

ATTENDANCE POLICY

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School Attendance Policy and The Development of Good Practice

Why have a School Attendance Policy?

1. To provide a structure for action.
2. To ensure consistency of practice.
3. To give clear policy to students, parents and others.
4. To offer security to newcomers.
5. To enable people to share good ideas and practices.
6. To enable the school to review these ideas and practices.

In order to encourage maximum attendance levels, both staff and pupils need to work within a framework of good practice that both supports and helps to motivate students, and is consistent across the school.

The Following Policy Includes:

- Guidelines for marking the register
- Guidelines for responding to absence
- Examples of good practice
- Standardisation of practice
- Procedures for communicating with parents
- Procedures for extending leave overseas
- Identification of appropriate management structures and general procedures for all of the above.

Good Practice Development:

Parental Support:

The role of the parent/guardian in supporting the school's efforts in securing high levels of attendance is critical. At Hasbury we intend to maintain close, effective and positive links with our parents and ensure that they are contacted at an early stage to deal with unexplained absences of their child. The regulations and guidance about our schools' expectations with regard to attendance are explained in the school prospectus, which is sent to all parents. The policy is available for all parents to see.

Unauthorised Absence:

A phone call will be made by the Deputy Head not later than the third day of absence, if there has been no communication from parents. This and brief details of any other communication made by the school must be noted on a pro forma (appendix 1). For certain children with an identified pattern of non-attendance, telephone contact is made on the first day of absence.

Lateness:

Regular lateness must be followed up in the same way as developing patterns of absence.

Early Intervention:

Monitoring and encouraging attendance is an integral part of the class teacher's role. Class teachers will receive support from the Senior Management Team, Head or Deputy, if necessary.

It is acknowledged that an early response to developing patterns of absence can be most effective. The circumstances of the individual pupil or group of pupils must determine the nature of communication regarding attendance. At Hasbury we will be particularly sensitive to issues of linguistic differences in matters of communication, and of cultural differences in perception regarding attendance.

Major early signs of absenteeism are:

- Unauthorised absences
- Lateness
- Occasional / developing patterns of absence

Strategies to be used by Class Teachers when tackling these early signs of absenteeism:

- Discussion with pupil
- Communication with parent / guardian by telephone* (the Secretary can be asked to phone by the Class Teacher)
- Standard letters (from Integris, see appendix 2)*

- School based interviews / meetings with parent / guardian

* Using translation / interpretation if necessary and where possible

Marking The Attendance Register

Each register must, by law, be marked at the beginning of the morning and during the afternoon session.

At Hasbury we use computerised registers (Integris). All staff have guidelines on how to complete the register (see appendix 3). All teachers also have a 'paper copy' of the register, so that a record can be made in the event of computer breakdown.

A print out of each weeks' attendance is produced every three weeks. The print out is filed once all unauthorised absences have been followed up. This practice meets the requirement of the DfES Circular 10/99 'Social Inclusion: Pupil support', (Annex A, Guidance on Attendance Registers), which states that paper copies of registers are kept for at least three years.

PUPIL REGISTRATION: THE STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

Parents, schools and the LEAs share legal responsibilities in respect of school attendance:

Parents of children of compulsory school age must ensure that they receive an efficient and suitable full-time education (Section 7 Education Act 1996)

All Schools (other than independent schools for boarders only) must keep an attendance register on which, at the beginning of each morning and during the afternoon session, a pupil should be marked present or absent.
(Pupils, Registration Regulations 1995)

LEAs must ensure that parents are fulfilling their statutory obligations as to their children's education including, where necessary, by action through the Courts.
(Sections 437-448 Education Act 1996)
Schools have a duty to report to their LEA on

"continuous pupil absences of two weeks or more and on those pupils who fail to attend school regularly, except where such absences are covered by a medical certificate"
(Pupils' Registration Regulations 1995)

Schools should ensure that Registers are properly kept and returned to the school office so they may be available for scrutiny by school EW0s and other authorised officers. To comply with this the School's Education Social Worker has 'read only' access to the 'reports' and 'tracking' sections of Attendance.

