

# Attendance Policy



## OUR MISSION STATEMENT

We are a successful, community school with a strong family feel. We nurture and inspire everyone in our community to be the best they can. With strong traditional values and high expectations, we ignite a passion for life-long learning and enable our children to be confident, aspirational and creative learners.

# ATTENDANCE POLICY

This document provides a guide for staff and parents of pupils at Horningham Primary School.

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***Working together to  
create a positive culture  
towards school punctuality  
and attendance.***

<b>Senior School Attendance Champion:</b>	<b>Odele Lapham</b>
<b>Nominated Lead Attendance Governor:</b>	<b>Stephanie Storrar</b>

This Attendance Policy is based on ['Working together to improve school attendance: Statutory guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities'](#) (August 2024)

## Rationale

At Horningham Primary School we recognise that excellent education is vital to the lives of all children and to our society as a whole. Whilst it is known that the life chances of children may not be equal from the outset of their lives for various reasons, education can help to redress this imbalance and help to ensure that every child has the chance to fulfil their potential.

We understand that regular attendance is the key to enabling children and young people to maximise the educational opportunities available to them and become emotionally resilient, confident adults who are able to realise their full potential and make a positive contribution to their community. School is the foundation for preparing children and young people for life as adults. 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.

For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend school regularly and punctually. We believe that parents/carers and the school community share the responsibility for supporting and promoting excellent school attendance and punctuality for all.

This policy represents our commitment to support our pupils to achieve 97% attendance. It sets out the principles, procedures and practice the school will undertake. Strategies to improve attendance and the benefits of good attendance. The sanctions and possible legal consequences of poor attendance and punctuality are also detailed. This policy will be reviewed, and amended as necessary and published annually in accordance with current legislation and guidance.

## The Department for Education and The Local Authority

The Department for Education (DfE) recognises that some pupils find it harder than others to attend school and that the best outcomes for pupils will be achieved when all parties work together to secure excellent attendance.

In February 2024 the DfE published new guidance "[Working Together to Improve School attendance: Guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities](#)". The guidance is statutory and effective from 19 August 2024.

Research suggests that a pupil who misses 17 days of school a year will drop 1 GCSE grade in attainment (DfE)

- 95% equates to half a day off every two weeks in a school year
- 90% equates to a day off every two weeks in a school year
- 85% equates to one and a half days off every two weeks in a school year
- 80% equates to one whole day off every week in a school year
- A secondary age pupil whose attendance is 80% will have missed ONE WHOLE YEAR of education by the time they leave school

*"Better attendance at school by pupils improves their educational achievements and, in turn, their lives and prospects. Even a small reduction in absence would result in many pupils receiving greater benefit from their education."* The National Audit Office.

The guidance is clear that **improving attendance is everybody's business**. It provides a framework that local authorities, schools, governing bodies and trusts must have regard to in order to support and maintain high levels of school attendance.

The Local Authority (LA) supports the principles, practice and procedures outlined in the DfE Working Together to Improve School Attendance document. We believe pupils can only take full advantage of their education by regular and punctual attendance at school or otherwise to ensure continuity of learning.

The Education Welfare Service, for the LA, has the responsibility to implement the statutory duties in relation to school attendance. It acknowledges that both the LA and schools must apply their powers fairly and consistently.

The Education Welfare Service has a key function in working closely with schools, families and teams within the Children's Services and other agencies, both statutory and voluntary, in order to promote excellent levels of attendance and punctuality at school or otherwise.

The Education Welfare Service acknowledges and supports the equal opportunity policies of the Council alongside Equalities legislation and recognises the need to strive against discrimination in all forms.

## Aims and Expectations

We believe that the foundation for good attendance is based on a strong partnership between school, parents and the child. This includes clear communication with parents and pupils regarding our expectations of what is required to secure excellent attendance for pupils at our school.

### At Horningsham Primary School we will:

- Apply a consistent framework to improve attendance for all pupils
- Provide information about attendance through regular communications through newsletters/website
- Fulfil the statutory duties in relation to school attendance
- Send home 3 seasonal termly attendance reports for your child
- Work with you and your child to achieve maximum attendance by providing support, advice and guidance
- Maintain a systematic approach to gathering and analysing attendance data
- Continue an effective partnership with the Education Welfare Officer and other agencies

### At Horningsham Primary School we expect:

- Pupils to arrive at school every day on time, and in a state of readiness for learning
- Parents to work with the school to ensure that their child attends regularly and punctually and prepared
- Honesty from parents about any leave of absence

## The Legal Framework

The law states that ensuring a child receives education is a parent/carer's legal responsibility (Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act). For most parents this means registering their child at a school. Permitting absence from school that is not authorised by the school creates an offence in law and parents/carers who do not secure their child's regular attendance at school may be referred to the Wiltshire Education Welfare Service for a formal legal intervention.

