



Attendance Policy

1. Introduction

Hertfordshire County Council is committed to achieving excellent levels of attendance for individual children, individual schools and for Hertfordshire as a whole. Underpinning this commitment is the belief that if children attend school regularly and punctually they will be best able to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them.

This Attendance Policy is intended to guide, assist and empower schools to meet their responsibilities and to provide an agreed framework within which consistent practices and procedures can be applied.

Hertfordshire County Council expects the Children's Services and all schools to work closely together in partnership with parents in order to achieve excellent levels of school attendance and punctuality for all pupils.

At Holtsmere End Junior School, we want the whole school community (Governors, Staff, Parents and Learners) to be committed to high standards of attendance and punctuality.

Good attendance helps learners in this school community to maximise their learning. This policy will support us all to achieve high levels of attendance and punctuality.

2. Purpose

- To ensure all learners on the school's roll attend regularly
- To promote the importance of attendance and assist all learners to achieve excellent levels of attendance and punctuality
- To ensure all learners take full advantage of the wide range of educational opportunities available to them through excellent attendance and punctuality

3. Rights and Responsibilities

The responsibility for good attendance is shared between school, parents and learners. All these groups need to understand their expectations:

Parents and Carers

Regular and punctual attendance is a legal requirement for all learners registered at Holtsmere End Junior School and is essential if learners are to maximise the educational opportunities available to them.

Therefore parents have a legal responsibility to ensure that their children arrive at school on time, properly dressed and 'Ready to Learn' (*Links to Home-School Agreement*)

Parents should:

- ensure that their children arrive at school on time, appropriately dressed and ready to learn
- instil in their children an appreciation of the importance of attending school regularly
- ensure that they are aware of the attendance policy of their children's school
- take an active interest in their children's school career, praising and encouraging good work and behaviour and attending Learning Review evenings and other relevant meetings

- work in partnership with their children's school to resolve issues which may lead to non-attendance
- On a daily basis, if your child is going to be absent from school for any reason, we ask parents to do one of the following:
 - Telephone the school as soon as possible before 9.30am
 - Send a written note to the school
 - Inform the School Office in person
 - E-mail admin@holtsmerejm.herts.sch.uk
- Parents should also provide an explanation for the absence and in some circumstances medical confirmation may be requested to clarify the absence explanation - this information would be provided by the parent /carer. Parents and carers will maintain regular communication with school staff where necessary
- **Parents and carers will ensure that school are informed of any change of contact details or changes of parental responsibility**
- avoid arranging medical/dental appointments during school hours (unless specialist appointments which are determined by the hospital / professional practitioner)
- avoid booking holidays during term time
- Learners who have been sick at home are to be kept home for 24 hours from the last time of sickness

Schools

Schools are responsible for supporting the attendance of their learners and for dealing with problems that may lead to non-attendance.

Schools are required to call attendance registers at the start of the morning session and once during the afternoon session and to record whether pupils are present, absent or on an approved educational activity. For pupils of compulsory school age, schools are required to differentiate in the registers between absence that is authorised and absence that is unauthorised.

Schools should:

- work actively to maximise attendance rates - both in relation to individual pupils and for the pupil body as a whole - as one of their key tasks
- have clear policies in place to address persistent absence
- support parents in ensuring the regular and punctual attendance of pupils and promptly respond to any issue which may lead to non-attendance
- be sensitive to the needs of individual parents and this should be reflected in the way in which attendance issues are addressed. Schools should recognise that some parents have difficulty understanding written communications. They should also recognise the reluctance of some parents to come into school
- Produce school attendance policies which are consistently applied and clearly communicated to all parents, pupils and staff

At Holtsmere End Junior School:

- The Head Teacher has overall responsible for Attendance
- We expect learners to attend school regularly and on time, and are 'Ready to Learn'
- Holtsmere End Junior School will set a good example in matters of attendance and punctuality, and will investigate all absenteeism and lateness
- Holtsmere End Junior School staff team will support the attendance of learners and will deal with concerns that may lead to non-attendance
- The school will employ a range of strategies to encourage good attendance and punctuality. We will offer an environment in which learners feel valued and welcomed. Learners must feel that their presence in school is important, that they will be missed when they are absent or late and that follow up action will be taken as outlined below:

