

Portway Junior School

Attendance & Punctuality Policy

Section 1 - Rationale:

At Portway Junior School, we believe that for a child to reach their full educational achievement, a high level of school attendance is essential.

We are committed to providing an education of the highest quality for all of our pupils and endeavour to provide an environment where all pupils feel valued and welcome. Parents and pupils play a part in making our school successful. Every child has the 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 we offer, it is vital that children arrive at school on time every day 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 high achievement and attendance above 95%.

Regular attenders:

- make better progress, both socially and academically;
- find school routines, school work and friendships easier to cope with;
- find learning more satisfying;
- are more successful in transferring between primary school and secondary school.

Section 2 - Operating the Policy:

2.1. Promoting Good Attendance

The foundation for good attendance is a strong partnership between our school, parents and our children. It is our duty to consistently strive to achieve a goal of 100% attendance for all children.

Our expectations of good attendance, link to our Behavioural Values of being Ready, Respectful and Safe so that children are ready to learn and show this by being present in school and arriving on time.

To help us all to focus on this we will:

- provide information on all matters relating to attendance in regular newsletters, communications and bulletins
- monitor school attendance each term and report to governing body at least annually

- report to parents annually on how their child is performing in school and what their attendance and punctuality rate is;
- monitor the attendance and punctuality of each child and speak with parents at parent's consultations if individual attendance falls below 95% or lateness to school is having a detrimental impact on the child or others in the child's class.
- set attendance targets (as needed) for school and children
- send follow up letters where attendance and punctuality do not show signs of improvement.
- arrange face to face meetings with parents when the attendance continues to be below the 95% expectation without indications that it is improving.

2.2. Roles and Responsibilities:

Responsibilities of the School's Attendance Leaders (Headteacher/Senior Admin Assistant/ Family Support Worker)

- oversee, direct and co-ordinate the school's work in promoting regular and improved attendance
- ensure the Attendance Policy is consistently applied throughout the school.
- meet twice per ½ term to discuss attendance and lateness of pupils to ensure concerns are identified at an early stage
- inform parents where attendance falls below 95%
- ensure support is put in place to address any difficulties
- arrange meetings with parents/guardians where attendance falls below 90%
- inform social workers of attendance concerns and absences for children on Child Protection (CP) plans, Children in Need (CiN) plans or Looked after Children (LAC)
- liaise and refer to Hampshire County Council Legal Intervention Team (as necessary)
- issue Penalty Code Notices for unauthorised absences in line with local authority guidelines
- record attendance concerns, actions and outcomes on CPOMs.

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 Classroom Staff:

- ensure that all children are registered accurately
- promote & reward good attendance at all appropriate opportunities.
- liaise with the Headteacher and Attendance Leaders on matters of attendance and punctuality
- communicate any concerns or underlying problems that may account for a child's absence.
- record any attendance or punctuality concerns on CPOMs

Responsibilities of Admin Staff:

- record any contact from parents about absence
- liaise with staff regarding attendance as needed
- produce individual and group reports when needed
- follow up all non-reported absences by 10am and any LAC/CP/CiN children by 9.30am before notifying Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSLs)

Responsibilities of Children:

- attend every day unless they are ill or have an authorised absence.
- arrive at school on time.
- attend all registrations and lessons on time.

- take responsibility for registering at the school office if they are late or leaving the school site during school hours.

Responsibilities of Parents and Carers:

Ensuring a child's regular attendance at school is a parent/carer's legal responsibility (1996 Education Act) and permitting absence from school that is not authorised by the school creates an offence in law.

Parents will:

- inform the school by 9am on the first day of absence by phone, school office email or in person
- inform the school of any planned absences well in advance.
- support the school's aim for their child to achieve a goal of 100% attendance each year
- ensure their child arrives promptly for the start of the day at 8.50am and is collected at 3.20pm
- make sure that any absence is clearly accounted for by phone, email or in person on the first and subsequent days of absence (unless notified of a longer illness on day 1)
- avoid taking their child out of school for non-urgent medical or dental appointments.
- avoid collecting their child early from school unless it is for an exceptional circumstance
- only request a leave of absence during term time if it is for an exceptional circumstance

Section 3 - Attendance:

3.1. 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 beginning of the afternoon session at 1.00 pm.