To avoid this happening we will work with parents and carers to address irregular or poor attendance to ensure full-time attendance.

Authorised absences are those that have been agreed by the Headteacher.

Unauthorised absences are those that have not been agreed by the Headteacher.

By law, schools are required to:

- Take an attendance register twice a day; at the start of the morning session and once during the afternoon
- Report to the LA pupils who fail to attend regularly or who are absent for 10 consecutive school days or more without known reason

## Partnership Working

At Horningsham Primary School attendance is the business of everyone in our school community. The governors and all staff are committed to supporting all pupils to achieve excellent attendance and regularly review school procedures and strategies to support this.

We expect that parents and carers will work with us if school absence becomes a concern. Parents and carers can help to promote positive attendance by working in partnership with us to:

- Ensuring children arrive at school on time, before registers close, appropriately dressed and in a 'condition to learn' (i.e. not too tired or too hungry) and with the right equipment for the day
- help their child gain an appreciation of the importance of attending school regularly
- take an active interest in their child's education
- work with other agencies (as and when appropriate) to resolve problems relating to non-attendance or which may have a negative impact on their child's attendance

## Procedures

Horningsham Primary School Timings	
<b>8.40am</b>	Start of the School Day
<b>8.45am</b>	Morning Register Opens
<b>8.50am</b>	Gate Closes
<b>9.15am</b>	Morning Register Closes
<b>12.40pm</b>	Afternoon Register Opens
<b>1.10pm</b>	Afternoon Register Closes
<b>3.15pm</b>	End of the School Day

Pupils who arrive at school after the gate closes at 8.50am will be marked as late. Parents must bring them to the school office to sign their child into school and provide a reason for being late.

Parents must inform us of an absence or delay to arrival at school by 9.15am by either emailing [parents@horningsham.wilts.sch.uk](mailto:parents@horningsham.wilts.sch.uk) or calling 01985 844342 to speak to our admin team or leave a message on the absence voicemail. Parents must share details about the child's absence.

Requesting a Leave of Absence – a Leave of Absence (LOA) form needs to be submitted to the school office prior to the absence where possible.

Absence is recorded as unauthorised until a satisfactory reason is provided. If the reason given is not satisfactory and/or evidence of the reason cannot be provided, the absence will be coded as unauthorised. Ongoing and repeated lateness after the close of registration is considered as unauthorised absence and may be taken into account if any legal action is taken.

## **Safeguarding**

The school takes the safety of all children very seriously and if a child does not come in to school we must have a valid reason provided for their absence. We need to be sure that a child has not left home in the morning and failed to arrive at school. We will contact parents if we have not been informed of a reason for a child's absence.

On the first day of absence, if we have not heard from you by 9.15am we will contact parent/carers to find out the reason for the child's absence. We will continue to try to contact you until we have been provided with a reason for their absence. This is a safeguarding measure to ensure that the child is safe.

If after 3 days of absence, your child has not been seen and no contact has been made with the school, a home visit will be made by school staff, to ascertain the safety and well-being of your child and establish the reason for absence from school.

After 10 days of unexplained absence and no contact with the school, we are obliged to notify the Local Authority. The Local Authority will follow their procedures for Children Missing from Education (CME) and parents may expect contact and visits from an Education Welfare Officer to ascertain the wellbeing and safety of your child.

## **Punctuality**

The school promotes punctuality as a part of being virtuous and having good manners, we actively work to build a strong culture of punctuality now and preparing them for life in the future when they are adults. We expect our parents to share this mindset and actively work to ensure that they too instil punctuality in their children through encouragement and by example.

The school therefore discourages late arrivals by pupils for these reasons and also as a late arrival may seriously disrupt not only their continuity but that of others.

It is the legal responsibility of the parent to ensure that their child attends school regularly and arrives promptly. Irregular attendance or late arrival can have a detrimental effect on a child's learning and confidence. Late arrival means that a child misses the start of the day when the morning's lesson is introduced and explained. Friendships and social groupings can also be affected. Arriving late after the register closes without a valid reason will result in an unauthorised absence being recorded.

Any child arriving after the gates close will be marked as 'late' in the register. After 8.50am the child enters school through the main entrance door via the school office and not from the playground to class. Any child arriving after 9.15 am will be recorded as an unauthorised absence unless a reason is provided. The Headteacher will investigate persistent lateness, to see if school can offer any support with getting their child to school on time each day.

