



much more than just a school



September 2024



Dear Parent/carer

As this new academic year begins, we are writing to remind you of attendance procedures at Park Community School and make you aware of changes introduced this year by the Department for Education.



Parents/carers are legally responsible for their child's regular attendance to school. All children of compulsory school age must receive a suitable full-time education.

Parents/carers:

- Must make sure their child is regularly attending school or 'otherwise' receiving suitable, full-time education
- Are guilty of an offence if their child doesn't regularly attend school (if they're registered at that school)



This is set out in [sections 7](#) and [444\(1\)](#) of the Education Act (1996).

Current procedures

At Park Community School we use ClassCharts as our communication tool. It is vital that all parents/carers have the app downloaded and have the notifications for ClassCharts turned on. If your child is going to be absent from school, then you can report this absence via the ClassCharts app. This will make the process of reporting absence much easier for you and will allow us to ensure your child's non-attendance is coded correctly.



If you are yet to download the ClassCharts, full instructions on how to, and instructions for each aspect of the app can be found here:



[Class Charts for parents guide.pdf \(pcs.hants.sch.uk\)](#)

If you require your unique parent code, this can be obtained by contacting your child's tutor or Year Team.



Below are our current absence procedures for children who have not been reported absent.

We use ClassCharts to notify you if your child is absent from school and we have not been informed of this by you, to check that all is well.



First day of absence

If your child is absent from school and you have not notified us by 9.00am, we will send you a message via ClassCharts at approximately 9.30am requesting the reason for non-attendance. This is a vital element in ensuring good attendance to school and ensuring the safeguarding of all our young people.



Success for All through Attainment, Resilience and Autonomy



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If you have not responded to that message by 10.30am, you will receive a second message via ClassCharts and a text message. This message will detail that if we receive no response from you, then we will likely carry out a home visit to ascertain the reason for absence.

Second day of absence

The procedures above will be repeated, but we will also take the opportunity to contact other family members listed as emergency contacts if we do not receive a response from you.

Third day and beyond of absence

If we have been unable to make contact with you on day 3 we will make contact with outside agencies such as the Police, Children's Services and the Local Authority.

If a child is absent for 10 consecutive days, we will have to report the young person to the Local Authority as being a Child Missing in Education (CME).

Attendance update from Department for Education

You may have seen the recent increased focus on school attendance in the news. This has come as a result of a revised government document which comes into force on 19 August 2024.

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65f1b048133c22b8eecd38f7/Working_together_to_improve_school_attendance_applies_from_19_August_2024.pdf

As a school, we have always tried to be clear and consistent about our attendance procedures to ensure fairness and transparency across our school community. I therefore feel that it is very important that we inform parents of the revised parts of these procedures so that they are not surprised if we have to make contact if a child is not in school or offended if they receive communication about attendance.

As you are no doubt aware, attendance in schools has never really returned to pre COVID-19 levels and the new and revised processes within this document, which are statutory, are the Department for Education's response to this.

Local Authorities are being asked to inspect school attendance termly and ensure that we are dealing with persistent absence (any child with less than 90% attendance) effectively. All schools are expected to have a clear action plan and policy to ensure attendance is dealt with as a high priority alongside safeguarding.



Penalty Notices

Penalty notices were introduced by the government in 2014 as deterrent to parents taking repeated annual holidays in term time and as a sanction for ongoing unauthorised absence. A penalty notice will be issued when there have been 10 sessions (5 days) of unauthorised absence in a continuous 100 session period (50 school days).

There are many reasons for an absence being classed as unauthorised but the main reason in schools is when a holiday is taken during term time.

We fully recognise the issue of rising holiday costs in school holidays and the frustration families feel around this. As staff working in schools, who are also restricted to holidays out of term time, we face the same problems and financial issues when we look at taking our families away.

However, under the Hampshire code of conduct, headteachers are only allowed to authorise an absence if it is exceptional. Exceptional is defined as "unexpected, rare, unavoidable and short". A planned holiday in term time would not be classed as unexpected or unavoidable and therefore does not meet this criterion. The new document now goes on to state that "the DfE does not consider a need or desire for a holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure and recreation to be an exceptional circumstance."

