

ATTENDANCE POLICY

FOR

HELMINGHAM COMMUNITY PRIMARY SCHOOL

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 **Helmingham Community Primary School** is committed to providing an education of the highest quality for all its pupils and recognises this can only be achieved by supporting and promoting excellent school attendance for all. This is based on the belief that only by attending school regularly and punctually will children and young people be able to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them. High attainment depends on good attendance.
- 1.2 The whole school community – pupils, parents and carers, teaching and support staff and school governors – have a responsibility for ensuring good school attendance and have important roles to play. The purpose of the policy is to clarify everyone's part in this.
- 1.3 The policy is based on current government and Local Authority guidance and statutory Regulations. The school will ensure that all members of the community know of the policy and have access to it.

2. School's roles and responsibilities

- 2.1 All staff (teaching and support) at **Helmingham Community Primary School** have a key role to play in supporting and promoting excellent school attendance and will work to provide an environment in which all our pupils are eager to learn, feel valued and look forward to coming to school every day. Staff also have a responsibility to set a good example in matters relating to their own attendance and punctuality.
- 2.2 Attendance Leader
At Helmingham Community Primary School, the Headteacher (as Attendance Leader), 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. S/he will also ensure that up-to-date attendance data and issues are shared with relevant personnel; pupils and parents are regularly reminded about the importance of good school attendance and data may be used to reinforce this. A report is prepared for the governing body, termly. S/he will ensure that attendance issues are identified at an early stage and that support is put in place to deal with any difficulties.
- 2.3 Registration
 - i) The school is required to mark the attendance register twice each day; once at the start of the day and once at the start of the afternoon session. Classroom teachers are responsible for completing the attendance registers; administrative staff add prescribed codes for absence (shown overleaf).

REGISTER CODES

CODE	DESCRIPTION	MEANING
/	Present (AM)	Present
\	Present (PM)	Present
B	Educated off site (NOT Dual registration)	Approved Education Activity
C	Other Authorised Circumstances (not covered by another appropriate code/description)	Authorised absence
D	Dual registration (i.e. pupil attending other establishment)	Approved Education Activity
E	Excluded (no alternative provision made)	Authorised absence
F	Extended family holiday (agreed)	Authorised absence
G	Family holiday (NOT agreed <u>or</u> days in excess of agreement)	Unauthorised absence
H	Family holiday (agreed)	Authorised absence
I	Illness (NOT medical or dental etc. appointments)	Authorised absence
J	Interview	Approved Education Activity
L	Late (before registers closed)	Present
M	Medical/Dental appointments	Authorised absence
N	No reason yet provided for absence	Unauthorised absence
O	Unauthorised absence (not covered by any other code/description)	Unauthorised absence
P	Approved sporting activity	Approved Education Activity
R	Religious observance	Authorised absence
S	Study leave	Authorised absence
T	Traveller absence	Authorised absence
U	Late (after registers closed)	Unauthorised absence
V	Educational visit or trip	Approved Education Activity
W	Work experience	Approved Education Activity
X	Non-compulsory school age absence	Not counted in possible attendances
Y	Enforced closure	Not counted in possible attendances
Z	Pupil not yet on roll	Not counted in possible attendances
#	School closed to pupils	Not counted in possible attendances

- ii) The register will be called promptly at **9.00 am** and **12:55pm (Key Stage 2)** and **1.00 pm (Key Stage 1)**, by each class teacher and a mark will be made in respect of each child.
- iii) The registers will close at **9.15 am** and **1.15 pm**. Any pupil who arrives **after** the closing of the register will count as **absent**. Pupils who arrive late but **before** the register closes will be counted as **present** but will be dealt with under the school's policy on punctuality and lateness (see para 4.4).

