

Attendance Policy

(May 2018)

Park Community School

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Mission Statement

Regular and full attendance is essential if students are to gain maximum benefit from their school career. Park Community School, parents and agencies have the major responsibility for promoting and rewarding good attendance.

At Park Community School we believe that regular attendance at school is essential if students are to benefit from their time at school. Missing out on lessons leaves children vulnerable to falling behind. Children with poor attendance tend to achieve less in both primary and secondary school. Parental support is therefore vital if students are to maintain optimum levels of attendance; assisted by school staff, governors and other agencies where appropriate.

The Law

The Law States that all children of compulsory school age (5 – 16) should attend school regularly to obtain the maximum benefit from their education.

Parents

The 1996 Education Act Section 7, states that parents are required to perform their legal duty by ensuring their children of compulsory school age are registered at school and attend regularly. The Act (section 576) also defines "parent" to include:

- All natural parents, whether they are married or not.
- Any person who, although not a natural parent, has parental responsibility for a child or young person.
- Any person who, although not a natural parent, has care of a child or young person.

Having care of a child or young person means that a person who the child lives with and who looks after the child, irrespective of what their relationship is with the child, is considered to be a parent in education law.

Completing the register

Registers are legal documents that may be used as evidence where parents are being prosecuted for attendance offences. They are retained by the school even after a student has left school. (See the Retention Schedule' available on the school's web-site.)

The governing body is legally responsible for ensuring the school maintains accurate admission and attendance registers.

Registers at Park Community School are completed using the SIMS system (see Appendix 1 for a copy of the SIMS codes).

In the register students will be entered under their legal name on their birth certificate or as changed by deed poll; their known name may be shown on the register in brackets.

Registration

The register is a legal document. It is the responsibility of each teacher to ensure that information is accurately entered onto the SIMS register as follows:

- All students must be registered in every lesson.
- Registers must be completed using the approved symbols for SIMS.
- Students must not mark the register under any circumstances.

Communication

- On the first day of absence, school expects parents to inform them of the absence and the reasons for it.
- If we do not receive notification we will text or phone to check the reason for the absence after 9.00 am.
- Reasons for absence are recorded on SIMS.
- Parents are asked to provide a written explanation of absence when the child returns to school. Letters can be brought in to school reception or an e-mail is also acceptable [email: Attendance@pcs.hants.sch.uk]

Absences

If a student of compulsory school age is absent, the register must show whether this was authorised or unauthorised.

- Authorised absence is where the school has either given approval in advance for a student to be away or has accepted an explanation offered afterwards as satisfactory justification for absence (see Appendix 2).

Authorised Absence

- The Department for Education (DFE) makes clear that it is only the school that can authorise an absence, not parents.
- If a parent's note offers an unacceptable explanation for an absence, then the school will not authorise it.
- If we feel a child has had too many authorised absences, we will inform parents that future absences may not be authorised without additional reassurances or evidence that the absences were unavoidable (see Appendix 3 for circumstances that may lead to parentally condoned absence).
- ALL OTHER ABSENCES MUST BE TREATED AS UNAUTHORISED (see Appendix 3).
- Sixth day of absence - if no contact has been made or the reason given is unacceptable, the Home Liaison Officer will arrange a home visit.
- After 10 sessions of absence, in a 100-session period, the Attendance Officer will send a warning letter.
- The Attendance Officer will also send a warning letter after 20 sessions of absence or where a pattern of absences has not improved.
- The Home Liaison Officer will liaise with local GP's if poor attendance seems to be linked to medical problems.
- The school will issue a fixed term penalty (where appropriate) for poor attendance.
- The school will also make a referral to the Attendance Legal Panel (ALP) where there are concerns re poor attendance.

Removing a student from Roll

When a student leaves Park Community School they will not be removed from the

school roll until one of the following is the case:

- Until they have been accepted onto the roll of another school.
- Until we have authorisation from the Local Authority (LA) to remove the child from the school roll.
- If the student's new address is such that it is impractical for the student to attend Park Community School daily.
- After 4 weeks without contact a child will be recorded as below if we suspect a move out of the area.