10 sessions of absence equate to 5 days of school missed, as a day is made up of a morning and an afternoon session. The 10 sessions do not necessarily need to have been taken as a block of days. If you were to have 3 days of unauthorised absence followed by two separate days of unauthorised absence within a 50-day period, you would still be liable for a penalty notice.

One of the key changes within the new document is the rise in cost of the fine linked to the penalty notices.

The document details this change as follows:

From autumn term 2024, only 2 penalty notices can be issued to the same parent in respect of the same child within a 3-year rolling period and any second notice within that period is charged at a higher rate:

- The first penalty notice issued to a parent in respect of a particular pupil will be charged at £160 if paid within 28 days. This will be reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days.
- A second penalty notice issued to the same parent in respect of the same pupil is charged at a flat rate of £160 if paid within 28 days.
- A third penalty notice cannot be issued to the same parent in respect of the same child within 3 years of the date of issue of the first. In a case where the national threshold is met for a third time (or subsequent times) within those 3 years, alternative action should be taken instead. This will often include considering prosecution but may include other tools such as one of the other attendance legal interventions.



Please be aware that penalty notices are issued per parent/carer per child so if, as a set of parents/carers, you plan to take your 2 children out of school you would each receive a penalty notice for each of the children (4 Penalty notices in total).

Schools are expected to pass on information about any penalty notices previously issued or court proceedings previously instigated when a child moves schools, i.e. between infant and junior school or junior school and secondary school.

Please be advised that schools are not able to authorise a child's birthday as holiday as, again, this would not be classed as exceptional.

If a child is reported as missing school due to sickness and we subsequently find out that the family were on holiday/on a day out, we are required to change the coding of the register to an unauthorised absence in the same way we would have if the leave had been requested through the correct channels. This will also be the case when siblings are repeatedly off school at the same time. Please be aware that via the children, social media and other parents, schools do often find out if a child is on holiday.

Persistent Lateness

Schools are asked to follow the same criteria when looking at lateness as we do with attendance. Where a child is consistently late, they are discussed in our regular attendance meetings and next steps action decided upon.

Next steps can be:

- An initial letter to parents informing them that lateness has become an issue and offering the opportunity to come and talk to staff, the school nurse or support staff regarding strategies for improving future punctuality.
- A further letter to parents informing them that further lateness will be classed as unauthorised absence
- Ten sessions of unauthorised absence would leave parents liable to a fine via a penalty notice as mentioned in the previous information.
- A referral to the Hampshire Legal Intervention Team which may result in court proceedings.

We know that so many of our families work very hard, alongside school, to ensure the best possible attendance and education for their children and therefore wanted to ensure that everyone is aware of the current attendance expectations and requirements for schools so that no one is caught out or surprised by our actions. As always, where there are genuine ongoing issues that affect attendance, we are always happy to work with parents to support the best outcomes for their children and to ensure absences are coded correctly to demonstrate these concerns.



Reduced Hours Provisions

As a school we will, in agreement with families, consider the use of Reduced Hours Provisions to help support attendance to school. This is when specific barriers are identified, and the Reduced Hours Provision is used as a way to overcome these barriers and will build student's resilience to attend school. As a part of the new guidance for schools, the Department for Education has made the parameters for a Reduced Hours Provision more stringent. The guidance reads as follows:

"In very exceptional circumstances, where it is in a pupil's best interests, there may be a need for a school to provide a pupil of compulsory school age with less than full-time education through a temporary part-time timetable to meet their individual needs. For example, where a medical condition prevents a pupil from attending school or another setting full-time, and a part-time timetable is used to help the pupil access as much education as possible".

A part-time timetable should:

- Have the agreement of both the school and the parent the pupil normally lives with.
- Have a clear ambition and be part of the pupil's wider support, health care or reintegration plan.
- Have regular review dates which include the pupil and their parents to ensure it is only in place for the shortest time necessary.
- Have a proposed end date that takes into account the circumstances of the pupil, after which the pupil is expected to attend full-time, either at school or alternative provision. It can, however, be extended as part of the regular review process. In some limited cases, a pupil with a long-term health condition may require a parttime timetable for a prolonged period.

A reminder that if you need support with your child's attendance or other barriers affecting attendance, we are here to help. Support can be accessed through contacting your child's tutor, WSG Manager, Head of Year or wider school teams such as the SEND department.

Yours sincerely

Jamie Bryce
Deputy Head of School