

Hawridge and Cholesbury CE School



Attendance Policy

Our Vision is for every child within the Hawridge & Cholesbury family to grow, flourish 'have life and ... have it more abundantly' (John 10:10 KLV); to be fascinated, rounded, eager to make a difference, spiritual and have high aspirations through Jesus' teaching and our curriculum.

We live our vision through our natural setting and our school values:

Respect Teamwork Responsibility Understanding Peace Honesty

Adopted by the governing body on 18th September 2024

Next review September 2027

1. Introduction and Aims

Regular school attendance is essential if children are to achieve their full potential.

Hawridge & Cholesbury CE School believe that regular school attendance is the key to enabling children to maximise the educational opportunities available to them and become emotionally resilient, confident and competent adults who are able to achieve great things and make a positive contribution to their community.

Our aim is for all children to have exceptional school attendance and for our whole school attendance to be at least 97% every week.

Hawridge & Cholesbury CE School values all pupils. As set out in this policy, we will work with families to identify the reasons for poor attendance and try to resolve any difficulties.

Hawridge & Cholesbury CE School recognise that attendance is a matter for the whole school community. Our Attendance Policy should not be viewed in isolation; it is a strand that runs through all aspects of school improvement, supported by our policies on Safeguarding, Anti-bullying, behaviour and our SEND policy. This policy also takes into account the Human Rights Act 1998, the Equality Act 2010 and the UN Convention of the rights of the child.

2. Legal Framework

Section 7 of the 1996 Education Act states that parents must ensure that children of compulsory school age receive efficient full-time education suitable to their age, ability and aptitude and to any special educational needs they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

A child is of Compulsory School Age at the beginning of the term following their 5th birthday. A child ceases to be of compulsory school age on the last Friday in June of the school year in which they reach the age of 16. Following this, children must then either continue in full time education, for example at college, begin an apprenticeship or spend 20 hours or more a week working or volunteering alongside part-time education or training.

Under the Education Act 1996, the Local Authority has a statutory responsibility to ensure that parents secure education for children of compulsory school age and where necessary, use legal enforcement.

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, require schools to take an attendance register twice a day, once at the start of the morning session and then again during the afternoon session.

The register must record whether the pupil was:

- present;
- absent;
- present at an approved educational activity; or
- unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

3. Promoting regular school attendance

At Hawridge and Cholesbury we promote the importance of good school attendance in many ways including:

- Class attendance awards in weekly celebration assemblies
- An Attendance Mascot who is awarded to the winning class each week alongside extra play time.
- Weekly attendance updates in the newsletter.
- An attendance information leaflet for parents available in the foyer and on our website.
- Attendance information on the website.
- Individual attendance awards for 100% attendance each term (gold award) or 98% (silver award). Children are awarded with a certificate and a small prize.
- Individual attendance awards for 100% attendance for the year (gold award) or 98% (silver award). Children are awarded with a certificate and a Venus Fly Trap prize.

4. Categorising absence

Where pupils of compulsory school age are recorded as absent, the register must show whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised.

Absence can only be authorised by the school and cannot be authorised by parents. All absences will be treated as unauthorised unless a satisfactory explanation for the pupil's absence has been received.

Parents should advise the school by telephone before registration on the first day of absence and provide the school with an expected date of return. Parents should continue to notify the school on a daily basis about their child's absence. Alternative arrangements will be agreed with non-English speaking parents/carers.

Absence will be categorised as follows:

Illness: In most cases a telephone call or an email from the parent informing the school that their child is ill will be acceptable. Parents may be asked to provide medical evidence where there are repeated absences due to reported illness. This will usually be in the form of an appointment card, prescription etc.

Medical/Dental Appointments: Parents are advised where possible to make medical and dental appointments outside the school day. Where this is not possible, pupils should attend school for part of the day. Parents should show the appointment card to school who will scan a copy to be held on school records.

Other Authorised Circumstances: No holidays will be authorised during term time. The Headteacher may authorise absence in exceptional circumstances at their discretion.

Excluded (no alternative provision made): Exclusion from attending school is counted as an authorised absence. The school will make arrangements for work to be sent home.

Late Arrival: Registration is at 8:45am. Pupils arriving after this time will be marked as present but having arrived late. The register will close at 9:15am. Pupils arriving after the close of register will be recorded as absent. This will not be authorised and will count as an absence for that school session.

