

Highfields Primary Academy

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Parents can access this policy via the school website or request a copy via the main office.

School Commitment

At Highfields Primary Academy we are committed to the improvement and sustainability of excellent attendance, and therefore are proactive in tackling poor attendance. Our aim is to achieve and maintain a whole school target of at least 97% and to reduce persistent absence. The school will work in partnership with parents and extended services to improve attendance and therefore raising achievement for all our children.

Aims and Objectives

- To achieve and maintain a target of 97% for whole school attendance.
- To continue to reduce persistent absence and remain at/under national levels.
- To ensure excellence and enjoyment for every child by providing a safe environment and a relevant curriculum that meets the needs and interests of all our pupils.
- To offer a range of extra-curricular activities that children really want to attend.
- To tackle poor attendance rigorously with a consistent and transparent approach so being firm and fair.
- To support families where attendance is poor by removing any barriers that may attribute to poor attendance.
- To raise aspirations and expectations for our children and their families so changing cultural attitudes in the long term.
- To stop all holidays in term time for the purposes of holidays including visiting relatives for whatever reason.
- To safeguard all our children where there are safety concerns such as children missing in education by working positively with external agencies.

Partnership with Parents/Carers

As a school attendance is a high priority. As a result of this, we have an Attendance Officer who focuses on maintaining excellent attendance across the school, alongside the Head of Academy.

The school works hard to provide a relevant and enjoyable curriculum including extra-curricular activities. Despite this, children's attendance is usually dictated by their parents/carers. Therefore, our work with parents/carers is crucial in achieving outstanding attendance for all pupils. The school sends out regular information and newsletters about attendance. This includes information on holidays in term time and Fixed Penalty Notices. Where there are concerns about a child's attendance, parents/carers are involved from the very beginning in working to improve the situation. The school uses positive attendance strategies that are constantly reviewed.

Rewards

There are a range of rewards in place to promote excellent attendance. These include a weekly celebrations, rewards and certificates, as well as mentions in newsletters and displays in school.

First Day Absence/Home visits

Parents/carers are asked to ring school by 8.15am if their child is not in school that day. If a phone call has not been received by 9am, the Attendance Officer will ring home and all available contacts. If they are

unable to speak to a parent/carers/contact or get a satisfactory reason for the absence they will make an unannounced home visit without delay to ensure the child is safe.

Home visits will also be made where there are general safeguarding concerns, queries about a persistently absent child or just to confirm that a child is too unwell to attend. The Police and/or Children's Social Care will be contacted to carry out a Welfare Visit if school have a safeguarding concern. The school has the right to unauthorise an absence if the reason given is not valid.

If a child is absent for more than two days, we will usually conduct a home visit on the third day to offer support to the family.

Unauthorised absence

Children should be brought to school unless they are seriously unwell. If you are unsure, you should bring your child to school and if they deteriorate and are seriously unwell, we will call you. Children often recover when they are around friends.

Note, if children have a pattern of short illnesses, it is our right to list the illness as unauthorised, as unless children are seriously unwell, they should be in school. Frequent, short term illnesses can lead to significant periods of absence and this has a serious impact on children's well-being, attainment and life chances.

Persistent Absence

Children who attend school for less than 90% of the time are known nationally as persistently absent pupils. Where a child become persistently absent (90% or below) then we can issue proceedings to support an improvement in attendance. This can include meetings and supportive strategies such as children attending breakfast club or we can issue warning letters and fines.

If we feel that a child is at risk of becoming persistently absent, then the school will implement supportive strategies such as meetings to support families so they do not become persistently absent. We will implement these strategies when a child falls below 97% attendance.

Holidays in Term Time

The school does not authorise any Holiday in Term Time for any reason or length of time, including visiting relatives. We strongly discourage this. The school enforces the Fixed Penalty Notice system of £60 per child per parent/carer following guidance from Doncaster Local Authority. Please note that for a family with two parents this will be £120 per child.

