First Federation Trust

Hawkchurch
CHURCH OF ENGLAND PRIMARY SCHOOL

Pupil attendance policy
Appendix 2
Practical information for parents

History of most recent Policy changes

Date	Page	Change	Origin of Change
November 2025	4	The school day	Updated in line with KCSiE 2025
	10	Requesting Leave in Term Time	
	12	Virtual Schools	

This appendix should be read alongside 'Keeping Children Safe in Education (2025)' and 'Working Together to Improve School Attendance (2024)', both of which are statutory guidance setting out schools' legal duties to safeguard children and promote regular attendance.

The foundation for good attendance is a strong partnership between the school, parents and the child, therefore, Hawkchurch CofE Primary School expects everyone to uphold their responsibilities for promoting attendance at school.

To do this everyone must understand their role in promoting a positive culture of attendance and be clear about what is required of them individually as well as how they need to work together in partnership with others.

Attendance expectations

Parents/carers responsibilities:

- ensure pupils attend regularly and punctually.
- promote the value of good education and the importance of regular school attendance at home
- ensure that their children attend school on time. This encourages habits of good timekeeping and lessens any possible classroom disruption.
- do everything you can to prevent unnecessary school absences, such as by making medical and dental appointments outside of school hours.
- work with the school and your child to address any in-school barriers to attendance and support their learning by taking an interest in what they have been doing at school.
- enforce a regular routine at home in terms of homework, bedtime, etc. so that you child is used to consistency and the school day becomes part of that routine. It is vital that your child receives the same message at home as they do at school about the importance of attendance.
- provide the school with more than one emergency contact for your child.
- provide proof of medical appointments that can only be attended during the school day.
- make early contact with us when you become aware of problems with your child attending school.
- attend meetings if concerns are identified.
- participate in Early Help Meetings if required.
- To provide medical evidence to support attendance plans and support for meetings and wider support with medical professionals
- support attendance contracts where appropriate.

The school day:

The school gates are open from: 8:30pm. The school day starts at 8.40am. All pupils should be in their classroom at this time.

The first (morning) registration session starts at 8.50am. Pupils will receive a late mark if they are not in their designated classroom by 9.00am. The register closes at 9.15am. Pupils will receive a mark of absence if they do not attend before this time. Attendance after the register closes will receive a mark to show that the pupil is on site, (U) but will count as an absent mark.

Pupils arriving late should report to the main school office and sign in.

The second (afternoon) registration session starts at 13.15pm.
If a pupil needs to leave school during the day, they must sign out at the main reception with a parent once authorisation has been given from the school office.

Before any pupil is placed in alternative provision, the school will obtain written confirmation that all required safeguarding checks have been completed. Each placement will be reviewed at least every half term to ensure the pupil's safety, attendance, and educational progress.

Pupils educated off-site are monitored daily for their attendance at the off-site/alternative provision. Staff work closely with the staff at the off-site provision, the pupil, and their parents to support the pupil to maintain good attendance.

How to report your child's absence

It is the responsibility of the parent to inform us of a pupil absence and to inform us of any changes to contact details.

Parents are expected to inform us of their pupil's absence before 8.30am on each day of absence providing the reason for absence giving full details and when the pupil will be returning to school. Parents can use Arbor or email the school office via Admin@hawkchurch-primary.devon.sch.uk or call 01297 678331 and use option 2
We will contact parents and/or other listed emergency contacts where no contact has been made. Where required, we may conduct reasonable enquiries with friends or neighbours. If no contact is made, we may request a welfare check from the police. All welfare checks should be carried out on or before day 3 of an unexplained absence.

Reasons for absence

Appointments

As far as possible, medical, and dental appointments should be made outside of the school day. Where this is not possible, a note and appointment card should be sent to us prior to the appointment.

Pupils must attend before and after the appointment wherever possible. If the appointment requires the pupil to leave during the day, they must be signed out by an adult listed on the pupil's record. Should a pupil arrive late following an appointment, they should report to the school office to be signed in.