On arrival after the close of the register, pupils must be brought to the school office by their parent/carer to ensure that we can be responsible for their health and safety whilst they are in school.

The absence will only be authorised if a satisfactory explanation for the late arrival can be provided, for example, attendance at a medical appointment. (Code M)

The absence will be recorded as **unauthorised** if the pupil has arrived late after the registers close without justifiable cause, for example, if they woke up late or were waiting for their uniform to dry. (Code U)

Parents/ children are expected to sign in late on Inentry and record a reason for their lateness.

Unauthorised absence: Absence will not be authorised unless parents have provided a satisfactory explanation that has been accepted as such by the school.

Examples of unsatisfactory explanations include:

- A pupil's/family member's birthday
- Shopping for uniforms
- Having their hair cut
- Closure of a sibling's school for INSET (or other) purposes
- "Couldn't get up"
- Confusion over term start/finish dates
- Illness where the child is considered well enough to attend school
- Holidays taken without the authorisation of school

Leave of Absence and Extended Leave: Parents do not have an automatic right to remove their child from school during term time for the purpose of a holiday and are strongly advised not to do so. Parents should be aware that if their child is absent for 10 school days they will miss 5% of their education during that academic year.

Parents wishing to take their child out of school during term time must send a written request to the head teacher before arrangements are made. Documentary evidence of leave and return dates may be required in order to process your request. Retrospective requests will not be considered and therefore will result in the absence being categorised as unauthorised. Each request will be considered individually and will take the following factors into account:

- Length of the proposed leave

- Age of the pupil
- The pupil's general absence/attendance record
- Proximity of SATs and public examinations
- Pupil's ability to catch up the work missed
- Pupil's educational needs
- General welfare of the pupil
- Circumstances of the request
- Purpose of the leave
- Previous term time holidays taken
- When the request was made

All requests for leave of absence will receive a written response. Where a request has been granted, the letter should state:

- The expected date of return
- That parents must contact school should any delays occur

If the permission to take leave is not granted and the pupil is absent, the absence will be **unauthorised**. In such cases the school may refer the matter to the County Attendance Team who may issue a Penalty Notice.

Religious Observance: Hawridge & Cholesbury CE School acknowledges the multi-faith nature of British society and recognises that on some occasions, religious festivals may fall outside school holiday periods or weekends and that this necessitates a consideration of authorised absence or special leave for religious observance. (Code R)

It is reasonable for a parent to allow their children not to attend school on any day of religious observance if recognised by the parent's religious body.

Parents are requested to give advance notice to the school if they intend their child to be absent.

However, in the interests of fulfilling the academic requirements of the school and limiting the authorised absence rate of the school, it is identified as reasonable that no more than one day be designated for any individual occasion of religious observance/festival and no more than three days in total in any academic year. Absence in excess of this will be categorised as unauthorised.

Traveller Absence: The aim for the attendance of Traveller children, in common with all other children, is to attend school as regularly and as frequently as possible.

To protect Traveller parents from unreasonable prosecution for non-attendance, the Education Act 1944, section 86, states that a Traveller parent is safe from prosecution if their child accrues 200 attendances (i.e. 200 half days) in a year. Traveller absence (Code T) will be used when the family have travelled for work purposes. Absences not due to occupational reasons will be recorded as unauthorised.

It does not mean that part-time education for Traveller children is legally acceptable, nor does it relieve parents of their duties to ensure that their children are receiving suitable education when not at school.

When in or around Buckinghamshire, if a Traveller family can reasonably travel back to their base school (see below) then the expectation is that their child will attend full-time.

Hawridge & Cholesbury CE School will be regarded as the base school if it is the school where the child normally attends when they are not travelling. However, the pupil must have attended in the last 18 months. Traveller children can register at other schools temporarily whilst away from their base school. In such cases, the pupil's school place will be kept open for them whilst travelling. This is to protect them from unfairly losing their place at their school of usual attendance.

Hawridge & Cholesbury CE School can operate effectively as the child's base school only if we are engaged in on-going dialogue with Traveller families. This means that parents must:

- advise the school of their forthcoming travelling patterns before they happen; and
- inform the school regarding proposed return dates

Hawridge & Cholesbury CE School will authorise the absence of Traveller children if we are satisfied that a family is travelling for work purposes and has given indication that they intend to return.

