

Policy and Guidelines for the Management of Absence and Punctuality

Policy Statement

This policy reflects the vision and aims of Hawkes Farm School by:

- encouraging staff, parents and children to maximise the learning experience in order that all children reach their full potential
- encouraging the development of high self esteem
- providing a framework for parents and staff
- providing clear procedures for involving parents
- providing clear procedures for referring to external agencies

Hawkes Farm School encourages all parents/carers to work in partnership with the school in order to improve attendance and punctuality and recognises that *'parents have the primary responsibility to ensure that pupils of compulsory school age attend school regularly'*. (DfES 1999)

This policy will be presented to each parent as their child is admitted to Hawkes Farm, and may also be accessed on the school web-site.

GUIDANCE

Absence and Punctuality

Regular and punctual attendance is of paramount importance in ensuring that all children have full access to the curriculum. Valuable learning time is lost when children are absent or late.

Parent/Carers Role

- to ensure that children are not on the school premises before 8.30 am
- to ensure that children are supervised by an adult before and after school
- to ensure that children arrive at school in time for a prompt start at 8.55 am
- to take children who are late to the school office
- to collect children punctually at the end of the school day
- to ensure that the school has up to date contact numbers and change of addresses

Absence for Medical Reasons

It is the parents/carers responsibility:

- to notify the school on the morning of the first day of absence before 9.15 am at the latest, and preferably before 8.45 am. (Messages may be left on the answer-phone number 01323 440434, which operates outside office hours and is checked first thing each morning.)
- if a child needs regular medical attention before coming to school, to agree a later registration time
- to inform the office in writing of any medical appointments the child has to attend
- to liaise with the school re specific problems that might cause absence or lateness e.g. sick child or parent/carer

Absence for Holiday

Parents are requested not to take holidays in term time. Requests for absence during term time due to special circumstances must be made in writing to the Headteacher. If parents take holidays in term time, these will be recorded as "unauthorised".

School Role

The school has responsibility to ensure that all children receive a minimum of 21 hours teaching time per week. This does not include time for registration or collective worship. The school's role is:

- to register the children promptly
- to record absence appropriately ie. according to the recognised codes

- to check registers daily for first day absence (see appendix 1)
- to telephone parents who have not contacted the school by 9.30 am on first day of absence, priority being given to:
 - children on the Protection Register or involved with Social Services
 - children where there is a particular concern eg, looked after children
 - children whose parents are normally fastidious in making contact
- to send a letter home to parents who cannot be contacted asking the parent to confirm the reason for the child's absence
- to log all phone calls and letters concerning absence
- to monitor lateness and absence, look for patterns and take appropriate action
- to involve the Education Welfare Service if a parent/carer fails to make first day contact on three occasions during a school year
- to inform the Education Welfare Officer of any concerns regarding absence or punctuality
- The school will be responsible for obtaining details of telephone contacts for all pupils and ensuring that records are updated by writing to parents on a regular basis reminding them of their responsibilities and requesting up to date information regarding contact numbers. An emergency telephone number must be recorded for every pupil.
- to raise concerns regarding absence at consultation evenings, or sooner if necessary
- to discourage the practice of taking children out of school for odd days and holidays
- to report all unauthorised absence on the child's annual report
- to publish attendance data in the School Prospectus and the Annual Report from Governors to parents
- to report to the LEA and the DfES all unauthorised absence

County's Role

The Education Welfare Service, acting on behalf of the LEA, is responsible for the enforcement of attendance of all registered pupils and has an obligation to ensure this, if necessary, through legal action.

- act on requests made by the school re lack of contact on first day of absence
- visit monthly to discuss pupil attendance and contact parents/carers of children who have a high level of absence or lateness
- provide support, if necessary, from the Ethnic Minorities Pupil Service for parents who have English as a second language

The LEA States

“Responsibility for a child's attendance at school, and for contacting the school promptly if a child cannot attend, lies with the parents. The Authority believes that schools that follow its guidance will have taken the appropriate steps to support parents in that responsibility”

(Dec. 1999 – Guidance on contact of first day absence)

Appendices

- 1 School policy for “First Day Absence”
- 2 EWO Referral Form

Policy on First Day Absence

Local Education Authority Guidance States:

It is important that parents appreciate that if a pupil does not arrive at school, teachers have no way of knowing whether that non-arrival is due to them not being sent, to them having had an accident on the way to school, or due to them being sent by parents but not arriving.