3.2. Lateness /Punctuality

It is extremely important that children arrive at school on time so that they can begin their learning alongside their peers. The start of a lesson is often a time when important information is shared, new learning takes place and activities are explained. Lateness can be detrimental, not only to the child, but also to the rest of the class who can become distracted from their learning.

- The school gates are open from 8am and classroom doors open at 8:45am. **Pupils are expected to be in school by 8:50am sharp. Morning registration closes at 8:50am.**
- All lateness is recorded daily. This information will be required by the courts, should a prosecution for non-attendance or lateness be necessary.
- Arrival before the close of registers is marked as 'L'. After the close of registration will be marked as unauthorised absence code 'L' in line with Local Authority and Department for Education (DfE) guidance. This mark shows them to be on site, but is legally recorded as an absence.
- If a child 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. Children should only be absent for the least amount of time required to attend the appointment.

Pupils who are consistently late are disrupting not only their own education but also that of other pupils. On-going and repeated lateness is considered as **unauthorised absence and will be subject to legal action.** (see section 6 for further detail).

Parents/carers of children 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 will be invited to attend the school and discuss the problem. Support may be offered as appropriate, including an offer to work with the school's Family Support Worker.

If the support offered is declined or not taken seriously and a child has 10 or more sessions (equivalent to 5 days) of unauthorised absence due to lateness recorded in any 10 week period, 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 (See section 6 of this policy for further detail).

3.3. Collecting children at the end of the day

The school day ends at 3.20pm and children should be collected promptly from their classrooms unless arrangements have been made to meet parents elsewhere onsite or they walk home.

Children who are not collected by 3.30pm, will attend PortwayPlus+ afterschool childcare and the cost of the session will be passed onto the parent.

If children are regularly collected late at the end of the school day, this information will be recorded on CPOMS and shared with the Family Support Worker/DSL and/or allocated social worker (if relevant).

3.4. What to do if my child is absent?

First Day Absence

A child not attending school is considered to be 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 by 9:00am on the first day of absence; (Messages can be left at any time on the school answerphone service.)
- Or, you can call into school and report the absence directly to office staff.
- If no contact is made then this will be recorded on the school attendance system as unauthorised

If your child is absent we will:

- Contact you by email and phone if we have not heard from you by 9am. This is because we have a duty to ensure your child's safety as well as their regular school attendance
- Carry out a visit to home address
- Make contact with other emergency contacts listed on our system
- Invite you in to discuss the situation if absences persist;
- Refer the matter to the Hampshire's Legal Intervention Team if unauthorised absence falls below 90%
- Notify Hampshire County Council when a child reaches 15 days absence due to illness (this does not have to be consecutive)

Third Day Absence

Please Note: If your child is not seen and contact has not been established with you or any of the named parent/carers after three days of absence the school is required to start a 'child missing in education' procedure, as set down by Hampshire County Council Guidance. We will make all reasonable enquiries to establish contact with parents and the child including emergency contacts on our system. This will include a visit to the home address.

Ten Day's 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. We ask parents to support us to help you and your child by making sure we always have an up to date contact number and address details.

Continued or Ongoing Absence

If your child misses 10% or 3 weeks or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason, they are defined as **persistent absentees**. Where this absence is authorised the school will:

- Monitor the attendance and punctuality of each of these children during the following academic year and speak with parents at parent consultations if individual attendance has fallen below 90% or lateness to school has had a detrimental impact on the child or the child's class.
- Send follow up letters where attendance and punctuality do not show signs of improvement.
- Arrange face to face meetings with parents when the attendance continues to be below the 90% expectation.
- We reserve the right to unauthorise sickness absence below 90% without evidence such as letter/text of doctor appointments, prescription notices, etc.

We monitor all absences thoroughly and all attendance data is shared with the Local Authority and the Department for Education. If your child has had an absence and their attendance level is falling towards 90% we will contact you and support you to take steps to improve this ongoing situation.

