



## HIGHBURY PRIMARY SCHOOL

### GOVERNORS' ATTENDANCE POLICY

Highbury Primary and Nursery School's mission is:

- To be an inclusive, safe and caring community where each member is equally valued and nurtured to develop their potential.
- To achieve academic excellence by ensuring each pupil performs to the best of their ability.
- To work together as a team with parents and carers within the community to promote respect responsibility for the benefit of all.

#### Attendance Policy

##### 1 Introduction

1.1 At Highbury Primary School we believe that regular attendance at school is essential if children are to benefit from their learning. Optimum levels of attendance can only be fully achieved when responsibility is accepted and shared by all concerned: pupils, parents, school staff, Governors, Portsmouth City Council, the Trust and the local community.

##### 2 The Law

2.1 The law states that all pupils of compulsory school age (5-18) should attend school regularly to obtain the maximum benefit from their education.

2.2 It is an expectation that children below 5 attend regularly as this develops good routines for school.

### **3 Parents**

3.1 The 1996 Education Act Section 7 states that it is the duty of parents to secure education of children of compulsory school age. The Act (section 576) also defines "parent" to include:

- All natural parents, whether they are married or not, and
- Any person who, although not a natural parent, has parental responsibility for a child or young person, and
- Any person who, although not a natural parent, has care of a child or young person.

3.2 Having care of a child or young person means that a person who the child lives with and who looks after the child, irrespective of what their relationship is with the child, is considered to be a parent in education law.

### **4 Completing the register**

4.1 Registers are legal documents that may be used in evidence where parents are being prosecuted for attendance offences. They are retained in school for a period of three years. The governing body are legally responsible for the attendance register and must register with the Data Protection Registrar under the Data Protection Act 1998.

4.2 Registers at Highbury Primary School are completed using the SIMS system. See appendix 1 for a copy of the SIMS codes.

### **5 Lateness**

5.1 If children are late (after 8.50 am) they must be brought to the school office and entered into the late book (with an explanation for their child's lateness). Any child who arrives after 9.10 am is considered to be late after the register has closed. This is recorded in the register as an unauthorised absence. If a child is regularly late for school, teachers and administrative staff should inform the Headteacher. The school will monitor lateness and will contact parents to address the problem. It is a parent's responsibility to ensure their child is collected at 3.15 pm.

### **6 Communication**

6.1 On the first day and following days of absence the school expects parents to inform them of the absence and the school will contact the parent if we have not heard a reason for absence. Reasons for absence are recorded in the school office and transferred onto computer by office staff. (All letters from parents regarding absence should be sent to the school office). Parents may be asked to provide a written explanation of absence when the child returns to school.

## **7 Absences**

7.1 If a pupil of compulsory school age is absent, the register must show whether this was authorised or unauthorised. Authorised absence is where the school has either given approval in advance for a pupil to be away or has accepted an explanation offered afterwards as a good reason for absence. All other absences must be treated as unauthorised.

## **8 Authorised Absence**

8.1 The Department of Education (DofE) points out that it is the school which authorises an absence not the parent and that a note containing an unacceptable explanation for an absence will not be authorised.

8.2 Parents may not authorise absence, only schools can do this. If a school feels a child has too many authorised absences we will inform the parents that future absences may not be authorised without additional assurances or evidence that the absences were unavoidable. See Appendix 3 for further details on authorised absence.

8.3 Absences of more than 10 sessions (5 days) will require medical evidence e.g. sight of prescribed medicines / Dr's appointment card / hospital letter.

## **9 Unauthorised Absence**

9.1 Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) (Education Observed, 13) offer the following definition of unauthorised absence: "Absence from school for any period as a result of a premeditated or spontaneous act by the pupil or parent or both. This includes parentally condoned absence." See Appendix 4 for circumstances that may lead to parentally condoned absence.

## **10 Removing pupils from roll**

10.1 When a pupil leaves Highbury Primary School they will not be removed from the school roll until they have been accepted onto the roll of another school, or we have been given permission to do so by the School Attendance Team.

## **11 Suspected changes of address**

11.1 When it is suspected that a family has moved away from the area without notifying the school, and the school and the School Attendance Team (SAT) are unable, after reasonable enquiry, to locate the child, the child should be removed from the school roll after a period of 4 weeks. A referral will be made to the School attendance Team (Portsmouth City Council) for permission to do so. The period from when the child stopped attending the school until removed from roll should not count against unauthorised absence returns.

## **12 Leave of Absence in term time**

12.1 The Governing Body do not allow authorised leave of absence at any time however, at the discretion of the Headteacher, it may be allowed in exceptional circumstances or on compassionate grounds.

12.2 At no time during Year 2 or Year 6 will pupils be granted leave of absence.

12.3 Parents will only be granted leave of absence in term time if they can provide evidence they cannot take holiday from their employment at any other time.

12.4 No pupils may have leave of absence in September.

12.5 The request for leave should be made on a Leave of Absence from School (LOAFS) form (Appendix 2) by the parent with day to day care of the child.

