



NIGHTINGALE PRIMARY SCHOOL

ATTENDANCE POLICY 2021/2022

This attendance policy has been written and agreed by the following schools, working in collaboration:

Cherbourg Primary, Crescent Primary, Crestwood Community, Nightingale Primary, Norwood Primary and Pre-School, Shakespeare Infants and Shakespeare Juniors

We have worked together to develop this policy to ensure a consistent approach to attendance between our schools, providing parents with reassurance that our schools are working together in the best interests of their children. Attendance officers from each school will meet half termly to review good practice and consistency.

Whilst being a joint policy, there is an element of personalisation to reflect the uniqueness of each school.

National Guidance:

School attendance is subject to various education laws and this school attendance policy is written to reflect these laws and the guidance produced by the Department for Education (DfE) and Hampshire County Council (HCC). This attendance policy is also consistent with the following school policies:

- admissions
- anti-bullying
- child protection and safeguarding
- special educational needs
- teaching & learning
- behaviour & rewards

From September 2015, the level of attendance & punctuality expected from all our pupils is included in our school's home-school agreement which parents must sign following their child's admission to a school (statutory).

It is very important therefore that you make sure that your child attends school regularly and punctually and this policy sets out how together we will achieve this. This policy will be reviewed annually and publicised in writing for all staff, parents and pupils via our website.

Section 1: Rationale

At Nightingale Primary School we are committed to establishing a safe, nurturing and stimulating learning environment, where the education and welfare of pupils is given the highest priority. We believe that children will learn and develop when they know that they are safe, valued and respected by their peers, their teachers and all other adults working in and with the school and that their parents and carers are encouraged to be involved in their development.

For a child to reach their full educational potential a high level of school attendance is essential. Parents/carers and teachers share the responsibility for supporting and promoting excellent school attendance and punctuality for all. It is our duty to consistently strive to achieve a goal of 100% attendance for all children. Every opportunity will be used to convey to pupils and their parents/carers the importance of regular and punctual attendance.

For our children to take full advantage of the educational opportunities offered it is vital your child is at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for absence is unavoidable. The routines children develop around attendance and punctuality at school are the same as the expectations of any future employer in the world of work. High attainment, confidence with peers and staff and future aspirations depend on good attendance.

Good attendance is important because:

- Regular attenders make better progress, both socially and academically
- Statistics show a direct link between under-achievement and absence below 95%
- Regular attenders find friendships, school routines and school work easier to cope with
- Regular attenders find learning more satisfying
- Regular attenders are more successful in transferring between primary school, secondary school and higher education, employment or training

Section 2: Operating the policy

2.1. Promoting Good Attendance:

The foundation for good attendance is a strong partnership between the school, parents and the child. The Home School Agreement will contain details of how we will work with parents and our expectations of what parents will need to do to ensure their child achieves good attendance.

To help us focus on this we will:

- Provide information on all matters related to attendance in our parent bulletin board, regular newsletter and on our website
- Report to you on how your child is performing in school, what their attendance and punctuality rate are and how this relates to their attainment
- Use coloured bands to aid understanding when reporting on, or discussing attendance
- Celebrate good attendance by displaying individual and class achievements
- Issue certificates and rewards each term that promote good and perfect attendance levels
- Reward improving attendance on an individual basis
- Set attendance targets for the school and for classes and display these in school
- Run events when parents, pupils and staff can work together on raising attendance levels across the school

2.2. Roles and Responsibilities

Responsibilities of the School's Attendance Leader:

The Welfare Leader will oversee, direct and co-ordinate the school's work in promoting regular and improved attendance and will ensure the Attendance Policy is consistently applied throughout the school. This person will also ensure that attendance is both recorded accurately and analysed regularly. (S)he will ensure that attendance issues are identified at an early stage and that support is put in place to deal with any difficulties.

If absence is frequent or continuous, except where a child is clearly unwell, staff will discuss with parents/carers the need and the reasons for their child's absence and will encourage them to keep the absences to a minimum. A note or explanation from parents/cares does not mean the absence will be authorised. The decision whether or not to authorise an absence **will always rest with the school.**

Responsibilities of Class Teaching Staff:

- Ensure that all pupils are registered accurately
- Promote and reward good attendance at all appropriate opportunities
- Liaise with the Welfare Leader on matters of attendance and punctuality
- Communicate any concerns or underlying problems that may account for a child's absence
- Support pupils with absence to engage with their learning once they are back in school

Responsibilities of Pupils:

- Attend school every day unless they are genuinely unwell or have an authorised absence
- Arrive in school on time
- Go to registration and lessons on time (for example, after play time)

Responsibilities of Parents/Carers:

If you have chosen to register your child at Nightingale Primary School, you are legally responsible for ensuring they attend school regularly and punctually (Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act) and permitting absence from school that is not authorised by the school creates an offence in law.

