Attendance Policy



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Date of next review: December 2021

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Approved by: Policy working party

Signed: 

Section 1

This policy is written within the context of the legislation governing the requirement for compulsory education of children. It identifies the responsibilities of parents/carers, the Local Authority and the school in ensuring that every child of school age is educated.

The Law

As legislation is often amended and Regulations introduced, the references made in this Guide may be to legislation that has been superseded. For an up to date list of legislation applying to schools, please refer to the Department for Education website at www.education.gov.uk/schools.

- i. The Education Act 1996 - sections 434(1)(3)(4)&(6) and 458(4)&(5)
- ii. The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006
- iii. The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2010
- iv. The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2011
- v. The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013

Basis of this Policy

This policy is based on the regulation, advice and guidance given by Hampshire County Council (including "Guidance for schools on support and procedures for pursuing legal action for non-attendance" dated May 2015).

Rationale / Statement of Intent:

For a child to reach their full educational achievement a high level of school attendance is essential. We are committed to providing an education of the highest quality for all our pupils and endeavour to provide an environment where all pupils feel valued and welcome. Parents/carers and pupils play a part in making our school so successful. Every child has a right to access the education to which he/she is entitled. Parents/carers and teachers share the responsibility for supporting and promoting excellent school attendance and punctuality for all.

It is our duty to consistently strive to achieve a goal of 100% attendance for all children. Every opportunity will be used to convey to pupils and their parents/carers or carers the importance of regular and punctual attendance.

For our children to take full advantage of the educational opportunities offered it is vital your child is at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. The routines children develop around attendance and punctuality at school are the same as the expectations of any future employer in the world of work. High attainment, confidence with peers and staff and future aspirations depend on good attendance.

Good attendance is important because:

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

Section 2

Operating the Policy

Promoting Good Attendance

The foundation for good attendance is a strong partnership between the school, parents/carers and the child. Our Home/School agreement gives details of how we will work with parents/carers and our expectations of what parents/carers will need to do to ensure their child achieves good attendance. We ask each parent/carer and child to sign that they agree on entry to the school.

Roles and Responsibilities:

A member of the Senior Leadership Team will oversee, direct and co-ordinate the school's work in promoting regular and improved attendance and will ensure the Attendance Policy is consistently applied throughout the school. This person will also ensure that attendance is both recorded accurately and analysed. (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. 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 Classroom Staff

Classroom staff will:

- Ensure that all pupils are registered accurately.
- Liaise with the SLT on matters of attendance and punctuality.
- Communicate any concerns or underlying problems that may account for a child's absence.
- Promote and reward good attendance appropriately.

Responsibilities of Children

Children will:

- Attend every day unless they are ill or have an authorised absence.
- Arrive in school on time.
- Go to all their registrations and lessons on time.
- Take responsibility for registering at the Reception Desk if they are late or meeting parents/carers at reception if they are being collected to leave the school site during school hours.

Responsibilities of Parents/carers and Carers

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

Parents/Carers will:

- Inform the school in the morning of the first day of absence.
- Support the school with their child in aiming for 100% attendance each year.
- Make sure that any absence is clearly accounted for by phone on the first and subsequent days of absence, or by letter if a phone is unavailable.
- 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

Recording Attendance

Legally the register must be marked twice daily. This is once at the start of the school day 8.55am and again for the afternoon session at 1.15pm.

Lateness /Punctuality

It is important to be on time at the start of the morning and afternoon school sessions and to lessons. The start of school/lessons are used to give out instructions or organise work. If your child is late they can miss work, time with their class teacher getting vital information, cause disruption to the lesson for others and can be embarrassing leading to possible further absence.

- The school day begins at 8.55am and all **pupils are expected to be in school at this time.**
- The register officially closes 15 minutes after the start time.
- 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 county and Department for Education (DfE) guidance. This mark shows them to be on site, but is legally recorded as an absence.
- If a pupil 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.

Pupils who are consistently late are disrupting not only their own education but also that of the other pupils. On-going and repeated lateness is considered as **unauthorised absence and will be subject to legal action** (see section 6 for further details).

Parents/carers of pupils who have patterns of lateness will be contacted to discuss the importance of good time keeping and how this might be achieved. If lateness persists, parents/carers will be invited to attend the school and discuss the problem and support offered. If support is not appropriate or is declined and a child has 10 or more sessions of unauthorised absence due to lateness recorded in any 10 week period the school or the Hampshire County Council will be required to issue parents/carers 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 details).

