



*"We Care."*

# Attendance Policy

**Reviewed: January 2024**

**Review Period: Annually**

**Next Review: January 2025**

**Persons Responsible: Scott Roche**

**Principal:**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Scott Roche", with a horizontal line underneath.

**Date: January 2024**

**Trustee:**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "M. O'Connell", with a horizontal line underneath.

**Date: January 2024**

Hamstel Infant School and Nursery values all its pupils and our 'We Care' values flow through all that we do to support our children and families. As set out in this policy, we will work with families to identify the reasons for poor attendance and try to resolve any difficulties. The school recognises that attendance is a matter for the whole school community.

Our Attendance Policy should not be viewed in isolation; it is supported by our other safeguarding and child protection policies and adopts the guidance laid out in;

**Working together to improve school attendance**

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/63049617e90e0729e63d3953/Working\\_together\\_to\\_improve\\_school\\_attendance.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/63049617e90e0729e63d3953/Working_together_to_improve_school_attendance.pdf) (until August 2024)

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65e9b3443649a20011ed6435/Working\\_together\\_to\\_improve\\_school\\_attendance\\_applies\\_from\\_19\\_August\\_2024\\_.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65e9b3443649a20011ed6435/Working_together_to_improve_school_attendance_applies_from_19_August_2024_.pdf) (From August 2024)

**Southend City Council's Code of Conduct under the Provision of the Education (Penalty Notices) Regulation 2004**

<https://www.southend.gov.uk/downloads/file/7916/southend-city-council-s-code-of-conduct-under-the-provision-of-the-education-penalty-notices-regulation-2004#:~:text=Parents%20can%20be%20issued%20a,not%20pay%20within%2021%20days.>

## **1. Aims**

Our aim is to successfully address the root causes of absence and removing barriers to attendance, at home, in school or more broadly requires schools and local partners to work collaboratively in partnership with, not against families. We aim to work closely with all relevant parties to:

**Expect** - Have high aspirations and high standards of attendance from children and parents and aim to build a culture where all children can, and want to, be in school and ready to learn by prioritising attendance improvement across the school.

**Monitor** - We aim to rigorously use attendance data to identify patterns of poor attendance (at individual and cohort level) as soon as possible so all parties can work together to resolve issues before they become entrenched.

**Listen and understand** - When a pattern is spotted, we will discuss with pupils and parents to listen to and understand barriers to attendance and agree how all partners can work together to resolve them.

**Facilitate support** - Our aim is to remove barriers in school and help pupils and parents to access the support they need to overcome the barriers outside of school. This might include an early help or whole family plan where absence is a symptom of wider issues.

**Formalise support** - Where absence persists and voluntary support is not working or not being engaged with, we aim to work together with all relevant parties to explain the consequences clearly and ensure support is also in place to enable families to respond. Depending on the circumstances this may include formalising support through an attendance contract or education supervision order.

**Enforce** - Where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or not being engaged with, enforce attendance through statutory intervention: a penalty notice in line with the

Southend City Council's Code of Conduct under the Provision of the Education (Penalty Notices) Regulation 2004 or prosecution to protect the pupil's right to an education.

### Attendance Targets

The school sets attendance targets each year. These are agreed by the Principal/Vice Principal and Attendance Officer to ensure we are in line with national expectations.

