



Attendance Policy

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Introduction to our school attendance vision and ethos

“Creating Futures Together”

Howletch Lane Primary School seeks to ensure that all of its pupils receive an education which maximises opportunities for each pupil to realise his/her true potential. The school will strive to provide a calm, orderly, safe, and supportive environment where all pupils want to be and are keen and ready to learn within a culture that promotes the benefits of high attendance.

Regular school attendance plays a vital role in children’s wellbeing and their education, ensuring that their current learning needs are being met but also building their future ability to learn.

As attendance is the essential foundation to positive outcomes for all pupils, improving attendance is everyone’s responsibility, a concerted effort across all teaching and nonteaching staff in school, the governing body, the local authority, and other local partners.

Some pupils find it harder than others to attend school and therefore at all stages of improving attendance, the school and partners will work with pupils and parents to remove any barriers to attendance by building strong and trusting relationships and working together to put the right support in place.

Why is regular attendance so important?

Being in school every day that it is open, is important to your child’s achievement, wellbeing, and their wider development. There is a renewed national focus on maximising pupils’ time in the classroom, as evidence shows that the pupils with the highest attendance throughout their time in school gain the best GCSE and A Level results.

Here’s what the data shows:

Pupils with higher attainment at KS2 and KS4 had lower levels of absence over the key stage compared to those with lower attainment.

Pupils who did not achieve the expected standard in reading, writing and maths in 2019 had an overall absence rate of 4.7% over the key stage, compared with 3.5% among pupils who achieved the expected standard and 2.7% among those who achieved the higher standard.

Pupils who did not achieve grade 9 to 4 in English and maths GCSEs in 2019 had an overall absence rate of 8.8% over the key stage, compared with 5.2% among pupils who achieved a grade 4 and 3.7% among pupils who achieved grade 9 to 5 in both English and maths.

Generally, the higher the percentage of sessions missed across the key stage at KS2 and KS4, the lower the level of attainment at the end of the key stage.

Among pupils with no missed sessions over KS2, 83.9% achieved the expected standard compared to 40.2% of pupils who were persistently absent.

Among pupils with no missed sessions over KS4, 83.7% achieved grades 9 to 4 in English and maths compared to 35.6% of pupils who were persistently absent.

The school and all partners will work together to:

EXPECT

Aspire to high standards of attendance from all pupils and parents and build a culture where all can, and want to, be in school and ready to learn by prioritising attendance improvement across the school.



MONITOR

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 them before they become entrenched.



LISTEN AND UNDERSTAND

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



FACILITATE SUPPORT

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, school and partners should work together 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 a parenting 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 or prosecution to protect the pupil's right to an education.

We recognise that the relationship between attendance and achievement of our pupils is inextricably linked.

Regular school attendance is crucial to maximise pupil progress and enjoyment of learning, and for this reason the school is dedicated to ensuring its attendance policy is adhered to.

We will ensure that:

- All pupils have an equal right, and access to, an education in accordance with the national curriculum, or agreed alternative.
- Attendance is a priority across the school.
- Aspire to high standards on attendance.
- Pupils will not be deprived of their education opportunities by, either their own absence or lateness, or that of pupils.
- Action is taken where necessary to secure an improvement in attendance.

1. Attendance data and identifying barriers

We will use data on a daily, weekly and termly basis to monitor punctuality, absence and other forms of non-attendance to establish whether early intervention is required before attendance levels drop to below the national average.

2. Listening to and understanding barriers to attendance

Once an issue is identified, we will work **together** with pupils, parents and other external agencies to discuss any barriers relating to attendance levels and to ensure all is being done to support the needs of the family as a whole. This may include extra pastoral support in school, understanding why a pupil may be late and working together with the family to alleviate any morning pressures they may have.

3. Facilitate support

As a school we will set out strategies for reducing persistent and severe absence, including enabling access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance and, when necessary, formalising support in conjunction with the local authority, linking with the Attendance Improvement Team.