- Every effort will be made to personalise the curriculum to the learners' needs
- Learners who find punctuality difficult will be set targets for improvement
- Learners who are absent through sickness for any extended period of time will have work sent home
- The Head Teacher will monitor attendance on at least a weekly basis
- The Head Teacher will report to the Governing Body on attendance matters on at least a termly basis
- The Head Teacher will write to parents on at least a termly basis on attendance matters
- Parents will receive their child's Attendance Registration Certificate on a termly basis
- The Head Teacher will liaise with external agencies when appropriate

ISL Attendance Team

The ISL Attendance Team fulfils the statutory duty of the County Council in enforcing regular school attendance. In doing so it enables schools and parents to meet their respective responsibilities. Each maintained school in Hertfordshire will be allocated an Attendance Improvement Officer who will work in close partnership with the school. In working closely with schools the Attendance Improvement Officer will offer the following services:

Consultation Visits

Consultation visits / telephone conversations by the AIO will be allocated according to need. Need will be identified using the school annual DfE Absence data. The purpose of the consultation visit will be to:

- identify pupils who are experiencing attendance difficulties. This will include the regular examination of attendance registers
- agree on focused, time-limited action which needs to be taken by the school and/or the AIO. Before accepting a referral the AIO will expect school staff to have first undertaken some preliminary work themselves, eg action by the school, contact with parents, etc
- feed back and exchange information in relation to work which has been undertaken by the AIO and/or the school
- identify areas of concern and of good practice in relation to attendance matters
- advise the school on strategies for improving attendance
- assist schools in identifying PA pupils and those at risk of becoming PA and ensuring that effective plans of action are in place

Casework

AIOs may undertake early intervention (pre-referral) work prior to a case being accepted. This may include the following:

- telephoning or writing to the parents about their child's absences or lateness
- attending a meeting with parents arranged by the school to emphasise the need for good attendance and the possibility that, if there is no improvement, the AIO will become formally involved.

Once a case has been accepted, the AIO will undertake direct work with pupils and their parents. This can include:

- arranging meetings between the school, parents and pupils
- making home visits to assess the situation and determine what action needs to be taken
- offering specific support to parents and individual pupils, either at school or elsewhere
- facilitating meetings
- enabling the pupil and parents to access appropriate support from other services and agencies through the use of Integrated Practice/Common Assessment process

The AIO may also arrange for the pupil to receive specialist support such as counselling or group work.

Attendance Improvement Officers will usually work with children whose absences have not been authorised.

However, AIOs may work with children whose absences have been authorised (see Appendix 1).

In-service training for school staff

Attendance Improvement Officers will offer, or assist with, INSET sessions on a range of subjects related to the attendance or welfare of pupils, including:

- the promotion of regular school attendance
- working effectively with the AIO
- addressing persistent absence
- legal responsibilities relating to school attendance

4. The Use of Legal Action

If a parent fails to register a child of compulsory school age at a school (and he/she does not intend to educate the child otherwise than at school). The LA will serve a School Attendance Order under Sections 437 - 439 of the Education Act 1996.

If a pupil, who is registered at a school, fails to attend that school regularly without a legitimate reason and attempts by the Attendance Improvement Officer and the school fail to secure that pupil's return to regular attendance, the County Council will take legal action. A complaint may be laid against the parents in the Magistrates' Court under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996, or an Education Supervision Order relating to the pupil under Section 36 of the Children Act 1989 will be applied for. Any exceptional mitigating circumstances relating to the pupil's absence will be taken into account, when considering legal action. 'Exceptional mitigating circumstances' will be determined by the Central Attendance and Employment Support Team Manager on behalf of the County Lead for Behaviour and Attendance. If 'exceptional mitigating circumstances' are not deemed to exist then cases which remain open for more than 24 weeks will be referred for legal action. Legal action will, however, be taken earlier when appropriate.

If, after legal action has been taken, the child still fails to attend school regularly the AIO will keep the case open and will, if appropriate, take further legal action at a subsequent date.

In cases where parents wilfully withhold a pupil from school, or persistently refuse to co-operate with efforts aimed at affecting a return to satisfactory school attendance, the ISL Attendance Team will promptly begin legal proceedings on the grounds that no other course of action is available.

The Central Attendance & Employment Support Team Manager on behalf of the County Lead for Behaviour and Attendance will give approval before legal proceedings are commenced. The Attendance Team will consider applying for an Education Supervision Order when a parent finds it difficult to exercise an effective influence over a child who has developed a pattern of poor attendance.