Suspected Changes of Address

When it is suspected that a family has moved away from the area without notifying the school, reasonable enquiry to locate the child will be undertaken. After a period of 4 weeks the child will be removed from the school roll and their name will be placed on the school to school (S2S) site for missing children.

The Role of the School

When a student is absent without explanation school will endeavour to contact the parent as soon as possible. Notes, records of telephone calls and medical certificates/evidence will be kept on file and referred to as and when appropriate, e.g. If legal action is required.

School will closely monitor the attendance of all Students with less than 95% attendance. School and the Attendance and Inclusion Officer work closely together to identify children at risk of becoming persistent absentees (PA's) and will offer support to parents as appropriate.

The Role of the Parent

Whatever efforts are made by the school staff, it is ultimately the parents' responsibility to see that their child attends school regularly and punctually. If parental support is not forthcoming, strategies to encourage good attendance may fail.

It is the parents' responsibility to inform school of the reason for a child's absence as promptly as possible and to provide any further information which may be required.

For any absence other than sickness a Leave of Absence Form must be completed (see Appendix 5). Parents are expected to attend meetings with school staff in relation to their child's attendance and take an active role in improving their child's attendance. Where children have individual targets for attendance, parents are expected to work with school staff to ensure those targets are met.

Parents should:

- Contact the school before 8.30am on the first day of absence, giving a reason and approximate anticipated length of absence.
- On student's return to school, parents must provide written evidence of the reason for absence (further clarification may be sought by the school)
- Make every effort to ensure medical/dental appointments are made for out of school hours. If this is unavoidable, the school should be informed in advance. The school reserves the right to mark as unauthorised any time taken for medical/dental appointments.

Referrals for non-attendance

Students with irregular attendance are regularly identified. Targets and plans are then put in place to improve the attendance, in discussion with relevant school staff.

Students having 5 or more day's unauthorised absence (10 sessions) may receive a Fixed Penalty Notice (Fine of £60 - £120) (see Appendix 4).

Role of Home Liaison Officer

- Will meet with and offer support to parents whose children have attendance/ punctuality issues.
- If a student is absent for three consecutive days, then Home Liaison will attempt to make contact.

Lateness

Letters received regarding Absence/Lateness - On receipt of a letter the mentor must write the child's name, mentor group, date and sign it and pass to the Assistant Headteacher (responsible for Welfare, Support and Guidance) who will, if not satisfied with the explanation offered, discuss with the Home Liaison Officer and further information be sought from parents.

- Parents can be asked to provide medical evidence to support the reasons given, **or**
- The school can refer the matter to a medical practitioner working for the school/Health Service, **or**
- Parental consent may be sought to contact family GP.

Lateness Procedures

- Students arriving after the register has been taken must be marked Late (L) by mentors.
- AM registration is marked in Mentor Time
- PM registration is marked in Period 4
- Students arriving after the AM register has been taken will be marked as Late.
- Students arriving after 9.30am will be marked as Unauthorised (U)
- A daily text goes out for all students who arrive late at school.
- Attendance Officer, Home Liaison Officer, and Assistant Headteacher (responsible for Welfare, Support and Guidance) will discuss students with persistent poor punctuality and take appropriate action.

Students who arrive after 8.30am will need to enter school via student reception to sign in.

Rewards

Rewards may include:

- Termly attendance badges for 98-100% attendance
- 100% attendance and punctuality = Headteacher's Certificate awarded at annual Awards Evenings (Years 7, 8 & 9).

