Hook Infant School
Attendance Policy and Parental Guidance

This policy was drawn up using a range of national documents including DfE Guidance School Attendance and Hampshire County Council Policy.

In accordance with the Hampshire guidance to schools the Governing Body and staff of Hook Infant School agree that regular and full time attendance is essential if children and young people are to benefit fully from their school career, we also believe that punctuality is of equal importance.

The purpose of this Policy Document, therefore, is to set out the ways in which matters of attendance and punctuality should be managed in this school, in order to ensure school and parents work together to achieve and maintain high standards in this area.

In order to achieve this, the school will:

- Promote a welcoming and positive atmosphere in school, where children feel safe and that their presence is valued.
- Enable parents to feel their support of this Policy is recognised by the school as a vital contribution towards their child's education.
- Create attitudes towards high standards of attendance and punctuality, which pupils should retain throughout life.
- Ensure that attendance is maintained effectively and absences or late attendances are followed up promptly.
- Meet legal requirements, with particular reference to identifying unauthorised absence.
- Check registers regularly, to note unexplained absences and identify patterns of absence and lateness, if they are occurring.
- If absence/punctuality becomes a matter for concern, use strategies devised in order to raise parental awareness of the importance of attendance and punctuality, so that they will make more effort to ensure their child attends school punctually and regularly.
- Involve other agencies when difficulties arise, and the school needs extra support or help as appropriate.
- Ensure all staff are aware of the School Policy and deal consistently with absence and punctuality.
- Ensure information on attendance/punctuality is available for Governors, as required.
- Ensure good liaison when a change of school occurs.

- Keep accurate registration documents to include authorised/unauthorised absence.

Parents must perform their legal duty by ensuring children of compulsory school age who are registered attend regularly and on time.

Rationale

For children to take full advantage of the education provided at Hook Infant School, it is vital pupils arrive at school on time every day the school is open. High attainment, confidence with peers and future aspirations all depend on punctual and good attendance.

At Hook Infant School, we are committed to providing a high quality education where all children achieve their full potential and feel valued and welcomed. Parents and children all play their part in making our school successful and share the responsibility for supporting and promoting excellent school attendance and punctuality for all.

It is our duty to strive consistently to achieve a goal of 100% attendance for all children and every opportunity will be used to convey this message to parents and carers.

Good attendance is important because:

- Statistics show a direct link between low attendance – under 95% and under achievement.
- Regular attendance ensures pupils make better progress, have better peer relationships and find learning more enjoyable.
- Regular attendance ensures that children find transition easier as they move up to their next school.

Promoting Good Attendance

At Hook Infant School, we expect all children to arrive punctually and ready to learn for each of the 190 days in the school academic year. There must be a legitimate reason for all absences and the school must be notified of any absences in line with the procedures set out in this policy.

The Home/School agreement, newsletters and the school website will all promote good attendance and remind parents/carers of their legal obligation to ensure their child attends school. If a child's attendance drops below 95% and there is cause for concern, the Headteacher will write personally to the parent/carer. Where low attendance persists, further action will be taken, in consultation with the Local Education Authority.

All absences will be recorded on the child's record and annual report to parents/carers.

Each year the school will examine their attendance figures and review systems in place to ensure that good attendance is achieved.

Roles and responsibilities

The Headteacher will oversee the schools work in promoting regular attendance and will ensure this policy is applied consistently throughout the school.

The school office staff will ensure that attendance is recorded accurately and that any attendance issues are reported promptly to the Headteacher.

If absence is frequent or continuous, except when a child is clearly unwell, staff will discuss with parents/carers the reasons for the child's absence and will encourage them to keep absences to a minimum. The decision whether or not to authorise an absence will always rest with the Headteacher, in the case of regular absence due to illness, the Headteacher has the right to request medical evidence to support the absence.

Responsibilities of Classroom staff

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

Responsibilities of Administration staff

The Admin Assistant will monitor the registers daily and in some cases the Business Manager to ensure that all absence on that day are accounted for.
The Admin Assistant who will enter the data on SIMS will monitor the registers weekly and will bring issues of concern to the Head Teacher's notice.

Responsibilities of Parents/carers

Ensuring a child's regular attendance at school is a parent/carers legal responsibility **(Section 444 of the 1966 Education Act).**

Morning registration

- Morning registration for EYFS will take place at 8.40 am
- EYFS children arriving after this time will be marked as late ('L').
- Morning registration for KS1 will take place at 8.45am
- Children arriving after this time will be marked as late ('L').

Afternoon registration

- Afternoon registration for EYFS will take place at 12.30pm
- Afternoon registration for KS1 will take place at 1pm
- Children arriving after these times will be marked as late ('L').

Collection of Children

It is parents' responsibility to ensure that their child/ren are collected promptly from school as soon as the school day or after school clubs finish, when the school is no longer responsible for their supervision. The school day finishes at 3.05pm for EYFS and 3.10pm for KS1 pupils.

Parents are responsible for making proper arrangements for the collection of their child/ren from school promptly at the allocated time by a responsible adult or designated person and for informing the school of these arrangements and personnel.