At Hasbury we insist on regular meetings with our ESW, so that patterns of absence or concerns with individuals can be reported on and appropriate action taken.

Schools are required to collect and publish data on their rates of unauthorised absence for the preceding year.

"All schools must distinguish in their attendance registers between authorised and unauthorised absences of pupils of compulsory school age; school prospectuses and annual reports must include specified information on rates of unauthorised absence.

(The Pupils' Registration Regulations, the Education (School Information) Regulations 1981) (The Education (school Curriculum and Related Information) Regulations 1989)

This information is reported in the Governors' Annual Report to parents and in the school prospectus. All schools' prospectuses must show the percentage rate of unauthorised absence and the percentage of pupils with authorised absence for each year. In addition, all parents receive information on their child's school report on number of absences authorised and unauthorised, and number of times late. For reporting purposes, the school year ends on the last day of the first half term in the Summer term.

NOTES OF GUIDANCE-AND GOOD PRACTICE

Regular attendance at school is an important legal responsibility, which is shared amongst schools, parents and the LEA. This is further emphasised by the Children Act 1989, which highlights the needs for schools to work in partnership with parents and the support services of the LEA, to promote and maintain the regular attendance of all its pupils.

REGISTER KEEPING

It is important that registers are carefully maintained. Information about a child's absence is recorded by use of the symbols demonstrated in [appendix 4](#). Careful register-keeping and monitoring of reasons for absence is an indication that all pupil absence is being questioned and followed up.

The LEA is ultimately responsible for the satisfactory attendance of every pupil. In some cases legal action may be required, either to ensure parents uphold their responsibilities, or to safeguard the child's welfare. During such proceedings, the detail of school attendance could become important evidence, therefore a further need for accurate and consistent registration is necessary.

Marking registers

- 1) All school registers should be marked at the beginning of the morning and during the afternoon sessions.
- 2) Absences should be authorised where appropriate, using the standardised symbols. "Only the school, within context of the law, can approve absence, not parents. The fact that a parent has offered a note or other notification in

relation to a particular absence does not, of itself, oblige the school to accept it if the school does not accept the explanation offered as a valid reason for absence”, (Policy and practice on Categorisation of Absence 1994 Under no circumstances should an un-notified/unverified absence be regarded as authorised.

- 3) The Education Act 1996 states that a parent of a child of compulsory school age registered at a school and failing to attend regularly is guilty of an offence punishable in law, unless one of the following can be demonstrated
- i. that the pupil was absent with leave (defined as granted by the head);
 - ii. that the pupil was ill or prevented from attending by an unavoidable cause;
 - iii. that the absence occurred on a day exclusively set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong;
 - iv. the school at which the Child is a registered pupil is not within walking distance of the child's home. That is 2 miles for a child under 8 and 3 miles for a child at 8 and over, and that the education authority has not made arrangements for any of the following;
 - the child's transport to and from school
 - boarding accommodation for the child at or near the school
 - enabling the child to become a registered pupil at a school nearer to his or her home

- 3) To distinguish between poor punctuality and non-attendance, it is necessary to set aside a time after which the register is closed. At Hasbury the register is closed as soon as lessons start, and pupils/parents are asked to report to the School Secretary to get their ‘mark’.

FOLLOW-UP ACTION IN CASES OF NON-ATTENDANCE

- 1) In all cases of absence, every effort should be made by the form tutor/teacher to obtain the reason for absence, so that it may be authorised as appropriate. This may involve phone calls home, or letters being sent to the parents. The same procedure should be followed in cases where a pupil is persistently late; at Hasbury the time of arrival is recorded in our late arrivals book.
- 2) In obdurate cases, where a child has persistent unauthorised absences, parents are contacted by telephone or letter to discuss reasons for the absence and possible solutions.

- 3) All action taken by the school is carefully dated and recorded.
- 4) If attendance remains poor, after all efforts by the school to resolve the problem within the framework of the school's Attendance Policy then the situation is discussed with the school's EWO, which may then lead to a referral being made to the EWS on the standard referral form EWS1.