Strategies for Maintaining and Improving Attendance

Strategies for maintaining and Improving attendance may include:

- Verbal praise, encouragement and acknowledgement.
- Parent and student awareness as to the importance of good attendance – regular information given in: assemblies, Mentor time, rewards, Parents' evenings.
- Key member of staff responsible for providing attendance data and monitoring consistency of records across the whole school.
- Nominated member of staff ensures rewards and certificates are available.
- Concerns regarding attendance go through fortnightly referral meetings.
- Prompt follow-up on absence – 1st day contact made with home; absence calls made daily.
- SENCO to have identified strategies for helping students return from absence and, in addition, teachers offer supportive advice to returning students.
- Use of Educational Psychologist/Education Welfare Service, SENCO and Inspired Education provision in setting up suitable re-integration programmes for poor attendees.
- Educational Psychologist discussion with SENCO about curriculum access and the most effective use of support staff.
- Termly attendance clinics

Appendix 1 - SIMS Codes

/ \	Present at registration
B	Educated off-site (not dual registration)
C	Other authorised circumstances (not covered by another appropriate Code/description)
D	Dual registered (i.e. present at another school or at a PRU)
E	Excluded but no alternative provision made
F	Agreed leave of absence
G	Leave of absence not agreed or sessions in excess of agreement
I	Illness
J	Interview
L	Late but arrived before the register closed
M	Medical or dental appointment
N	No reason for the absence provided yet
O	Other unauthorised (not covered by other codes or descriptions)
P	Approved sporting activity
R	Day set aside exclusively for religious observance
S	Study leave
T	Traveller absence
U	Late and arrived after the register closed
V	Educational visit or trip
W	Work experience (not work based training)
X	Untimetabled sessions for non-compulsory school-age Students
Y	Partial and forced closure
Z	Pupil not on roll yet
#	School closed to all Students

Appendix 2 - Authorised Absence

An absence may be counted as authorised if a child is absent:

- When prevented from attending by illness.
- On a day set aside for religious observance.
- Participating in a public performance.

Furthermore, the school may “reasonably exercise discretion to grant leave” for:

- Absence following the death of a close family member of the child’s family.

Appendix 3 - Unauthorised absence

Circumstances that may lead to parentally condoned absences include:

- The child's father/mother/carer being ill
- A student being used to support members of the family
- Family work patterns
- A parent's desire for company
- Family holiday
- Indulging a child who wants to stay at home
- A child's birthday
- Apathy on the part of the parent
- Buying clothes
- A parent's inability to control the child
- Child used as an interpreter
- Uneasy relationships with an institution representing authority

Appendix 4 - "Fixed Penalty Notice"

Penalty Notices

(To address poor attendance and punctuality at school)
The Education Act 1996, section 444A

Advice to parents and carers from the Children's Services Department

- **Penalty Notices and the Education Act 1996**

Section 444A of the Act gives powers to the Local Authority (LA) and other designated bodies (including headteachers) to issue Penalty Notices where a parent/carer is considered capable of but unwilling to secure an improvement in their child's school attendance and/or punctuality. The person authorised to issue Fixed Penalty Notices for Park Community School is Christopher Anders, Headteacher.

- **Why use them?**

Reducing absence and improving punctuality in schools is a key priority both nationally and locally because missing school damages a pupil's attainment levels, disrupts school routines as well as the learning of others and can leave a pupil vulnerable to anti-social behaviour and youth crime.

Above all, missing school seriously affects children's longer-term life opportunities.

Under existing legislation, parents/carers commit an offence if their child fails to attend school regularly and punctually and the absence is recorded by the school as unauthorised. Absence is recorded as unauthorised unless it is taken with the permission of the school or is for some unavoidable reason. Punctuality is recorded as unauthorised absence when the pupil arrives after the register has been closed.

Depending upon the circumstances, such cases may result in prosecution by the LA under the Education Act 1996, section 444. A Penalty Notice is an alternative to prosecution.

- **What is a Penalty Notice?**

A Penalty Notice is a fine which may be issued as an alternative to prosecution. It does not require a court appearance and does not result in a criminal record. Payment of a Penalty Notice enables the parent/carer to discharge the potential liability for prosecution and subsequent conviction.

- **What is the cost of a Penalty Notice?**

Payment of a Penalty Notice is £60 if paid within 21 days of receipt and £120 if paid after this but within 28 days of receipt.

- **How is a Penalty Notice issued?**

By post to your home by Recorded Delivery.

