## Attendance Policy

## Portsdown Primary School \& Early Years



PORTSDOWN<br>Primary School \& Early Years

| Approved by: Headteacher | Date: April 2023 |
| :--- | :--- |
| Review frequency: Annually | Statutory requirement: No |
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## 1. Rationale

At Portsdown Primary School we recognise that for pupils to get the most out of their school experience, including educational attainment and progress, wellbeing and wider life chances, good attendance at school is essential. Children who attend school regularly have better relationships and more consistent learning, thus they achieve more highly, making better progress and can develop higher self-confidence and esteem. The link between good attendance, standards of behaviour and attainment is clear.

The law entitles every child of compulsory school age to a full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude and any special education need they may have. Where parents decide to have their child registered at school, they have an additional duty to ensure that their child attends that school regularly and on time.

Our school has a strong relationship with families, and we are committed to working in partnership to support parents and children who may experience any barriers to school attendance.

Therefore, ensuring good attendance and improving attendance is everyone's business.

Portsdown Primary School fully supports Portsmouth City Council and the Portsmouth Education Partnership with the 'Miss School Miss Out' campaign.

## 2. Aims

We are committed to meeting our obligation with regards to regular good school attendance through our whole-school culture and ethos, and relational practice, that values education and the life chances it enables, including:
$>$ Promoting the benefits that school attendance and education brings
> Working collaboratively to maximise school attendance
$>$ Reducing absence, including persistent and severe absence
$>$ Ensuring every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled
$>$ Acting early to address patterns of absence
$>$ Listening to and understanding any barriers that families may face
$>$ Building strong relationships with families to ensure children and young people have the support in place to attend school

We will also promote and support punctuality in attending school and lessons.

## 3. Roles and responsibilities

## Parents and carers

$>$ Make sure their child attends school every day/timetabled session and on time
$>$ Inform the school of any absence before 9am on the day of the absence and each subsequent day of absence if required, and advise when they are expected to return
$>$ Provide the school with more than 1 contact number for their child
> Ensure that, where possible, medical or other non-urgent appointments for their child are made outside of the school day
$>$ Support the school with their child aiming for100\% attendance every school year
> Discuss with the school attendance officer, Mrs S Carpenter, any potential planned absences to see if these can be avoided wherever possible

## Class teachers

> Class teachers are responsible for recording attendance accurately daily, using our online Studybugs facility, and submitting this information by 9.10am for the morning session and 10 minutes after they have returned from lunch.
$>$ Meet and greet children at the classroom door where appropriate
$>$ Ensure that the children experience walking through the door in the morning is a positive one
$>$ Liaise with the Attendance Officer on matters of attendance and punctuality
$>$ Communicate any concerns or underlying problems that may account for a child's absence with the Attendance Officer/Designated Safeguarding Lead
$>$ Support pupils after any absence to engage with their learning when they are back in school
$>$ In the event of the electronic registers not working the class teaches manually record pupils' attendance on a paper register which is then recorded on SIMS as soon as the system is up and running

## School admin and attendance staff

$>$ Take calls from parents about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the school system
> Transfer calls from parents to the relevant member of staff if necessary in order to provide them with more detailed support on attendance
$>$ Ensure that pupils are accurately signed in/out during the school day
> Report any absences to the Attendance Officer by 9am

## The attendance officer

> Take the lead for attendance across the school
$>$ Devise specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data
$>$ Arrange calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues
> Deliver targeted intervention and support to children and families
$>$ Check that registers match the absence information
$>$ Monitor and analyse attendance data on at least a weekly basis
$>$ Follow-up any non-attendance that is not accounted for
$>$ Benchmark attendance data to identify areas of focus for improvement
$>$ Provide regular attendance reports to school staff and report concerns about attendance to the designated senior leader responsible for attendance. At Portsdown Primary, this is the headteacher
$>$ Work with local authority staff and the Portsmouth Education Partnership to tackle and improve persistent absence
$>$ Advise the headteacher when to consider referral for fixed-penalty notices
> The attendance officer is Mrs S Carpenter and can be contacted via the school's main number 02392378991 or email the Stubybugs app.

