



**The Holden
School**

Attendance Policy

Policy Document (2021-2022)

Updated:	Sept 2019
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Introduction

For children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they regularly attend school, on time, every day unless the reason for absence is unavoidable.

It is very important that your child attends school and this Policy sets out how together we achieve this. Helping to create a regular pattern of attendance is everybody's responsibility- parents, pupils and all members of school staff

School aim

Our policy aims to:

1. emphasise the importance to all students of maximum attendance at school as an essential pre-requisite for making full use of all educational opportunities and to maximising individual achievement;
2. make explicit to all relevant parties (teachers, parents/carers and students) the Partnership's expectations on attendance levels
3. promote a consistent approach across the Partnership towards all matters relating to attendance;
4. clarify the roles and responsibilities of all parties with respect to attendance;
5. communicate to all relevant parties the legal position with respect to attendance and the categories of absence which are deemed "authorised";
6. stress the need for home and school to work in close partnership to achieve high attendance.

Regular attendance at school is vital. Put simply, absence means missed learning; without it the learning process becomes fragmented and unsatisfactory. It is a legal requirement that students of compulsory school age receive full-time education and this, with the exception of those educated at home or elsewhere, means regular attendance at school. Irregular attendance leads to students missing important lessons and therefore not fulfilling their true potential; it also places children at risk and may result in their being drawn into patterns of anti-social or criminal behaviour. Therefore we take the issue of attendance very seriously and do all we can to obtain very high attendance from all our students.

Types of Absence

Every half day from school is classified as either authorised or unauthorised absence.

Authorised absence are periods of time when a pupil is away from school for a good reason including illness, medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall within school time, emergencies or other unavoidable cause.

The school cannot legally authorise any leave of absence unless there are exceptional circumstances. The Department for Education (DFE) has issued guidelines to all schools detailing valid reasons for authorised or justified absences:

- (i) a child is ill or receiving medical attention;
- (ii) days of religious observance, notified in advance;
- (iii) absence due to family circumstances (e.g. bereavement, serious illness).

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable for which 'no leave' has been granted. This type of absence can lead to the Local Authority and school using sanctions or legal proceedings.

These are absences where:

1. no letter or acceptable explanation is provided by parent(s)/carers;
2. the reason for the absence does not fall into one of the categories of authorised absence above.

DFE guidelines state that the following activities would be classified as unauthorised:

1. minding the house;
2. caring for relatives;
3. awaiting repair people;
4. shopping
5. a birthday or family celebration.

If a pupil misses more than 20% of schooling they are deemed to have persistent absence. Pupils with persistent absence levels are tracked and monitored with referring Local Authorities. Action plans will be put in place to improve attendance at school.

There are clearly some grey areas. The DFE guidelines look at the area of Special Occasions and make clear that only truly exceptional occasions should be classified as authorised; for example, absence resulting from a pupil attending the graduation of an older brother or sister could be counted as authorised; a birthday treat to a theme park would not.

Absence Procedures

If your child is absent you must:

1. Contact the school office as soon as possible on the first day of absence on

If your child is absent we will:

2. Telephone you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you;
3. Invite you to discuss the situation with the Headteacher or other senior member of the staff team;

Holidays in term time

We strongly discourage holidays being taken in term time as learning is disrupted and the lost time is detrimental to the educational progress of the child (this message is conveyed in letters home).

In common with the other primary schools in the county, we ask parents who feel it is absolutely unavoidable that they take their annual holiday (or any other proposed special occasions) during term time to notify the School, in writing, at least four weeks in advance of the proposed date, explaining the circumstances.

The DFE guidelines make it plain that, in the final analysis, it is the school that judges whether an absence is authorised or not. Amendments to the 2006 regulations remove references to family holidays and extended leave as well as the statutory threshold of 10 school days. These amendments make it clear that Head Teachers should determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted. A note from home therefore does NOT automatically make an absence valid, justified or authorised.

The School will not authorise holidays retrospectively. Any requests for term time holidays may necessitate an interview with an appropriate member of staff.

Religious Absence:

The school will authorise on day 'leave' per religious festival e.g. Eid, but no more than 3 days in any one academic year. Parents must request leave in advance.

Home/School Partnership

Securing a high level of attendance requires the school and home to work closely together. To this end, we ask parents/carers to:

1. do all they can to ensure their child arrives **on time** for the school day by ensuring they are up and ready for their transport into school
2. if their child is ill, notify the school **on the first day** with an estimation of the likely length of absence;
3. get in touch at an early stage about any concerns they have about their child's attitude towards school.
- 4.

In return the School will:

1. contact home daily in the case of absences;
2. contact home over any unexplained absences;
3. follow up promptly any concerns parents pass on to us that may be affecting their child's attitude to, or feeling of wellbeing in school;
4. help pupils re-integrate into school after illness or other individual circumstances;
5. regularly and consistently remind students of the importance of good attendance and punctuality;
6. reward excellent or improving attendance and action any concerns promptly.

Roles and Responsibilities

School:

High attendance levels are achieved as a result of staff working closely together and knowing where their responsibilities lie. The school's Designated Safeguarding Lead and Pastoral Support Manager work closely together to monitor attendance and implement strategies to overcome any barriers. Some of the strategies utilised are; Phone calls home; attendance letters; home visits and re-integration timetables being offered. The school's Designated Safeguarding Lead may ask other staff members to help with actions associated with attendance (phone calls/home visits) should we feel this would garner a more successful outcome.

Furthermore, the school and all its staff will ensure a safe, secure and welcoming learning environment is provided for all pupils in an effort to encourage consistent attendance. This will be achieved by ensuring any concerns or barriers to learning are dealt with in an efficient and empathetic manner.

Parents:

1. Ensure pupils attend regularly and punctually
2. Contact the school on the first day of absence
3. Avoid holidays in term time wherever possible and apply for any period of leave in advance
4. Attend any attendance meetings in school
5. Participate in support and intervention offered by the school or Local Authority

Pupils:

1. Attend school regularly and punctually
2. Speak to parents or teachers if issues arise that may have an effect on school attendance
3. Co-operate and participate in support and interventions offered by the school or Local Authority

Head teacher:

1. Take a lead to ensure that attendance has a high profile within school
2. Ensure that there is designated staff with day-to-day responsibility for attendance matters.
3. Take responsibility for ensuring the school meets all statutory requirements for attendance

Designated staff:

1. First day response: contact parents if a reason for absence has not been provided

2. Monitor pupil and whole school attendance
3. Communicate attendance levels to parents
4. Work with parents and the Local Authority to remove barriers to regular attendance

Teachers and Support staff:

1. Provide a welcoming atmosphere and a safe learning environment
2. Provide a sympathetic response to any pupils' concerns
3. To see attendance as the responsibility of all school staff

The Education Welfare Service

In extreme cases the Education Welfare Service will initiate legal proceedings against parents who have not fulfilled their responsibility for getting their child to school. Before a case goes to court, Parenting Contracts will be drawn up, setting targets for attendance levels; there may also be interviews which could lead to a fixed penalty notice. The prime aim of all action is to get the child attending school on a regular basis.

A Final Word

We feel attendance levels are an indicator of how effective and caring a school is. Failure to attend can be an indication that all is not well at home so that there is a welfare aspect to attendance as well. Equally, it is clear that regular, consistent attendance is an essential pre-requisite for effective learning.

We take attendance seriously and have put a lot of time and energy into getting our procedures as efficient and effective as possible. We urge you to give this matter the priority it deserves

The success of the school's attempts to improve attendance levels will be evaluated as part of the termly governance process.

Next review: Sept 2020