Traveller children will be recorded as attending an approved educational activity when:

- The child is on roll and attending another visited school
- Undertaking supervised educational activity under the jurisdiction of another Local Authority's Traveller Education Service
- The child is undertaking computer based distance learning that is time evidenced

Where Traveller children are registered pupils at a school and are known to be present either at a site (official or otherwise) or in a house and are not attending school, the absence will be investigated in the same way as for any other pupil.

5. Deletions from the Register

In accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, pupils will be deleted from the register only when one of the following circumstances applies:

- The school is replaced by another school on a School Attendance Order
- The School Attendance Order is revoked by the Local Authority
- The pupil has ceased to be of compulsory school age
- Permanent exclusion has occurred and procedures have been completed
- Death of a pupil
- Transfer between schools
- When a parent informs the school in writing that the pupil is to be withdrawn to be educated outside the school system
- Failure to return from an extended holiday after both the school and the local authority have tried to locate the pupil
- A medical condition prevents their attendance and return to the school before ending compulsory school-age
- In custody for more than four months (in discussion with The Youth Offending Team)

- 20 days' continuous unauthorised absence have elapsed and both the Local Authority and school have tried to locate the pupil
- A pupil has left the school but it is not known where he/she has gone after both the school and the Local Authority have tried to locate the pupil

Hawridge & Cholesbury CE School will follow Buckinghamshire County Council's Children Missing Education Protocol when a pupil's whereabouts is unknown and may carry out a home visit.

6. Roles and Responsibilities

Hawridge & Cholesbury CE School believe that improved school attendance can only be achieved if it is viewed as a shared responsibility of the school staff, governors, parents, pupils and the wider school community.

Admin and office staff will:

- Check registers as registration closes and record reasons for absence for absent children provided by parents via phone or email.
- Send a text message reminder for parents of absent children who have not provided a reason.
- Record children who have been dropped off late and reasons.
- Notify the Senior Attendance Champion of any attendance concerns.

Senior Leaders and teachers will:

- Actively promote the importance and value of good attendance to pupils and their parents
- Form positive relationships with pupils and parents
- Contribute to a whole school approach which reinforces good school attendance; with good teaching and learning experiences that encourage all pupils to attend and to achieve
- Comply with the Registration Regulations, England, 2006 and other attendance related legislation
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The Senior Attendance Champion will:

- Implement systems to incentivise good attendance.
- Implement systems to report, record and monitor the attendance of all pupils, including those who are educated off-site
- Analyse attendance data to identify causes and patterns of absence
- Contribute to the evaluation of school strategies and interventions
- Work with other agencies to improve attendance and support pupils and their families
- Document interventions used to a standard required by the Local Authority should legal proceedings be instigated

Governors will:

- Meet termly with the Senior Attendance Champion to discuss school attendance and any concerns, actions, new initiatives etc.
- Analyse attendance data provided by the Senior Attendance Champion and ask relevant questions.

We request that Parents will:

- Talk to their child about school and what goes on there. Take a positive interest in their child's work and educational progress
- Instil the value of education and regular school attendance within the home environment
- Encourage their child to look to the future and have aspirations
- Contact the school if their child is absent to let them know the reason why (before registration on the first day of absence) and the expected date of return. Follow this up with daily updates in the form of phone calls or emails where possible.
- Try to avoid unnecessary absences. Wherever possible make appointments for the doctors, dentists etc. outside of school hours
- Ask the school for help if their child is experiencing difficulties
- Inform the school of any change in circumstances that may impact on their child's attendance
- Support the school; take every opportunity to get involved in their child's education, form a positive relationship with school and acknowledge the importance of children receiving the same messages from both school and home
- Encourage routine at home, for example, bed times, homework, preparing school bag and uniform the evening before
- Not keep their child away from school to go shopping, to help at home or to look after other members of the family
- Avoid taking their child on holiday during term-time. Where this is unavoidable, send a written leave request to the Head Teacher in advance of booking the holiday.

7. Using Attendance Data

All pupils' attendance will be monitored and will be shared with the Local Authority and other agencies if a pupil's attendance is a cause for concern.

When a pupil's attendance falls below 90%, they are classified as persistently absent.

If a pupil's attendance falls below 50%, this is classified as severe absence.

Every half term the Senior Attendance Champion will provide all class teachers with attendance data for the previous half term for each pupil within their class. The list will be presented in numerical descending order with the highest attendees at the top.