2.4 Categorising absence

- i) A mark will be made in respect of each child during registration. Any child who is not present at this time will be marked as having unauthorised absence, unless leave has been granted by the school in advance, or the reason for absence is already known and accepted by the school as legitimate. Where a reason for absence is given and accepted by the school at a later stage, the register will be amended in such a way that the original entry and the amendment / correction are distinguishable. The decision about whether the absence should be authorised or unauthorised rests with the headteacher.
- ii) **Helmingham Community Primary School** recognises the clear links between attendance and attainment, and attendance and safeguarding children. It recognises that inappropriate authorisation of absence can be as damaging to a child's education as authorised absence, will potentially send a message to parents that any reason for non-school attendance is acceptable and can render children extremely vulnerable to harm. If absence is frequent or continuous, and except where a child is clearly unwell, staff at **Helmingham Community Primary School** will then challenge parents about 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 Headteacher. Significant absences agreed in exceptional circumstances will be advised to the Governors via the Headteachers Report.**
- iii) If no explanation about an absence is received by the school **within 2 weeks**, the absence will remain unauthorised;
- iv) Absence will be authorised in the following circumstances:
 - (a) where leave has been granted by the school in advance, for example –
 - a pupil is to participate in an approved performance for which a licence has been granted by the Local Authority,
 - a pupil is involved in an **exceptional** special occasion – in authorising such an absence, the individual circumstances of the particular case and the pupil's overall pattern of attendance will be considered,
 - in **exceptional** circumstances, permission has been granted for a family holiday, for which the parents have sought permission in advance (see page 8 for school's policy on term-time holidays);
 - (b) where the school is satisfied that the child is too ill to attend, for example, evidence of planned hospital admission.
 - (c) where the pupil has a medical appointment (although parents should be encouraged to make these out of school hours wherever possible, and to return their child to school immediately afterwards – or send him / her to school beforehand);
 - (d) where there is an unavoidable cause for the absence which is beyond the family's control, eg extreme weather conditions;
 - (e) the absence occurs on a day exclusively set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong;

- (f) the pupil lives more than two miles (if he/she is under eight) or three miles (if he/she has reached eight) and no suitable transport arrangements have been made by the Local Authority;
 - (g) the pupil is of no fixed abode, his/her parent is engaged in a trade which required him/her to travel, the pupil / student has attended school as often as the nature of the trade permits **and**, having reached the age of six, he/she has attended 200 sessions in the preceding 12 months;
 - (h) in other **exceptional circumstances** (eg a family bereavement) and **for a period at the Headteacher's discretion**.
- v) Except in the circumstances described above, absences will be unauthorised. Some examples of reasons for **not** authorising absence would be:
- no explanation has been given by the parent;
 - the school is not satisfied with the explanation;
 - the pupil is staying at home to mind the house;
 - the pupil is shopping during school hours;
 - the pupil is absent for **unexceptional** reasons, eg a birthday;
 - the pupil is absent from school on a family holiday where the Headteacher has not agreed it can be taken under exceptional circumstances;
 - the pupil has been stopped during a truancy sweep and is unable (or the parent is unable) to give a satisfactory reason for the absence.

2.5 Approved educational activity

Where a pupil is engaged in off-site approved educational activities, the school will check his/her attendance on a daily basis before entering the appropriate code in the register.

2.6 Class registers

In order to track pupils' whereabouts throughout the day, deal with any truancy that occurs after morning or afternoon registration and to ensure the safety of pupils, class teachers will ensure all expected pupils attend each lesson. Any sudden absences that occur during the day will be picked up immediately by the school office and measures taken to locate the pupil.

2.7 Staff Training

The School Attendance Leader will ensure that all staff responsible for taking registers, including any temporary or supply staff, receive sufficient training to enable them to perform the task accurately.

3. Collection and analysis of data

- 3.1 The Attendance Leader will ensure that attendance data is complete, accurate, analysed and reported to relevant school personnel, parents and the governing body. The report should include commentary on the trajectory and the school target. The data will inform the school's future practice to improve attendance and prevent disaffection.
- 3.2 Attendance is monitored for each pupil; where relevant, it is analysed and discussed with all appropriate parties. The Headteacher reviews attendance reports on a weekly basis that are given to her by the Attendance Officer. Any issues are referred to the EWO where needed.
- 3.3 Accurate attendance returns are made to the DFS within the stipulated time-frame.

