

Section 1:

At Alverstoke Infant and Junior School, if a child is to reach their full educational achievement then 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 and pupils play a part in making our schools so successful. Every child has a right to access the education to which he/she is entitled. Parents 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 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 and training.

Section 2:

Promoting Good Attendance

The foundation for good attendance is a strong partnership between the school, parents and the 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:

- Report to you on how your child is performing in school, what their attendance and punctuality rate is and how this relates to their attainments
- Alverstoke Junior School will reward 100% attendance by awarding the children with a certificate each term.

Responsibilities of the Governing Body

Governors will ensure that they are given an accurate view of school attendance, and will monitor attendance of groups of children, including those with protected characteristics, three times a year as a minimum.

They will be informed of escalation procedures, and engage in attendance panels where appropriate.

Responsibilities of the Senior Leadership Team

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. They will ensure that attendance is both recorded accurately and analysed. Attendance issues will be 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 parents/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 the Class Teacher

- Ensure that all students are registered accurately at the morning and afternoon session
- Promote and praise good attendance at all appropriate opportunities
- Liaise with the Senior Leadership Team member on matters of attendance and punctuality and
- Communicate any concerns or underlying problems that may account for a child's absence.

Responsibilities of Pupils

- Attend school every day unless they are ill or have an authorised absence
- Arrive in school on time every day

Responsibilities of Parents/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 on the first day of absence by 9.30am.
- Discuss with the Headteacher any planned absences well in advance of the event.
- Support the school with their child in aiming for 100% attendance each year.
- Make sure that any absence is clearly accounted for by phone or email 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

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 afternoon session at 12.50pm

Lateness/Punctuality

It is important to be on time at the start of the morning and afternoon school sessions. These are times which are used to give out instructions and input for the lessons. If your child is late they can miss work, time with the class teacher getting vital information, cause disruption to the lessons for others, and can be embarrassing for the child.

- The school day for Alverstoke Infants and Alverstoke Juniors begins at 8.50am. All pupils are expected to be in school at this time. Morning registration is at 8.55 am and it closes at 9.25am (*please note that both schools are currently operating staggered start and finish times due to Covid restrictions – Autumn term 2020*)
- All lateness is recorded daily. This information is 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 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. On-going and repeated lateness is considered as **unauthorised absence and will be subject to legal action**.

Parents 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/carers will be invited to attend the school and discuss the problem and offered support. 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's Code of Conduct for issuing penalty notices for non-attendance.

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 the school via the telephone absence line or email by 9.30am on the first day of non-attendance, giving the reason for the absence.
- provide regular updates if the absence is ongoing or you can come into school and speak to the office.

If your child is absent we will:

- telephone you by 9.30 am 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.* We will make ALL reasonable enquiries to contact you and may consider a home visit by a member of the school's leadership team or Child & Family Support worker, to ensure that we know the whereabouts of your child.

- invite you to discuss the situation with the Headteacher if absences persist;
- refer the matter to the Hampshire's Attendance Legal Panels if absence is unauthorised and falls below 90%.

Continued or Ongoing Absence

If your child misses 10% (3 weeks) or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason they are defined as **persistent absentees**. All our persistent absentees and their parents/carers are subject to an Attendance Plan or home school contract.

It is important that on return from an unavoidable absence all pupils are made to feel welcome. This should include ensuring that the pupil is helped to catch up on missed work and brought up to date on any information that has been passed to the other pupils.

Children at Alverstoke Infant and Juniors are dependent on their parents/carers, who are responsible for their level of attendance and punctuality. It is vital that children enjoy coming to school, and whilst being encouraged to attend and on time, will not carry blame and be made to feel unhappy if their parents are not supportive or effective in these areas.

Section 4

Request for leave of absence:

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 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 complete an application form, which is available from the school office or on the schools websites, in advance and before making any travel arrangements. Please note, we may ask you to provide documentary evidence to show that your request constitutes exceptional circumstances.

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 with the code (see Section 6 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.

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:
 - parents giving their children permission to be off school unnecessarily such as for shopping, birthdays, to look after siblings
 - truancy before or during the school day
 - absences which have not been explained.

If needed, Alverstoke Infant and Junior school can change an authorised absence to an unauthorised absence and vice versa if new information is presented, for example where a parent states a child is unwell but on return to school there is evidence they have been on holiday. Any changes will be communicated to parents/carers.

Section 6

Penalty Notices for Non Attendance and other Legal Matters:

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

Alverstoke Infant, Alverstoke Junior school 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 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 the schools:

- parenting contracts set at Education Planning Meetings
- parenting orders
- Penalty Notices
- Education Supervision Orders
- Prosecution

Where a child has an 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:

www.hants.gov.uk/education/hias/learning-behaviour-attendance/attendance-guide-for-parents/possible-penalties.

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 whole 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 school days) after the register has closed
- persistently late before the close of the register (code 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 attendance then a Penalty Notice is issued for either:

1. 10 sessions of unauthorised absence or lateness in any 10 week period
2. one or more sessions of unauthorised absence during a public exam, formal school assessment 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/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(s) will decide whether a Penalty Notice is issued to **one or more parent/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 to 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 notice. Penalties are to be paid to Hampshire County Council NOT the school. Revenue resulting from payment of penalties is used by

the County Council to help cover the costs of issuing these notices and/or cost of prosecuting parents/carers 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 within the same academic year, or in the following year, a referral will be made to the Attendance Legal Panel and may 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:

www.hants.gov.uk/education/hias/learning-behaviour-attendance/attendance-guide-for-parents/possible-penalties.

Section 7

Other Recommendations

Sometimes children may be reluctant to come to school for a particular reason i.e. falling out with a friend etc. If this is the case always contact the school immediately to discuss this. It is important that we identify the reason for your child's reluctance to attend school and work together to address the issue.

Ensuring that your child gets enough sleep every night and gets up in plenty of time each morning to have breakfast and is dressed in the appropriate school uniform.

Absence through child participation in Public Performances, including theatre, film or TV work & 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 down to the headteacher's discretion as to whether this will be authorised. 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 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's 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.

Forces Families

A number of our pupils have a family member in the armed forces. In support of the Armed forces Covenant, there may be occasions, due to exceptional circumstance, where we are able to authorise short leave of absent requests. It is down to the Headteacher's discretion as to whether authorisation can be made.

Section 8

Record preservation

School registers are legal documents. Alverstoke Infant and Junior school will ensure compliance with attendance regulations by keeping attendance records for at least three years. Registers completed using computer registers will be preserved as electronic back-ups.