For national guidance refer to:

1. 'School attendance' 2015 located at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-attendance>

2. National Association of Headteachers guidance document on '**Authorised Absence**' 2014

<http://www.naht.org.uk/welcome/news-and-media/key-topics/parents-and-pupils/naht-issues-news-guidance-on-authorised-absence/>

For county advice and guidance refer to:

1. Guidance on recording absence

<http://documents.hants.gov.uk/childrens-services/HIAS/Promotingpupilattendanceandrecordingabsence-maindocument.pdf>

2. Guidance on approval of '**Extended leave of absence**' see county guidance

<http://www3.hants.gov.uk/education/hias/learning-behaviour-attendance/lba-resources-for-schools/atten-guidance/attendance-guidance-for-schools.htm>

Absent to attend medical or dental appointments

In the event a medical or dental appointment is during school hours, children should only be absent for the least amount of time necessary to attend the appointment. We expect children to be present before or after appointments to avoid whole day absences if they are well enough and there is no medical reason to be absent. If children are absent unnecessarily this will be unauthorised and coded 'O'.

Section 4 - Request for Leave of Absence:

Request for Leave of Absence:

Amendments to school attendance regulations were updated and enforced from September 2013: **The regulations state that Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances.** Exceptional circumstances are principally defined as rare, significant, or unavoidable and that the event could not reasonably be scheduled at another time. e.g. A parent is in the armed forces and is on tour during the school holidays. The Headteacher can determine the length of the authorised absence as well as whether absence is authorised at all. There is 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 fill in an application form in advance and before making any travel arrangements. As authorised absence will only be approved in very exceptional circumstances then as much detail needs to be recorded. If needed, parents will be asked to attend a meeting to discuss the request.

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, parents will be issued with a fixed-penalty fine, or other legal action in accordance 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 support 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, an absence 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.

The headteacher 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.

Section 6 - 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.

6.1. Legal Measures for tackling persistent absence or lateness

Hampshire County Council will use the full range of legal measures to secure good attendance. Legal measures will only be considered through a referral by our school to Hampshire's Legal Intervention Team where:

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 are 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

6.2. Legal Measures for absence taken when the headteacher has declined parent/carers request for leave of absence

Where a pupil has unauthorised absence due to either:

1. non approval of a parent/carer's request for leave of absence or
2. a holiday that has been taken without permission and the unauthorised absence is for 10 or more sessions (5 days) in any 100 possible school sessions then a penalty notice for non-attendance will be issued

Where a child has **unauthorised absence** our 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

<http://www3.hants.gov.uk/education/hias/learning-behaviour-attendance/attendance-guidance-for-parents/possible-penalties.htm>

The code of conduct states that:

Schools or Hampshire Local Authority 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
- 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 the attendance then a single Penalty Notice is issued for either:

1. **10 sessions of unauthorised absence or lateness in any 10 week school period**
2. **1 or more sessions of unauthorised absence during a public exam, formal school assessment or testing where dates are published in advance.**

Parents and 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, Hampshire County Council will decide whether a penalty notice is issued **to one or more parent/carers** for each child. **N.B** 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.

If the fine is unpaid, or indeed if any subsequent holiday requests are submitted to the school at any time within the student's school career from Year 1 to Year 11, then the school will make a referral to the local authority for their consideration, and each parent could receive a maximum fine of £2,500, a community order or a jail sentence of up to 3 months. The court also issues parents/guardians with a Parenting Order.

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.

For further information parents/carers can request a leaflet from their school and should visit Hampshire County Councils website at:

<http://www3.hants.gov.uk/education/hias/learning-behaviour-attendance/attendance-guidance-for-parents/possible-penalties.htm>

Leavers

If a child is leaving Portway Junior School (other than when transferring to secondary school), parents/carers are asked to provide the following information (where applicable) **in writing** to the school office:

- the date of the move
- new home address and contact telephone numbers
- name of the child's new school and the start date when known

If a child leaves Portway Junior School and we do not have the above information, then the child is considered to be a 'Child Missing in Education'. This requires schools and Local Authorities to carry out investigations to try and locate the child, which includes liaising with Children's Services, the Police and other agencies.

Absence through child participation in public performances, including theatre, film or TV work & Modelling.

Parents/carers can request 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. Any absence recorded as part of a child's participation in a public performance is recorded with 'C' code; an authorised absence.

Absence through competing at regional, county or national level for Sport

Parents/carers can request leave of absence from school for their child to take part in regional, county, national and international events and competitions. It remains at the Headteacher's discretion whether these absences are authorised and parents will be expected to provide details about the nature and frequency of absences and how learning will continue.

Permission for a child to leave early or arrive late to attend coaching/training sessions is also at the discretion of the Headteacher and is unlikely to be approved if it results in too much school time missed unless the sports club or association is providing an education tutor as part of their coaching.