4. Systems and strategies for managing and improving attendance

- 4.1 Attendance has a very high profile at **Helmingham Community Primary School** and is discussed at assemblies, meetings for parents and in governor meetings. Parents are regularly reminded in newsletters and school meetings about the importance of good attendance and its links to attainment.
- 4.2 **Helmingham Community Primary School** has procedures for dealing with unexplained absences, within a week. Administrative staff endeavour to make contact with the families concerned; if necessary a follow-up letter is written by the Headteacher and a meeting convened. Advice is sought from the EAS when the matter cannot be resolved.
- 4.3 First-day calling
Helmingham Community Primary School has in place a system of first-day calling. This means that parents will be telephoned on the first day a pupil is absent without explanation, to establish a reason for the absence. This helps to identify at an early stage pupils who do not have a good reason for absence, or who may be absent without their parents' knowledge. Where it is not possible to make contact with parents on the first day of absence, the school will send a letter to them by first class post.
- 4.4 Meetings with parents
Where there is an emerging pattern to a pupil's absence over a 3 to 4 week period (or sooner if staff are particularly concerned), with or without explanation, the school will invite parents to a meeting to discuss the reasons for the absences. Plans are put in place with the parents and pupil to resolve any difficulties and improve the attendance within a specified time limit – usually no more than 6 weeks. It will be explained to parents that any future absences will be unauthorised unless there is clear evidence of a good reason for them.
- 4.5 Referral to the Education Attendance Service
If there continue to be unauthorised absences by the end of the specific time (or sooner if the pupil is failing to attend school at all), the matter will be referred to the Education Attendance Service.
- 4.6 Lateness and punctuality
Pupils are expected to arrive at school, and be in the correct room for registration, on time every day. It is very disruptive to their own education, and that of others in their class, if they are late. Pupils who arrive after the register closes (see para. 2.3 (iii)) will be marked absent for the whole session (a session being a morning or an afternoon). This absence will be unauthorised unless the school is satisfied that there is a legitimate reason for the pupil to be late. Such a reason will not include things such as missing the taxi, clothes in the washing machine or lost shoes. A pupil who is persistently absent by reason of lateness will be dealt with in the same way as other pupils with an emerging pattern of absence (see para. 4.3). If the matter is not resolved quickly, it will be referred to the Education Attendance Service.
- 4.7 Where a pupil arrives late for school, but before the register closes parents / carers are asked to sign the late book, with reasons for the lateness. Persistent lateness will be followed up by a letter / meeting with those concerned and strategies suggested to improve the matter. The matter is referred to the EAS if no improvement is seen.
- 4.8 For health and safety reasons it is important that the school knows who is in the building. Pupils arriving late should therefore report to the Office. **It is important that all pupils arriving late follow this procedure.**
- 4.9 For the same reason it is important that pupils leaving the premises legitimately (eg for a medical appointment), or returning to school later in the day, are collected from /returned to the Office area. Parents / Carers do not go to the classrooms.
- 4.10 Post-registration truancy
Post-registration truancy occurs when a pupil goes missing from school, having previously registered for the session. This behaviour not only means the pupil will not be receiving a full-time education, it also potentially renders him/her vulnerable to harm. School takes this very seriously and will endeavour to ensure it does not happen by taking the register and noting attendance in

lessons. If, however, a pupil appears to have left the premises without authorisation, the school will try to make contact with his/her parents immediately.

5. Term-time Holidays

- 5.1 Term-time holidays are intended for children whose parents are **unable to take holiday at any other time**.
- 5.2 **The Headteacher** will consider every application individually; its policy is NOT to grant leave of absence for a holiday, other than in the most exceptional circumstances. Time off school for family holidays **is not a right**. An application must be made in writing, with appropriate evidence, **in advance** of the intended holiday.
- 5.3 **The Headteacher** will consider authorising holidays for:
- service personnel and other employees who are prevented from taking holidays out of term-time;
 - families where parents / carers work in agriculture and where opportunities for holiday periods are very limited
 - when a family needs to spend time together to support each other during or after a crisis;
 - parents who are subject to a strict and un-negotiable holiday rota and evidence is provided to this effect.
- 5.4 Requests for holidays for the following reason will not be authorised:
- cheaper cost of holiday;
 - more convenient flight times;
 - availability of the desired accommodation;
 - poor weather experienced in school holiday periods; and
 - overlap with beginning or end of term.
- 5.5 **The Headteacher** will respond to all requests for a leave of absence, giving the reasons for the decision.
- 5.6 **The Headteacher** will NOT authorise a holiday during periods of national tests, ie SATs examinations.

6. Penalty Notices

- 6.1 **The local authority does have the responsibility to issue penalty notices in the following situations where unauthorised absence occurs**
- Where pupil has missed at least 10 sessions (5 school days) due to unauthorised absence during a school term
 - Where a pupil is stopped with parents/carers during a truancy sweep and the absence is not authorised by the school.