Parents/carers will:

- Ensure your child attends school every day, on time, unless they are genuinely unwell or have an authorised absence
- Make sure that any absence is clearly accounted for by phone on the first and subsequent days of absence (or by letter if a phone is unavailable)
- Discuss with the class teacher any planned absences well in advance
- Support the school with their child in aiming for 100% attendance each year
- Avoid taking their child out of school for non-urgent medical or dental appointments
- Only request leave of absence if it is for an **exceptional** circumstance

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Section 3

3.1. Recording Attendance

Legally the register must be marked twice daily. At Nightingale Primary School, morning registration takes place at the start of the school day at 8:50am and again after lunch at 1:00pm. Please be aware that missing school for a whole day classes as two absences.

3.2. Lateness/Punctuality

It is important that your child is on time at the start of the day and for all sessions. The start of the day/session is used to give out instructions, organise work or attend school assemblies. If your child is late they may miss work or time with their teacher getting vital information, cause disruption to the lesson for others or be late for the school assembly, all of which can be extremely embarrassing leading to possible further absence.

- The school day begins when the doors close at 8:45am and all **pupils are expected to be in school at this time**. Morning registration takes place in the classroom at 8:50am.
- All lateness is recorded daily. This information will be required by the courts, should a prosecution for non-attendance or lateness be necessary.
- Children arriving after 8:45am **MUST** be signed into school with the office staff in the main reception. This should be done by a parent/carer wherever possible.
- Arrival after the close of registration at 9:20am will be marked as unauthorised absence code "U" in line with county and DfE guidance. This mark shows them to be on site, but is legally recorded as an absence.
- If a pupil is late due to a medical appointment and proof is provided, they will receive an authorised absence coded "M". Please be advised that where possible medical appointments are to be made outside of school hours or during the school holidays.

For further advice and guidance refer to: Hampshire County Council's guidance, promoting pupil attendance recording absence, available at:

<http://documents.hants.gov.uk/childrens-services/HIAS/Promotingpupilattendanceandrecordingabsence-maindocument.pdf>

Pupils who are consistently late are disrupting not only their own education but also that of the other pupils. On-going and repeated lateness is considered as **unauthorised absence and will be subject to legal action through either a Penalty Notice or referral to the Local Authority Attendance Legal Panel** (see section 6 for further detail).

Parents, guardians or carers of pupils who have patterns of lateness will be contacted to discuss the importance of good time keeping and how this might be achieved. If lateness persists parents, guardians or carers will be invited to attend the school to discuss the problem and support will be offered. If support is not appropriate or is declined and a child has 10 or more sessions of unauthorised absence due to lateness recording in any 10 week period, the school or Hampshire County Council will be required to issue parents with a Penalty Notice in accordance with Hampshire County Council's Code of Conduct: issuing Penalty Notices for unauthorised absence from schools (see section 6 for further detail.)

3.3. What to do if my child is absent?

First Day Absence

A child not attending school is considered a **safeguarding** matter. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required.

If your child is absent you must:

- Contact us by telephone as soon as possible in the morning on the first and subsequent days of absence, stating your name, your child's full name, their class and a reason for their absence, alternatively, you can call into school in person and report the absence with reception
- Send a note in on the first day they return with an explanation of the absence - you must do this even if you have already phoned us

If your child is absent we will:

- Telephone or text you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you by 9:30am (this is because we have a duty to ensure your child's safety as well as their regular school attendance.) We need to have at least two active contact numbers.

Third Day Absence

Please note: If your child has not been seen and contact has not been established with any of the named parents/carers, after three days the school is required to start **child missing in education** procedures as set down by HCC guidance. We will make all reasonable enquiries to establish contact with parents/carers and the child, including:

- Making enquiries with known friends, wider family, known work contacts/colleagues and a possible home visit from the Welfare Leader
- If the above is unsuccessful then we will send a letter to the registered address, requesting that parents contact either the Welfare Leader or Head Teacher

Ten Day's Absence

We have a legal duty to report the absence of any pupil who is absent without an explanation for ten consecutive days. If the child has not been seen and contact has not been established with the named parent/carer, then the Local Authority is notified that the child is "at risk of missing". Children's Services Staff will visit the last known address and alert key services to locate the child.