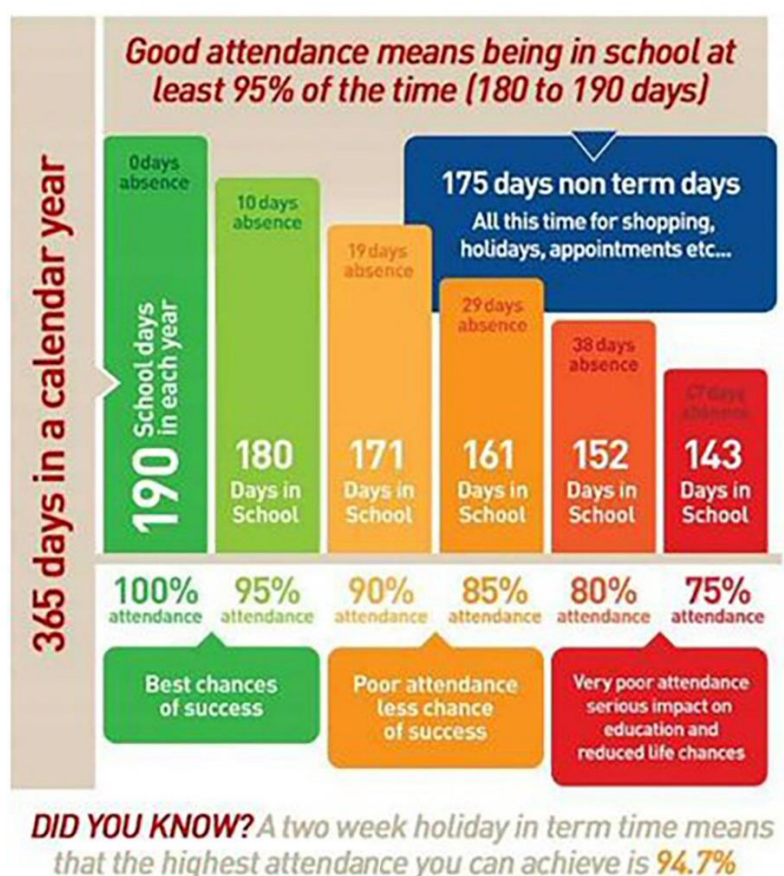
The targets are challenging yet realistic, and based on attendance figures achieved in previous years. The school considers carefully the attendance figures for other similar schools when setting its own targets.

The school's attendance target is a minimum of 95%

### Attendance Matters at Hamstel Infants

#### Why Regular Attendance is so important:

There is a strong correlation between the amount of absence from school and the qualifications that pupils achieve. Every lesson in school matters and children who have regular absences or poor punctuality tend to find it difficult to catch up and do well at school. Regular absence can limit a child's future opportunities and set up bad habits for work and life.



### Legislation and guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the **Working together to improve school attendance document** from the Department for Education (DFE)

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/63049617e90e0729e63d3953/Working\\_together\\_to\\_improve\\_school\\_attendance.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/63049617e90e0729e63d3953/Working_together_to_improve_school_attendance.pdf) (until August 2024)

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65e9b3443649a20011ed6435/Working\\_together\\_to\\_improve\\_school\\_attendance\\_applies\\_from\\_19\\_August\\_2024\\_.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65e9b3443649a20011ed6435/Working_together_to_improve_school_attendance_applies_from_19_August_2024_.pdf) (From August 2024)

and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on [school attendance parental responsibility measures](#).

We also follow the Southend City Council's Code of Conduct under the Provision of the Education (Penalty Notices) Regulation 2004 for guidance around fines and penalty notices.

<https://www.southend.gov.uk/downloads/file/7916/southend-city-council-s-code-of-conduct-under-the-provision-of-the-education-penalty-notices-regulation-2004#:~:text=Parents%20can%20be%20issued%20a,not%20pay%20within%2021%20days>

## **2. Legal Framework**

Section 7 of the 1996 Education Act states that parent/carers must ensure that children of compulsory school age receive efficient full-time education suitable to their age and ability, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise. A child is of compulsory school age the first term. Under the Education Act 1996, the Local Authority has a statutory responsibility to ensure that parent/carers 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.

### **Penalty Notices to Address Poor Attendance at School**

- In accordance with the Education Act 1996 Section 444 and Section 444a, penalty notices can be issued to parents whose child/children are not in regular attendance at school.
- The penalty notice is £60 if paid within 21 days. If it is not paid within 21 days but within 28 days, the penalty notice will increase to £120. If the penalty notice is not paid within 28 days the debt will be referred to the Debt Collection Agency.
- Penalty notices are issued per parent, per child.
- Parents cannot appeal against the penalty notice being issued and there is no option to pay in instalments.

## **3. Roles and responsibilities**

### **3.1 The Academy Trustees**

The Academy Trustees are responsible for monitoring attendance figures for the whole school on at least a termly basis. It also holds the Principal/Vice Principal to account for the implementation of this policy.

### **3.2 The Principal/Vice Principal**

The Principal/Vice Principal are responsible for:

- Implementation of this policy at the school
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to trustees
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils
- Considering the issuing of fixed-penalty notices, where necessary

### **3.3 The Attendance Officer and Senior Leadership**

The school Attendance Officer:

- Monitors attendance data across the school and at an individual pupil level
- Reports concerns about attendance to the Principal/Vice Principal and Family Support Worker
- Works with Local Authority Access and Inclusion officers to tackle persistent absence
- Arranges calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues
- Advises the Principal/Vice Principal when to consider issuing fixed-penalty notices

### **3.4 School Staff**

- Actively promote the importance and value good attendance and punctuality to pupils and their parents/carers
- 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 Registration Regulations, England, 2006 and other attendance related legislation
- Contribute to the evaluation of school strategies and intervention

### **3.5 School administration staff**

School administration staff are expected to take calls from parents about absence and record it on the school system.