Before involvement of the ESW following will be done by school:

- Absences must be unauthorised
- Parents contacted by phone
- Parents contacted by letter
- Parents invited to a meeting in school.

All actions are recorded. At all stages the school offers support to the family to improve attendance.

- 5) Once a decision has been taken by the school to refer the matter to the EWO, it is important that the school informs the parents of this in writing.
- 6) The EWS1 should be completed with the fullest information after consultation with the key teaching staff involved with the child and discussion with the family, and should include details of all action undertaken by the school. An attendance grid indicating the previous 6 weeks' absence should be attached along with a copy of the letter sent to the parents.
- 7) Once the referral has been accepted by the EWS it is important that schools continue to work in partnership with the allocated EWO to ensure the child's return to maximum attendance.
All members of staff who have contributed to the referral should be kept informed of progress. In cases where an Education Supervision Order (under the Children Act 1989) is to be sought in court, the school will be involved in agreeing the Education Plan for the child and may well have a clear role to fulfil in carrying out that plan.
- 8) Systems of communication within the school between the Head, teachers and EWS should be efficient in the identification of irregular attendance, and in the subsequent support offered to children and parents.
The better the communication, the more effective the follow-up action will be.

Early identification and effective follow up of non-attendance rely on efficient communication both within the school and between the school and its support services.

Prompt action on non-attendance is an important area of child Protection and should also be included in the school Child Protection Policy.

STANDARDISED MARKING CODES

We use the LEA codes and procedures: see appendix 4.

PARENTAL HOLIDAY AUTHORISED

Normally notified in advance in writing by the parent/carer. An absence of this type should not usually exceed 2 weeks in any school year although the Headteacher/Governors may exercise her/his discretion. For academic year 2004/05 the Governors have determined authorisation of 5 days only. When requesting extra leave beyond the ten school days, parents are asked to put their request in writing to the Governing Body, together with reasons why they feel the absence is justifiable.

Non-starting pupils:

At the beginning of an academic year there may be some new pupils who fail to arrive, for example reception class pupils. It is important that the whereabouts of each student is ascertained by the school in conjunction with the Admissions section of the LEA and/or EWO so that, where regulations permit, they can be removed from the roll and do not contribute to the unauthorised absence statistics. Similarly, where pupils leave school part way through the school year, it is the responsibility of the School Secretary to remove the child from the school roll.

Specific Responsibilities of Class Teachers Relating to Attendance and Punctuality

Class teachers hold important responsibilities for the general welfare of pupils in their classes; attendance and punctuality is an important feature of their responsibility and is part of good primary practice. An Attendance Register is a legal document and must be completed accurately and in time.

Line Management :

Class teachers are responsible to the School Governors, Head and Senior Management Team for carrying out the responsibilities outlined below:

Taking the Register :

Teachers are responsible for marking the register twice a day.

Following up absences:

- Any absence should be followed up by talking to the pupil and then the parent/guardian.
- Acceptable forms of communication can be a note, a personal visit from the parent/guardian, or another responsible adult, or a phone call.
- If no response is forthcoming teachers can phone parents. (The school Secretary can be asked to do this.) However, if no reason is given for the absence a standard letter (first letter) should be sent after the third day of absence and noted in the register.
- If parents/guardians do not respond within 7 days to the first letter, then second standard letter (2nd letter) should be sent. Again note in

the register when this was sent.

- As a general rule teachers should try to get a satisfactory reason for the absence within ten working days of the first day of absence.
- If after this time no satisfactory reason has been given (even though the child may now be in school) then teachers should refer the absence to the Head, or Senior Management Team, who will make a referral to the Educational Welfare Officer (EWO), following agreed procedures.

Recording information on attendance:

Teachers must sign and date all letters from parents when they are brought in.. These are filed in a foolscap folder in the teachers' drawer. At the end of the term the records are archived by the Deputy head. Telephone/verbal messages are written on a pro forma (see appendix one) and stored in the same way.