Where a pupil has not returned to school for ten days after an authorised absence or is absent from school for twenty consecutive school days, the pupil can be removed from the admission register when the school and the local authority have failed, after jointly making reasonable enquiries, to establish the whereabouts of the child. This only applies if the school does not have reasonable grounds to believe that the pupil is unable to attend because of sickness or unavoidable cause.

We are required to notify the local authority within five days of adding a pupil's name to the admission register at a non-standard transition point. The notification must include all of the details contained in the admission register for the new pupil. This duty does not apply when a pupil's name is entered in the admission register at a standard transition point - at the start of the first year of education normally provided by that school - unless the local authority requests that such returns are to be made.

Help us to help you and your child by ensuring that we always have your correct contact details. There will be regular checks on telephone numbers throughout the year.

3.4. Continued or Ongoing Absence

If your child misses 10% (three weeks) or more schooling across the school year, for whatever reason, they are defined as **Persistent Absentees**.

Absence for whatever reason disadvantages a child by creating gaps in their learning. Research shows these gaps affect attainment when attendance falls below 95%. As

such we monitor all absence thoroughly and all attendance data is shared with the Local Authority and DfE.

If attendance falls below 96%, or 90% or below we will:

- Invite you in to discuss the situation with our Welfare Leader and/or Head Teacher of absences persist
- Refer the matter to the HCC's Attendance Legal Panels (ALP's) if the absence is unauthorised and falls below 90% - you may be subject to a penalty warning notification and a fine
- Persistent absentee pupils and their parents may be subject to an Attendance Improvement Plan or home school contract
- We may contact the Eastleigh Early Help Hub for further advice and support

A welcome back:

We will ensure that on return from **any absence** all pupils are made to feel welcome. This should include ensuring that the pupil is helped to catch up on missed work and brought up to date with any information that has been passed to other pupils. All children registered at Nightingale Primary School are dependent on their parents/carers, who are responsible for their level of attendance and punctuality. It is vital that children enjoy coming to school, and whilst they will be encouraged to attend well and on time, they will not carry blame and be made to feel unhappy if there are family issues that result in attendance being compromised.

Collecting your child:

Please collect your child promptly at the end of the school day. If you are going to be late, please phone the school office to update us so we can reassure your child(ren). Where late collection is persistent and/or significantly late (5:30pm or beyond) the school is obliged to take any uncollected pupil to a place of safety and share concerns, as necessary, with other agencies. If one is available, the school will place a child into the after-school club and provide the parent/carer with the bill.

Section 4: Request for Leave of Absence

Amendments to school attendance regulations were updated and enforced from September 2013: The Education (Pupil registration) (England) Regulations state that Head Teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. It is important to note that Head Teachers can determine the length of the authorised absence as well as whether the absence is authorised at all. **The fundamental principles for defining "exceptional" are rare, significant, or unavoidable which means the event could not reasonably be scheduled at another time.** There are no rules on this as circumstances vary from school to school and family

to family. There is however, no legal entitlement for time off in school time to go on holiday **and in the majority of cases holiday will not be authorised.**

Parents/carers wishing to apply for a leave of absence need to fill in an application form, available from the school office or our website, in advance and before making any travel arrangements.

When a leave of absence form is received by the school, we shall liaise with other schools who have siblings/relatives who would also be impacted by the absence request. It is your responsibility to indicate the schools that other siblings attend. All schools will respond within 3 school days after consultation with each other.

If term time leave is taken without prior permission from the school, the absence will be unauthorised and if the number of sessions absent hits the thresholds set down in Hampshire's Code of Conduct, parents/carers will be issued with a fixed-penalty fine or other legal action in accordance with the code (see section 6 for detail).

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 out of school during term time.

For national guidance refer to:

- www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-attendance

Section 5: Understanding types of absence

Pupils are expected to attend school every day for the entire duration of the academic year unless there is an **exceptional reason** for the absence. There are two main categories of absences:

- **Authorised Absence:** is when the school has accepted the explanation offered as satisfactory justification for the absence, or given approval in advance for such an absence. If no explanation is received, absences cannot be authorised
- **Unauthorised Absence:** is when the school has not received a reason for absence, or has not approved an absence from school after a parent's request. This includes:
 - Parents giving their children permission to be off school unnecessarily such as for shopping, birthdays or to look after siblings
 - Truancy
 - Absences which have not been explained

A school can, if needed, change an authorised absence to an unauthorised absence and vice versa if new information is presented. An example of this would be where a parent states a child is unwell but on return to school there is evidence they have been on holiday. Any changes will be communicated to parents/carers either in writing, by phone or during a meeting.