- **When are they issued?**

Hampshire County Council and Hampshire schools consider that regular attendance and punctuality is of such importance that Penalty Notices may be issued where a pupil has had 10 or more half-day sessions i.e. the equivalent to 5 school days of

unauthorised absence, in any 10 school week period and

- where issuing a Penalty Notice will be an effective measure in helping the pupil return to school and/or ensure their future regular attendance/punctuality
- where the parent/carer is capable of ensuring the pupil's regular attendance/punctuality
- where the parent/carer has failed to cooperate in making use of advice/support offered.

NB. A Penalty Notice may also be issued where a parent/carer takes a child on holiday during term-time.

- **Is a warning given?**

In most situations the parent/carer will be given a written warning of the possibility of a Penalty Notice being issued. This written warning will advise the parent/carer about the extent of the child's absence and warn them that if the child's attendance and punctuality does not show a significant improvement and if this improvement is not maintained thereafter, a Penalty Notice may be issued without further warning.

NB. The school may, however, have already warned parents of its policy in respect of term-time holidays. In such cases, if a holiday is taken without the school's permission beforehand, a Penalty Notice may be issued without a further warning.

- **Is there an appeal process?**

There is no statutory right of appeal. Once a Penalty Notice has been issued, it can only be withdrawn if it can be shown that it was issued in error.

- **How do I pay?**

Details of payment arrangements will be included in the Penalty Notice. Payment in part or by instalments of a Penalty Notice is not acceptable.

- **What happens if I do not pay?**

You will have up to 28 days from receipt to pay the Penalty Notice in full. If you fail to do so, the Local Authority is required, by law, to commence proceedings in the Magistrates' Court for the original offence of poor school attendance and/or punctuality.

If convicted of this offence under the Education Act 1996, there are a number of possible sentences including a fine of up to £1000 (in the case of a prosecution under section 444(1)) or a fine of up to £2500 and/or a period of up to 3 months' imprisonment (in the case of a prosecution under section 444(1A)).

- **What if my child has further unauthorised absence from school?**

If you pay the Penalty Notice and your child has further unauthorised absences, you may be prosecuted for the further unauthorised absences but not for the absences during the period covered by the Penalty Notice.

- **Can I get help if my child is not attending school?**

Yes. Both the school and Hampshire County Council Children's Services Department are available to provide advice and support.

Appendix 5 – Request to authorise absence from school due to exceptional circumstances

Before submitting your request, please book an appointment with Ms S Bannard (Assistant Headteacher). Call 023 92 489800 ext 251. Please bring this form with you to your appointment.

Request to authorise absence from school due to exceptional circumstances

Schools are only able to authorise absence from school in exceptional circumstances. In making a request for an authorised absence from school you will need to explain why the circumstances are exceptional. Please note there is no general right to authorise absence for a family holiday and if you take your child out of school without permission the absence will be unauthorised and we may refer the matter for consideration of legal action.

You are advised not to make any arrangements until your request has been considered.

Section A – to the headteacher

I wish to apply for

Child's name: _____ Class: _____

To be authorised as absent from school (please include dates and time):

from _____ to _____ (inclusive dates)

Section B

Please explain why you are applying for an authorised absence and the **circumstances** which make your **application exceptional**; and why the leave cannot be taken within the normal 13 weeks annual holiday your child already has from school. If you are requesting authorisation to attend a specific event, for example a funeral, please confirm the date of the event and explain your travel arrangements. If you require additional space please continue on the other side of the page.

Section C

I am the parent/carer with whom the pupil normally resides. The information I have given on this form is correct.

Signature (parent/carer): _____ Date: _____

PTO



Hampshire
County Council

www.hants.gov.uk

Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 have been amended (as of 1 September 2013) to prohibit the proprietor (headteacher) of a maintained school granting leave of absence to a pupil except where an application has been made in advance and the proprietor considers that there are exceptional circumstances relating to the application.

Section D – for school use only

Delete as appropriate

Request approved for __ number of days from the dates and times _____

Request not approved as the circumstances are not considered to constitute an exceptional reason and/or the impact of this absence will affect your child's educational progress.

A personal discussion with you is requested Please contact: _____

Headteacher: _____ Date: _____

Current attendance rate: _____



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