School Procedures for dealing with pupil lateness

It is important to be on time at the start of school. The start of school/lessons is 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 it can be embarrassing leading to possible further absence.
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 and coded ***U*** in line with Hampshire County Council and Department of Education 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. Ongoing and repeated lateness is considered as **unauthorised absence and will be subject to legal action** (See Legal measures for tackling persistent absence or lateness for further detail).

Parents, guardians or 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, guardians or carers will be invited to attend the school and discuss the problem and support will be 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 Hampshire County Council will be required to issue parents with a Penalty Notice in accordance with **Hampshire County Council's *Code of conduct: issuing Penalty Notices for unauthorised absence from schools.***

Recording attendance
Legally the register must be marked twice daily. This is once at the start of the school day at 8.40am, and again for the afternoon session at 12.30pm (Early Years) and 8.45am and 1.00pm (Years 1 &2).

What should I do if my child is absent?
First day absence
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 on the first day of absence
- send a note in on the first day they return with an explanation of the absence – you must do this even if you have already telephoned us, or you can call into school and report to reception.

If your child is absent we will:

- telephone you 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 with the Headteacher if absences persist
- refer the matter to the Hampshire County Council's Attendance Legal Panels if absence is unauthorised and falls below 90%.

Third day absence

Please note: If your child is not seen and contact has not been established with any of the named parents/carers, after three days of absence the school is required to start ***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 enquiries to known friends and 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% (three weeks/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 take further action including legal action
Persistent absence is managed on an individual basis with children and families, ensuring that the most appropriate strategies or methods of support are put into place to improve attendance as swiftly as possible. This could involve creating an attendance plan or home school contract or involving the family support service or school's legal department specialising in attendance.
All children in our school are dependent on their parents to bring them to school regularly and on time. It is vital that children enjoy coming to school and do not have to carry blame or be made to feel unhappy if their parents are not supportive or effective in these areas.

<u>Request for leave of absence</u>

Amendments to school attendance regulations were updated and enforced from September 2013: The Education (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 term 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 or the school website) in advance and before making any arrangements. 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 County Council's *Code of conduct* parents/carers will be issued with a fixed-penalty fine or other legal action in accordance with the code (see Section Penalty Notices for non-attendance and other legal measures for detail).
Taking holidays in term time will affect your child's schooling as much as any other absence and we expect parents to help us by not taking children out during school time.

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 of absence from school after a parent's request. This includes:
    I. parents 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 states a child is unwell but on return to school, there is evidence they have been on holiday***.**

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.
Children of non-compulsory school age once admitted to a school must comply with the attendance policy.

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 when there is unauthorised absence and:
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 will be used 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

Where a child has, unauthorised absence the school must enforce **Hampshire County Council's *Code of conduct: issuing Penalty Notices for unauthorised absence from schools*** 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://documents.hants.gov.uk/childrens-services/HIAS/penalty-notice-unauthorised-absence-school-march2020.docx

https://documents.hants.gov.uk/code-of-conduct-issuing-penalty-notices-for-unauthorised-absence-from-schools.pdf

The *Code of conduct* states that schools or Hampshire County Council 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
- any unauthorised absence during national testing (End of KS1 assessment period in May) may be subject to a penalty notice.

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 Penalty Notice is issued for either:

- 10 sessions of unauthorised absence or lateness in any 10 week school period
- one or more sessions of unauthorised absence during a public exam, formal school assessments or testing where dates are published in advance.

This includes where a pupil has unauthorised absence due to either:

- non-approval of a parent/carer's request for leave of absence, or
- a holiday that has been taken without permission.

Parents and carers will be warned of the likelihood of a Penalty Notice being issued for unauthorised absence through the leave of absence request form, or through the school's 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 parents/carers** for each child.

NB: 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.

Please note: If you pay the Penalty Notice and your child has further unauthorised absences additional legal action will be taken. For example, in the event that a Penalty Notice has previously been served to you due to unauthorised holiday, should your child have any future unauthorised leave this will result in further legal action for you, such as prosecution or an Education Supervision Order. For further information parents/carers can request a leaflet from their school and should visit Hampshire County Council's website at:
http://documents.hants.gov.uk/childrens-services/HIAS/InformationonPenaltyNoticesfornonattendanceatschool-advicetoparentsandcarersleaflet-Nov2015revised.pdf

Leavers

If your child is leaving our school (other than when transferring to the junior school) parents are asked to:

- Give the school 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 the 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 television work and modelling

Parents 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. It is, however, down to the Headteacher's discretion as to 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. 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 of able sportsmen and women can seek leave of absence from school for their child to take part in regional, county, national and international events and competitions. It is, however, down to the Headteacher's discretion as to 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 is also at the discretion of the Headteacher and is not likely to be approved if it is a regular event, unless the sports club or association is providing an education tutor as part of their coaching.

Gypsy, Roma, Traveller 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.

Record preservation

School registers are legal documents. We will ensure compliance with attendance regulations by keeping attendance records for at least three years

Approved by the Governing Body, Hook Infant School

Signed: *Alison Collier*

Date: 17 November 2021

Chairman of the Governing Body

Date for review November 2023