



High Wych CE Primary School



*SUCCESS AND EXCELLENCE WITHIN A CARING CHRISTIAN
ENVIRONMENT*

High Wych Child Attendance Policy

Policy Review	
Staff Consulted	October 2024
Approved by Governing Body	24 th October 2024
Next Review Date	October 2025

High Wych Child Attendance Policy

1. Aims

To ensure:

- all pupils of statutory school age have an equal right to access an education in accordance with the National Curriculum regulations.
- that no pupil is deprived of their opportunity to receive an education that meets their needs and personal development.

2. Promoting Regular Attendance

At High Wych school, we believe in developing good patterns of attendance and set high expectations for the attendance and punctuality for all our pupils from the outset. It is a central part of our school's vision, values, ethos and day to day life. We recognise the strong connections between attendance, attainment, safeguarding and wellbeing.

3. Parent/Carer Responsibilities

3.1 Parents are responsible in law for ensuring that their children of compulsory school age receive an efficient education suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs that they may have. Most parents fulfil this responsibility by registering their children at a school.

3.2 Parents whose children are registered at a school are responsible for ensuring that their children attend and stay at school.

3.3 Parents should: -

- ensure that their children arrive at school on time, appropriately dressed and ready to learn on a regular and full-time basis
- instil in their children an appreciation of the importance of attending school regularly
- impress upon their children the need to observe the school's rules
- take an active interest in their children's school career, praising and encouraging good work and behaviour and attending parents' evenings and other relevant meetings
- work in partnership with their children's school to resolve issues which may lead to non-attendance
- notify their children's school if they are absent. This should be done on the first day of absence. They should also provide an explanation for the absence.
- avoid arranging medical/dental appointments during school hours
- not book holidays during term time

3.4 Parents/carers should ensure that their child arrives at school in time for the start of the school day (between 8.40-8.50am). If a child is late, they should report directly to the school office.

3.5 Requests for leave should be made at least 4 school weeks in advance and will be considered on an individual basis by the Head Teacher following a meeting with the Deputy Head. Parents/carers should not expect leave of absence to be granted automatically. Parents/carers are advised not to make any arrangements until the request for leave of absence has been considered.

3.6 Leave of absence **should be avoided at all times** but especially should not be requested: during the month prior to and week of Key Assessments (currently held during May/June); □ the beginning or end of a school term.

These will be recorded as an unauthorised absence.

Please always be honest about absences as this sets a good example to your child. Absence codes can and will be changed should further information come to light.

4 School Responsibilities

4.1 The school will record and monitor attendance in accordance both with the statutory requirements and with the principle that regular, uninterrupted attendance is vital to a child's educational progress.

4.2 Registers will be called twice daily at the start of each morning and afternoon session. Any child arriving after the register has been called will be recorded as late for that session. If a child arrives after the register has closed but their parent/carer provides a reason that the school think is acceptable, they are marked as authorized absence for that session. If they are late and fail to provide an acceptable reason they will be marked as unauthorised absence for the whole of that session.

4.3 Teachers will complete registers in accordance with the guidance they have been given. The Deputy Head Teacher will monitor registers weekly in order to ensure that they are being satisfactorily maintained and to ensure that any potential attendance difficulties are identified at an early stage.

4.4 Should a class teacher have particular concerns about an individual child's attendance or punctuality the Head Teacher and Deputy Head should be informed. The Deputy Head Teacher will alert the Head Teacher if any child's attendance falls below the school's minimum attendance percentage, currently 95% although we aim for all children to achieve at least 96%. Strategies will then be discussed to support the family to improve their child's attendance e.g. parent letters/phone calls/meetings, referral to Aspects/SENCO/GP/follow up meetings with Attendance Officer etc.

4.5 If a child is absent the office staff will select the correct code for that absence. The school attendance admin assistant will aim to contact by telephone, any parent who has failed to inform the school of the reason for an absence (first day calling - the primary aim being to check on the safety of the child). This phone call should be done, wherever possible, **by 10.00am** and continue until an answer is received.

4.6 Only notes concerning absences about which there are concerns/queries should be brought to the attention of the Head Teacher and Deputy Head (who may then choose to contact the parents/carers concerned).

4.7 If an absence is likely to continue for an extended period or be a repetitive absence (such as necessary stays in hospital), the school will contact the Attendance Improvement Officer so that arrangements can be made. Each school is linked to a Hertfordshire Attendance Officer who receives regular updates about any of our children who are causing concern.

4.8 The Deputy Head Teacher will review attendance data weekly and will use this data during meetings with the school's Attendance Officer and Governing Body. These meetings will agree the attendance thresholds and

targets for specific children and will identify respective tasks and follow-up actions for both the school and attendance service.