## The designated senior leader responsible for attendance

$>$ Offer a clear vision to drive attendance improvement
$>$ Evaluate and monitor attendance expectations and processes
> Have an oversight of data analysis
> Report attendance information to the Governors
$>$ The designated senior leader responsible for attendance is the Headteacher and can be contacted via the main front office number 02392378991

## The headteacher

> Ensure implementation of this policy at the school
> Monitor school-level absence data and report it to governors regularly
$>$ Support school staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils
> Monitor and evaluate the impact of any implemented attendance strategies
$>$ Make referrals for the issuing of fixed-penalty notices, where necessary
$>$ Support the work of the Portsmouth Education Partnership Behaviour and Attendance Group

## The Governing Board

$>$ Set high expectations for all leaders, staff, pupils and parents
$>$ Promote the importance of school attendance across the school's policies and ethos
$>$ Ensure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties
$>$ Regularly review and challenge attendance data
$>$ Monitor attendance figures for the whole school and groups of pupils
$>$ Have oversight of staff training on attendance to ensure that it is regular and rigorous
$>$ Hold the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy
$>$ The school's link Governors for attendance are Siun Cranny and Danielle DeSousa

## 4. Attendance expectations and procedures

### 4.1 The attendance register

We will keep an attendance register and place all pupils onto this register. We will take our attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. It will mark whether every pupil is:

Present / Attending an approved off-site educational activity / Absent / Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.
$\Rightarrow$ Pupils must arrive in school by 8.45am on each school day
$>$ The register for the first session will be taken at 8.55am and will be kept open until 9am
> The register for the second session will be taken within 10 minutes of coming in from lunch.
$>$ The school day finishes at 3pm.
The attendance register is a legal document and may be used in evidence in cases of prosecution for non-attendance.

### 4.2 Planned absence

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as an authorised absence as long as the pupil's parent/carer notifies the school in advance of the appointment. However, we encourage parents/carers to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

The pupil's parent/carer must also apply for other types of term-time planned absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence. As headteachers should only grant leaves of absence in exceptional circumstances it is highly unlikely a leave of absence will be granted for the purposes of a family holiday. Go to section 5 to find out examples of which term-time absences the school can authorise.

### 4.3 Unplanned absence

The pupil's parent/carer must notify the school of the reason for the absence on the first day of an unplanned absence by 9am or as soon as practically possible by calling the school front office staff on 02392378991 or using the Studybugs App.

We will mark absence due to illness as authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness. If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may ask the pupil's parent/carer to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents/carers will be notified of this.

Some pupils, such as those with long term medical conditions or who have special educational needs and disabilities, may face greater barriers to attendance than others. We will work with parents to still share high expectations for school attendance but also to offer additional support and make reasonable adjustments where necessary.

### 4.4 Lateness and punctuality

A pupil who arrives late:
$>$ Before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code
> After the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code
If a pupil arrives late after the register has closed for a session, the appropriate code applies to the whole of that session.

Classroom doors are open until 08.55am. If a child arrives at school after this time they will need to come into the school via the front office.

A pupil who arrives after the register has closed at 9.20am will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code.

If children are late to school (after 8:55 am) they should be brought to the school office and parents are asked to provide an explanation for their child's lateness. The reason for the lateness is recorded in the late book. Any child who arrives after 9:20 a.m. is considered to be late after the register has closed. This is recorded in the register as an unauthorised absence.

Lateness and ongoing punctuality issues are followed up by the Attendance Officer who will speak to parents about the issues. The Attendance Officer will also send letters to the parents with regard to lateness and punctuality.

The attendance officer will monitor lateness and improvements will be celebrated.

### 4.5 Following up unexplained absence

Where any pupil we expect to attend school does not attend, or stops attending, without reason, the school will:
> Contact the pupil's parent/carer on the morning of the first day of unexplained absence to ascertain the reason. If the school cannot reach any of the pupil's emergency contacts, the school will send a Studybugs email. The school may contact siblings school, police, MASH or any similar agency as necessary
$>$ Identify whether the absence is approved or not
$>$ Identify the correct attendance code to use and input it as soon as the reason for absence is ascertained - this will be no later than 5 working days after the session
$>$ Contact the parent/carer on each day that the absence continues without explanation to ensure proper safeguarding action is taken. If absence continues, the school will take further advice e.g. contacting the local authority School Attendance Team, MASH.

### 4.6 Reporting to parents/carers

The school will regularly inform parents about their child's attendance and absence levels. In the autumn term the Studybugs messaging system will be used to inform parents of their child's attendance. In Spring term, we will use parent evening as an opportunity to share attendance data. In the Summer term, attendance reports will be part of the end of year reports.