Children should be collected promptly at the end of the school day. Where late collection is persistent and / or significantly late, the school is obliged to take any uncollected pupil to a place of safety and share concerns as necessary with other agencies. If one is available, the school will place a child into the after school club and provide the parents/carers with the bill.

What to do if my child is absent?

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

If your child is absent you must:

- Contact us as soon as possible in the morning of the first day of absence and on each subsequent day.
- Provide copies of appointment letters/cards prior to any absence due to a medical appointment.

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

If your child is absent we will:

- Contact you during the morning session on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you; *This is because we have a duty to ensure your child's safety as well as their regular school attendance.*
- Invite you in to discuss the situation if absences persist.
- Refer the matter to the Hampshire's Attendance Legal Panels if absence is unauthorised and falls below 90%.

Third Day Absence

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 procedures as set down by Hampshire County Council Guidance. We will make all reasonable enquiries to establish contact with parents/carers and the child including making enquires to known friends and/or wider family.

Ten Days Absence

We have a legal duty to report the absence of any pupil who is absent without an explanation for 10 consecutive days. If the child is not seen and contact has not been established with the named parent/carer then the Local Authority is notified that the child is 'at risk of missing'. Children's Services Staff will visit the last known address and alert key services to locate the child. So help us to help you and your child by making sure we always have an up to date contact number. There will be regular checks on telephone numbers throughout the year.

Continued or Ongoing Absence

If your child misses 10% (3 weeks / 30 sessions) or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason they are defined as **persistent absentees**.

Absence for whatever reason disadvantages a child by creating gaps in his or her learning. Research shows these gaps affect attainment when attendance falls below 95%. As such we monitor all absence thoroughly and all attendance data is shared with the Local Authority and the Department for Education. If your child has had absence and their attendance level is falling towards 90% we will contact you and depending on the reasons for the absence will discuss support.

Section 4

Request for leave of absence

Amendments to school attendance regulations were updated and enforced from September 2013: **(Pupil registration) (England) regulations state that Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances.**

It is important to note that Headteachers can determine the length of the authorised absence as well as whether absence is authorised at all. The fundamental principles for defining 'exceptional' are rare, significant, or unavoidable which means the event could not reasonably be scheduled at another time. **There are no rules on this** as circumstances vary from school to school and family to family. There is however, no legal entitlement for time off in school time to go on holiday **and in the majority of cases holiday will not be authorised.**

Parents/carers wishing to apply for leave of absence need to fill in an application form available from the school office in advance and before making any travel arrangements.

Any leave of absence will not be authorised during May for Year 6 pupils due to SATs assessments taking place during this time.

If term time leave is taken without prior permission from the school, the absence will **be unauthorised** and if the number of sessions absent hits the thresholds set down in Hampshire's Code of Conduct parent/carers will be issued with a fixed-penalty fine, or other legal action in accordance the code (see section 6 for details).

Taking holidays in term time will affect your child's schooling as much as any other absence and we expect parents/carers to help 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, absences 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. This includes:
 - i. parents/carers giving their children permission to be off school unnecessarily such as for shopping, birthdays, to look after siblings
 - ii. truancy before or during the school day
 - iii. absences which have not been explained

A school can, if needed, change an authorised absence to an unauthorised absence and vice versa if new information is presented. Any changes will be communicated to parents/carers. An example of this would be where a parent/carer 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 Schools and Hampshire County Council will use the full range of legal measures to secure good attendance. Legal measures will only be considered through a referral to Hampshire's Attendance Legal Panels where:

- 1. The child or family do not require the support from any agency to improve the attendance.**
- 2. The child has 10 or more sessions of unauthorised absence and parents/carers 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 headteacher has declined parent/carers request for leave of absence.

Where a pupil has unauthorised absence due to either:

1. non approval of a parent/carer's request for leave of absence or:

1. a holiday that has been taken without permission,

and the unauthorised absence is for 10 or more sessions (5 days) in any 100 possible school sessions then a penalty notice for non-attendance will be issued.

Where a child has **unauthorised absence** the school must enforce Hampshire's Code of Conduct for issuing Penalty Notices or follow its guidance on other Legal Measures for Non-Attendance. The Code of Conduct is a statutory document that ensures that powers for legal sanctions are applied consistently and fairly across all schools and their families within the authority.