4.9 The school will employ a number of strategies to promote regular and punctual attendance:

- the Head Teacher, Deputy Head and class teachers will communicate regularly with parents/carers on attendance matters
- Parents will receive letters where attendance is causing concern and agree a meeting date to discuss where necessary with the Deputy Head - the following model is used:
 - Autumn 1st term - information of individual summary of attendance to be given out during parent's consultation if attendance is a concern (below 96%)
 - Autumn term - Letter will be received for attendance below 96%
 - Spring/Summer term - a meeting to discuss attendance with Deputy Head and Head Teacher.
- Children who have 100% attendance will receive an Excellence Certificate for Attendance, awarded at a Whole School Assembly at the end of each term
- 100% Attendance trophy to be given out weekly to the best class
- The Governing Body reserve the right to use Fixed Penalty Notices for persistent unauthorized absentees

4.10 Lateness/Punctuality of your child is recorded and where necessary, followed up. Children arriving between 8.50- 9.20am will be marked as late. Registers will close at 9.20 and children arriving after that they will be marked as absent for that session unless an acceptable reason is cited and approved by the Head Teacher.

5. Authorised or Unauthorised Absence:

Authorised absence is where the school has either given approval in advance for a pupil to be away or has accepted an explanation offered afterwards as a satisfactory reason for absence. All other absence must be regarded as **unauthorised**.

The following may be reasons for **authorising** absences.

- Unavoidable illness
- Close family bereavements
- Emergency medical and orthodontic appointments.
- Days of religious observance.
- Fixed term exclusion
- Permanent exclusion until removed from roll or re-instated.

6. School Attendance and the Law

New legislation was passed, The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 which introduced a National Framework in England. By law all children of compulsory school age must receive an appropriate full-time education (Education Act 1996). Parent/Carers have a legal duty to ensure their child attends school regularly at the school at which they are registered.

Parent/Carers may be recognised differently under education law, than under family law. Section 576 of the Education Act 1996 states that a 'parent', in relation to a child or young person, includes any person who is not a parent (from which can be inferred 'biological parent') but who has parental responsibility, or who has care of the child.

A person typically has care of a child or young person if they are the person with whom the child lives, either full or part time and who looks after the child, irrespective of what their biological or legal relationship is with the child.

7. National Framework for Penalty Notices

There is now a single consistent national threshold for when a penalty notice must be considered by all schools in England, of 10 sessions (usually equivalent to 5 school days) of unauthorised absence within a rolling 10 school week period. The 10 sessions of absence do not have to be consecutive and can be made up of a combination of any type of unauthorised absence (G, O and/or U coded within the school's registers). The 10-school week period can span different terms, school years or education settings.

Sanctions may include issuing each parent (for each child) with a Penalty Notice for £160, reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days (for the first offence). A second Penalty Notice issued within a three-year period will result in a fine of £160 per parent, per child. If a third offence is committed the matter may be referred to the local authority for consideration of prosecution via the Magistrates Court. If prosecution is instigated for irregular school attendance, each parent/carer may receive a fine of up to £2500 and/or up to 3 months in prison. If a parent/carer is found guilty in court, they will receive a criminal conviction.

Parents are invited to discuss Holidays in term time with the Deputy Head prior to applying for Holidays requests.

8. Additional Guidance

8.1 The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 set out the statutory requirements for schools. All references to family holidays and extended leave have been removed. **The amendments specify that headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are "exceptional circumstances" and they do not have any discretion to authorise up to ten days of absence each academic year.**

8.2 Term times are for education. This is the priority. Children and families have 175 days off school to spend time together, including weekends and school holidays. Heads will rightly prioritise attendance. The default school policy should be that absences will not be granted during term time and will only be authorised in exceptional circumstances.

8.3 At High Wych 'exceptional circumstances' will be interpreted as:

The fundamental principles for defining 'exceptional' are events that are "rare, significant, unavoidable and short". By 'unavoidable' we mean an event that could not reasonably be scheduled at another time, outside of school term time, regardless of who has planned or paid for the holiday or absence (including grandparents or other family or friends).

8.4 Absence for a bereavement of a close family member may be considered an exceptional circumstance but for the funeral service only, not extended leave.

8.5 The headteacher/school may discuss the leave of absence request with other education settings and/or the Local Authority to determine any exceptional circumstances.

8.6 Absences for important religious observances are often taken into account but only for the ceremony and travelling time, not extended leave. This is intended for one off situations rather than regular or recurring events.

8.6 Schools have a duty to make reasonable adjustments for students with special educational needs or disabilities.

8.7 Families may need time together to recover from trauma or crisis.

6. Review Date

This attendance policy will be reviewed every two years in line with county regulations.

7. Implementation

This policy received the full agreement of the *Governing Body* and was agreed at their meeting on 24th October 2024