4. Formalise support

Where absence persists and voluntary support is not working or not being engaged with, partners will work together 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 a parenting contract or education supervision order.

6. Enforce

If all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or not being engaged with, attendance may be enforced where necessary through statutory intervention or prosecution to protect the pupil's right to an education. The Local Authority and Attendance Improvement Team will be heavily involved at this stage.

General / frequently asked questions

When can children be absent from school?

When you register your child at school, you have a legal duty to ensure your child attends that school regularly.

This means that your child must attend every day that the school is open, unless:

- Your child is too ill to attend that day.
- You have asked in advance and been given permission by the school for your child to be absent on that day due to **exceptional** circumstances.
- Your child cannot attend school on that day because it is a day you are taking part in religious observance.
- Your local authority is responsible for arranging your child's transport to school and it is not available on that day or has not been provided yet; or
- You are a gypsy/traveller family with no fixed abode, and you are required to travel for work that day meaning your child cannot attend their usual school. In most circumstances, however, your child is required to attend another school temporarily during such absences.

These are the only circumstances where schools can permit your child to be absent.

What do I need to do if my child needs to be absent from school for one of those reasons?

You should contact their school as early as possible to explain why. If not, your child's school will contact you on the first morning of their absence to find out why. If we do not hear from a parent after contacting them in the first instance, their absence will be logged as unauthorised.

All parents can request a 'leave of absence' for their child which gives them permission to be absent from school. Leaves of absence must be applied for 10 working days before your child will be absent and will only be granted in exceptional circumstances.

Your child's headteacher has the final say over whether to approve the request and how long your child can be absent.

Their decision will be made after considering the specific facts and circumstances behind your request.

Can I take my child on holiday during term time?

Parents should plan their holidays around school breaks and avoid requesting leaves of absence for holidays.

Permission will be refused therefore if you keep your child off school on the days requested, you are likely to be committing an offence and will be issued a fixed penalty notice or be prosecuted by your local authority. This will be recorded as an "Unauthorised absence" on the child's attendance register.

Attendance Procedures and Absence Processes

Attendance and absence management

Our School Attendance Lead's role is to track and monitor the attendance of all pupils, particularly focusing on persistent absentees.

As a school, at Howletch Lane Primary we promote the importance of regular attendance through the use of rewards and incentives.

Every week, the highest attending class in EYFS, KS1 and KS2 receive recognition in assembly and are awarded a trophy for that week to keep in class. Our attendance display is then updated showing the winners and their attendance percentage for all to see. Three pupils with 98% or above attendance for that week will be randomly selected and entered in to a draw to be given a prize at the end of each half term.

At the end of each term, pupils with excellent attendance (98% or above) are rewarded with certificates and a special treat/activity within school, this will also include pupils who have made significant progress in improving their attendance.

Communication

The school requests that all parents please remember to report and explain the reasons for absence and to make sure your contact and emergency contact details are up to date. It is vital, that school can contact parents if their child becomes unwell during the school day or in order to discuss the reasons for absence.

The school will analyse absence across the school. As a result of this, some families will receive letters to inform them if their child's absence is lower than it should be if no prior discussion has taken place (unless this is due to, for example, medical needs). If we have concerns regarding your child's attendance then we may contact you by phone, letter, invite you to a meeting or make a visit to your home.

As a parent you may identify concerns about school attendance early on if you have seen a change in your child's attitude to school or in their willingness to attend. If this is the case, please share your concerns with us and we can work together to ensure that school attendance doesn't ever need to decline. The quicker that concerns are shared, the quicker they can be resolved.

The school will work with you to discuss ways that we can offer support in finding a way to improve attendance.

On the first day of absence

If a child is absent for any reason, parents or carers are asked to phone the School Office giving a reason for the child's absence. A message can be left before the office is open or an email can be sent to the school office;

o.howletch200@howletchlane.co.uk

If a child is absent from school and there is no phone call from home then school will phone home or send an email via Arbor to inform parents that the child is not in school and enquire about a reason why.