The Senior Attendance Champion will monitor the attendance of all pupils, closely monitoring the attendance of pupils whose attendance is of concern through a tracking system. Pupil level data will be used to trigger school action as set out in the escalation of intervention (Appendix 1).

Parents of children whose attendance falls below 90% (persistently absent) will receive a letter at the end of the term to emphasise the need for their child's attendance to improve. They will be offered the opportunity to discuss this with the Senior Attendance Champion and the class teacher and/or the Headteacher. The attendance of these children will be tracked carefully and parents may be invited in to formulate an action plan to improve their child's attendance. The Senior Attendance Champion will identify any patterns in attendance and discuss these with parents in order to try to improve the child's attendance. Unauthorised absences may be addressed using penalty notices.

Any interventions implemented for individual children will be analysed by assessing the improvement in the child's attendance data. Worsening attendance will be addressed again with parents and the Senior Attendance Champion may contact the County Attendance Team.

The Senior Attendance Champion will provide the Headteacher and governors with termly attendance data analysis including persistent absence figures (below 90%) and severe absence figures (below 50%).

Attendance data will also be used to identify emerging patterns and trends to inform whole school strategies to improve attendance and attainment.

Hawridge & Cholesbury CE School will share attendance data with the Local Authority as required. All information shared will be done so in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.

8. Support Systems

Hawridge & Cholesbury CE School recognise that poor attendance is often an indication of difficulties in a child's life. This may be related to problems at home and or in school. Parents should make school aware of any difficulties or changes in circumstances that may affect their child's attendance and/or behaviour in school, for example, bereavement, divorce / separation. This will help the school identify any additional support that may be required.

Hawridge & Cholesbury CE School also recognises that some pupils are more likely to require additional support to attain good attendance, for example, those pupils with special educational needs, those with physical or mental health needs, migrant and refugee pupils and looked after children. We will always consider the individual needs of pupils and their families who have specific barriers to attendance and ensure our approach is in line with The [Equality Act 2010](#) and the [UN Convention on the Rights of the Child](#).

In order to support individual children with barriers to good school attendance, we will implement a range of strategies including:

- Discussion with parents and pupils
- Referrals to support agencies
- Allocated support adult
- Friendship groups
- Reward systems
- Individual timetables and time limited reduced timetables
- Additional learning support
- Behaviour support
- Reintegration support packages
- SEND support
- EBSA (Emotional Based School Avoidance) support

Support offered to families will be child centred and planned in discussion and agreement with both parents and pupils.

9. Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA)

Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA) is a term used to describe children and young people who experience challenges in attending school due to negative feelings (such as anxiety). EBSA is

commonly associated with emotional and physical distress, and a reluctance to attend school, which can lead to reduced attendance and further anxiety regarding school.

At Hawridge and Cholesbury CE School we aim to identify EBSA early on and encourage families to inform us straight away if their child feels unable to attend school because they are anxious or worried. If this is the case, we will work with the child and family to try to get to the root of problem so it can be addressed. A plan will be put in place to support the pupil and they will be closely monitored by the class teacher, Senior Attendance Champion and SENDCo. Communication with the child's family will continue until the issue is resolved.

If a child continues to miss school as a result of EBSA and initial school responses have been ineffective, we may carry out a home visit and will contact external agencies for support. This may include the Family Support Service. If we are concerned about the mental wellbeing of the child then we may make a referral to the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Team (CAMHS) and advise the parent or carer to visit their GP. We will work with other professionals to support the child and try to get them attending school again.

Whilst they are not attending school, work will be provided in order to support learning at home and minimise the impact of missing school. We will try to encourage social connection through Zoom/Teams calls with friends.

Reintegration into school life will be managed carefully and a reduced timetable may be implemented to help the child to cope. This will be increased gradually in agreement with the parents. Individual timetables may be devised and the school day adapted for the child where necessary e.g. movement breaks may be included at the end of each lesson.

10. Legal Sanctions

Where intervention fails to bring about an improvement in attendance, Hawridge & Cholesbury CE School will notify the County Attendance Team of the irregular attendance.

The County Attendance Team or school, may invite parents to attend a Parenting Contract Meeting and issue a formal warning of a Penalty Notice.

Parenting Contracts (Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003)

A Parenting contract is a voluntary agreement between the Local Authority, school and the parent, it can also be extended to include the child and any other agencies offering support to resolve any difficulties leading to improved attendance.