7. Extended leave of absence

- 7.1 In considering absence for extended trips overseas, **The Headteacher** will take account of the following:
- a visit to family overseas, (where this is their country of origin), has a very different significance from a normal 'holiday';
 - such visits may be important in terms of children's identity and self-esteem as they grow up;

- parents may feel that the reasons for their visit outweigh the importance of their child's uninterrupted attendance at school (although parents could be encouraged to use the school holiday periods for at least part of their trip);
- the reasons for wishing to make a visit are more difficult, particularly for minority ethnic families, where huge distances and high costs are involved;
- where extended leave of absence is granted, there will be an expectation that the pupil undertakes some school-set work during this period.

8. Parents' / carers' responsibilities

8.1 The prime responsibility for ensuring children receive an appropriate and full-time education rests with parents / carers (defined by the Education Act 1996 as those with parental responsibility and those who have the care of a child), who will be supported and encouraged by **Helmingham Community Primary School**.

8.2 **Helmingham Community Primary School** expects parents / carers will:

- ensure their children attend the school regularly;
- support their children's attendance by keeping requests for absence to a minimum;
- not expect the school to automatically agree any requests for absence, and not condone unjustified absence from school.

8.3 Parents will also be expected to:

- notify **Helmingham Community Primary School** on the first day of absence ; a telephone call is sufficient. We ask that children are not asked to relay a message about another child's absence, or reasons for it. We also ask that messages are not relayed via the taxis.
- ensure their children arrive at school on time, properly dressed and with the right equipment for the day;
- work in partnership with the school, for example by attending parents' meetings and consultations, signing homework diaries when asked to do so, taking an interest in their children's work and activities;
- contact the school without delay if they are concerned about any aspects of their children's school lives. **Helmingham Community Primary School** will endeavour to support parents to address any concerns.

9. Pupils' responsibilities

9.1 All pupils should be aware of the importance of regular school attendance. If they are having difficulties that may prevent them from attending school regularly, they should speak to their class teacher.

9.2 Pupils should attend all their lessons on time, ready to learn. Parents may wish to confirm the reasons for any absence by sending in a letter when the child returns to school. Providing a telephone call has been made at the start of the absence, a follow-up letter is not obligatory. In cases of prolonged absence, a letter may be requested, in addition to the initial telephone call. Pupils also have a responsibility for following school procedures if they arrive late.

10. Governors' responsibilities

10.1 The governing body of a maintained school shall make arrangements for ensuring that their functions relating to the conduct of the school are exercised with a view to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children who are pupils at the school.

11. Conclusion

11.1 Regular school attendance is a necessary contributor to ensuring the outcomes of *Every Child Matters*:

Be healthy –

- attendance at school supports children's emotional and social health and development
- the school curriculum teaches children to be healthy

Stay safe –

- schools and the LA have a statutory duty to promote the safety and welfare of children
- the best way to safeguard children is to ensure they attend school regularly

Enjoy and achieve –

- good school attendance supports children in reaching their maximum potential and enjoying the fulfilment this brings

Make a positive contribution –

- membership of a school community builds confidence, gives children a sense of belonging and teaches them to contribute to and be responsible for the well-being of others

Achieve economic well-being –

- good school attendance supports engagement in further education, employment or training in the future, which in turn helps to support a prosperous and fulfilling life-style

Reviewing the policy

The school will review this policy each year and seek guidance from the Education Welfare Office where necessary.

A GUIDE FOR PARENTS

1. When does my child need to be in School?

Your child should be at school in good time for registration. The morning register will be called promptly at **9:00am** and the afternoon register at **12:55pm (Key Stage 2)** and **1:00pm (Key Stage 1)**

2. What happens if my child is late?

If your child arrives between **9:00am** and **9:15am** he/she will be marked **late**.

If your child arrives, (having been home for lunch), between **12:55/1:00pm** and **1:15pm** he/she will be marked **late**.

If your child arrives after **9:15am** or **1:15pm** he/she will be marked **absent**.

*(Pupils who arrive after registration should report to the school office, and their parents / carers are asked to sign the Late Book. **Pupils who are late must not be sent into school unaccompanied.** If a pupil is regularly late arriving at school (or when being collected at **3:15pm**) a meeting will be arranged with a member of staff to discuss reasons / difficulties for lateness. In the case of persistent lateness, the School Attendance Service will offer advice.*

Unacceptable reasons for lateness include:- getting fuel for car, overslept, clock wrong, running late, disorganised, children's behaviour.