Religious Observance

Parents must inform us, in advance, if absences are required for days of religious observance. We will authorise absences where a reasonable request is made. The day must be exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the parents belong. Where necessary, we will seek advice from the parents' religious body about whether it has set the day apart for religious observance.

Illness

In order to make informed decisions about their pupil's fitness for attending parents are encouraged to refer to the NHS guidance 'Is My Child Too Ill for School?'. Any authorisation of absence through illness is done so at the discretion of the Head of School or member of staff delegated to carry out this task.

In the case of an illness which lasts for five days or more (or four days in the event of an INSET day or Bank Holiday), parents may be asked to provide additional medical evidence before authorising the absence, however this will only be requested if there is any genuine and reasonable doubt about the authenticity of the illness. In this instance, if medical evidence is not provided, the absence may be recorded as unauthorised.

Where attendance is of a serious concern, we may require medical evidence to authorise any further periods of absence through illness. This will be determined on an individual basis. Parents will be notified of this by letter. Telephone calls and handwritten notes from a parent will not be accepted as medical evidence when

attendance is a serious concern. For the purpose of this policy, 'serious concern' may be defined as: repeated unexplained/unauthorised absences or 3 separate illnesses within a half term where no medical condition or underlying health issues have been identified.

Acceptable forms of medical evidence include:

- Medical card with one appointment entered with the pupil's name and surgery stamp included, signed by the receptionist
- Text message or email confirming the appointment
- Letter from a professional such as a hospital consultant
- Evidence of consultation with NHS 111
- Medication prescribed by a GP
- Copy of prescription
- Print screen of medical notes / call log
- Letters detailing hospital appointments Doctor or GP 'sick notes' are not required, and we do not expect parents to request these from their GPs.

In some cases, a pupil may be absent for long term due to an illness or injury. We will liaise with families to ensure children return to school quickly and that there are no safeguarding concerns. On occasions where this is not possible, and the section 19 (of the Education Act 1996) threshold is met, we will make a referral to the Local Authority Medical Panel which provides educational opportunities for pupils who are unable to attend their regular school.

Traveller Pupils Travelling Traveller Absence

- The school will authorise the absence of a Traveller pupil of no fixed abode who is unable to attend school because they are travelling with their parent who is engaged in a trade or business of such a nature as to require them to travel from place to place.
- This is subject to certain limits, depending on the child's age and number of sessions absent. The school will discuss cases individually with Traveller parents as necessary.
- Parents should let the school know of their plans as far in advance as possible.
- Authorised Traveller absence will be recorded appropriately in the register.

The aim for the attendance of Traveller students, in common with all other students, 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/carer is safe from

prosecution if their child accrues 200 attendances (i.e., 200 half days) in a year. It is important to note that this is only relevant when the family are engaged in a trade or business that requires them to travel and when the child is regularly attending school when that trade/business permits following a request from parents (and the minimum 200 session criteria is met).
It does not mean that part-time education for Traveller pupils is legally acceptable, nor does it relieve parents/carers of their duties to ensure that their child is receiving a suitable education when not at school.

It is parent's responsibility to:

- ensure that your child's ethnicity has been registered with the school. You can ask the school to correct this or update it
- ensure you tell your child's school ahead of time. 2 weeks' notice is useful.
- your children should attend as much school as possible
- it is the parent's responsibility to ensure their child is accessing at least 100 days (200 sessions) of school in any 12-month period
- to have regular contact with their child's school whilst travelling. Once a week is suggested
- to support their child to complete the work set by schools whilst travelling
- if staying in a new area for a week or more, the parent/guardian can register their child for a temporary place at any school – called 'dual registration'.

Pupils with medical conditions or special educational needs and disabilities

Some pupils face greater barriers to attendance than their peers. These can include pupils who suffer from long term medical conditions or who have special educational needs and disabilities. Their right to an education is the same as any other pupil and therefore the attendance ambition for these pupils should be the same as they are for any other pupil.

The school will:

- Work with parents to improve attendance, be mindful of the barriers pupils face, make reasonable adjustments, and put additional support in place where necessary to help them access their full-time education. It is also expected that parents will engage with the support offered both internally and with external partners to ensure our children have all the support they need to thrive.
- Encourage positive conversations so that a good support plan can put in place including making reasonable adjustments.