Parents will be advised of this in the school brochure and reminded at the beginning of each new year in a newsletter. They will be asked to contact the school on the first day of absence at the earliest possible stage

and by 9.15 am at the latest. An answer phone system will be in operation and the secretary will check this first thing in the morning. Where notice of absence is received, a pro-forma will be completed and passed to the teacher whose duty it is to code and date the notification in line with registration requirements. Registers will be delivered each morning at 8.45 am and during the lunch break. They must be returned to the office immediately after each registration.

Where a child is absent for the first day, and no notification has come through with the register:

Teachers will record the pupil's name, along with the date on a pro-forma attached to the front cover of the register.

Where the office has by this time received notification, the register will be amended by the secretary. Where notification has still not been received, the secretary will record the child's name and the date in the "First Day Absence Log".

Once all registered are in, the secretary will then attempt to contact the parents concerned, logging the time of the call and the response, and reminding the parent to notify the school in the future. If after two calls, no contact has been made, a letter will be sent home indicating the action taken and requesting contact to explain the absence.

Where a parent fails to notify the school of leave on three occasions the Education Welfare Office will be notified.

"Responsibility for a child's attendance at school, and for contacting the school promptly if a child cannot attend lies with parents. The Local Education Authority believes that schools that follow the guidance above will have taken appropriate steps to support parents in that responsibility". (Circular 130 / 99)

Guidance Notes for Referral Acceptance by EWO

A maximum of 10 referrals will be managed by the EWO for the Hailsham area at any one time.

- School should complete the Referral Form, unless referral initiated by another party.
- The Referral Form together with attachments, should be sent by courier to Cathie Barrow, Education Welfare Officer, 4th Floor, St Mary's House, Eastbourne (alternatively to Hailsham Community College, Battle Road, Hailsham)
- EWO will ensure that referrals are initiated by appropriate senior staff in schools and that the school will have taken steps to resolve the attendance issue **before** the referral is accepted, eg,
 - a) contact with parent(s) by telephone or letter
 - b) meeting with parent(s) in school and/or contact with other involved agencies
 - c) all referrals must be accompanied by a six-week record of attendance shown also as a percentage

Please provide copies of recent letters/meeting notes relating to attendance issues.

Once a referral has been accepted and on-going casework identified it will be subject to regular attendance and progress reviews. The EWO will take responsibility for the case development within a given timeframe and schools will receive an update report every three weeks.

It is very important that any meetings/contact with parent(s) are brought to the attention of the EWO to enable him/her to attend where possible.

Referrals cannot be accepted where absences have been authorised by the school.

V Cobb (updated January, 2005)

IMPROVING SCHOOL ATTENDANCE & TACKLING TRUANCY

David Miliband and Ivan Lewis recently wrote to all Chief Education Officers about the renewed emphasis they want to give, from this year 2004, to improving school attendance. A copy of that letter is available at www.dfes.gov.uk/schoolattendance/uploads/letter1.doc

The Ministerial letter drew attention to some new evidence and analysis about the link between attendance and attainment and emphasised the key role that Local Authorities have to play in supporting schools to tackle high levels of absence. An important element of the new approach – and one which affects your school directly – is the statutory collection of absence data **every term**, starting with a collection in January 2005 for the current term. This will enable progress to be monitored closely, so that intervention and support can be deployed speedily for those schools which require it.

The Department has carefully considered the implications of termly data collections from schools. Discussions have indicated that the collection of termly absence data will not place undue workload pressures on the majority of schools. To keep the workload to a minimum, we will only ask for the **overall absence** figure (that is, the combined total of authorised and unauthorised absences) for the new collections in respect of the autumn and spring terms. We will ensure that the data questionnaire sent to your school will be in a format that is not time consuming or bureaucratic to complete. However, the usual end of year data collection by FORVUS will, as in previous years, require the absence figures for the year as a whole to be split between authorised and unauthorised absences. Guidance notes and pro-formas for the first collection will be issued to you in December 2004.