### 4.7 Part-time timetables

All pupils of compulsory school age are entitled to a full-time education. In very exceptional circumstances, where it is in a pupil's best interests, there may be a need for a temporary part-time timetable to meet their individual needs. For example, where a medical condition prevents a pupil from attending full-time education and a part-time timetable is considered as part of a re-integration package.

A part-time timetable will always be in place for the shortest time necessary and not treated as a long-term solution. Any pastoral support programme or other agreement should have a time limit by which point the pupil is expected to attend full time, either
at school or alternative provision. There should also be formal arrangements in place for regularly reviewing it with the pupil and their parents.

The local authority must be notified of any part-time timetables and the plan for return to full time education. They should never be open-ended. In agreeing to a part-time timetable, a school has agreed to a pupil being absent from school for part of the week or day and therefore must treat this absence as authorised.

### 4.8 Alternative provision

Any pupils who attend alternative provision are dual registered but remain the responsibility of the school. We will regularly check the attendance, behaviour and progress of dual registered pupils and raise any concerns about absence with the alternative provision and/or parents as necessary, in line with our safeguarding responsibilities.

## 5. Authorised and unauthorised absence

Pupils are expected to attend school every day for the entire duration of the academic year. The Headteacher will not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. A leave of absence is granted at the headteacher's discretion, including the length of time the pupil is authorised to be absent for

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, considering the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request. Any request should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated and, where possible, at least 4 weeks before the absence, and in accordance with any leave of absence request form (LOAF), accessible via the front office. The Headteacher may require evidence to support any request for leave of absence. If no explanation is received absences cannot be authorised.

There are two main categories of absences:
Authorised absence: when the school has accepted the explanation offered as a satisfactory reason for the absence, or approval has been given in advance. For example:

- Illness/sickness, medical appointment (medical evidence of appointment required), attending a funeral
- Religious circumstances (where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong)
- Participation in sporting competition, artistic performance, or examination
- Circumstance linked to parent in HM Armed Forces (MOD advice)
- Traveller pupils travelling for occupational purposes

Unauthorised absence: when the school has not received a reason for absence or has not approved a child's leave of absence from school following a parental request. This includes:

- parents giving their children permission to be absent from school e.g. shopping for uniform, birthdays, visiting other family members
- absences which have not been explained or a satisfactory explanation received

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

If a child has more than 5 days ( 10 sessions) unauthorised absence in a term, then the matter will be referred to the local authority School Attendance Team for consideration of a Fixed Penalty Notice fine.

## Escalation of procedures

## Reducing persistent absence

The school through the attendance officer targets unauthorised absence by identifying pupils and families through data analysis, looking at trends and patters of irregular attendance and using Study Bugs. The parents will be phoned, sent an email sent letters, offered meetings. Home visits and school meetings may also be offered. Interventions offered by school are recorded and may be used as evidence for legal action in court and in the event of penalty notices and school attendance panels. Teachers and the senior leadership team are made aware of pupils absences and the interventions and support the parents are being offered. This is recorded on the CPOM's data base and shared as necessary.

If a child reaches 6 sessions of absence ( 3 days) an attendance letter is sent to the parents. This letter informs the parents of their child's current attendance. It also outlines the schools processes with regard to absence e.g. telephone calls, sending message via studybugs app, by arranging school meetings or arranging a home visit. The parents are encouraged to inform the school if there are specific circumstances that have contributed to their child's attendance.

If a child reaches 10 sessions of absence a further letter is sent to the parents. This letter is named 'medical 2 ' letter and informs the parents of the attendance of their child and how this compares this to the minimum attendance requirement of the government. Parents are requested to provide medical evidence to support any future medical absences for their child. Parents are also asked if the child has a medical condition that the school may not be aware of. This is to enable the school to support the child's medical needs. Parents are also notified that if their child reaches 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in that term, the school will have no alternative but to request that a penalty notice be issued to them with regards to their child's irregular attendance.

If a child reaches 15 sessions of unauthorised absence, has external agency support or has been subject to a previous penalty notice or legal action, a school attendance panel may be requested. This panel will usually be in the school or via a video link. The parents will be invited to this panel in addition to professionals supporting the
family. The school attendance panel will attend to chair the meeting and take minutes, a plan will be formulated to support the parents in improving their child's attendance. A key person is identified in the school, this will be the person that communicates with the parent if any issues arise during the 30 day monitoring period. It is expected that the child is in school on a daily basis. In the event of illness of the child medical evidence will be expected. The attendance will be reviewed after the monitoring period by the school and the school attendance team. The parent will not be invited to this review.