Before an application is made for an Education Supervision Order:

- other possible means of dealing with the pupil's poor attendance will be explored
- the attitudes of the parent and pupil towards the poor attendance, and their wishes as to how it should be dealt with, will be noted
- the AIO will be of the view that the Order will have a significant effect on the pupil's attendance at school

5. Penalty Notice

A penalty notice will be issued with regard to unauthorised absence if a learner fails to attend school as required without a genuine explanation. A learner's absence must have been unauthorised for at least 15 sessions (*one session is half day either am or pm*) in the previous and/or current term. **Penalty notices will involve a parent paying a fine of £60 if paid within 21 days, or £120 if paid within 21-28 days.** Failure to pay the fine within 28 days will result in either a prosecution for the offence to which the notice applies, or

withdrawal of the notice (limited circumstances only). Prosecution will be taken by the Local Authority under the Education Act 1996, section 444.

The issuing of penalty notices will comply with the code of conduct and practice as determined by the Local Authority.

6. Penalty Notices for Parents of Truants

Subsection (1) of section 23 of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 adds two new sections (444A and 444B) to section 444 of the Education Act 1996. These new sections introduce penalty notices as an alternative to prosecution and enable parents to discharge potential liability for conviction for that offence by paying a penalty. A penalty notice is a suitable intervention in circumstances of parentally condoned truancy, where the parent is judged capable of securing their child's regular attendance but is not willing to take responsibility for doing so. For example it could be used where a parent has failed to engage in any supportive measures. It will be particularly useful as a sanction at an early stage before attendance problems become entrenched and where the Local Authority considers that a prosecution would not be appropriate as a first action. Further information on penalty notices is available at www.thegrid.org.uk/administration/pupil_welfare/attendance or from the local Attendance Team Manager.

7. Attendance Registers

The rules governing the maintenance of registers, including removal from roll, are contained in the Education (Pupil Registration)(England) Regulations 2006 as amended 2011 and 2016. Attendance registers are legal documents that may be required as evidence in court cases.

Registers must be taken at the beginning of each morning and once during the afternoon session. If the register is called at the end of the afternoon session schools should ensure that adequate arrangements are in place to ensure that pupils do not leave school between registrations. They should ensure that pupils can be accounted for in an emergency and that a pupil removed from the school at lunchtime will not go unnoticed.

Registers must record whether each pupil is present; attending an approved educational activity; absent; or unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances. In the case of a pupil of compulsory school age who is absent the register must also indicate whether the absence has been authorised by the school.

Registration Procedure at Holtsmere End Junior School:

- Learners are expected on the playground / in the classroom from 8.30am
- Learners are expected to come into school at 8.45am
- Learners can access their classrooms from 8.45am, at 8.55am the external doors are closed
- The bell is rung promptly at 8.45am on both playgrounds. Once the last learner of a class enters the building the doors are closed
- A learner arriving after this is considered to be late and must report to the school office (code L)
- Registers close at 9.05am and 1.30pm, any learner arriving after the closure and an acceptable explanation is not forthcoming, the learner has to be recorded as 'unauthorised absent' (U) for that session
- Registers are marked in accordance with DFE guidance
- If a learner is persistently late, the parents will be contacted
- The Head Teacher will inspect all registers regularly ensuring that correct procedures are being followed

When calling the register the appropriate mark and/or symbol should be placed against each pupil's name

gaps should not be left so that entries can be made later. In marking registers, schools should use the national set of symbols as advised by the Department for Education.

When the reason for a pupil's absence cannot be established at the beginning of a session, the absence should be recorded as unauthorised and any subsequent correction to the register made as soon as practicable after the reason for the absence has been established.

All schools are required to notify the Local Authority of any pupil of compulsory school age who fails to attend school regularly, or who has been absent for a continuous period of more than 10 school days, without a legitimate reason.

Removal from Roll (CS4533: Statutory responsibilities of schools and academies when removing pupils from the admissions roll (September 2016))

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2016 came into force on 1st September 2016. Regulation 5 extends the duty of schools to notify the local authority when a pupil is removed from roll to **all** instances of removal from roll.

The 2016 amendment also places a duty on schools and local authorities to work collaboratively in '**jointly making reasonable enquiries**' as to the whereabouts of a pupil before a pupil is removed from roll.