Consider possible explanations for absence including Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA).
Devon Anxiety based school avoidance (ABSA) – Education and Families (devon.gov.uk).
Plymouth Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance | PLYMOUTH.GOV.UK
Dorset Dorset Education Advice Line (DEAL) - Dorset Council

- Work with parents to consider whether additional support from external partners (including the local authority or health services) would be appropriate, making referrals in a timely manner and working together with those services to deliver any subsequent support.
- Ensure relevant referrals are made for pupils who are too ill to attend school, which may include medical panel (under section 19 of the Education Act 1996) and or medical agency support such as CAMHS.
- Establish strategies for removing the in-school barriers this may include considering support or reasonable adjustments for uniform, transport, routines, access to support in school and lunchtime arrangements.
- Ensure joined up pastoral care is in place and consider whether a time-limited, closely monitored and reviewed, phased return to school would be appropriate, for example for those affected by anxiety about school attendance.

Requesting Leave in Term Time

Absence for purposes of leave during term time can only be authorised by the Headteacher / Principal, within the boundaries set by the Education (Pupil Registrations) (England) Regulations (2006). “Head Teachers may not authorise leave during term time except where the circumstances are exceptional.” Under the Regulations, retrospective authorisation for leave in exceptional circumstances is not permitted.

The fundamental principles for defining ‘exceptional circumstances’ are that they are: ‘rare; significant; unavoidable and short’. Holidays during term time will not usually be considered as exceptional circumstances.

The following guiding principles apply:

- Term-times are for education. This is the priority. Children and families have 175 days off a year including weekends and school holidays. We will rightly prioritise attendance.

- The decision to authorise a pupil's absence is wholly at the Head of School's discretion based on their assessment and merits of each individual request.
- It is important to note that Heads of School can determine the length of the authorised absence, as well as whether absence is authorised at all.
- If an event can be reasonably scheduled outside of term-time, then it would be normal to authorise absence for such an event – holidays are therefore not considered 'exceptional circumstances'.
- It is acceptable for the Head of School to take a pupil's record of attendance into account when making absence-related decisions.
- We will take the needs of the families of service personnel into account if this prevents them from being able to take family holidays during scheduled holiday time.
- We have a duty to make reasonable adjustments for pupils with special needs and/or disabilities.

The following might be considered as exceptional circumstance:

- Religious festivals: the school should authorise any absence where the parent/carer's religious organisation sets the day as a religious festival.
- For example: There are two key festivals in Islam, Eid-ul-Fitr (celebration that takes place at the end of Ramadan, the period of fasting) and Eid-ul-Adha (festival of sacrifice). The dates of these key events are set according to the Islamic calendar. Muslim families usually need to take one or two days to celebrate these important festivals.
- Religious rites e.g. Bar Mitzvah, Holy Communion. The Head of School will consider each request for leave of absence individually to determine the number of days approved.
- Illness or death of an immediate family member; the Head of School should consider time needed for the length of journey when child needs to travel abroad.
- Child, parent/carer requires medical treatment overseas or elsewhere in the UK due to language barrier or requiring specialist treatment elsewhere.
- Cultural celebrations such as Chinese New Year or Diwali. Cultural celebrations give children a feeling of belonging and make them feel part of their culture. This sense of identity is like a natural buoy for a child's emotional health.
- Children attending their annual exam in their home country. There are exams which are compulsory in some EU countries. They are normally during holidays but can occasionally be requested during term time.
- Child, parent/ carer's visa have been revoked and they need to return to their birth country whilst pursuing the renewal of a visa.

Family emergencies need careful consideration before decisions about attendance are made. It is not always appropriate or in the best interests of the pupil to miss education for emergencies which are being dealt with by adult family members. Being at school with support from staff and peers can provide children with stability. The school routine can offer a safe and familiar background during times of uncertainty. Relevant members of staff will work with parents to decide what is in the best interest of the pupil.

The school recognises that attendance is a key safeguarding indicator. Patterns of absence, lateness, or non-attendance will be reviewed regularly by the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and pastoral team. Attendance concerns may trigger Early Help assessments or safeguarding referrals in line with KCSIE (2025).

