



# The Federation of Elson and Gomer Infant Schools

## Attendance Policy

**Person(s) responsible for implementing and monitoring the policy: Executive Headteacher and Heads of Schools**

### **National guidance**

This policy was drawn up using the following National Guidance:

Section 175 of the Education Act 2002

Section 110 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998

DfE Guidance School Attendance (2014)

The Education (pupil registration) (England) (amendment) regulations 2013 2013 no. 756 and The Education (penalty notices) (England) (amendment) regulations 2013 2013 no. 757

### **Section 1:**

#### **Rationale / Statement of Intent:**

For a child to reach their full educational achievement it is essential that their maintain a high level of attendance and are punctual.

Optimum levels of attendance can only be achieved when responsibility is accepted and shared by all concerned – children, young people, school staff, governors and the Local Education Authority.

The Federation of Elson and Gomer Infant School is responsible for supporting the attendance of our pupils and for dealing with difficulties which may lead to non-attendance.

#### **To this end we:**

- Promote a welcoming atmosphere that makes children feel safe and valued
- Encourage good relationships between the school and parents
- Stress the importance of good attendance

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- Ensure that attendance is monitored effectively and absence followed up quickly
- Are sensitive to the needs of individual families

### **Good attendance is important because:**

- Statistics show a direct link between under-achievement and absence below 95%
- Regular attenders make better progress, both socially and academically
- Regular attenders find school routines, school work and friendships easier to cope with
- Regular attenders find learning more satisfying
- Regular attenders are more successful in transferring between primary school, secondary school, and higher education, employment or training

### **Section 2:**

#### **2.1 Promoting Good Attendance & Punctuality**

The foundation for good attendance is a strong partnership between the school, parents and the child. The Home/School agreement will contain details of how we will work with parents and our expectations of what parents will need to do to ensure their child achieves good attendance.

To help us all to focus on this we will:

- Provide information on all matters related to attendance in our regular school newsletters, school websites and the 'Attendance matters' leaflet issued jointly with the Junior school (Appendix C).
- Report on how your child is performing in school, their attendance and punctuality rate and how this relates to their achievements;
- Organise opportunities when parents, pupils and staff can work together on raising attendance.

#### **2.2 Roles and Responsibilities:**

##### **Responsibilities of the Executive Headteacher and Heads of Schools**

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The Senior Leadership Team will oversee, direct and co-ordinate the school's work in promoting regular and improved attendance and will ensure the Attendance Policy is consistently applied throughout the school. They will also ensure that attendance is both recorded accurately and analysed. They will ensure that attendance issues are identified at an early stage and that support is put in place to deal with any difficulties.

If absence is frequent or continuous, except where a child is clearly unwell, staff will discuss with parent/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 students are registered accurately
- Liaise with the Executive Headteacher and/or Heads of Schools on matters of attendance and punctuality and
- Communicate any concerns or underlying problems that may account for a child's absence.

### **Responsibilities of Parents and Carers:**

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

Parents will:

- Ensure their child attends every day unless they are ill or have an authorised absence.
- Ensure children arrive in school before the close of registers (see appendix A).
- Take responsibility for registering at the Reception Desk if they are late or are leaving the school site during school hours.
- Inform the school by 10am on the first day of absence and any subsequent days with the appropriate information.
- Inform the school of any planned absences well in advance.
- Support the school with their child in aiming for 100% attendance each year.
- Ensure that non-urgent medical or dental appointments are made out of school time.



- Only request for leave of absence if it is for an exceptional circumstance.

### **Section 3:**

#### **3.1. Recording Attendance:**

Legally the register must be marked twice daily. This is once at the start of the school day and again for the afternoon session (See appendix A).

A child not attending school is considered a **safeguarding** matter. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required.

All attendance registers are checked daily. It is the parents' responsibility to contact the school as stated above, to report an absence. However, if absence is found that cannot be accounted for the school will make every effort to contact the family. This is because we have a duty to ensure your child's safety as well as their regular school attendance.

If your child is not seen and contact has not been established with you any of the named parent/carers after three days of absence the school is required to start a child missing in education procedures as set down by Hampshire County Council Guidance. We will make all reasonable enquires to establish contact with parents and the child including making enquires to known friends, wider family. If absence is unauthorised and falls below 90% this will be referred to Hampshire's Attendance Legal Panel.

#### **Ten Day's Absence**

We have a legal duty to report the absence of any pupils 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. So help us to help you and your child by making sure we always have an up to date contact number. There will be regular checks on telephone numbers throughout the year.

Absence for whatever reason disadvantages a child by creating gaps in his or her learning. Research shows these gaps affect attainment when attendance falls below 95%. As such we monitor all absence thoroughly and all attendance data is shared with the Local Authority and the Department for Education. If your child has had absence and their attendance level is falling towards 90% we will contact you to plan for improved.

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### **3.2. Lateness /Punctuality**

It is important to be on time at the start of the morning and afternoon school sessions and to lessons. The start of school is used to give out instructions or organise learning. If your child is late they can miss learning time with their class teacher and may cause disruption to the learning of others, and can be distressing for the child.

- All pupils are expected to be in school by the close of registration. Arrival after this time and up to 30 minutes after the close of registration will be marked as late (L).
- Persistent lateness may result in the school recording the lateness as unauthorised absence (U) and entered as “late but not authorised”.
- Repeated lateness is considered as **unauthorised absence and will be subject to legal action** (see section 6 for further detail).
- Any arrival after the time stated above is recorded as (U) unauthorised.
- All lateness is recorded daily. This information will be required by the courts, should a prosecution for non-attendance or lateness be necessary
- Arrival after the close of registration will be marked as unauthorised absence code ‘U’ in line with county and Department for Education (DfE) guidance. This mark shows them to be on site, but is legally recorded as an absence.
- If a pupil is late due to a medical appointment which has had to be made in school time, with proof of the medical appointment in the form of a letter from the clinic/ hospital the pupil will receive an authorised absence recorded as ‘M’.