## **Absence due to ill health**

Parents are asked to inform the school if their child is unwell by 9.15am at the latest on the first day of absence (by phone using the absence message box option). We ask that parents phone school on the first and subsequent days of absence to keep school informed in cases of ongoing absence.

If no contact has been made by 9.15 am when the registers close, the school office will phone the parents. If we are unable to contact the parents and have no letter explaining the absence it will be recorded as unauthorised. A letter from the GP may be requested if a pupil has high levels of authorised absence through sickness and parents will be invited to an informal meeting with the headteacher. Parents may be asked for proof of illness if staff have a valid reason to suspect that the illness may not be the reason for the absence.

## **Leave of Absence Requests**

In accordance with Department for Education statutory guidance, leave of absence from school may only be authorised in exceptional circumstances. Examples of types of absence that are not considered reasonable and which will not be authorised under any circumstances are: birthdays, staying at home because other members in the family are unwell, day trips and holidays in term time, truancy, being tired.

Parents are required to complete a leave of absence request form, which must outline the exceptional circumstances for which the leave has been requested.

Requests for a leave of absence in exceptional circumstances need to be submitted 2 weeks before the absence giving the Headteacher time to consider the application. We do not give retrospective agreement for leave of absence so any absence not advised to the school in advance will not be authorised (unless in an emergency situation).

### **Dental/medical treatment**

We request that parents try to make any routine appointments outside of school hours where possible. Parents must fill in a leave of absence form in advance of known appointments. School will complete and return to the parent. Any scheduled appointment letters are copied and maintained with the request form.

### **Holiday absences**

The school does not authorise any holidays during term time. A request for a leave of absence must only be considered if;

- the parent the child normally lives with applies in advance for the absence; and
- there are **exceptional circumstances** for the absence.

Any pupil whose parent has requested a term time holiday may be required to provide medical evidence if they are ill in the period directly before or after the dates advised to school or if the absence is immediately before or after a designated school holiday period.

Parents/carers may be asked to provide evidence if a pupil does not return to school on the agreed date following a holiday as a result of delayed or cancelled flights or other travel arrangements.

### **Other absences**

Permission for special occasions, such as funerals, weddings, must be requested in writing in advance by filling in a Leave of Absence request form. The headteacher will review the request and return the form with the outcome to the parent.

When receiving leave of absence requests, we review the pupil's current attendance data. Leave of absence requests aim to be returned to parents within two weeks of receiving them.

### **Collecting your child from school**

We ask that all parents/carers ensure that they collect their children from school on time. The school day ends at 3.15pm (we also run an after school club programme for those who sign up in advance).

If parents are unable to collect their child on time/as usual then they will need to communicate the alternative arrangements/expected time of arrival by contacting the school office prior to 3.00pm. We will not release children to other adults who we have not been advised of by the child's parent.

If children remain uncollected from school, the protocol is that the school should:

- Contact parents or carers
- Call all contacts on the child's contact list so that any authorised adult can come and collect the child
- Keep records of late collections

### **Monitoring attendance, reporting and support for families**

Our school works in collaboration with the Local Authority and holds termly targeted support meetings with our designated Education Welfare Officer who also conducts register checks. Governors also regularly review attendance data to identify trends and patterns and challenge and support school systems. The school monitors attendance data regularly to identify pupils with low attendance, a pattern of absences that may lead to Persistent Absence (PA), Severe Absence (SA), patterns and levels of broken weeks, lateness, authorised absence and unauthorised absence and reasons for absence.

A pupil is classed as a persistent absentee (PA) when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year and as a severe absentee (SA) if they miss more than 50% of schooling for whatever reason, whether it be authorised or unauthorised, or a mixture of both. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to a child's educational prospects and we need parents' full support and encouragement to tackle it. PA and SA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully and we combine this with tracking academic progress to assess the effect on the pupil's attainment.

School provides parents with a termly attendance report (3 times per year) showing their child's attendance and punctuality for that term as well as a cumulative report of their attendance from September. Attendance meetings are convened for any family with persistent punctuality or attendance issues to explore the reasons and ways the school can support the family. Each parent/ carer has online secure access to their child's live attendance percentage via eSchools.

The Senior Attendance Champion is responsible for putting in place actions for each pupil of concern. Initially, we will try to resolve the problem with parents/carers and this may involve requesting medical evidence in order for the school to authorise any further absence due to ill health and/or an attendance meeting with a member of school staff where we can discuss the barriers to attendance and provide help and support to address that. We may ask parents to agree to an Attendance Contract which details how we will work together to improve attendance. However, if absence continues and the support we have offered is not working we may make a referral to the Local Authority for additional intervention.