Section 6: Penalty Notices for Non-Attendance and other Legal Measures

In education law, parents/carers are committing an offence if they fail to ensure the regular and punctual attendance of their child, of compulsory school age, at the school at which the child is registered, unless the absence has been authorised by the school. Penalty Notices are intended to be used for tackling parentally condoned absence, where it is reasonable to expect that the parent can ensure the child's regular attendance, but s/he is not willing to take responsibility for doing so, e.g. where a parent is not co-operating with advice or support offered to help improve his or her child's attendance.

6.1. Legal Measures for tackling persistent absence or lateness:

Hampshire Schools and HCC will use the full range of legal measures to secure good attendance. Legal measures will only be considered when there is unauthorised absence and:

1. The child or family do not require the support from an agency (or support has been declined) to improve the attendance
2. The child has 10 or more sessions of unauthorised absence and parents are complicit in their child's absence

The following legal measures will be used for pupils of compulsory school age who are registered at a school:

- Parenting contracts set at Education Planning Meetings
- Parenting orders
- Penalty notices
- Education Supervision Orders
- Prosecution

6.2. Penalty Notices for Non-Attendance - Hampshire's Code of Conduct

Where a child has **unauthorised absence**, the school **MUST** enforce Hampshire County Council's *Code of Conduct: issuing Penalty Notices for unauthorised absence from schools* or follow its guidance on other Legal Measures for Non-Attendance. The Code of Conduct is a statutory document that ensures that powers for legal sanctions are applied consistently and fairly across all schools and their families within the authority.

The Code of Conduct states that:

Schools or Hampshire County Council will issue a Penalty Notice for any unauthorised absence where the pupil has been:

- absent for 10 or more half-day sessions (five school days) of unauthorised absence during any 100 possible school sessions - these do not need to be consecutive
- persistently late (coded U) for up to 10 sessions after the register has closed - these do not need to be consecutive
- persistently late before the close of the register (coded L), for 10 more sessions when the school has met with or contacted parents and has clearly communicated that they will categorise as unauthorised any further lateness (coded O) and where the threshold of 10 sessions has been met
- absent for any public examinations of which the dates are published in advance
- absent for any formal school assessments, tests or examinations where the dates have been published in advance

unless the issuing of a Penalty Notice would conflict with other intervention strategies in place or other sanctions already being processed.

If a child's unauthorised absence meets any of the above criteria and the family or child do not require any agency support to improve the attendance, then a Penalty Notice is issued for either:

1. 10 sessions of unauthorised absence or lateness in any 10-week school period
2. One or more sessions of unauthorised absence during a public exam, formal school assessment or testing where dates are published in advance.

This includes where a pupil has unauthorised absence due to either:

- Non-approval of a parent/carer's request for leave of absence or,
- A holiday that has been taken without permission

Nightingale Primary School will warn parents/carers of the likelihood of a penalty notice being issued for unauthorised absence via letter, through the leave of absence request form or through the school's attendance policy and website. The penalty notice is a fine that is issued to each parent/carer who condoned (or was responsible for the child) during the period of unauthorised absence for which the fine has been issued. If, after a warning letter has been issued, there is sufficient irregular attendance to merit a Penalty Notice, it must be issued within 7 days of the period of absence, unless there are exceptional reasons against taking this action.

For each case of unauthorised absence, the school or HCC will decide whether a Penalty Notice is issued to **one or more parent/carers** for each child. *N.B This could mean*

four penalty notices for a family with two children, both with unauthorised absence for holiday, i.e. one penalty notice to each parent.

Each penalty notice carries a fine of £60 if paid within 21 days of the penalty notice being posted. If the fine is not paid within the 21 days the penalty is automatically increased to £120 if paid within 28 days. If the fine remains unpaid, HCC will consider prosecution for the non-attendance. Payment methods are detailed on the penalty notices themselves. Penalties are paid to HCC and revenue resulting from the payment of penalties is used by the County Council to help cover the costs of issuing Penalty Notices and/or the cost of prosecuting recipients who do not pay.

Please note: If you pay the Penalty Notice and your child has further unauthorised absences additional legal action will be taken. For example, in the event that a Penalty Notice has previously been served to you due to unauthorised holiday, should your child have any future unauthorised leave this will result in further legal action for you, such as prosecution or an Education Supervision Order.

For further information, parents/carers can request an information leaflet on Penalty Notices from their school.

