



Heelands School Attendance Policy 2020

Introduction

At Heelands School our policy is always to work in partnership with parents to secure the best outcomes for the pupils in our care. We want our pupils to achieve the very best that they can and to do this, they need to attend school every day and be on time. In the world of work, no employer would accept their employees arriving late for work or regularly having days off and schools are exactly the same. We are a place of work, our work-day begins at 9am and we expect our pupils to start their work at 9am too. We expect them to attend school every day that we are open which means that our attendance expectation is **100%**.

There is very clear evidence showing the link between good attendance and academic achievement and, conversely, how poor attendance is linked in later life with truancy, poor achievement, crime and imprisonment. These patterns of poor attendance often begin right at the start of a child's school career and it is vital that we embed good habits in these early days. Schools have a statutory duty to promote good attendance and this policy will set out very clearly the steps that we will take to achieve this.

The legal background

The Education Act of 1996 makes it an offence if parents 'fail to secure regular attendance of a registered pupil.' Prosecution for this offence means that parents may receive a Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN), a fine of up to £2500 per parent which also incurs a criminal record or even receive a custodial sentence. The legal position on holiday absence was finally clarified by the Supreme Court in 2017 and Milton Keynes council's directive is that holidays cannot be authorised in term time. Furthermore, we are obliged to report parents who take their child on holiday in term time to Milton Keynes Council's Senior Attendance Officer. Five days absence can mean a Fixed Penalty Notice being imposed whatever the level of attendance.

Authorised Absence

Every half-day absence from school is recorded by the school as either authorised or unauthorised. Absence is authorised, or agreed, for just four events:

- The **child's** illness - not that of the parent or sibling
- Medical appointment
- Religious observance - only one main day is authorised
- 'Unavoidable cause' - bereavement, funeral, house flood etc



Medical /dental appointments

We encourage parents to make appointments outside of school hours. We do recognise that with hospital or orthodontic appointments this is not always possible, and if so, parents must ensure their child attends school before and after the appointment times.

Unauthorised Absence

Absence cannot be authorised for reasons such as days out, long weekends, tiredness after the long weekend, hair-cuts, birthday outings, collecting/delivering someone to an airport or buying new shoes.

Levels of attendance

% attendance	Number of days missed	Impact on child's success at school
100% excellent	None	Pupils with these levels of attendance should achieve their full potential and have a really good start in life.
97% very good	6 days absent	
95% satisfactory	10 days absent	Pupils with this attendance are likely to achieve their targets but will have to work harder to get there.
90% unsatisfactory	19 days absent	Pupils at 90% have missed almost a whole month of school and are in real danger of falling behind in maths and literacy. They will have a lot to catch up on and it will be difficult for them to achieve their best. Less than 90% is seen as 'persistent absence' and must be reported to the local authority.
85% Serious cause for concern	29 days absent	Pupils have missed six weeks or a whole half-term of school. This time cannot be made up and pupils will find it very difficult to achieve the best that they could do.
80% serious cause for concern	40 days absent	Pupils have missed almost a whole term which is virtually impossible to catch up

The impact of attendance on attainment

Less than 85% Attendance	Less than 30% chance of 5 A*-C grades
88% Attendance	Less than 35% chance of 5 A*-C grades
90% Attendance	Less than 50% chance of 5 A*-C grades
92% Attendance	Fair chance of 5 A*-C grades
94% Attendance	Good chance of 5 A*-C grades
Above 95% Attendance	Very good chance of 5 A*- C grades

Research also shows that low attendance affects pupils' confidence, their social and emotional development and their ability to make and keep friendships.



Persistent Absence

Attendance below 90% is deemed to be '**persistent**' absence and a trigger for concern and must be reported to the Senior Attendance Officer at Milton Keynes Council. If a child's attendance falls below 90%, no further absences can be authorised.

Steps in the process to improve attendance

The Headteacher monitors attendance fortnightly. If your child has unauthorised absences which cause attendance to fall below 95% the school will:

Send **Letter 1** to invite parents to discuss the situation and devise a plan to improve attendance.

If there is no improvement after 4 weeks **Letter 2**, a warning letter, will be sent to invite parents to a formal Attendance Interview. A 100% attendance target will be put in place from the day of the interview. The warning letter will be issued if ten sessions or five days of unauthorised absence are recorded over a period of twelve weeks. The warning letter will be effective for twelve weeks and during this time it is expected that the pupil's attendance increases.

If there is no improvement after 4 weeks, or if further unauthorised absence occurs, then **Letter 3** will be sent referring parents to the local authority for a PACE, 'Police and Criminal Evidence' interview. In this process, each parent is interviewed separately under caution with a firm commitment on the part of the local authority to prosecute.

Lateness

Persistent lateness is extremely disruptive for the child, the class and affects everybody's learning. The doors open in the morning at 8.45 and registers are taken at 9.00am. Children arriving after this time must be signed into the late book in the office with the time and reason for the late arrival. Registers close at 9.20 so any child arriving after this time is recorded as an unauthorised absence which affects their overall attendance figure. FPNs can also be issued to parents for persistent lateness. 10 unauthorised absences due to lateness within a 12 school week period will lead to a warning letter followed by an FPN if there is any further absence.

Reporting absence

Parents are requested to inform the school on the first day of absence, if we do not receive a message we will contact you to find out why your child is not in school.



Support Agencies

We work with many agencies such as MASH and CAMHS to fulfill our duty to safeguard all children in our care. We report all concerns to the MASH team including persistent lateness or late collection from school as this is often symptomatic of issues at home or changes in circumstances which families may need support with. Whenever referrals to outside agencies are made the safety and well-being of the child is our main concern and overwhelming priority.

Celebrating the Positive

- Each week in our Values Assembly, the class with the highest attendance is awarded our Pippa the Penguin trophy.
- Pupils with 100% attendance are awarded with a certificate at the end of every term and at the end of the year.
- The class with the highest attendance each week, term and over the whole year is given a certificate and a special treat.
- We monitor pupils who have improved their attendance and acknowledge and reward that with letters home and certificates
- We give parents an attendance report at the end of each term so that they are fully aware of their child's attendance level.

When a child first starts school, parents sign the Home School agreement where they promise to ensure their child attends school every day and on time. We expect parents to honour that commitment and support us to do the very best that we can for the children in our school.

Monitoring and Review

This policy will next be reviewed in the Autumn Term 2023.

Approved by governors: October 19th 2020