A copy is available from <https://www.hants.gov.uk/educationandlearning/behaviour-attendance-parents#step-7>

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/carers 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**
or;
- 2. 1 or more sessions of unauthorised absence during a public exam, formal school assessment or testing where dates are published in advance.**

Parents/carers will be warned of the likelihood of a penalty notice being issued for unauthorised absence either via a letter, through the leave of absence request form, or through the schools attendance policy and website. The penalty notice is a fine that is issued to each parent/carer who condoned (or was responsible for the child) during the period of unauthorised absence for which the fine has been issued. For each case of unauthorised absence the school or Hampshire County Council will decide whether a Penalty Notice is issued **to one or more parent/carers** for each child. **N.B** This could mean four penalty notices for a family with two siblings both with unauthorised absence for holiday i.e. one 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 the Hampshire County Council will consider prosecution for the non-attendance. Payment methods are detailed on the Penalty Notices themselves. Penalties are to be paid to Hampshire County Council and revenue resulting from payment of Penalties is used by the County Council to help cover the costs of issuing Penalty Notices and/or the cost of prosecuting recipients who do not pay.

For further information parents/carers can request a leaflet from their school and should visit Hampshire County Councils website at:

<https://www.hants.gov.uk/educationandlearning/behaviour-attendance-parents#step-7>

Section 7

Reluctance of my child to attend school

Children are sometimes reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents/carers and the child. If a child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and may make things worse.

Contact your child's class teacher immediately and openly discuss your worries. Your child could be avoiding school for a number of reasons – difficulties with school work, bullying, friendship problems, family difficulties. It is important that we identify the reason for your child's reluctance to attend school and work together to tackle the problem. In some cases you may find it helpful to discuss the circumstances of your child's difficulties with another professional.

What can I do to encourage my child to attend school?

Make sure your child gets enough sleep and gets up in plenty of time each morning. Ensure that he/she leaves home in the correct clothes and properly equipped. Show your child, by your interest, that you value their education.

Be interested in what your child is doing in school, chat to them about the things they have learnt, what friends they have made and even what they had for lunch!

Section 7

Leavers

If your child is leaving our school (other than when transferring to secondary school) parents/carers are asked to:

1. Give the school office comprehensive information about their plans including any date of a move and your new address and telephone numbers, your child's new school and the start date when known. This should be submitted to our school in writing

If pupils leave and we do not have the above information, then your child is considered to be a 'Child Missing in Education'. This requires schools and Local Authorities to then carry out investigations to try and locate your child, which includes liaising with Children's Services, the Police and other agencies. By giving us the above information, these investigations can be avoided.

Absence through child participation in public performances, including theatre, film or TV work & modelling.

Parents/carers of a child performer can seek leave of absence from school for their child to take part in a performance. They must contact the Headteacher to discuss the nature and frequency of the work, whether the child has a valid performance licence and whether education will be provided by the employer during any future leave of absence. Any absence recorded as part of a child's participation in a public performance is recorded as C an authorised absence.

Absence through competing at regional, county or national level for sport

Parents/carers of able sportsmen and women can seek leave of absence from school for their child to take part in a regional, county, national and international events and competitions. It is however, down to the Headteacher's discretion whether to authorise this and they will wish to discuss with you the nature and frequency of the absence and how learning will continue if absence occurs. Permission for your child to leave early or arrive late to attend coaching and training sessions are also at the discretion of the Headteacher and are not likely to be approved if it is a regular event, unless the sports club or association are providing an education tutor as part of their coaching.

Gypsy Roma Traveller Showman and Showman families

Absence of a child from a traveller family that has left the area may be authorised if the absence is for **work purposes only** and it is believed that the family intends to return. To ensure the continuity of learning for Traveller children, dual registration is allowed. That means that a school cannot remove a Traveller child from the school roll while they are travelling. When the Traveller is away the home school holds the place open and records the absence as authorised through the T code. Distance Learning Packs for traveller children are not an alternative to attendance at school.

For further advice and guidance on Attendance & GRT and Showman see County Guidance at: <https://documents.hants.gov.uk/childrens-services/HIAS/Promotingpupilattendanceandrecordingabsence-Section6.pdf>

Section 8

Record preservation

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