We will contact parents to address and improve attendance where:

- A pupil's attendance falls below 95%
- A pupil has more than 3 weeks where they haven't achieved full attendance in a term.
- A pupil has more than 5 recorded lates in a term
- A pupil has a regular pattern of absence

If no improvement is seen following school support, then a meeting with the Education Welfare Officer will be organised.

## **Improving and maintaining good attendance**

At this school we promote the importance of attendance and punctuality for all pupils. We are a caring school community where the needs of all pupils are carefully considered. Horningsham Primary School provides and promotes a welcoming and positive atmosphere so that pupils feel safe, and know that their presence is valued.

If there are specific issues that might impact on your child's attendance it is important that you let us know so that we can support you and your child.

There may be times when we ask other agencies to become involved to help us understand and work with you to encourage regular school attendance (e.g. Wiltshire Council, school health, Ethnic Minority and Traveller Achievement Service, Medical Needs Education and Reintegration Service). If we feel that this would be helpful we will discuss with you first.

We are very keen to listen to the views of children and parents with regard to attendance matters and we welcome any feedback, which helps us to shape how we work with families to address attendance issues.

## **The National Framework for Penalty Notices**

The Department for Education has issued a national framework and the Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2024 which govern how and when penalty notices may be used. All local authorities and schools must work within the new framework.

This means that whenever a pupil accrues 10 sessions (half days) of unauthorised absence in a 10 week period a school must consider whether a penalty notice should be issued. The unauthorised absence can relate to unexplained absence, absence that the school has not agreed to including for a holiday in term time or a pupil being late after the register closes.

Where a pupil has accrued 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in 10 weeks that is NOT related to a holiday in term time we may issue you with a Notice to Improve. This will provide you with an opportunity to engage with support to improve your child's attendance. If support is not working then we will refer the matter to the local authority who may decide to issue a penalty notice to you.

Where there are 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a 10 week period as a result of a holiday taken in term time the absence will be notified to the local authority who may issue a penalty notice without further warning.

Each parent can receive a penalty notice for each child that has unauthorised absence. For example 2 parents with 2 children who take a holiday in term time can expect to receive 4 penalty notices.

The new framework allows for parents to receive a maximum of 2 penalty notices for each of their children in a 3 year period.

The **first penalty notice** issued in respect of an individual child will be in the **sum of £160 to be paid within 28 days**, reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days.

The **second penalty notice** issued in respect of the same child within 3 years shall be in the **sum of £160**.

If the national threshold is met on a **third or subsequent occasion in 3 years** then the **local authority may present the matter to the magistrates' court**.

or

The local authority may initiate court action under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996, which could lead to fines of up to £2,500, imposition of orders such as Parenting Orders or even imprisonment.

or

In some cases, action may be taken under the Children Act 1989 to protect the welfare and development of the child.

## Monitoring and Evaluation

The Attendance Policy will be reviewed annually by governors and school staff to ensure that it continues to meet the needs of the school community. We will ensure that the policy reflects current DfE and Local Authority guidance so that parents may be assured of the standards that we strive to achieve.

## Communicating the contents of the Attendance Policy

All new parents are introduced to the policy and information on attendance in the induction process. It is also accessible on the school website.

School attendance will feature attendance in the school newsletter and we will advise parents of any changes to policy and procedures.

### Other Related Policies:

- Admissions Policy
- Behaviour and Exclusions Policy
- GDPR Policies
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- SEND Policy

# Horningsham Primary School

## Leave of Absence Request Form



Taking your child out of school during term time may impact on your child's progress.  
Please refer to our Attendance Policy on our website for further details.

Absences may only be authorised at the discretion of the Headteacher in **EXCEPTIONAL** circumstances. Circumstances which are notified to the school or Local Authority **after** a decision has been made by the Headteacher will not be considered. Therefore, please be certain to provide details of the exceptional circumstances relating to your application below and attach any supporting evidence. Penalty Notices may be issued for 10 sessions of unauthorised Leave of Absence during term time.

Name of child:			
Child's Date of birth:		Class	Robins      Woodpeckers      Owls

Date of first day of absence:		Date of Return to school:		Number of school days requested:		Number of sessions requested: (2 sessions per day)	
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Exceptional Circumstances (reason) for Leave of Absence during term time:
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Parent/Carer completing this form:		Date form Completed:	
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For school use only:

Current Attendance %:	Total sessions absent this academic year:		Total unauthorised absence this year:	
Request authorised:		Reason for visit not being authorised:		
Yes	No			
Signed by Headteacher:			Date signed:	
Attendance code to be used:			Total unauthorised sessions:	

*Please be aware that 10 unauthorised sessions may result in a penalty notice. Please see our Attendance Policy for further information. If we have concerns about your child's attendance then we will be in touch to organise a meeting to help you in supporting your child's school attendance.*