### **3.6 Parents/Carers**

- Instil the value of education, regular attendance and punctuation within the home environment
- Contact the school if their child is absent to let us know the reason for the absence
- Try to avoid unnecessary absences by making appointments outside of the school day
- Ask the school for help if a child is experiencing difficulties
- Encourage routine at home, for example, bed times, homework, preparing the school bag and uniform the evening before
- Avoid taking the child on holiday during term-time. Where this is unavoidable, before booking the holiday, complete and submit a holiday form to the Principal, who will consider whether the request should be granted
- Ensure children are well prepared for the whole school day in terms of equipment needed, for example, swimming kit, P.E. kit, water bottle.

### **3.7 Children**

Our children will be punctual for school and ready to learn.

## **4. School procedures categorising absence**

All parent/carers on admission to the school sign a copy of the Home School Contract which states that parent/carers will ensure their children attend regularly and punctually.

#### **4.1 Attendance register**

By law, all schools are required to keep an attendance register, and all pupils must be placed on this register.

The attendance register will be taken at the start of the first session of each school day (AM) and once during the second session. (PM) It will mark whether every pupil is:

- Present (/)
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity (V or P)
- Absent (I)
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances (C)

Pupils at Hamstel Infant School and Nursery must arrive in school be registered by 8.55am on each school day.

The register for the first session (AM) will be taken promptly at 8.55 and will be kept open until 9.15am when the register is closed, any pupils that arrive after this time will receive a late mark.

The register for the second session will be taken at 1.15pm.

#### **4.2 Unplanned Absence**

Parent/carers must notify the school on the first day of an unplanned absence – for example, if their child is unable to attend due to ill health.

The school can be informed of the absence by **01702 468461 (option 1)**, via the Parent Pay 'communication to school' option or email [office@his.porticoacademytrust.co.uk](mailto:office@his.porticoacademytrust.co.uk)

Absence due to illness will be authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

The school may ask parents/carers to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised.

#### **4.3 Planned absence**

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the pupil's parent/carer notifies the school in advance of the appointment and provides evidence i.e. appointment letter/email

We encourage parents/carers to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary. For example, if the appointment is at 11am, the child can come to school for morning registration, be collected for the appointment and return afterwards.

#### **4.4 Lateness and Punctuality**

A pupil who arrives late, but before the register has closed will be marked as late (L code). If they arrive after the register has closed they will be mark at an absent late (U code)

Lateness will affect a pupil's overall attendance. Children regularly arriving at school late will be monitored by the Attendance Officer who will contact parent/carers as regular lateness has a detrimental effect on their attendance.

Hamstel Infant School also work closely with the Local Authority Attendance Officer who will undertake 'late gates' and issue letters to persistent offenders around punctuality.



**DID YOU KNOW? If you are 15 minutes late each day you will have missed 2 full weeks of school in one year?**

#### **4.5 Absence Monitoring**

The school will follow up any absences to establish the reason and ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary. This will identify whether the absence can be approved or not and identify the correct attendance code to use.

- Parent/carers will be contacted on the day of the absence by the school by phone/email
- Where no contact has been made with the parent/carer on the first day of absence the school will mark this as an unauthorised absence.
- If the school are concerned about the child's absence and are unable to contact the parent/carer, we will contact the child's emergency contacts, carry out a home visit or contact other professionals.

#### **4.6 Reporting to Parent/Carers**

Parent/carers are informed of pupil's attendance along with their annual school report. Attendance information is also shared on individual pupils at parent/carer consultation sessions where necessary and on an in-year pupil registration certificate.

## **5. Authorised and Unauthorised 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 parent/carers. All absences will be treated as unauthorised unless a satisfactory explanation for the pupil's absence has been received.

### **Authorised Absence**

An absence is classified as authorised when a child has been away from school for a legitimate reason and the school has received notification from a parent/carer.