The circumstances in which a pupil of compulsory school age may be removed from the admission roll are prescribed by regulation 8 of The Education (Pupil Registration)(England) Regulations 2006 (as amended). (It is illegal to remove a pupil's name from the admission roll unless one of these circumstances applies, even if a parent requests it).

Circumstances in which a pupil may be removed from roll:

- A new school is named on a School Attendance Order, or the Order is revoked
- Pupil is registered at another school
- Pupil is registered at more than one school
- Elective Home Education
- Pupil has moved, has ceased to attend and the new address is not within a reasonable distance of the school/academy (except in the case of a boarder)
- Pupil has failed to return after being granted leave of absence for exceptional circumstances in accordance with regulation 7(1A)
- Pupil is medically unfit and is likely to remain so beyond compulsory school age
- Pupil has been continuously absent for not less than twenty school days
- Pupil is in custody
- Pupil has died
- Pupil has been permanently excluded and the exclusion has been upheld

If a school is told that a pupil is leaving to attend another school, staff at the school of departure should establish the pupil's new address, the name and address of the new school and the date the pupil will start there. Confirmation should then be sought from the receiving school. When this information has been obtained, the school should complete the Removal from Roll form and return it to the local Attendance Team office.

Whenever a pupil leaves a school a Common Transfer File (CTF) must be completed. If a school is concerned about any aspect of a transfer or if a pupil has "disappeared" the matter should be drawn without delay to the attention of the Children Missing Education Officer.

Further guidance and a referral form is available at www.thegrid.org.uk administration/pupil welfare/attendance.

Responsibilities of the AIO – Attendance Registers

If the allocated AIO is concerned that a school's registers have not been kept in accordance with the requirements of the relevant regulations he/she will:

- notify the Head Teacher of the concern and suggest that the matter is addressed
- if no appropriate action is taken by the school, and the AIO remains concerned, the Attendance Team Manager will address the concern with the Head Teacher
- if the matter still remains unresolved, the Attendance Team Manager will write to the Head Teacher formally noting the concern. A copy of this letter will be sent to the relevant ISL Area Manager and the County Lead for Behaviour and Attendance

Registers- Retention

Registers should be kept in a secure place for a period of not less than 3 years.

When computerised registration systems are used a print-out of the register should be made not less than once a month. A print-out of the register relating to a particular school year should be bound in a single volume and retained for a period of not less than 3 years

Registers should be made available for inspection by Attendance Improvement Officers when requested.

8. Punctuality

Late Arrival

Learners who arrive at Holtsmere End Junior School late, that is after the classroom doors have been closed at 8.55am, must enter the school via the main office. On arrival the learner will be asked to provide a satisfactory explanation, he / she should be marked as 'authorised absent' for that session (Code L or other code linked to explanation) and a record kept in the late arrivals register for the purpose of emergency evacuation etc

When a learner arrives after the register has closed and fails to provide a satisfactory explanation, he/she should be marked as 'unauthorised absent' for that session. (Code U)

Following up lateness

Parents, whose children are regularly late for school, will be contacted by a member of staff who will work with the parent(s) to bring about improvement in punctuality.

Leaving and returning to school during the School Day

When learners leave or return to school during the school day, office staff must be notified. Learners are required to sign out and back in at the school office.

9. Authorising Absence

Absence should be authorised if:

- the pupil is absent with leave (defined as 'leave granted by any person authorised to do so by the governing body or proprietor of the school')
- the pupil is ill or prevented from attending by any unavoidable cause
- the absence occurs on a day exclusively set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parent belongs
- the pupil is the child of Traveller parents who are known to be travelling for occupational purposes and have agreed this with the school but it is not known whether the pupil is attending alternative provision
- there is a close family bereavement
- leave of absence has been applied for in advance and has been granted because of exceptional circumstances relating to the application. (Parents should be reminded that they cannot expect, as of right, that the school will grant leave of absence)

- leave of absence should be granted to allow a pupil to take part in a performance within the meaning of s37 of the Children and Young Persons Act 1963 (c) for which a child performance licence has been issued. HCC will not issue a child performance licence where absence is required without the written permission of the Head Teacher

- The learner is participating in an **exceptional** special occasion (eg, the graduation of an older sibling, nonlocal family wedding)

Absence should be **unauthorised** if no explanation is forthcoming from the parents or if the school is dissatisfied with the explanation Absence should be **unauthorised** if: *(NB: Only the school can authorise absence)*

