

Howes Primary School
Primary Attendance & Exceptional
Leave Policy





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1 Introduction

At Howes Primary School, we recognise that regular attendance and punctuality by pupils is an important factor in raising their achievement. We believe that children need to be in school for all sessions, so that they can make the best progress possible. To do this it is essential that a child's time at school is maximised and to recognise that even short absences can have a detrimental effect on children's learning. Any pupil's absence or late arrival disrupts teaching routines, so, in addition to affecting your own child, it may also affect the learning of others in the same class.

Research clearly demonstrates the link between the regular attendance and educational progress and attainment. **Early poor attendance habits follow right through from primary to secondary school and into employment.**

We expect all children to be at school, and on time, every day that the school is open, as long as they are fit and healthy enough to do so. We do all we can to encourage children to attend.

At Howes Primary School, we believe that the most important factor in promoting good attendance is the development of positive attitudes towards school. To this end, we strive to make our school a happy and rewarding experience for all children. We will reward those children whose attendance is very good. We will also make the best provision we can for those children who, for whatever reason, are prevented from coming to school.

2 Legal Requirements and Local Authority Policy

Ensuring 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.

Under the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, the governing body is responsible for making sure the school keeps an attendance register that records which pupils are present at the start of both the morning and the afternoon sessions of the school day. This register will also indicate whether an absence was authorised or unauthorised.



There is no automatic right to any leave of absence and all schools in Coventry are encouraged to adopt a policy of not authorising exceptional leave. Being mindful of this, only in very exceptional circumstances will the school grant leave of absence during term time.

Further guidance can be found in the school's Exceptional Leave Policy and Parent leaflet, but it should be noted that requests for leave of absence for the following will always be refused for children with less than 95% attendance.

Any leave taken without authorisation can lead to parents/carers being issued a fixed penalty, which is currently £60 per parent per child if paid within 21 days and £120 per parent, per child if paid after this date but within 28 days.

3 What are Authorised and Unauthorised Absence?

The Government's own guidance on the issue of attendance states an expectation of at least 96%+.

3.1 Authorised Absence

An absence is classified as authorised when a child has been away from school for a legitimate reason and the school has received notification from a parent or guardian. For example, if a child has been unwell, the parent writes a note or telephones the school to explain the absence.

Only the school can make an absence authorised. Parents/carers do not have this authority. Consequently, not all absences supported by parents/carers will be classified as authorised. For example, if a parent takes a child out of school to go shopping during school hours or to get a haircut or to watch a play; this will not make it an authorised absence.

3.2 Unauthorised Absence

An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of both the school and a parent. Therefore, the absence is unauthorised if a child is away from school without good reason, even with the support of a parent.



4 Punctuality

Punctuality is an important life skill. It is also polite. Pupils who are consistently late are disrupting not only their education but also that of other pupils. Schools should actively discourage late arrival; staff should be alert to patterns of late arrival and seek an explanation from the parent. If lateness persists parents/carers/guardians or carers will be invited to attend the school to discuss the problem with a school representative.

Parents/carers are informed and reminded of the school dates and times in a number of different ways throughout the school year. The importance of the registration time in school as a time for greetings and early morning learning is stressed to parents/carers. All pupils who arrive late must sign in on arrival and an accurate log of their time of arrival is made. This log can be used as evidence if a prosecution through court proceedings is initiated as a result of persistent absence or lateness.

At 9.15am the registers will be closed and the morning session will be unauthorised and coded as 'U'.

If your child has 10 or more late sessions in a 5-week period you may receive a £60 fine per parent per child from the Local Authority.

5 Procedures

At Howes Primary School, the school day begins at 8.55am.

The register is taken for children from Nursery to Year 6 once the children have settled into class. If a child is not present when the register is taken, they are given a late mark. If a child arrives at school later than 9.00am they are given a late mark and later than 9.30am will be given an **unauthorised absence** mark.

The afternoon session begins at 1pm for Acorn, Oak and Ash classes, and 1.15pm for Cedar, Maple, Willow and Fir classes - the same procedures apply.

All children who arrive after the playground gates are locked at 8:55 must enter the school via the main entrance and their names are logged and minutes late recorded. Letters will be sent home if children are late three times in a two week period and phone calls and meetings with the headteacher will occur if lateness is persistent. This log can be used in



prosecution evidence in court proceedings in the event of persistent lateness.

6 If a Child is Absent without Notification

Where no notification has been received by 9:30am a text message will automatically be sent to the parents/carers/carers via the School Office. If there is no response, a follow up phone call will be made by 11.00am.

If there is no response to the message or phone call and there is any doubt about the whereabouts of a child, the learning mentor should take immediate action by notifying the school's Senior Leadership Team who will then work with the Learning Mentors in order to check on the safety of the child. Appropriate action will be taken.

