



The Governors of
Herons Dale Primary
School

have adopted the following policy:

Attendance Policy

Reviewed by:

Teresa O'Connell

Date:

March 2021

Ratified by Governors:

March 2021

Review Date:

March 2022

Introduction

Herons Dale School is a Special Primary School in Shoreham which caters for pupils with a diverse range of needs, including PMLD, SLD, MLD and ASD. We are committed to providing a stimulating learning environment in which all our children can feel happy, valued, safe, secure and confident.

We expect all members of the school community to be prepared to experience new things and take on new challenges, to produce their best work and behaviour at all times and, where possible, to be aware of the needs and feelings of others.

Rationale and Aims

At Herons Dale School we strive to ensure that pupils experience bespoke opportunities which cater specifically to meet their needs and to facilitate holistic progress. The Department for Education stipulate that 'pupils need to attend school regularly to benefit from their education. Missing out on lessons leaves children vulnerable to falling behind. Children with poor attendance tend to achieve less'. DfE, School Attendance, Guidance, November 2016.

In accordance with government expectations, Herons Dale School wishes to:

- Promote good attendance and reduce absence, including persistent absence;
- Ensure every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled; and,
- Act early to address patterns of absence. Herons Dale School also supports government expectations of parents:
- To perform their legal duty by ensuring their children of compulsory school age who are registered at school attend regularly.
- To ensure all pupils are punctual to their lessons. Promoting Attendance Herons Dale School wishes to promote the best level of attendance achievable by our students. Ideally all students should achieve a good level of attendance (over 95%) with as many achieving 100% as possible. Within our school we recognise that:

Some pupils have significant medical conditions that make it unlikely they will achieve attendance at this level. The school does not consider it appropriate or beneficial for pupils who are unwell to attend school.

Sometimes pupils are unhappy about attending school. Families may be going through unsettled times that can make regular school attendance difficult. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents or carers and their child at an early stage. Attendance Policy

Due to the nature of some pupils' needs it may only be possible to arrange holidays during term time, to facilitate our pupils and their families having quality time away from the stresses that crowds can induce etc. Herons Dale School is committed to working with families to ensure that maximum attendance is achieved wherever possible and that in circumstances where attendance is less than is desirable; we will work together with you to move towards improved attendance.

The school will celebrate the achievement of students who have good attendance (above 95%) through internal school rewards such as certificates.

Information

The people responsible for attendance matters in this school are: Isabel Robson, Headteacher and Teresa O'Connell, Deputy Head.

Each half day absence (defined as a session) from school has to be recorded by staff at the school as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. It is therefore a requirement that we receive information regarding the reason for every absence.

Authorised absences

You must get permission from the headteacher if you are planning to take your child out of school during term time. Your child may be allowed to miss school for:

- A death in the family or funeral
- Doctor, hospital or dental appointments. If you do not get permission and you take your child out of school, this will be recorded as an unauthorised absence. Unauthorised absences

Unauthorised absences are when a pupil has been marked in the school attendance register as being absent from school without authority. It is only a headteacher who can authorise absence for any reason from school. These are an offence by the parent or carer and include:

- Keeping students off school without a good reason
- Absences which have never been properly explained
- Students who arrive too late at school to get a mark
- Taking holidays that have not been approved by the school in advance

Attendance Policy

The Government has directed that headteachers may now only grant leave for a holiday in term-time where there are exceptional circumstances. In West Sussex, we may issue a Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN) if a pupil has accrued unauthorised absence from school and the school has referred the matter to us.

- Any absence marked in the register as unauthorised ('O' or 'N' codes)
 - Persistent late arrival at school after the register has been taken ('U' codes)
 - A holiday in term-time, which has not been authorised by the headteacher ('G' codes).
- Procedures The school will monitor the attendance and punctuality of all pupils, following the procedures outlined below:
- Pupils may arrive on site from 8:30am
 - Pupils must be handed directly into the care of a member of their class staff.
 - Pupils are expected to be on site by 8:45am.
 - Registers are marked by 9.15am and pupils will receive a late mark if arriving after this time (with the exception of pupils for whom there is an alternative arrival/departure arrangement linked to their SEN)