## Legal sanctions

The school through the local authority can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age.

If issued with a fine, or penalty notice, each parent must pay $£ 60$ within 21 days or $£ 120$ within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the local authority. Penalty notices can be issued by a headteacher, local authority officer or the police.

The decision on whether to issue a penalty notice may take into account:
$>$ The number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year
$>$ One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without authorisation
> Where an excluded pupil is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason
$>$ If the payment has not made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute or withdraw the notice.

## 6. Strategies for promoting good attendance

Our aim is to encourage families to ensure children regularly attend school.

## We support families by:

$>$ Providing information on the school website regarding absence related to illnesses
$>$ Encouraging families to contact the Attendance Officer to listen to, understand and discuss any barriers, worries or concerns
$>$ Recognising there are other factors affecting children's attendance such as poor sleep, change in family circumstances, ongoing medical conditions etc.
> Providing access to Senco, Mental Health Support Team, Parenting Surgeries, Family Early Support, school nursing team, other agencies
$>$ Engaging in city-wide priorities and initiatives such as the Portsmouth Education Partnership Education strategy and relational practice work

We promote good attendance at our school by:
$>$ Ensuring that good attendance is everyone's business
$>$ Incentives to encourage good attendance, such as stickers, certificates and rewards
$>$ Aiming for $100 \%$ attendance and setting aspirational targets at a wholeschool, year group, class and individual level
> Celebrating improved attendance
$>$ Regular updates for parents and carers in newsletters and the school's channels of communication such as our Facebook page

At Portsdown Primary School we positively encourage good school attendance. Class teachers constantly praise children for good attendance and this will also be highlighted in assemblies. The attendance cup will be awarded weekly to the class with the best attendance the previous week, as long as that attendance is over $96 \%$. At any time school may reward good attendance in other ways and may hold specific attendance drives to promote good attendance at school. These will always be clearly communicated to children and parents.

Good attendance is celebrated in assembly on a weekly basis. Children are also rewarded for improved attendance and good attendance by receiving certificates, letters home and prizes. Children are also rewarded on an individual basis for improved lateness.

KS1 and KS2 classes with the best attendance is celebrated through our Facebook page on a weekly basis. Classes with $100 \%$ attendance for the week receive a small prize.

There is an attendance board in the front office celebrating improved and good attendance. This can be seen by parents and children as they come into the school. School and parents have access to an app called Marvelous Me which enables then to receive positive communication from school about their child.

The School uses the Studybugs app to allow parents and carers to access up to date NHS information regarding illness related absence. This app enables parents to send reasons for non-attendance directly to school and also enables school to respond to any concerns that parents may have. The school also has a dedicated absence reporting phone line.

Children who achieve 100\% attendance at the end of each term ie: Christmas, Easter and the end of the summer term receive a certificate in assembly. Parents are actively encouraged to celebrate good attendance with their children.

The school works with parents and our professional partners such as the school nursing service to support regular attendance - for example, communicating early about issues, acknowledging positive improvements, indicating a named contact in school, etc.

## 7. Attendance data and monitoring

The school sets an annual target for attendance to be higher than $96 \%$ for the whole school. The school monitors the attendance of children in a range of ways:

| Timing | Actions |
| :--- | :--- |
| Daily | Persistent absentees |
|  | N codes for non attendance |


|  | Illness absences <br> Contagious illnesses e.g. chicken pox |
| :--- | :--- |
| Weekly | Persistent late arrivals |
|  | Persistent absentees |
|  | Whole class attendance |
| Half-termly | Persistent Absent Report (PAR) sent to |
|  | Portsmouth LA School Attendance |
|  | Team highlighting PA children and |
|  | actions completed by the school |
|  | $100 \%$ attendance |
| Termly | Termly attendance for all groups |
| Annually | Annual attendance for all groups |

### 7.1 Monitoring attendance

The school will:
> Monitor attendance and absence data daily, weekly, half-termly, termly and yearly across the school and at an individual pupil level
> Identify whether there are particular groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern
> Pupil-level absence data will be collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. The school will compare attendance data to the national average, and share this with the governing board.