Collecting Statistics :

Statistics are obtained by using the appropriate 'reports' from Integris. Clerical assistants are employed to collect reports on unauthorised absence, print off registers to enable class teachers to track down unauthorised absences; to provide the Deputy Head with information on pupils with high percentages of absence and class attendance rates, and to analyse absence patterns. The Deputy Head sends off appropriate reports to the DfES.

Providing support and guidance :

- Teachers should encourage patterns of punctuality and good attendance as it is good educational practice.
- All teachers should be aware of responding early to developing problems of attendance and punctuality. Generally speaking the poorest attendance is with younger pupils and we need to develop good habits early on. Close links with parents are essential but these need to be formalised so that issues such as punctuality and attendance can be discussed openly and frankly, e.g. a child who is 15 minutes late each day loses 1hr 15mins tuition per week. Multiply that by 38 weeks and it accumulates to almost two weeks absence over the year without taking into account any other absences.*****

Develop good patterns of attendance and punctuality by :

- Monitoring authorised absences - excessive numbers of authorised

absences such as illness may need following up with the school nurse.

- Monitoring patterns of lateness - are parents/guardians aware that the child is regularly late.
- Identifying patterns of absence - are children absent on particular days, swimming days, P.E. days, class visits etc.

If teachers are concerned about a child's absence and/or punctuality they should discuss these matters with the child. If there is no improvement then the parent/guardian should be contacted. If there continues to be no improvement after contact with the parent/guardian then the matter should be referred to the Head, Deputy, or Senior Management Team.

Monitoring Procedures :

1. The Deputy Head will have overall responsibility for monitoring Attendance Registers.
2. The School Governors (Curriculum) will receive a copy of the termly authorised and unauthorised attendance figures for each class.
5. The E.S.W. will visit the school each term to monitor the Attendance Policy and rate of absences.
6. Annual attendance figures will be sent to the DfES and LEA, as part of the national and local monitoring of attendance.

Role of Local Education Authority

The LEA carries out the role of supporting schools and parents in the area of attendance by means of the Education Welfare Service.

Education Welfare Service :

The EWS operates within a legal framework on behalf of the Local Education Authority in discharging its legal obligations. The EWS aims to ensure that those sections of the Education Act 1996 which relate to children receiving efficient full-time education suitable to their age, ability and aptitude, whether by regular attendance at school or otherwise, are applied in line with the LEA's values, policies and procedures, and Equal Opportunities policies. Additionally, the Service carries out responsibility under Education Act 1996 which relates to the employment of children and to their engaging in public entertainment. The EWS is also responsible for initiating proceedings under the Children Act 1989 and acting as supervisor for young people subject to Education Supervision Orders.

Referral to Education Welfare Service

One of the main objectives of the EWS is to maintain and improve regular school attendance, Educational Welfare Workers monitor school attendance registers, hold

regular consultations with school staff responsible for attendance and obtain referrals from schools.

Staff Attendance

1. All staff must notify the Headteacher/School Secretary of illness, as soon as they know they will not be able to attend work.
For teaching staff this means contacting the Deputy Headteacher by telephoning her on her mobile phone the night before, or as soon as possible on the morning they become unfit for work.
For non-teaching staff the school should be contacted as early as possible, certainly before 9am.
2. All staff must let the school know how long they will be off work for, and when they will be able to return to work. This is most important, as all staff absence must be accounted for, and reported to the LEA, so that staff are paid correctly. Absence without notification could result in unpaid leave of absence.
3. Staff are able to self-certification absence for the first week, thereafter a letter from the G.P. must be sent in to the school. Pink and green forms should be completed and handed to Head Teacher.
4. Permission from the Headteacher must be obtained beforehand to seek time off work for visits to the Dentist, Doctor, Hospital etc. evidence of the appointment must be produced.
Unless in an emergency, all appointments should be made outside school hours, or during school holidays.
5. All leave of absence must be approved in advance by the Headteacher and/or School Governors.
6. All teaching staff must be punctual, and be on site at 8.35am, ready to begin work, at the appropriate time.
Teachers must not leave school before 3.30, as 3.15 to 3.30 is Directed Time (to supervise uncollected children, tidy classrooms etc.)

This policy will be reviewed annually.

Related Policies: Child Protection