- At 9:45 the registers will be closed. Pupils arriving after this time will be marked in the register as on site but will receive an unauthorised absence for the morning session. In accordance with the regulations, if your child arrives after that time, they will receive a mark that shows them to be on site, but this will not count as a present mark, and it will mean they have an unauthorised absence.
- Parents and carers are expected to telephone school staff on the day that their child is not able to come to school and any subsequent days that their child is absent. If issues arise with children and families coming to school for any reason, the Family Liaison Officer will contact all parties to offer support and assistance to ensure a smooth transition in the first instance.
- Office staff listen to absence calls
- Staff will call any pupils absent without explanation. They will continue to call until they get an answer.
- If they get an overseas ring tone – it will be recorded
- If no reply at all we consider whether any children have additional agency support, such as a social worker or Early Help. The Safeguarding Lead or Family Liaison Officer will contact them.
- If no answer by 10:30am a referral will immediately be made to children's services / MASH / Police and request a welfare call.
- Parents and carers are expected to inform staff verbally or by note of prior appointments e.g. medical. Pupils are encouraged to attend school before and/or after medical appointments where practical in order to access as much of the school day as possible.
- Any requests for exceptional leave should be made using the appropriate form or by letter to the Headteacher. Forms are available from the school office and on the school website.
- The Safeguarding Lead and Family Liaison Officer will discuss any absences for concern. Absence monitoring letters will be sent home for pupils whose attendance falls below 90%.
- Parents and carers will be invited to a meeting in cases where there has been no improvement in a pupil's attendance or punctuality. All cases will be treated on an individual basis, taking into account personal circumstances.

Absence Requests

Headteachers have been directed by the Government not to authorise any absence from school unless there is an 'exceptional' circumstance. You must get permission from the headteacher if you want to take your child out of school for a holiday in term time. It's up to the headteacher on how many days your child can be away from school if it is granted.

Term Time leave

Leave may be granted in exceptional circumstances on an individual basis but arrangements should not be made without the school's prior agreement. The Headteacher may authorise absence in exceptional circumstances only. These might include:

- Leave granted on compassionate grounds for sudden unexpected incidents e.g. when a family member dies or is very ill.

- Special 'one off' family events such as weddings, funerals and other occasional celebrations (but not just because it is a pupil's birthday).
- Family holidays to accommodate the individual needs of our pupils e.g. when going on holiday at busy periods could be extremely traumatic to a pupil's wellbeing. The Headteacher will take into account whether requested absence will fall before and during assessment periods or examinations, whether a pupil's attendance record already includes any level of unauthorised absence and whether a pupil's attendance rate is already below 90% or will fall below that level as a result of leave and may not grant leave if this is the case. Taking leave without permission is 'unauthorised' absence. If you think the Headteacher's decision not to authorise the absence is unreasonable you have the right to make representations to the Chair of Governors, but the final decision over any action to be taken lies with the Head teacher and the LA.

Targets

In May 2016 the DfE published National statistics which gave a National Average attendance for primary schools of 96.4%. The school has adopted the following attendance targets:

- Overall whole school attendance to be 93% or better
- There will be no gaps between vulnerable groups and their peers' attendance. Fixed Penalty Notices Fixed Penalty Notices (FPN) are issued per parent, per child and are an alternative to prosecution, giving you an opportunity to discharge your criminal liability by paying a fine of £120, which must be paid within 28 days. They are generally issued where there have been at least 10 sessions of unauthorised absence from school within a recorded 10 school week period. However, there are some occasions where they are issued outside of these criteria. Should the period of absence for a holiday in term time be 15 school days or more, a FPN may not be deemed suitable. Instead the matter may be brought directly before the court. After 28 days we will consider prosecuting for the original non-attendance, not for the non-payment of the FPN, however if you pay within 21 days we will reduce the fine to £60. Paying a Fixed Penalty Notice You must make sure you have both your customer number and invoice number stated on the front of the FPN. Online payments can only be for the full amount of £120. If you wish to take advantage of paying within the first 21 days call the payment line below. Alternative methods of payment are outlined on the FPN.
- Pay online (full amount only)
- Payment line: 01243 777505 Attendance Policy Further information on legal action that can be taken can be found on GOV.UK. Please do not hesitate to contact us for any additional information or with any queries you may have. We thank you for working with us to promote good attendance for all of our pupils.