

HURLEY PRIMARY SCHOOL

ATTENDANCE & PUNCTUALITY POLICY



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ATTENDANCE AND PUNCTUALITY POLICY

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Reviewed by:

Matt Hardman, Headteacher

Siobhan Hardman, Assistant Headteacher

Lorraine O'Carroll, SBM

INTRODUCTION

It is important that you and your child develop a positive attitude to school attendance and punctuality so that they do not miss out on the opportunities at school. These qualities of reliability are also important in adult life.

Poor attendance, especially when condoned by parents, disrupts a child's education. This causes a lack of continuity and progression in school work.

Hurley Primary School will work closely with other partners to ensure this policy is fulfilled, including the Department for Education (DfE) & Warwickshire Attendance Compliance Enforcement Service (ACE Service).

AIM

This policy aims to improve pupils' attendance at school and to ensure that absence from school only occurs when pupils have a genuine reason.

This policy aims to help parents understand the importance of regular school attendance to pupil's educational success and seeks to gain the support of parents in its implementation.

LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK

Parents/guardians, schools and the Local Authority have legal responsibilities in ensuring that children attend school.

Parents/guardians of children of compulsory school age must ensure that their children receive an efficient and full-time education, either at school or otherwise (Education Act 1944 S.36).

Schools must maintain an attendance register in which each pupil is marked present or absent at the beginning of each morning and afternoon session (Pupils' Registration Regulation 1956).

Schools must publish attendance data showing the number of unauthorised absences in each term of the preceding school year, expressed as a percentage of the total number of possible attendances that term (The Education (Pupils' Attendance Records) Regulations 1991).

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Leave of Absence

In line with the latest legislation (The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024) and DfE guidance, the following principles apply regarding Leave of Absence during term time:

- **Exceptional Circumstances Only:**
Headteachers will only grant Leave of Absence in *exceptional circumstances*. Each application will be considered individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances, and relevant background context of the request. (DfE paragraphs 207, 28, 29)
- **No Automatic Right to Holiday Leave:**
Parents do not have an entitlement to take their children out of school for holidays during term time. It is unlikely leave will be granted for family holidays unless there are exceptional circumstances. (DfE paragraphs 30, 215, 216)
- **Advance Application Required:**
Leave of Absence must be applied for in advance by the parent with whom the pupil normally resides (the "appropriate person"). Failure to apply in advance will result in the absence being unauthorised, which may lead to legal sanctions such as Fixed Penalty Notices. (DfE paragraphs 207, 216, 12(11))
- **Headteacher Discretion on Duration:**
If granted, the headteacher will determine the length of the Leave of Absence. This decision is entirely at the headteacher's discretion. (DfE paragraph 29)
- **Unauthorised Absence Consequences:**
Absence without permission, or refusal of a Leave of Absence request, will be recorded as unauthorised and may result in legal action, including Fixed Penalty Notices and potential prosecution under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996. (DfE paragraphs 17, 89)
- **Special Circumstances:**
 - Pupils participating in licenced performances or approved educational activities may be granted leave in accordance with licencing regulations and headteacher discretion. (DfE paragraphs 208-211)
 - Temporary part-time timetables may be agreed in exceptional circumstances such as medical needs, but should be time-limited and regularly reviewed. (DfE paragraphs 212-213)
 - Leave for maternity (pregnancy) is treated like other leave of absence with reasonable discretion applied by the headteacher. (DfE paragraph 214)
- **Legal Compliance:**
The school complies with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 and the DfE's "Working Together to Improve Attendance" guidance to ensure all attendance recording and leave of absence decisions meet statutory requirements.

ATTENDANCE PROCEDURE

Procedures in this policy take in to consideration statutory and non-statutory guidance from the Department for Education, (DfE) and Local Authority.

Daily/Weekly Attendance Procedure

- If your child is going to be absent from school, the parent/guardian must ring school before **9.15am** to inform school of the reason for the absence.
- At **9.25am** the school registers will close. School registers are checked for any absences for which we have no information.

- School staff will message the parent/guardian if there has been no contact with school regarding the absence.
- If a pupil has been absent and school have not been able to find out any reason for absence from the parent/guardian, a home visit will be made, at least within three days, sooner if there are concerns.

Categorising Absence

Under the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 and the DfE's "Working Together to Improve Attendance" guidance, it is the school's responsibility to determine whether an absence is authorised or unauthorised. Parents cannot authorise absence; only the school can approve it.

At Hurley Primary School, absence will be authorised only for the following reasons:

1. **Pupil Illness:**
Absence due to the pupil being unwell.
2. **Religious Observance:**
Absence on a day exclusively set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong. (DfE Code R)
3. **Approved Public Performance:**
Absence for participating in an approved public performance, where the pupil has a valid licence or Body of Persons Approval (BOPA), and the school has granted leave. (DfE paragraphs 208-211)
4. **Leave of Absence Granted by the Headteacher:**
Permission granted through the school's Absence Request Procedure, in line with the requirement that leave of absence is only authorised in exceptional circumstances and must be applied for in advance by the parent with whom the pupil normally resides. (DfE paragraphs 207, 28-30)
5. **Bereavement:**
Absence following the death of a close family member, granted at the headteacher's discretion.
6. **Medical or Dental Appointments:**
Absence for medical or dental appointments, confirmed with an appointment card or letter. Pupils are expected to attend school before and/or after the appointment whenever possible. Parents are encouraged to arrange appointments outside school hours where feasible.

Monitoring Attendance

As a school we monitor all areas of attendance and are required to provide the DfE and the Warwickshire Attendance Service our attendance data. We also work with Central School Attendance and Welfare Service Ltd (CSAWS).