A copy is also available from:

<http://documents.hants.gov.uk/code-of-conduct-issuing-penalty-notices-for-unauthorised-absence-from-schools.pdf>

Further advice for parents/carers on school attendance can be found here:

<https://www.hants.gov.uk/educationandlearning/behaviour-attendance-parents>

6.3. Hampshire's Attendance Legal Panels:

Schools must complete an attendance legal panel referral form if the threshold for legal action is met and if prosecution is appropriate. The panel considers if it is appropriate to pursue legal action on cases presented by schools and to ensure that the evidence provided is robust and unambiguous enough to be presented in court. The panels are scheduled at least 11 times during the year.

Section 7

7.1. My child is trying to avoid coming to school. What should I do?

Children are sometimes reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents/carers and the child. If your child is reluctant to attend, it is never best to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to allow them to stay home. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and may make things worse.

Contact your child's class teacher immediately and openly discuss your worries. Your child could be avoiding school for a number of reasons - difficulties with school work, bullying, friendship problems, family difficulties. It is important that we identify the reason for your child's reluctance to attend school and work together to tackle the problem. In some cases, the class teacher may arrange for you to see the Welfare Leader or Head Teacher to discuss your concerns further.

What can I do to encourage my child to attend school?

For many parents, your child attending school may be your first experience of being separated from them. This can seem quite daunting at first, for both of you, but consistency and a caring and supportive home and school life will make the transition a quick and easy experience for you both.

Things that can help:

- Make sure that your child gets enough sleep and gets up in plenty of time each morning.
- Ensure that he/she leaves home in the correct uniform and properly equipped.
- Check their home/school liaison book each day
- Be positive about school in front of your child, show them you value their education
- Be interested in what they are doing at school. Chat to them about the things they have learnt, friends they have made and even what they ate for lunch!

EBSA

Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA) is a broad umbrella term used to describe a group of children or young people who have severe difficulty in attending school due to emotional factors, often resulting in prolonged absences from school. A clear distinction is made between those that are absent from school due to truanting and those who are absent from school due to the specific emotional distress that they experience around attending school.

School play a very important role in identifying factors associated with pupil vulnerability and the potential triggers leading to EBSA.

<https://documents.hants.gov.uk/childrens-services/EBSA-good-practice-guidance.pdf>

7.2. Leavers

If your child is leaving our school, other than when transferring to secondary school, parents are asked to:

- Give the Attendance Officer comprehensive information about your plans including the date of any move, your new address and telephone numbers, your child's new

school and the start date when known. This must be submitted to our school in writing.

- Inform the school, in writing, if you are choosing to electively home educate your child

If pupils leave and we do not have the above information, then your child is considered to be a "Child Missing in Education". This requires schools and Local Authorities to then carry out investigations to try and locate your child, which includes liaising with Children's Services, the Police and other agencies. By giving us the above information, these investigations can be avoided.

7.3. Absence through child participation in public performances, including theatre, film or TV work & modelling:

Parents of a child performer can seek leave of absence from the school for their child to take part in a performance. They must contact the Head Teacher to discuss the nature and frequency of the work, whether the child has a valid performance licence and whether education will be provided by the employer during any future leave of absence. Any absence recorded as part of a child's participation in a public performance is recorded as "C", an authorised absence.

7.4. Absence through competing at regional, county or national level for sport:

Parents of able sportsmen and women can seek leave of absence for their child to take part in regional, county, national and international events and competitions. It is however, down to the Head Teacher's discretion whether to authorise this and they will wish to discuss with you the nature and frequency of the absence and how learning will continue if absence occurs. Permission for your child to leave early or arrive late to attend coaching and training sessions is also at the discretion of the Head Teacher. This is unlikely to be approved if it is a regular event, unless the sports club or association are providing an education tutor as part of their coaching.

7.5. Gypsy, Roma, Traveller and Showman families:

Absence of a child from a Traveller family that has left the area may be authorised if the absence is for **work purposes only** and it is believed that the family intends to return. To ensure the continuity of learning for Traveller children, dual registration is allowed. That means that a school cannot remove a Traveller child from the school roll while they are travelling. When the Traveller is away the home school holds the place open and records the absence as authorised through the "T" code. Distance Learning packs for traveller children are not an alternative to attendance at school.

Please note that your child must have attended 200 sessions in a rolling 12 month period to be able to request leave for work purposes.

Section 8: Record preservation

School registers are legal documents. We will ensure compliance with attendance regulations by keeping attendance records for at least 3 years. Computer registers will be preserved as electronic back-ups.

Date of Policy Approval: Autumn 2021
Date of Next Review: Autumn 2024