How the school monitors attendance and takes action about absence

Following up absence

We will contact parents and/or other listed emergency contacts where no contact has been made. Where required, we may conduct reasonable enquiries with friends or neighbours. If no contact is made, we may request a welfare check from the police. All welfare checks should be carried out on or before day 3 of an unexplained absence.

Where it is appropriate, a member of staff may carry out a ‘Return to School Interview’ to discuss the absence and to offer any support. Following three separate periods of absence the interview will be carried out by a senior member of staff.

Monitoring absence figures

Pupils with 90% or less attendance are classified as Persistent Absence (PA). PA includes both authorised and unauthorised absences.

Pupils with 50% or less attendance are classified as Severe Absence (SA). SA includes both authorised and unauthorised absences

All PA pupils will have bespoke action plans to try to improve their attendance to above 97%.

Taking action

Where it is appropriate, a member of staff may carry out a 'Return to School Interview' to discuss the absence and to offer any support. Following three separate periods of absence the interview will be carried out by a senior member of staff.

It may occasionally be necessary to inform parents that no further absences will be authorised for a particular pupil unless medical evidence is provided. This decision can only be made by the Head of School in consultation with, where relevant, the SENDCO.

It is a parent's legal responsibility to ensure their children receive appropriate education. Failing to send children to school regularly without good reason is a criminal offence. Schools can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their pupil, where the pupil is of compulsory school age. The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice ultimately rests with the Head of School, in line with the local authority's code of conduct for issuing penalty notices. This may consider:

- A number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year
- Singular incidences of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission
- Where a suspended/excluded pupil is seen in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason

The national Framework for Penalty Notices (as of 19th August 2024)

- The national framework for penalty notices is to help tackle inconsistencies in their use. The fine to parents must be considered if a child misses 5 days of school for unauthorised absence. Alongside this, costs for fines will go up.
- 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.
- A second penalty notice issued to the same parent in respect of the same pupil is charged at a flat rate of £160 if paid within 28 days.
- A third penalty notice cannot be issued to the same parent in respect of the same child within 3 years of the date of issue of the first. In a case where the national threshold is met for a third time (or subsequent times) within those 3 years, alternative action should be taken instead. This will often include considering prosecution but may include other tools such as one of the other attendance legal interventions.

- Penalty notices are issued to parents as an alternative to prosecution where they have failed to ensure that their child of compulsory school age regularly attends the school.
- A penalty notice can be issued to each parent liable for the offence or offences. They should usually only be issued to the parent or parents who have allowed the absence (regardless of which parent has applied for a leave of absence (for example an unauthorised holiday in term time). These will be issued in line with the Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007.
- All state funded schools must consider whether a penalty notice is appropriate in each individual case where one of their pupils reaches the national threshold for considering a penalty notice.
- The threshold is 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks. A school week means any week in which there is at least one school session.
- This can be met with any combination of unauthorised absence.
- For Example;
- 4 sessions of holiday taken in term time plus 6 sessions of arriving late after the register closes all within 10 school weeks
- 10 sessions of holiday in one week
- 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.

A penalty notice may also be issued where parents allow their child to be present in a public place during school hours without reasonable justification during the first 5 days of a fixed period or permanent exclusion.

The school must have notified the parents of the days the pupil must not be present in a public place. This type of penalty notice is not included in the National Framework and therefore not subject to the same considerations about support being provided or count towards the limit as part of the escalation process in the case of repeat offences for non-attendance.

The school works closely with the Virtual School Head (VSH) to promote educational outcomes for children in care, previously looked-after children, and those with a social worker or in kinship care, in accordance with KCSIE (2025).

The school is committed to equality and inclusion. Attendance expectations apply to all pupils, and reasonable adjustments are made to support pupils with disabilities, long-term medical conditions, or additional needs.

Attendance data may be shared with the local authority, social care, or other safeguarding partners where necessary to protect children from harm. Attendance systems and records are managed in accordance with the school's data protection and online safety policies, consistent with the expectations set out in KCSIE (2025).