12.6 Parents of children who have unauthorised absence will be liable for a fixed penalty notice.

## **13 Extended absence abroad**

13.1 Children who go on an extended absence abroad must complete a LOAFS form and indicate an intended return date. Any children who do not return to school on the specified return date may be removed from the school roll following completion of a 'children missing education report,' to the local authority.

## **14 The role of the school**

14.1 Whilst the Headteacher is the only person in school who can authorise absence it is recognised that other members of staff also play a vital role in following up absence. On any day a child is absent without explanation, the school will contact the parent as soon as possible via text or phone. A letter will be sent home to all pupils who return from absence without explanation. Notes, records of telephone calls and medical certificates will be placed in the register by class teachers and then kept with the paper register sheets.

14.2 Families of pupils who are persistently absent from school (those below 90% attendance) will have been monitored daily and support offered to raise attendance. If the pupil has further absences an unannounced home visit will be completed and the pupil may be brought to school. If the family are not at home, a slip will be posted through the door informing them that the school attended the home. If parents fail to engage with the attendance support offered a meeting with the Headteacher will be called. If attendance does not improve a referral to children's social care may be considered. Information about the impact of poor attendance is regularly shared with parents.

## **15 The role of the parent**

15.1 It is ultimately the parents' responsibility to see that their child attends school regularly and punctually. If parental support is not forthcoming, strategies to encourage good attendance may fail. It is the parents' responsibility to inform school of the reason for a child's absence as promptly as possible and to provide any further information which may be required. For any absence other than sickness and medical appointments, a LOAFS form must be completed. Parents are expected to attend meetings with school and other professionals in relation to their child's attendance and take an active role in improving their child's attendance. Where children have individual targets for attendance, parents are expected to work with school and the School Attendance Team.

## **16 Referrals for non-attendance**

16.1 The School Attendance Team may become involved when school has written to the parents explaining concerns over the level of attendance/unauthorised absence.

16.2 A request for a Penalty Notice for Irregular Attendance or a meeting of the School Attendance Panel may be made to the SAT (Portsmouth City Council) at the discretion of the Headteacher.

## **17 The role of the School Attendance Team**

17.1 When a referral is made to the SAT this is, in legal terms, a request for an investigation into whether the parents have committed a criminal offence. Therefore all aspects of SAT intervention may be used as evidence in legal proceedings. It is important that it is made clear to parents at the outset.

## **18 Rewards for good attendance**

18.1 Class teachers constantly praise children for good attendance and this will also be highlighted in assemblies and the newsletter. Parents are actively encouraged to celebrate good attendance with their children. The best attending class of the month have a dress down day.

18.2 Children who achieve 100% attendance in a term receive a certificate. Those who attend for a whole year have an extra outing.

18.3 Children with improving attendance are rewarded with certificates and letters home to parents.

18.4 At Highbury Primary School we believe good attendance is vital for our children to gain the maximum from their time in school. We aim to work collaboratively with all involved parties for the benefit of all of our children.



Approved by the Governing Body: .....

Approved: February 2018

Review: February 2020

## Appendix 1 - SIMS codes

|   |  |
|---|--|
| / | Present (am)   |
| \ | Present (pm)   |
| # | School closed for all pupils                                 |
| B | Educated off site (not dual registration)                    |
| C | Other authorised circumstances (not covered by other code)   |
| D | Dual registration (i.e. Pupil attending other establishment) |
| E | Excluded   |
| F | Extended family holiday (agreed)                             |
| G | Family holiday (not agreed or days in excess)                |
| H | Family holiday (agreed)                                      |
| I | Illness (not medical/dental appointment)                     |
| J | Interview  |
| L | Late (before registers closed)                               |
| M | Medical/dental appointment                                   |
| N | No reason yet provided for absence                           |
| O | Unauthorised absence (not covered by any other code)         |
| P | Approved sporting activity                                   |
| R | Religious observance   |
| S | Study leave  |
| T | Traveler absence   |
| U | Late (after registers closed)                                |
| V | Educational visit or trip                                    |
| W | Work experience  |
| X | Non-compulsory school age absence                            |
| Y | Enforced closure   |
| Z | Pupil not on roll  |
| - | All should attend/No mark recorded                           |



### **Appendix 3 - Authorised Absences**

An absence may be counted as authorised if a child is absent:

- When prevented from attending by sickness or any unavoidable cause
- On a day set aside for religious observance
- If the school is not within walking distance of the child's home and no suitable arrangements have been made for his/her transport to and from school, boarding accommodation or enabling him/her to become a registered pupil at a school nearer his/her home.
- On approved work experience
- Participating in a public performance
- At the Headteacher's discretion

Furthermore school may "reasonably exercise discretion to grant leave" for:

- Absence following the death of a close member of the child's family.

### **Appendix 4 - Unauthorised Absences**

- The child's father or mother being ill
- A pupil being used as a child minder
- A pupil being used to support members of the family
- Family work patterns
- A parent's desire for company
- Indulging a child who wants to stay at home
- A child's birthday
- Apathy on the part of the parents
- Buying clothes
- A parent's inability to control the child
- Hairdressing appointments
- Child used as an interpreter
- Head lice
- Uneasy relationships with an institution representing authority