In the meantime, you will wish to be aware of the data that FORVUS will collect on the Department's behalf in respect of the autumn and spring terms:

- Number of pupils of compulsory school age on roll
- Total number of pupil sessions
- Total sessions missed

Please ensure that your school has the necessary absence management systems in place to meet the requirement of submitting the data by this deadline.

The LEA will be contacting schools to discuss the process for setting absence targets. Our approach is based on the principle that schools with relatively high absence should aim to reduce their rates to the average (median) level for similar schools – and we are encouraging LEAs to target their support for schools on this basis. The Government is keen that all partners should work together on tackling absence. Schools, parents, local authorities, and support agencies all have a critical role to play in dealing with the problem. We will be exploring actively with our partners in local authorities what strategies and approaches will best support schools in this area. We look forward to your co-operation and support as we approach this challenge.

If you would like further information please phone Saleem Quazi on 0207 925 5269 or e-mail saleem.quazi1@dfes.gsi.gov.uk

Pupil Attendance

Background

- 1 Under new regulations schools must distinguish in their attendance registers between pupils' authorised and unauthorised absences.
- 2 Schools' prospectuses and annual reports are required to include specified information on rates of unauthorised and authorised absence.

Please continue to mark registers meticulously at the beginning of both morning and afternoon sessions, and notify the head over any unexplained absence.

Attendance registers should be sent to the office after morning and afternoon registration so that the secretary can bring them en bloc to the playground in the event of a fire.

All East Sussex schools are required to adopt the following code for marking in absences, please ensure that the appropriate code is used.

Codes For Registration 2004/05

Code	LEA Meaning	When Used / Notes	Statistical Meaning
#	Holiday for all	School Holidays / Inset	Nil
*	Not on roll	Prior to being admitted to the school roll	Nil
-	All should attend	Marks not yet entered for this period	Nil
!	Attendance not required	Reception Children ONLY – Not to be used for students on part-time timetables	Nil
/\	Present	As stated	Present
@	Late (after registration closed)	To be used for students who arrive after 9.15 am	Unauthorised Absence
B	Education off site	College Links Home Tuition PRU Interviews Sporting, musical or cultural activities approved by school Religious observance	Present
C	Other authorised circumstances	Funeral of close relative or family friend To visit terminally ill relative	Authorised Absence
D	Unsatisfactory reasons provided for absence	Parental reasons not accepted and to be investigated by school. (Head authorised absence, not parent)	Unauthorised Absence
E	Excluded	As stated	Authorised Absence
G	Suspended Absence (inclusion code by EWS agreement only)	Pregnancy Domestic Violence Other temporary circumstances Extended trip to country of origin for cultural visit ONLY TO BE USED WITH AGREEMENT OF EWO	Present
H	Annual Family Holiday	Only in exceptional circumstances and not to exceed 10 days in any academic year	Authorised Absence
I	Illness	Absence for whole of session due to genuine illness	Authorised Absence
L	Late (before close of register)	To be used for students who arrive late - up until 9.15 am	Present
M	Medical / Dental	Absence for Medical / Dental appointment – only to be used for whole day medical appointments if pupil unable to return, eg, all day appointment. Schools to seek evidence before authorising whole day absences for medicals.	Present
N	No reason yet given	As stated	Unauthorised Absence
O	Unauthorised Absence	As stated	Unauthorised Absence
P	Late due to school bus / taxi	As stated	Present
S	Study Leave	Year 11 ONLY (and no more than 15 days prior to examination period)	Present
T	Traveller Absence	Traveller children on migration – maximum 100 sessions per year	Authorised Absence
V	NOT DEFINED	NOT DEFINED	NOT DEFINED
W	Work Experience	KS4 pupils only	Present
X	Only Staff should attend	As stated	Nil
Y	Enforced Closure	Bad weather, school deemed unsafe, etc	Nil
Z	Unauthorised Holiday	School not agreeing to request for holiday in term time	Unauthorised Absence