Process for requesting a holiday

- If a parent does request a holiday, they must meet with the Head of Academy or Associate Executive Principal **prior to the holiday being booked**. The class teacher may also attend. They will explain clearly that the absence will be unauthorised and that they are in danger of losing their child/ren's place at school or being issued with a Fixed Penalty Notice.
- If the holiday extends over twenty school days, a child will be taken off roll. A CME Referral, (Child Missing Education) will be made, if appropriate, to the Local Authority.
- Parents/carers will receive written confirmation that the holiday is unauthorised prior to the absence when possible.
- Verbal confirmation will always be given prior to the absence and recorded on the Holiday in Term Time form.
- A letter will also be sent after the child has returned to school to explain the next steps of the fining process.
- Although we cannot physically stop parents from taking their children out of school, if a form is completed and a meeting takes place, we have an explanation for the absence and do not have to

refer as a CME, (Child Missing Education), due to a safeguarding concern.

- The Head of Academy or Associate Executive Principal will also meet with the parents/carers post-holiday to discuss with them how the absence has affected their child's attendance percentage and learning. Class teachers may also be present for this meeting.
- **It is not acceptable to go on holiday without following this process.**

Religious Observance

The school may allow 1 day of authorised absence for religious observance per occasion. This is at the Head of Academy's discretion.

Dentist and Medical Appointments

Parents are asked not to take children out of school for dental and medical appointments, with the exception of emergency or consultant appointments. If children are taken out for these urgent appointments the main office will need to see a letter or an appointment card. The office team will contact the Learning Mentor or Head of Academy immediately if a parent asks to take their children out of school for non-urgent appointments. Non-urgent appointments made in school time will be unauthorised.

Children should not be taken out of school due to appointments for parents. If you are struggling to collect or drop children off at the normal times due to a personal appointment, school may be able to support the children to stay in school, with a later collection time. Please note that children's attendance will be marked as unauthorised in these circumstances.

Partnership with Others

In order to safeguard all pupils and their families the school will be proactive in liaising openly and professionally with all external agencies with the aim of protecting a child and their family and improving attendance outcomes. These agencies include Admission Team, Education Social Work Service, Children's Social Care, Police Service, Special Educational Needs team and the School Nursing Team.

Children Missing from Education

The school follows guidance from the DfE regarding Children Missing Education. Where children on roll do not turn up, and the school has made enquiries through phone calls and home visits, we will refer the case to the CME Team. The CME team will advise school when it is safe to take a child off roll.

Confidentiality

As in all aspects of school data and pupil information the school's Confidentiality Policy is adhered to.

Pupil Information

Highfields Primary Academy will aim to keep up to date and accurate information in order to keep children safe and provide appropriate care for them. The school requires accurate and up to date information regarding:

- Names and contact details of persons with whom the child normally lives.
- Names and addresses of all persons with parental responsibility.
- Emergency contact details.
- Details of any persons authorised to collect the child from school.
- Any relevant court orders in place, including those which affect any person's access to the child.
- A child who is or has been on a Child Protection Plan/Family Support Plan.
- Name and contact details of GP.
- Any other factors which may impact on the safety and welfare of the child.

Children not Collected

The following procedure is followed when children are not collected by an appropriate adult at the end of

the school day or extra-curricular activity.

- If not collected at 3.05pm children are kept safe with their Class Teacher/Learning Support Assistant until 3.30pm.
- At 3.30pm the children are safely escorted by one of the above adults to the main office and a qualified member of staff supervises the children until they are collected by an appropriate adult. The school office staff will be alerted and will contact parents to collect them as soon as possible. Other emergency contact numbers will be rung if parents/carers cannot be reached until an appropriate adult can collect them.
- If no contact is made, two members of staff will escort the child home, leave them with their parents or another appropriate adult and ask for up to date contact numbers.
- If there is no suitable person at home the staff will return to school with the child and Children's Social Care/Police will be contacted so that appropriate actions can be taken.
- The same procedures will be followed if a child is not collected after a school visit or extra-curricular activity.
- Children who go home alone at the end of the school day must have written consent from a parent/carer. It is the responsibility of the parent/carer to update this permission if they wish to do so via the school office.

Children Leaving School Premises without Permission

Every effort is made to ensure that the school site is as safe and secure as possible and children are supervised appropriately at all times. In the event that a child is reported missing, the following procedures will be followed.

- A thorough search of the school site and immediate locality is made by all available staff.
- Admin staff will ring the child's contact numbers so they are fully informed and also to check whether or not the child is at home.
- If the child has not been located after these actions the police will be notified.