

# Attendance policy

## Portsmouth Primary School and Early Years



Approved by:	Governing Board	Date: March 2024
Last reviewed on:	February 2024	
Next review due by:	July 2024	

## Contents

1. Rationale and Aims .....	2
2. Legislation and guidance .....	3
3. Roles and responsibilities .....	3
4. Recording attendance .....	5
5. Authorised and unauthorised absence .....	8
6. Strategies for promoting attendance .....	11
7. Attendance monitoring.....	11
8. Monitoring arrangements .....	13
9. Links with other policies .....	14
Appendix 1: attendance codes .....	14

---

### 1. Rationale and Aims

At Portsdown Primary School and Early Years, we recognise that for pupils to get the most out of their school experience, including educational attainment and progress, wellbeing and wider life chances, then 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 behavior 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 needs they may have. Where parents decide to have their child registered at a 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 and Early Years fully supports Portsmouth City Council and the Portsmouth Education Partnership with the 'Miss School Miss Out' campaign.

Therefore, we are committed to meeting our obligation with regards to school attendance through our whole-school culture and ethos that values good attendance, including:

Promoting good attendance and promoting the benefits that school attendance brings

Working collaboratively with families 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

Building strong relationships with families to ensure pupils have the support in place to attend school

We will also promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

## 2. Legislation and guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the [working together to improve school attendance](#) from the Department for Education (DfE), 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](#)

It also refers to:

[School census guidance](#)

[Keeping Children Safe in Education](#)

[Mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance: guidance for schools](#)

## 3. Roles and responsibilities

### 3.1 The governing board

The governing board is responsible for:

Promoting the importance of school attendance across the school's policies and ethos

Making sure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties

Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data

Monitoring attendance figures for the whole school

Making sure staff receive adequate training on attendance

Holding the Headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy

As part of the monitoring role of the governing body, Andrew Starr (governor) is responsible for discussing attendance with relevant members of staff and reporting his findings back to the full governing body.

### 3.2 The Headteacher

The Headteacher is responsible for:

Implementation of this policy at the school

Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors

Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils

Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies

Requesting fixed-penalty notices, where necessary

### **3.3 The designated senior leader responsible for attendance**

The designated senior leader is responsible for:

Leading attendance across the school

Offering a clear vision for attendance improvement

Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes

Having an oversight of data analysis

Devising specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data

Building relationships with parents/carers to discuss and tackle attendance issues

Creating intervention reintegration plans in partnership with pupils and their parents/carers

Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families

The designated senior leader responsible for attendance is Mr. Vaghela who can be contacted via the school's office.

### **3.4 The Attendance Officer**

The school Attendance Officer is responsible for:

Monitoring and analysing attendance data (see section 7)

Benchmarking attendance data to identify areas of focus for improvement

Providing regular attendance reports to school staff and reporting concerns about attendance to the designated senior leader responsible for attendance and the Headteacher

Working with The school Attendance Team to tackle persistent absence

Advising the Headteacher when to issue fixed-penalty notices

The Attendance Officer is Ms Sue Carpenter who can be contacted via the school's office.

The school through the Attendance Officer targets unauthorised absence by identifying pupils and families through data analysis, looking at trends and patterns 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.

### **3.5 Class teachers**

Class teachers are responsible for accurately recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the school office at the start of the day and after the lunch playtime.

### **3.6 School office staff**

School office staff will:

Take calls from parents/carers about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the school system/ inform the Attendance Officer

Transfer calls from parents/carers to the Attendance Officer in order to provide them with more detailed support on attendance

### **3.7 Parents/carers**

Parents/carers are expected to:

Make sure their child attends every day on time

Call the school to report their child's absence before 9am on the day of the absence and each subsequent day of absence), and advise when they are expected to return. This can be via Studybugs (our preferred method) or by phoning the school (and leaving a message/ speaking to a member of staff dependent upon the time of the call).

Provide the school with more than 1 emergency contact number for their child

Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day

### **3.8 Pupils**

Pupils are expected to:

Attend school every day on time

## **4. Recording attendance**

### **4.1 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 after lunch time for 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

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

The original entry

The amended entry

The reason for the amendment

The date on which the amendment was made

The name and position of the person who made the amendment

See appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes.

We will also record for pupils of compulsory school age:

Whether the absence is authorised or not

The nature of the activity if a pupil is attending an approved educational activity

The nature of circumstances where a pupil is 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.

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 finishes at 3:15pm.

## **4.2 Unplanned absence**

The pupil's parent/carers 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 office staff on 02392 378991 or by using the Studybugs App (see also section 7).

We will mark absence due to physical or mental illness as authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

Where the absence is longer than 5 days or there are doubts about the authenticity of the illness, the school will ask for 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 in advance.

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.

### **4.3 Planned absence**

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the pupil's parent/carer notifies the school in advance of the appointment. Please let the school office of any planned absence.

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 absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence. Go to section 5 to find out which term-time absences the school can authorise.

### **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 8.55am. 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 9.30am 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 SIMS data base through the Studybugs app.

Any child who arrives after 9:30 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 made 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:

Call 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 message. The school may contact siblings in school or a sibling's school where known, 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

Call the parent/carer on each day that the absence continues without explanation to ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary. On day 2 of an unexplained absence, the school will contact the primary carer but also the other contacts on the child's records (referred to as contacts on SIMS and provided initially by the parent/carer and updated as appropriate by them. We will contact in the order provided on SIMs.) If this is unsuccessful, then we will visit the home address on day 3 after the contacts and parent/carer as aforementioned have been phoned. The person attending the address will leave a letter if there is no answer at the home address, asking for the parent/carer to contact the school. If absence continues, the school will consider involving the School Attendance Team at the Local Authority, MASH etc. The Attendance Officer will keep the safeguarding team informed about unexplained absences of key children through CPOMS if absences have not been resolved by the end of day 1.