Requests for leave of absence must be made in advance as the DfE has advised schools that absences cannot be authorised after they have been taken

- No explanation if forthcoming
- The school is dissatisfied with the explanation
- The learner stays at home due to a parent being unwell
- The learner stays at home because a sibling is unwell
- The learner stays at home to mind the house or look after siblings
- The learner is shopping during school hours
- The learner is absent for **unexceptional** special occasions (eg, birthday)
- The learner's attendance statistic is below 90% and the parent has failed to provide the school with medical confirmation (applies only to learners of statutory school age)
- The learner is away from school for an **exceptional** special occasion for a period of time longer than that negotiated with the school
- The learner is on family holiday during term time (since September 2010 family holidays taken during term have been unauthorised)

Holidays

Parents do not have the right to take their child out of school for a holiday. The Governing Body implemented in September 2010 that there would be no authorisation of family holidays. However they also agreed that there may be exceptional circumstances and so some leave of absence may be granted at the discretion of the Leadership team . In these circumstances parents must apply to the school in writing **in advance**, and it likely that a meeting will occur with the Head Teacher.

In September 2013 Government Legislation stated that requests for leave can only be granted in exceptional circumstances and that family holidays do not fall into this category.

Procedures for following up Absences

- If a pupil is absent without explanation a member of the office team will call home to gain an explanation
- If days of absence persist with or without an explanation, this is then monitored and further phone calls are made by the office team
- If absence still does not improve a letter is sent home, and if it has been indicated that the absence is due to a medical reason, the school request that the parent may wish to provide medical evidence from a medical practitioner to explain the absence. Failure to do so may result in intervention from the AIO
- On occasions, the AIO and the Head Teacher will invite parents to attend a meeting to discuss the absences
- On the advice of the AIO a penalty warning letter will be sent if unauthorised absences continue
- A member of the SLT will write to the parent on a half termly basis if attendance is below 95% (96% at the end of the year)

Procedure for following up Lateness

- The Head Teacher monitors Lateness on a weekly basis
- An initial letter is sent home by the Office Team member responsible for Attendance at the end of each month to parents whose children have arrived at school late more than 5 times during the month
- Meeting to be set up with a member of the Headship Team if no further improvement is seen
- The Attendance Improvement Office (AIO) is informed and appropriate action taken

10. Rewards

Holtsmere End Junior School rewards good attendance through a variety of individual and group awards, these include:

Weekly class award for the best attendance (Attendance Trophy)

Termly certificates and badges for 100% attendance for the current term

Termly letters home to parents where their child's attendance is 98%+

Good attendance and punctuality is part of the criteria for Head Teacher exemplar learner award

'Ready to Learn' weekly award for the class (sticker each)

'Ready to Learn' termly award for the class (badge and £50 for the class)

£10 gift cards awarded to learners with 100% attendance and good punctuality for the year

Hertfordshire certificates for excellent annual attendance and the most improved attendance

'What a star' certificates may be awarded for good / improved attendance

Head Teacher merits awarded for excellent attendance / improved attendance / punctuality

End of Year certificates/badges for 98%+ attendance and good punctuality

Names of learners with 100% attendance and good punctuality published in the newsletter

11. Publication of Information

- Parents, learners, staff, and Governors are informed of whole school performance (statistics) and any concerns linked to attendance on a regular basis
- Holtsmere End Junior school shares information on individual learners' attendance as necessary with parents, learners and staff
- Monthly attendance is published on the school website, notice boards and communicated via the Newsletter

12. Administration Codes

There are a number of administrative codes which are not counted as a possible attendance in the school census (Y, X, Z, #). They must only be used in specific circumstances.

13. Flexi-schooling

Head Teachers can agree to flexi-schooling arrangements where the parents take on the responsibility for their child's education for part of the school week. Head Teachers are advised to consider any such requests from parents very carefully before agreeing to them and are advised to draw up a written agreement with the parent.

Where agreement has been reached, pupils should be marked authorised absent from school during periods when they are receiving home education. (C)

14. Part-time time-tables

All pupils of compulsory school age are entitled to a full-time education. In exceptional circumstances there may be a need for a part time timetable to meet an individual pupil's needs. A part time timetable must be time limited and must not be treated as a long term solution. The school should mark the sessions were the pupil is not expected to attend as authorised absence. (C)