- School will send out a letter to all parents at the end of the school year.
- At the beginning of a new term the attendance data from the previous term is analysed.
- Each term, in conjunction with CSAWS, we will communicate with parents/guardians of pupils with less than **90%** attendance who will be sent a letter and printout of their child's attendance for that term.

Persistent Absentees

Pupils whose attendance falls below 90% are classified as Persistent Absentees (PAs) by the Department for Education. At Hurley Primary School, we adopt a supportive, multi-agency approach to improve attendance for these pupils, recognising that absence often signals wider issues needing tailored intervention.

Our approach includes the following steps:

- Step 1: Early Identification and Support Meeting
The school initiates contact with the parent/guardian and relevant school staff to discuss attendance concerns. Where appropriate, the Warwickshire Attendance Service Officer or other local support services may be involved. Together, they agree an individualised action plan to address barriers to attendance and set clear, achievable targets.
- Step 2: Written Summary and Action Plan
A letter summarising the meeting discussion and the agreed action plan is sent to the parent/guardian to ensure clarity and shared understanding.
- Step 3: Monitoring and Review (Typically 6 Weeks)
After an agreed period, attendance data is reviewed collaboratively by school staff and the Warwickshire Attendance Service. Based on progress:
 - If attendance improves to above 90%, ongoing monitoring continues with supportive interventions as necessary.
 - If attendance remains below 90%, a further meeting is arranged with parents/guardians, school staff, and the Warwickshire Attendance Service team to explore additional support or formal interventions, which may include legal measures if appropriate.

Additional Principles:

- Holistic Support:
The school works closely with families and local partners to understand and remove barriers to attendance, including health, wellbeing, and social factors.
- Proactive Communication:
Early and regular communication with families is prioritised to prevent escalation.
- Tailored Interventions:
Action plans are personalised, recognising the unique circumstances of each pupil and family.
- Legal Intervention as a Last Resort:
Formal legal actions, such as Fixed Penalty Notices or prosecutions, are only considered after all supportive measures have been exhausted and where parents are non-compliant.

REQUESTS FOR LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Absence for anything other than through illness or medical reasons during term time is actively discouraged.

Parents requesting time out of school for their child during term time should obtain a 'Leave of absence' request form from the school office before booking a family holiday.

The DfE has published new amendments to the Pupil Registration Regulations which come into force from September 2013 and relate to Holidays in Term Time, Penalty Notices and Deletions from the school register.

The amendments make clear that headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances.

The Headteacher will define 'exceptional circumstances' and also determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted.

We strongly discourage absence at all times of the year and leave of absence will not be granted in May when all classes particularly Years 2 and 6 have important annual assessments. In June Year 1 and Year 4 children have important assessments which must not be missed through unnecessary absence.

PENALTY NOTICES

Penalty Notices and Prosecution for Unauthorised Absence

At Hurley Primary School, we work collaboratively with parents, the local authority, and other partners to support regular attendance and address barriers to attendance sensitively and proactively. However, where unauthorised absence persists despite support, legal interventions may be necessary.

Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs)

- Purpose:**
Fixed Penalty Notices serve as an alternative to prosecution and are intended to encourage parents to improve their child's attendance without court proceedings. They may be issued when:
 - A pupil's absence is unauthorised (e.g., unauthorised holidays during term time).
 - Support and intervention have been provided but not engaged with or have failed.
 - Immediate action is necessary due to the nature of the offence.
- Issuing Authority:**
FPNs can only be issued by the Headteacher (or authorised deputy/assistant), local authority officers, or the police. All issued notices must be copied to the local authority.
- Payment Amounts and Deadlines:**
 - £80 per parent, per child if paid within 21 days of receipt.
 - £160 per parent, per child if paid after 21 days but within 28 days.
 - Payments are made directly to the local authority regardless of who issued the notice.
- Non-Payment Consequences:**
If the penalty is not paid within 28 days, the local authority must decide whether to prosecute the parent(s) for the original offence or withdraw the notice. Prosecution can only proceed after the 28-day period has expired without full payment.
- Limits and Codes of Conduct:**
Local authorities publish Codes of Conduct outlining when FPNs are appropriate, including limits on the number of notices issued to a parent within a 12-month period.
- No Right of Appeal:**
Parents do not have the right to appeal against a Fixed Penalty Notice.
- Use of Funds:**
Money collected from FPNs is used solely for administration and prosecution costs related to attendance offences. Surpluses are returned to the Secretary of State.

Prosecution

- When Prosecution Applies:**
Prosecution is a last resort after all supportive and formal interventions have been exhausted or deemed inappropriate. It applies when a parent fails to ensure their child attends school regularly without valid reason.
- Legal Powers:**
Local authorities have the power to prosecute parents under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 for failure to secure regular attendance or failure to comply with school attendance orders.
- Costs:**
The local authority bears all costs associated with prosecution, including court documentation and proceedings.

Supporting Pupils and Families

In line with the DfE's guidance, Hurley Primary School prioritises support and early intervention for pupils with persistent or severe absence (missing 10% or more of school). We recognise the importance of understanding and addressing underlying barriers to attendance before considering legal action.

PUNCTUALITY

It is important that pupils are punctual so that they do not miss out of the beginning of each school day. This time can be important because information is often given out which allows for the smooth running of the day and helps pupils feel part of the school community. The school day usually starts with the teaching of the core subjects of English and maths so missing this time has an increased impact on academic attainment.

- The school opens at 8.45 a.m. and pupils should enter from this time onwards. It is essential that your child is ready for registration at 8.55 am prompt.

If you have any queries or require further information please do not hesitate to contact us on **01827 872207** or email head2032@welearn365.com

Hurley Primary School, Heanley Lane, Hurley, Nr Atherstone, North Warwickshire, CV9 2HY