#### **4.6 Reporting to parents/carers**

The school will regularly inform parents/carers about their child's attendance and absence levels. We will use Studybugs in the Autumn Term to keep parents/carers about their child's attendance. In the Spring Term parents' evenings each child's attendance will be discussed. In the Summer Term, parents/carers will be provided with their child's attendance as part of the end of year report for their child.

### **5. Authorised and unauthorised absence**

#### **5.1 Approval for term-time 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.

The Headteacher will only grant a leave of absence to a pupil during term time if they consider there to be '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.



Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

Illness (including mental illness) and medical/dental appointments (see sections 4.2 and 4.3 for more detail)

Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents/carers belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents'/carers' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart

Travelers pupils travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh gypsies, Irish and Scottish travelers, showmen (fairground people) and circus people, bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and new travelers. Absence may be authorised only when a traveler family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school, but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision

Participating in sporting competitions and training, artistic performance or examination where these cannot be completed at another time

Circumstances linked to a parent in His Majesty's Armed Forces (based on Ministry of Defence advice)

Unauthorised absence:

This is 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

Portsmouth Primary School and Early Years 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.

### **Attendance letters**

**If a child reaches 8 sessions of absence** (4 days) an attendance letter 'Attendance 1 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 14 sessions of absence** (7 days) 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 expectations 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 will also be 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.

### **10 + sessions of unauthorised absence**

**If a child has 5 days or more (10 sessions) of 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 and escalation of procedures.

If a child reaches 15 sessions of unauthorised absence and 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. A representative from 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.

**What happens if a child has sickness and diarrhoea or a repetitive illness/medical condition?** The individual case will need to be looked into. Each child's individual circumstances will be considered by the school, looking at previous attendance and via discussions with the parents/carers as to the reasons for the absences. Where there is an existing medical condition, then this will also be taken into account. The school may send a letter recommending that the parent/carer consults a medical practitioner. The school nursing service may also be able to support a child. Parents can make an appointment via the school office to arrange to speak with the school nurse.

## **5.2 Legal sanctions**

The school or local authority can fine parents/carers 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/carers 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 or not 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 permission

Where an excluded pupil is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason

If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute or withdraw the notice.

## 6. Strategies for promoting 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 allow the school and parent/carer 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 SENDco, Mental Health Support Team, Parenting Surgeries, Family Early Support, school nursing team, and other agencies as appropriate
- 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 whole school, 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 and Early Years, 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 punctuality. Year R/KS1 and KS2 classes with the best attendance are 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/carers and children as they come into the school.

School and parents have access to an app called Marvelous Me which enables them to receive positive communication from school about their child. The school also 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 i.e. 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 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 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

- Monitor attendance and absence data half-termly, termly and yearly across the school and at an individual pupil level
- Identify whether or not 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.

## **7.2Analysing 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 patterns

## **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 in order 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/carers 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
- 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 may 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. Monitoring arrangements

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

## 9. Links with other policies

This policy links to the following policies:

Child protection and safeguarding policy

Behaviour policy

## Appendix 1: attendance codes

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

Code	Definition	Scenario
<b>I</b>	Present (am)	Pupil is present at morning registration
<b>\</b>	Present (pm)	Pupil is present at afternoon registration
<b>L</b>	Late arrival	Pupil arrives late before register has closed
<b>B</b>	Off-site educational activity	Pupil is at a supervised off-site educational activity approved by the school
<b>D</b>	Dual registered	Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
<b>J</b>	Interview	Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
<b>P</b>	Sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
<b>V</b>	Educational trip or visit	Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised, or approved, by the school
<b>W</b>	Work experience	Pupil is on a work experience placement

Code	Definition	Scenario
<b>Authorised absence</b>		
<b>C</b>	Authorised leave of absence	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
<b>E</b>	Excluded	Pupil has been excluded but no alternative provision has been made
<b>H</b>	Authorised holiday	Pupil has been allowed to go on holiday due to exceptional circumstances
<b>I</b>	Illness	School has been notified that a pupil will be absent due to illness
<b>M</b>	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment
<b>R</b>	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance
<b>S</b>	Study leave	Year 11 pupil is on study leave during their public examinations
<b>T</b>	Gypsy, Roma and traveller absence	Pupil from a traveller community is travelling, as agreed with the school
<b>Unauthorised absence</b>		
<b>G</b>	Unauthorised holiday	Pupil is on a holiday that was not approved by the school
<b>N</b>	Reason not provided	Pupil is absent for an unknown reason (this code should be amended when the reason emerges, or replaced with code O if no reason for absence has been provided after a reasonable amount of

		time)
<b>O</b>	Unauthorised absence	School is not satisfied with reason for pupil's absence
<b>U</b>	Arrival after registration	Pupil arrived at school after the register closed

<b>Code</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Scenario</b>
<b>X</b>	Not required to be in school	Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
<b>Y</b>	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances	School site is closed, there is disruption to travel as a result of a local/national emergency, or pupil is in custody
<b>Z</b>	Pupil not on admission register	Register set up but pupil has not yet joined the school
<b>#</b>	Planned school closure	Whole or partial school closure due to half-term/bank holiday/INSET day