3. Does the School need letters explaining my child's absence or will a phone call do?

We would expect a parent to telephone the school on the first day of absence, preferably by 9:30am. If you do not phone us, we will phone you. If we do not receive an explanation, or if the explanation is unsatisfactory, we will not authorise the absence, and this will be shown on your child's end of year report. A follow-up letter is not obligatory, but may be requested in cases of prolonged absence.

Messages related to absence or other matters must not be relayed via other pupils or via the taxis

4. What reasons will the school accept for absences?

- Illness
- Emergency dental / medical appointment (**please make routine appointments after school or during the holidays**)
- Day of religious observance
- Family bereavement

Except in the case of illness and other unexpected events, you should ask for permission for your child to miss school well in advance, giving full details. In cases of recurring absences through illness, you may be asked to produce a medical certificate.

5. What is unacceptable?

The school will not authorise absence for day trips, additional days to extend holiday, visiting relatives, shopping, birthdays or looking after brothers or sisters, etc.

In instances when a child misses 10 sessions (5 school days) in a term, that have not been authorised, the school can inform the local authority who may then issue a penalty notice.

6. Will the School contact me if my child is absent?

The school operates a first day response to absences: we will phone you if we have not heard from you. This is because we believe it is our responsibility to ensure your child's safety as well as their regular school attendance.

If we are concerned about aspects of your child's attendance or punctuality we will contact you to discuss the best way forward.

7. I am thinking about sending my child on an extended absence for an overseas trip to visit relatives. What should I do?

The school recognises that such absence can be important for children to keep in touch with their extended family, **where this is their country of origin**. Contact the Headteacher as soon as possible to discuss the best time for such a visit.

The school would strongly recommend that such absences do not take place during your child's SATs examinations. You need to complete an application form for extended leave of absence and if the Headteacher then approves the visit, the school will set work for your child to complete while away.

As far as possible, we will ensure the work set reinforces the educational value of such a visit.

8. What can I do to encourage my child to attend School?

Make sure your child gets enough sleep and gets up in plenty of time each morning. Ensure that he / she leaves home in the correct clothes and properly equipped. Show your child, by your interest, that you value his / her education.

9. My child is trying to avoid coming to School. What should I do?

Contact your child's class teacher or Headteacher immediately and openly discuss your worries. Your child could be avoiding school for a number of reasons – difficulties with school work, bullying, friendship problems, family difficulties. It is important that we identify the reason for your child's reluctance to attend school and work together to tackle the problem.

In some cases you may find it helpful to discuss the circumstances of your child's difficulties with an Education Welfare Officer. The school may also refer you to an Education Welfare Officer who works with staff and families if difficulties with attendance arise. The Education Attendance Service is based at:

Northern Area Education Office
Adrian House
Alexandra Road
Lowestoft NR32 1PL

Tel. No. 01502 405000

ATTENDING SCHOOL REGULARLY

A GUIDE FOR PUPILS

1. Attending regularly and on time

Regular attendance will help you make the most of the opportunities here at **Helmingham Community Primary School**. It will help you:

- keep up with your school work and get the best results you can;
- when you move on to secondary school;
- get a job when you are older – employers like people who are reliable.

Remember, your attendance at school is shown in your pupil record.

2. Absences

Acceptable reasons for absences include:

- illness
- emergency dental / medical appointments (your parents are asked to make routine appointments after school or during the holidays)
- day of religious observance
- family bereavement

Looking after your brothers and sisters, birthdays, general trips such as shopping and helping at those are NOT reasons to be absent from school.

Your parents are asked to telephone the school by 9:30am on the first day of your absence. We may also ask for a letter on your return. If you are late for school and this keeps happening, we will ask to talk to you parents.

If you arrive at school after 9:15am you are marked as absent. The absence will count as unauthorised and will be shown on your end of year report.

3. Need help?

Problems with your school work? Are you being bullied? Are your friends giving you a hard time? Are things difficult at school? Are things difficult at home?

You may feel that not going to school is the answer. It is not – it may even make things worse. **TALK TO SOMEONE** – your class teacher, another member of staff, your parents. We will do everything we can to help you get over the problem.