If a child is absent from school for three consecutive days and the school are unable to make contact with the family or an emergency contact, the school will carry out a 'safe and well' check at the family home. If the school is concerned about the welfare of the child, it reserves the right to do so sooner. If there is a concern regarding the welfare of the child then safeguarding procedures will be followed as stated in the school's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

7 Missing Children

If a child is missing and their whereabouts are unknown, the school will follow the Local Authority procedures in taking immediate steps to locate that child as soon as possible. See the school's Children Missing in Education policy.

8 Notification of Planned Absence

Where the absence is because of a pre-arranged medical appointment, for example, parents/carers should inform the school prior to the absence and provide evidence of the medical appointment.

9 Requests for Exceptional Leave of Absence

If parents/carers wish to take their child out of school during term time, a request for leave of absence must be made on the appropriate form at least four weeks before the exceptional leave is due to begin, except in an



emergency, in which case the application will be considered on an individual basis. Application forms can be obtained from the School Office. The appropriate information and documentation must be provided to back up the application.

The school will delete pupils from roll who fail to return to Howes within 10 school days of the agreed return where leave of absence has been authorised by the Headteacher; or after 20 days of unauthorised absence if leave of absence has not been agreed.

Evidence of any travel bookings, if applicable, may be requested by the school. If you take your child on holiday during term time, or where your request for leave has not been granted, your child's absence will be recorded as unauthorised holiday. This will result in a Fixed Penalty Notice being issued, which is currently £60 per parent per child, to be paid within 21 days (the fine doubles to £120 per parent per child after 21 days). After 28 days the matter is referred to the Local Authority for non-payment and can result in court action being taken.

Each request for exceptional leave of absence is considered by the Attendance panel. Where necessary, a meeting will be arranged between parents and the Headteacher to discuss the application.

Absence for the purpose of a family holiday does not constitute exceptional leave. Taking holidays during term time will affect your child's learning and we expect parents to take holidays during official school closure periods.

If you take your child out of school for a holiday, then your child's absence will be recorded as unauthorised holiday. This may result in a Fixed Penalty Notice being issued.

Where the school suspects that a child is absent due to a holiday, steps will be taken to investigate further. This will involve a home visit during the absence period with a view to having direct contact with you and your child. Parents will also be required to produce evidence (for instance medical evidence) in support of the period of absence in order to avoid the issue of a Penalty Notice and / or prosecution.

If the pupil is female and from a Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) identified affected community, or the pupil is travelling to a country that would deem the pupil to be 'at risk', the Safeguarding Lead will arrange a meeting with the parent/carer and use direct questioning to ascertain whether 'cutting' of the girl will be undertaken during the leave of



absence. The Safeguarding Lead will then take the information from this meeting and make a decision on whether to refer to local Referral and Assessment Services or the Police.

10 Long-term absence through Child's Accident or illness

If a child is under the care of a hospital Consultant and a Consultant's letter has been produced, and the absence is likely to continue for an extended period, or to be a repetitive absence, the school may contact the support services so that arrangements can be made for the child to be given some tuition outside school.

11 Repeated Unauthorised Absences

The school will contact the parent or guardian of any child who has an unauthorised absence. If a child has a repeated number of unauthorised absences, the parents/carers or guardians will be asked to visit the school and discuss the problem. If the situation does not improve, the school will then contact the LA support services, who may visit the home and seek to ensure that the parents/carers or guardians understand the seriousness of the situation.

The governors, supported by the Local Authority, reserve the right to consider taking legal action against any parents/carers or guardians who repeatedly fail to accept their responsibility for sending their children to school on a regular basis. There is a fast track to court procedure for parents/carers of pupils whose attendance falls below the expected levels.

12 Persistent Absences

Since the 1st September 2015, the Government has reduced the threshold from 15% to 10% for persistent absence. This will now class a child with attendance below 90% as a persistent absentee. This equates to 38 sessions or 19 days of absence across the year. Regular attendance at school is essential to ensure uninterrupted progress and to enable children to fulfil their potential. The attendance pattern for all children is monitored weekly with the school seeking to work actively with parents to ensure that regular attendance is maintained. The Department for Education has published data on their website that clearly shows the link between attendance and attainment. A child becomes a 'persistent absentee' (PA) when their attendance falls below 90% at any time during



their school life. All children whose attendance has fallen to 90% or are at risk of becoming persistent absentees will be monitored rigorously.

13 Rewards for Good Attendance

All the children who have 100% attendance in any one term will receive an attendance band. Special consideration will be given in circumstances where a child is unable to attend due to a long-term illness or a medical condition.

A special certificate and star badge will be presented for any child who has 100% attendance for a whole year.

Children are encouraged to be in school prior to 8.50am and after five days, they will receive entry into a prize draw at the end of term

Classes with the highest weekly attendance each week receive a trophy in celebration assembly and receive additional playtime as a reward.