Doctors and dentist's appointments should be made outside of school time. If this is not possible, your child should miss the minimum amount of school time necessary. If they are well enough following the appointment they should return to school. School will need to see evidence of the appointment or this will be marked as unauthorised. Parents/carers will need to take a photo/screen shot of the proof of appointment and email this to the school office prior to the appointment taking place.

Periods of extended absence

Parents need to contact the school office **each day** that their child is absent unless school have advised that this is not necessary. If a phone call is not received after three consecutive days, the attendance lead will make a home visit with a designated safeguarding lead to verify the absence and take any relevant action in relation to ensuring all needs are being met whilst the pupil is absent and any intervention has taken place (such as doctors appointments.)

If the school receives no reason for any absence then an unauthorised absence will be recorded. Continued absenteeism and unauthorised absences will result in more formal action and intervention being carried out by Durham County Council. A notice to improve will be issued to any parents with parental responsibility in the first instance. Parents will then have six weeks to improve their child's punctuality/attendance. If this does not improve then legal proceedings will commence.

Absence authorisation

The High Court has confirmed that the school's Head Teacher authorises absences. In some circumstances, the school may request that parents provide medical evidence to support absences.

We are committed to supporting your child effectively, to ensure that they get the very best education possible and therefore have the best life chances. All challenges made concerning persistent absences, will be handled sensitively and in confidence.

Punctuality:

Registration time for Reception to Year 6 is at **8:40am** at which point the pupil entry gates will be locked and all late pupils must enter by the main entrance. It is so important for all children to be on time, as missing the first few minutes of any lesson can be disruptive and unsettling, both for children and for the rest of the class. If a child arrives in school from this time up until 9am then a late mark will be recorded in the register (L). Registers will be closed at 9am and any children arriving after this time will be recorded as (U) which is a late after registers close mark and this is classed as an unauthorised absence (a number of these marks can also contribute to more formal action being considered).

If your child is late for school:

All children **MUST** come in to school using the main entrance if they are late and sign in using the Inentry system in reception. This then links in with our school's attendance database and ensures the children are recognised as being in school. This will also record the reason for being late and how many minutes late they are.

If a child is late (after registers close) for school on a number of occasions

The school Attendance Lead will be informed and will make contact with the parent to discuss any barriers they may have with getting their child to school on time. They will work together with the parents and any other agencies if necessary to assist in improving future punctuality.

If lateness becomes persistent with no identifiable reason

The Attendance Officer will seek guidance from The Attendance Team within Durham County Council to offer support in any which way possible to the child, parent and school to improve lateness.

If the school continues to have concerns about a child's punctuality

This will then be referred to the Attendance Team at Durham County Council and enforcement may be necessary. A notice to improve will be issued to any parents with parental responsibility in the first instance. Parents will then have six weeks to improve their child's punctuality/attendance. If this does not improve then legal proceedings will commence.

Help & Support

If you need help with attendance, it is important that you contact school about the issues as soon as possible. The quicker we know what the issue is, the quicker that we can work together to solve it and put a plan together which will meet your child's needs and ensure your child can benefit from all that school has to offer. Where needed we can also involve other services to make sure that your child and your family gets the right support, at the right time from the right people.

Pupils with specific needs

This Attendance Policy will be applied fairly and consistently and consider the individual needs of pupils/ families who have specific barriers to attendance.

In development and implementation of the policy, consideration will be given under the obligations of the Equality Act 2010 and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Children Missing from Education

If you move from the area and your whereabouts are unknown, the school can legally remove your child from the roll after 20 school days of unauthorised absence. It is **vital that if you keep school informed of any change of details** and regularly update them if details change. Your child may be at risk of losing their school place if your whereabouts are not known.

It is also important that emergency contact information is kept up to date and that if you are leaving the area, you provide details of where and how you can be contacted. If you do not do this and the school is unable to trace your child, this would be treated as a **safeguarding matter**.

Roles and Responsibilities

Amanda Wigham – Attendance Lead

Helen Beattie – Attendance Champion