Only the school can make an absence authorised. Parent/carers do not have this authority. Consequently, not all absences supported by parent/carers will be classified as authorised.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** may include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart
- Traveller pupils travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh Gypsies, Irish and Scottish Travellers, Showmen (fairground people) and Circus people, Bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and New Travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a Traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision.

### **Unauthorised Absence**

An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of the school.

An absence is unauthorised if a child is away from school without good reason, even with the support of parent/carer, such as a shopping trip or for a birthday.

An absence is unauthorised if a child has low attendance which is being monitored at Level 2 and medical proof is not supplied by the parent/carer to evidence the absence. Medical evidence could be seeing the prescribed medicine, seeing the child's prescription, a doctor's or hospital letter or an appointment card etc. The school can provide the parent/carer with a medical form which can be completed and signed by a doctor.

### **Reporting pupil absence**

Parent/carers are requested to contact the school as soon as possible on the first day of absence providing child's name, class and reason for absence. The school should be updated if the absence continues into the following day.

Parent/carers 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, doctor's note etc.

#### **5.1 Authorised term-time absence (exceptional circumstances)**



The Government issued regulations in September 2013 regarding Leave of Absence; The Education (Pupil Regulations) (England) Regulations 2006 as amended by Education (Pupil Regulations) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013.

The Principal/Vice Principal shall not grant any leave of absence during term time unless it is considered an exceptional circumstance. If a child is absent, for the purpose of a holiday, this will not be authorised and the parent/carer may receive a penalty notice.

The Pupil Absence from School Request form can be obtained from the School office. Each request will be considered individually and approval is at the discretion of the Principal/Vice Principal.

All Pupil Absence from School Request forms will be reviewed by the Principal/Vice Principal and parents/carers will receive notification stating whether the leave has been granted.

If the permission to take leave is not granted and the pupil does not attend school, the absence will be marked as unauthorised.

**The Education Act 1996 makes it a criminal offence for a parent or carer to ‘fail to secure their child’s regular attendance at the school.’**

## **6. Promoting School Attendance**

The school recognises that children may be absent from school for a variety of reasons. Parents/carers should make the school aware of any difficulties or changes in circumstances that may affect their child’s attendance and/or behaviour in school. This will help the school identify any additional support that may be required. The school has a range of strategies that could be used to support improved attendance.

- Classes will be updated with attendance progress in weekly celebration assemblies
- Awarding of the weekly Attendance Cup in each year group
- Awards and attendance news shared on weekly newsletter
- Class termly certificate in each Key Stage with the highest attendance
- Attendance focused assemblies
- Certificates good attendance for the year

## **7. Attendance Support**

Pupil absence is monitored on a daily basis. The Attendance Team works closely with parent/carers to support regular attendance in school. If the school has concerns over a pupils’ attendance, the Attendance Officer will contact parent/carers to discuss these concerns. If after contacting parent/carers, a pupil continues to have regular absences, we will invite the parent/carer to attend a meeting with the Attendance Officer/Principal or Family Support worker in school.

Examples of school support:

- Discussion with parent/carers and pupils
- Referrals to support agencies such as Supporting families
- Work with learning mentors
- Additional learning support
- Behaviour support
- Reintegration support

### **7.1 Attendance Support and Monitoring Formal Process**

### **Level 1**

If a child has a repeated number of unauthorised absences, or when attendance falls below 90%, attendance will be reviewed and the parent/carer may receive a level 1 attendance letter or contact from the Attendance Officer. In this instance, the child's attendance will be monitored for a period of 4 weeks with the expectation of 100% attendance. If it does not improve, the case will escalate and parent/carer will be invited to an Attendance Support Meeting.

### **Attendance Support Meeting**

If attendance remains below 90% after the 4-week level 1 review period, the school will arrange an Attendance Support Meeting. At the Attendance Support Meeting targets will be set and reviewed. At this stage, the parent/carer will be expected to meet the target set and provide medical evidence for any further illness absences. The case will also be discussed with the Local Authority Attendance Support Team.

Once attendance targets are met and the parent/carer understands the importance of children attending school regularly, the case will return to Level 1 and be monitored in school by the Attendance Officer. If after 2 reviews, the child's attendance does not improve and targets are not met, the case could go to Fast-Track or escalate to Level 3.

