

## ATTENDANCE POLICY

### Hedgewood School

#### Introduction:

Hedgewood is a small but successful specialist school and every child makes a wonderful and unique contribution. We always strive to do our best working, learning and playing together. We absolutely love your child attending school and contributing to the daily kaleidoscope of fun and learning

It is very important therefore that you make sure that your child attends regularly and this Policy sets out how, by working together, we will achieve this. The key principles woven through this document are **commitment** and **communication** which will form the basis of a great partnership between home and school.

#### Why Regular Attendance is so important:

Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect acquisition of learning because of the patterns established. **This is especially true for the young person with autism.** Interestingly, the other young people expect to see their classmates every day and we would always explain why a friend is absent.

#### To help you we will:

- Report to you via ILPs on how your child is performing in school including attendance.
- Celebrate good attendance in our Pat on the Back weekly assemblies;
- Reward high attendance.
- Support you with any issues in a personalised way e.g. with social stories and jigs as necessary.
- Keep you regularly informed via the Link Book and by other means
- By 'same morning' calling by our admin team
- Always be understanding and supportive

## **Understanding types of absence:**

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required, preferably in writing.

***Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason like illness, medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable cause.***

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been given. Please note that if this type of absence is persistent it could lead to the Local Authority (Participation Team) using sanctions and/or legal proceedings.

So please try to avoid time off for any of the following

- keeping children off school unnecessarily
- absences which cannot be properly explained
- children who arrive at very late at school
- shopping,
- looking after other children
- birthdays
- day trips and holidays in term time which have not been agreed
- excessive illness without medical evidence

## **Persistent Absenteeism (PA):**

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason. We monitor all absence thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority and you will be informed of this immediately.

We are also very mindful of how the autistic child might react to a brother or sister remaining at home poorly or on a training day and the difficulties that this might bring. We also know that pupils might not feel well but will insist on attending school which often means we could be calling you later on. We also know that our pupils have more than their fair share of medical appointments which we can help you to negotiate if there is any reluctance or anxiety to attend.

Reluctance to attend school to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents and the child. If your child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and usually make things worse.

## **Absence Procedures:**

**If your child is absent you must:**

Contact us as soon as possible on the first day of absence;

Send a note / message in on the first day they return with an explanation of the absence.

**If your child is absent we will:**

Telephone or text you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you;

**With Persistent Absence we will**

Contact you by telephone

Invite you in to discuss the situation with our Family Support Worker, Assistant Headteacher or Headteacher if absences persist;

Refer the matter to the Pupil Attendance & Participation Officer if attendance moves below 90%.

**Your Telephone numbers:**

There are times when we need to contact parents about lots of things, including absence, so we need to have your contact numbers at all times. So help us to help you and your child by making sure we always have an up to date number – if we don't then something important may be missed. There will be regular checks on telephone numbers throughout the year.

**The Participation Officer:**

Parents are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any problems together. This is nearly always successful.

If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, the school may refer the child to the Participation Officer from the Local Authority. He/she will also try to resolve the situation by agreement but, if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed and unauthorized absences persist, these Officers can use sanctions such as Penalty Notices per parent/carer per child (currently £60 rising to £120 if unpaid after 21 days. If unpaid after 28 days a summons to Court will be issued for each unpaid Penalty Notice) or prosecutions in the Magistrates Court. The legislation is the Education Act 1996 sec. 444(1) and 444(1A). Parents that have previously been issued with Penalty Notices for their children's unauthorised absences, in the event of further unauthorized absences may be summonsed to Court.

"If any child of compulsory school age who is a registered pupil at a school fails to attend regularly at the school, his/her parent is guilty of an offence."

Alternatively, parents or children may wish to contact the Participation Team themselves to ask for help or information. They are independent of the school and will give impartial advice. Their telephone number is 01895 250858 or [participationteam@hillington.gov.uk](mailto:participationteam@hillington.gov.uk)

### **Lateness:**

Poor punctuality means essential play and learning are missed. If your child misses the start of the day they can miss work and do not spend time with their class teacher getting vital information and news for the day. Late arriving pupils also disrupt lessons, can be embarrassing for the child and can also encourage absence.

### **School day timings**

The school day starts at 8.50am and we expect your child to be in class at that time.

Registers are marked by 9.15 a.m and your child will receive a late mark if they are not in by that time.

At 10.00 am the registers will be closed. In accordance with the Regulations, if your child arrives after that time they will receive a mark that shows them to be on site, but this will **not** count as a present mark and it will mean they have an **unauthorised absence**.

If your child has a persistent late record you will be asked to meet with the Assistant Headteacher and/or Attendance Officer to resolve the problem, but you can approach us at any time if you are having problems getting your child to school on time.

### **Exceptional Leave:**

Taking holidays in term time will affect your child's schooling as much as any other absence and we expect parents to help us by not taking children away in school time. Remember that any savings you think you may make by taking a holiday in school time are offset by the cost to your child's education.

There is **no** automatic entitlement in law to time off in school time to go on holiday. All requests for exceptional leave will be considered in the light of current attendance and any patterns of non- attendance.

**The Local Authority Participation team have recommended that we include the following paragraph:**

*'Your child's regular attendance at school is your legal responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.'*

*and*

***The Participation Team can issue Penalty Notices for any unauthorised 'Exceptional Leave' Penalty Notices can be issued to each parent/carer concerned. Please note that it will be per parent per child. Payment within 21 days of receipt of notice is £60 and £120 if paid after this period but within 28 days. If the Penalty Notice remains unpaid you will each receive a summons to Uxbridge Magistrates Court. If unauthorised leave is repeated the Participation Team may summons each parent to Court without a Penalty Notice being issued.***

The school has targets to improve attendance and your child has an important part to play in meeting these targets.

The minimum level of attendance for this school is **95%** attendance and we will keep you updated regularly about progress to this level and how your child's attendance compares.

Our target is to achieve better than this however because we know that good attendance is the key to successful schooling. Through the school year we monitor absences and punctuality to show us where improvements need to be made. Information on any projects or initiatives that will focus on these areas will be provided in our Home - School bulletin and we ask for your full support.

**Those people responsible for attendance matters in this school are:**

Mrs Bhavni Shah, Attendance Officer  
Mrs D Owens, Deputy Headteacher  
Mr J Goddard , Head Teacher

**Summary:**

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures and to promote good attendance. School attendance data is also made available to the Local Authority and the Department for Education. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend.

We are all committed to working with you to achieve as high a level of attendance as possible.

**Annual Policy Review:**

(date)

Autumn Term annually

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