14 Attendance targets

Howes Primary School sets attendance targets each year. These are agreed by the senior staff and governors at the annual target-setting meeting. The targets are challenging yet realistic and based on attendance figures achieved in previous years. When it is setting targets, the school considers carefully the attendance figures for other similar schools, as well as national figures and those achieved by other schools in the city.

15 Monitoring

It is the responsibility of the governing body to monitor overall attendance and the Headteacher will produce a termly and an annual report. The governing body also has the responsibility for seeing that this is carried out. Governors will therefore examine the information provided in the report to satisfy themselves that attendance meets the required levels.

The school will keep accurate attendance records for a minimum period of three years.



The rates of weekly attendance and lateness will be reported in the school newsletter and in the annual governors' report.

Class teachers are responsible for monitoring attendance in their class, as well as for taking action on day-to-day absences, according to the school's procedures. If there is a longer-term worry about the attendance of a particular child, they must report this to the Senior Leadership Team, who will contact the parents/carers or guardians.

16 Exceptional leave during the School Day

Parents/carers are expected to arrange medical appointments out of school hours where possible. Children must not be taken out of school without a previously written agreement (unless in an emergency). Parents/carers must report to the school office, enabling the school staff to collect children from the classroom.

On return to school during the day parents/carers must inform the school office staff so that the register can be adjusted accordingly.

Parents/carers should inform the school office of any unexpected events which may result in a delayed return to school.

17 Exceptional Leave during Term Time

We follow Local Authority guidance on parents/carers taking children out of school for leave during term time, which is **not** to authorise, and absence for this purpose will be treated as unauthorised absence. Consequently, parents/carers will receive a Fixed Penalty Notice from the Local Authority (see school's Attendance Policy).

Exceptional Leave of absence will only be authorised in very exceptional circumstances.

18 Requests for Exceptional Leave

Except in an emergency, permission must be sought from the school at least **4 weeks** before the exceptional leave is due to begin and in advance of making any arrangements. The request must be made on an **Exceptional Leave of Absence Form**, which can be obtained from the school office.



Evidence of any travel bookings, if applicable, may be requested by the school.

Each request for exceptional leave of absence is considered by the Headteacher. Reasons for exceptional leave will be logged on the child's records and will be shared as part of the transfer/transition process.

Further information can be found on the Parent leaflet.



19 Expected Attendance

100%	Outstanding
99%	Excellent
98%	Very good
97%	Good
96%	Good This is the minimum level of attendance expected by Government.
93-95%	Satisfactory Room for improvement.
90-92%	Unsatisfactory This is well below Government expectation.



85-89%	Poor School will be monitoring and help given to raise levels of attendance.
Less than 80%	Cause for concern Attendance Officer involvement.

20 Daily Attendance Procedures

TIME	PROCEDURE	WHO
DAILY	Visible Presence on the Playground and front of school	SLT/SSO/LM
8:30AM	Go through answer machine messages and record absentees and reason for absence	OS
8:55AM	Bell and gates closed	LM/SSO
8:55 – 9:30AM	Any children late to go through the office and minutes late are recorded. Parents/carers asked to give reason and sign late log.	LM/OS
9:10AM	Registers close	CT
9:15AM	All registers to office	CT
9:30AM	Children arriving after this time receive an unauthorised absence mark	OS
9:30AM	Text message parents/carers/carers re absent children with no notification	OS
10AM	Print off list off all absent children with no notification following text and inform LM	OS
10:30AM	Investigate and make calls using known contact information. Log calls	LM
10:30AM	Share information with Inclusion Lead, HT or AHT.	LM
	Evaluate – Consider home visit.	HT/AHT
	Following Home Visit or Non- contact report to DSL.	HT/AHT

21 Late Correspondence Procedure

PROCEDURE	WHO
If a child is late for 3 sessions in a two week period Letter L1 sent home and a copy filed	LM
Log details	LM
If a child is late for a further 3 sessions over the next two week period Letter L2 sent home and a copy filed	LM
Log details	LM
If a child is late for a further 3 sessions over the next two week period advise LM	OS
LM to call parents	LM
Repeated lateness the following half term – above procedures to be followed	LM
Repeated lateness for the whole term – meeting with HT/LM	HT/LM



22 Attendance Correspondence Procedure

PROCEDURE	WHO
Print all attendance data prior to half termly meeting with Learning Mentor	OS
Print all attendance data less than 90% on the Monday prior to the end of each half term	LM
Send letter 1A to all families whose child's attendance is below 90%.	LM
Log details	LM
Meeting to be held with persistent absentee parents/carers at the end of term	HT/LM

HT – Headteacher AHT – Assistant Headteacher
SLT – Senior Leadership Team

LM – Learning Mentor OS – Office Staff SSO – Site Service Officer

23 Review

The policy will be reviewed by the governing body every two years, or earlier if considered necessary.

Policy Date: January 2023

Next Review Date: January 2025