**Level 3** – If the attendance targets are repeatedly not met at Level 2, the child's case will escalate to Level 3. This stage may include weekly meetings or home visits to ensure that the parent/carer understands the seriousness of the situation. The Local Authority Attendance Support team will make it very clear that if the child does not begin to attend school regularly, the family are likely to face a fine or court proceedings.

## **7.2 Persistent Absence**

The persistent absence threshold is 10%. If a pupil's individual overall absence rate is greater than or equal to 10%, the pupil will be classified as a persistent absentee.

Pupil-level absence data is collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. We compare our attendance data to the national average and with other schools in the Trust and share this School linked Trustees.

Each half term, the Attendance team complete a monthly return with the Local Authority Attendance Officer to identify patterns in attendance and to highlight any cases causing particular concern.

The Attendance Officer reports daily/weekly/termly data to the Principal/Vice Principal through an Attendance Report including information on attendance of the whole school, individuals and key groups of children.

### **Fast Track to Attendance**

The Fast-Track Framework is a time-focused model of best practice which concentrates on early intervention in cases of persistent non-attendance and aims to ensure a faster more effective approach to the implementation of strategies to tackle this behaviour and the underlying causes. Where the parents/carers fail to bring about the necessary improvement, legal proceedings are initiated.

The aims are:

- To ensure the intervention strategies are put into place early to tackle school attendance problems

- To ensure parents who fail to cooperate or are unwilling to work with the school/LA are identified sooner and action taken to make sure they take responsibility for their child's school attendance

### **Criteria for Fast Track**

The pupil being considered for Fast Track should

- have an attendance rate of 90% or less within the previous 10 weeks
- have unauthorised absences of 10 sessions or more
- is not 'looked after' by the local authority
- school has evidence of pre-referral work undertaken by the school
- the parent or pupil has not identified any valid reasons or barriers why they cannot attend school on a regular and punctual basis

### **8. Legal sanctions**

The school or local authority can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age. If issued with a fine, or penalty notice, each parent must pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the local authority. Penalty notices can be issued by a Principal, local authority officer or the police.

The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice may take into account:

- The number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year
- One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission
- Where a suspended pupil is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason

If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute or withdraw the notice

### **9. Links with Other Policies**

- Child Protection and Safeguarding policy
- Southend City Council's Code of Conduct under the Provision of the Education (Penalty Notices) Regulation 2004

### **Escalation of Attendance Interventions:**

Pupils with attendance between 90% and 95%

- Attendance Officer/Family Support Worker will speak to the family to offer any support
- Attendance is monitored regularly by the Attendance Officer and a level 1 attendance concern letter is issued.
- If this does not affect an improvement in attendance, the issue is escalated to the local authority.
- Parent/carers will be advised of support services available and may be invited to complete an Early Help Assessment (EHA) if appropriate.

Pupils with less than 90% attendance

- If following the above strategies attendance continues to be an issue for concern, parents/carers will be invited to a meeting in school. An Attendance Officer from the local authority will also be present at this meeting.
- Parents/carers will be requested to complete a parenting contract which will state that they agree to comply with specified requirements and that the school and local authority will agree to provide the support needed to enable the parent/carer to comply.

- Parents/carers will be informed that no further absence will be authorised without supporting medical evidence.
- A personal attendance target will be set and a review date agreed. If this target is not met, the case will be escalated.
- The Local Authority Attendance Officer will try to resolve the situation by agreement, but if this is unsuccessful, this officer can use sanctions such as Penalty Notices or prosecution in the Magistrates court.

### **Child Missing Education**

Child Missing Education (CME) is a child missing from education is a child of compulsory school age who is not on a roll at a school or a child that has unauthorised leave for a long period of time from school and cannot be contacted. It is vital we identify and report children who may be missing education as these are children who are at risk and may be living a life of abuse. All schools have a responsibility for ensuring they are aware of their Local Authority's guidance and have procedures in place for making a referral. The school will refer to the [Southend CME guidance](#) for further information or to make a referral.

If a pupil fails to return and contact with the parent/carers has not been made, the school may take the pupil off-roll in compliance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006. This means the child will lose their school place.

### **Summary**

Hamstel Infant School and Nursery has a legal duty to publish its absence figures and promote attendance. Equally parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend. All school staff are committed to working with parents and pupils as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible.

If you have any queries or concerns, please contact a member of the attendance team on 01702 468461 or email [office@his.porticoacademytrust.co.uk](mailto:office@his.porticoacademytrust.co.uk)