Parents, guardians or carers of pupils 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, guardians or carers will be invited to attend the school and discuss the problem and support offered. If support is not appropriate or is declined and a child has 10 or more sessions of unauthorised absence due to lateness recorded in any 10 week period the school or the



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).

Please collect your child promptly at the end of the school day (Appendix A). Where late collection is persistent and/or significantly late, the school is obliged to take any uncollected pupil to a place of safety and share concerns as necessary with other agencies. The school may decide to place a child into the after school club and provide the parent/Carer with the bill.

#### **Section 4:**

##### **Request for Leave of Absence:**

Amendments to school attendance regulations were updated and enforced from September 2013: **(Pupil registration) (England) regulations state that Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances.** It is important to note that Headteachers can determine the length of the authorised absence as well as whether absence is authorised at all. The fundamental principles for defining 'exceptional' are rare, significant, or unavoidable which means the event could not reasonably be scheduled at another time. **There are no rules on this** as circumstances vary from school to school and family to family. There is however, 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 available from the school office at least 2 weeks prior to the absence and before making any travel arrangements.

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 parent/carers 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 help us by not taking children out during school time.**

#### **Section 5:**

##### **Understanding types of absence – Authorised & Unauthorised:**



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, absences 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. This includes:
  - parents giving their children permission to be off school unnecessarily such as for shopping, birthdays, to look after siblings
  - absences which have not been explained

A school 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.

### **Legal Measures for tackling persistent absence or lateness**

Hampshire Schools and Hampshire County Council will use the full range of legal measures to secure good attendance. Legal measures will only be considered through a referral to Hampshire's Attendance Legal Panels 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 in any continuous 100 session period, and parents are complicit in the child's absence.**

The following legal measures are for pupils of compulsory school age (the term after a child's 5<sup>th</sup> birthday) who are registered at a school:

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- Parenting contracts set at Education Planning Meetings
- Parenting orders
- Penalty notices
- Education Supervision Orders
- Prosecution

Where a child has **unauthorised absence** the 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>

### **Penalty Notices for non-attendance- Hampshire's Code of Conduct**

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 (codes G, U, or O on the register)
- 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 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.

### **Legal Measures for absence taken when the Executive Headteacher or Heads of Schools 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 (recorded as G) is for 10 or more sessions (5 days) in any 100 possible school sessions/10 week period then a penalty notice for non-attendance will be issued. Please note this may not be 10 consecutive weeks.

Parents and Carers will be warned of the likelihood of a penalty notice being issued for unauthorised absence through the leave of absence request form, and 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 the school or 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 PN 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 the Hampshire County Council will consider prosecution for the non-attendance. 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>

## **Section 7:**

### **7.1 Absence through child participation in Public Performances, including theatre, film or TV work & Modelling.**

Parents of a child performer can seek leave of absence from school for their child to take part in a performance. They must contact the Executive Headteacher/Heads of Schools 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 as C an authorised absence.

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## **7.2 Absence through competing at regional, county or national level for Sport.**

Parents of able sportsmen and women can seek leave of absence from school for their child to take part in a regional, county, national and international events and competitions. It is however, down to the Executive Headteachers'/Heads of Schools discretion whether to authorise this and they will wish to discuss with you the nature and frequency of the absence and how learning will continue if absence occurs. Permission for your child to leave early or arrive late to attend coaching and training sessions are also at the discretion of the Headteacher and are not likely to be approved if it is a regular event, unless the sports club or association are providing an education tutor as part of their coaching.

## **7.3 Gypsy Roma Traveller Showman and Showman families**

Absence of a child from a traveller family that has left the area may be authorised if the absence is for **work purposes only** and it is believed that the family intends to return. To ensure the continuity of learning for Traveller children, dual registration is allowed. That means that a school cannot remove a Traveller child from the school roll while they are travelling. When the Traveller is away the home school holds the place open and records the absence as authorised through the T code. Distance Learning packs for traveller children are not an alternative to attendance at school

### **Section 8:**

#### **Record preservation**

School registers are legal documents. We will ensure compliance with attendance regulations by keeping attendance records for at least 3 years. Computer registers will be preserved as electronic back-ups or microfiche copies.



## Appendix A

### Gomer Infant School school day:

1. The classrooms doors are open to the children at 8.50am until 9.00am.  
Arrivals at 9.01am must report to the main reception.
2. The school day ends at 3.20pm.
3. An attendance register is called at the beginning of each session 9am and again at 1pm.



## Appendix B

### The Law

The Education Act 1996 Part 1, Section 7 states:

The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him to receive efficient full-time education suitable-

- [a] To his age, ability and aptitude and
- [b] To any special needs he may have.

either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

For educational purposes the term parent is used to include those that have parental responsibility and/or those that have the day to day care of the child.

The legislation that appertains to children who are of compulsory school age and are registered at school is contained within this Act.

Part V1 Section 444 contains the details of when an offence is committed if a child fails to attend school.

### Register and Admission Roll keeping.

The legal requirements are found in: The Education [Pupil Registration] (England) Regulations 2006

### Guidance documents on attendance.

The following DfE documents are used to guide attendance recording.

Absence and Attendance codes (Guidance for Schools and Local Authorities)

Keeping Pupil Registers (Guidance on applying the Education Pupil Registration Regulations)

These and other guidance documents are available on the DfE website

Hampshire County Council Guidance is available on Hantsweb at

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

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