### 7.2 Analysing attendance

The school will:
> Analyse attendance and absence data regularly to identify pupils or cohorts that need additional support with their attendance, and use this analysis to provide targeted support to these pupils and their families
> Look at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence, and then develop strategies to address these

### 7.3 Using data to improve attendance

The school will:
> Provide regular attendance reports to class teachers and other school leaders, to facilitate discussions with pupils and families
> Use data to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place to modify them and inform future strategies

### 7.4 Reducing persistent and severe absence

Persistent absence is where a pupil misses $10 \%$ or more of school, and severe absence is where a pupil misses $50 \%$ or more of school.

The school will:
> Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence
> Hold regular meetings with the parents of pupils who the school (and/or local authority) considers to be vulnerable, or are persistently or severely absent, to discuss attendance and engagement at school
$>$ Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance
If a child has continuous (attendance drops below 95\% attendance for reasons which need further investigation) or regular absence, such as a particular day of the week, parents or carers are invited to meet with the Attendance Officer and/or the headteacher to agree how attendance can be supported.

The current persistent absence threshold is $90 \%$. As children near this threshold, the school will let parents know. The school will issue a Medical 1 letter at the required time and may refer the absence to the School Nurse.

## Suspension

Suspensions are very rare but in the event that a suspension is necessary the LA guidelines will be used. If a lengthy period of suspension is required reintegration will be planned and monitored.

## 8. Legislation and guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the DfE working together to improve school attendance (May 2022), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on school attendance parental responsibility measures. These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- Part 6 of The Education Act 1996
- Part 3 of The Education Act 2002
- Part 7 of The Education and Inspections Act 2006
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (and 2010, 2011, 2013, 2016 amendments)
The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013
This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the school census, which explains the persistent absence threshold.


## 9. Links with other policies/documentation

This policy specifically links to the following policy and/or documents:
> Child protection and safeguarding policy
> Behaviour and relationships policy
> DfE School attendance Guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities (May 2022)
> DfE Improving school attendance: support for schools and local authorities (May 2022)
> DfE Working together to improve school attendance Guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools, and local authorities (Published May 2022, Applies from Sept 2023)
> PCC Children Missing Education (CME) (Sept 2016)
> DfE Keeping Children safe in Education (Sept 2022)
> Ofsted School Inspection handbook (Sept 2022)

## 10. Policy monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the local authority or DfE is updated, and as a minimum every 2 years by the Headteacher and the attendance officer. At every review, the policy will be approved by the full governing board.

## Appendix 1: Attendance codes

The following codes are taken from the DfE's guidance on school attendance.

| Code | Definition | Scenario |
| :---: | :--- | :--- |
| I | Present (am) | Pupil is present at morning registration |
| I | Present (pm) | Pupil is present at afternoon registration |
| L | Late arrival | Pupil arrives late before register has closed |
| B | Off-site educational activity | Pupil is at a supervised off-site educational activity approved <br> by the school |
| D | Dual registered | Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they <br> are also registered |
| J | Interview | Pupil has an interview with a prospective <br> employer/educational establishment |
| P | Sporting activity | Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity <br> approved by the school |
| V | Educational trip or visit | Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised, or approved, <br> by the school |
| W | Work experience | Pupil is on a work experience placement <br> C <br> Authorised absence |
| E | Authorised leave of absence | Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to <br> exceptional circumstances |
| H | Authorised holiday | Pupil has been excluded but no alternative provision has <br> been made |
| I | Illness | Pupil has been allowed to go on holiday due to exceptional <br> circumstances |
| M | Medical/Dental appointment | Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment <br> School has been notified that a pupil will be absent due to <br> Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance |
| R | Religious observance | Year 11 pupil is on study leave during their public <br> examinations |
| S | Study leave | Gypsy, Roma and traveller <br> absence |
| Pupil from a traveller community is travelling, as agreed with |  |  |
| the school |  |  |


| N | Reason not provided | Pupil is absent for an unknown reason (this code should be <br> amended when the reason emerges, or replaced with code <br> O if no reason for absence has been provided after a <br> reasonable amount of time) |
| :---: | :--- | :--- |
| O | Unauthorised absence | School is not satisfied with reason for pupil's absence |
| U | Arrival after registration | Pupil arrived at school after the register closed |
| X | Not required to be in school | Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend |
| Y | Unable to attend due to <br> exceptional circumstances | School site is closed, there is disruption to travel as a result <br> of a local/national emergency, or pupil is in custody |
| Z | Pupil not on admission <br> register | Register set up but pupil has not yet joined the school |
| \# | Planned school closure | Whole or partial school closure due to half-term/bank <br> holiday/INSET day |