The contract will outline attendance targets and will detail agreed actions that will help to achieve the target. The contract will be reviewed regularly.

The contract can be used as evidence in a prosecution should irregular attendance continue.

Penalty Notices (Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003, Working together to improve school attendance 2024)

Penalty Notices may be issued for any term-time absences that are unauthorised (for example, a 5-day term time holiday) - whether these absences are taken consecutively or cumulatively over a rolling period of 10 school weeks.

Penalty Notice fines will also be considered when there have been **10 sessions** of unauthorised absence in any rolling period of 10 school weeks.

NB * A school day has two sessions- a morning session and an afternoon session.

A **school week** means any week in which there is at least one school session. The threshold can be met with any combination of unauthorised absence (e.g. 6 sessions of holiday plus 4 sessions of arriving late after the register closes all within 10 school weeks). These sessions can be consecutive (e.g. 10 sessions of holiday in one week) or not (e.g. 6 sessions of unauthorised absence taken in 1 week and 1 per week for the next 4 weeks). The period of 10 school weeks can also span different terms or school years (e.g. 2 sessions of unauthorised absence in the Summer Term and a further 8 within the Autumn Term).

A penalty notice is an out of court settlement which is intended to change behaviour without the need for criminal prosecution. If repeated penalty notices are being issued and they are not working to change behaviour they are unlikely to be most appropriate tool. Therefore, from August 2024, only 2 penalty notices can be issued to the same parent in respect of the same child within a 3 year rolling period and any second notice within that period is charged at a higher rate. Any further offences will result in criminal prosecution.

First Offence

The first penalty notice issued to a parent in respect of a particular pupil will be charged at £160 if paid within 28 days. This will be reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days.

Second Offence (in a 3-year rolling period)

The second time a Penalty Notice is issued for a Term-Time Leave of Absence or irregular attendance to the **same parent** for the **same child** the amount will be: **£160** per parent, per child (if paid within 28 days)

There is no reduction in the amount if paid within a shorter time frame.

Third Offence or Any Further Offences (in a 3-year rolling period)

The third time an offence is committed for a Term-Time Leave of Absence or irregular attendance by the **same parent** for the **same child** (including those by other Local Authorities) a Penalty Notice will NOT be issued. The case will be referred to Buckinghamshire's County Attendance team for **Prosecution** which may result in fines of up to **£2,500** per parent, per child. Cases found guilty in a Magistrate's Court can show on a parent's future DBS certificate.

Penalty Notice fines are issued **Per Parent, Per child**. This means that fines are issued to each parent, for each child who is absent. For example: If 2 siblings are absent for a term-time holiday this will result in each parent receiving 2 separate fines.

Prosecution

Failure to pay the Penalty Notice may result in a prosecution under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996.

The school will provide the Local Authority with evidence required for a prosecution under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996. This is to ensure that parents realise their own

responsibilities in ensuring attendance at school and most importantly about returning children to education.

11. Contact Details

If a parent wishes to speak to somebody about their child's attendance, please contact Heather Woodward (Senior Attendance Champion) via the school office either by calling 01494 758 368 or emailing office@hcschool.uk.

Intervention Flow Chart

School will notify parent of the child's irregular school attendance and offer them the opportunity and support to improve.

If you receive a letter informing you of concerns regarding your child's attendance you should

- Speak with your child to see if there are any reasons why they are reluctant to attend
- Contact the school to discuss any difficulties you or your child may be experiencing.
 - Ensure your child attends school regularly

If there is no improvement and the parent has not provided a good reason for the absence, the school may refer to the County Attendance Team

Whilst your involvement in a Parenting Contract is voluntary, if you fail to engage with the support offered and your child's attendance remains irregular, the County Attendance team may issue a Penalty Notice or begin legal proceedings in the Magistrates' Court.

If you are issued with a Penalty Notice of £80 per parent/carer, per child this must be paid in full within 21 days otherwise the Penalty will increase to £160 per parent/carer, per child. If you fail to pay the Penalty by the 28th day, the County Attendance Team may instigate legal proceedings against you.

If you are found guilty of this offence you can be fined up to £2500 and/or be imprisoned for a period of three months.

A Parenting Contract is a voluntary agreement between you and the Local Authority aimed at supporting you in improving your child's school attendance.

The County Attendance Team will invite you to attend a Parenting Contract Meeting and may issue a Warning of a Penalty Notice.