

Attendance policy

Portsmouth Primary School and Early Years



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Contents

1. Rationale and Aims	2
2. Legislation and guidance	5
3. Roles and responsibilities	5
4. Recording attendance	9
5. Authorised and unauthorised absence	13
6. Strategies for promoting attendance	18
7. Attendance monitoring	20
8. Monitoring arrangements	22
9. Links with other policies	22
Appendix 1: attendance codes	23

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.

As a school, we follow the Department for Education statutory guidance on [Working together to improve school attendance](#) that: ‘schools should sensitively consider some of the reasons for absence and understand the importance of school as a place of safety and support for children who might be facing difficulties, rather than reaching immediately for punitive approaches’. This policy, therefore, aims to show our commitment to meeting our obligations with regards to school attendance, including those laid out in the Department for Education’s (DfE’s) statutory guidance, through our whole-school culture and ethos that values good attendance. Furthermore, we recognise that low attendance is often a symptom of wider barriers to learning or wellbeing. Following Portsmouth City Council’s *“Attendance – the Tip of the Iceberg”* guidance (2025), we commit to exploring the underlying causes of non-attendance with sensitivity, including mental health, emotional wellbeing, neurodiversity and family circumstances, and to respond with tailored support rather than solely enforcement.

The purpose of attendance should be for the child to engage in education and prepare for a happy, healthy and productive life into adulthood. Therefore, all efforts to bring the child or young person back to school should have this in mind. The purpose of attendance should be for the child to engage in education and prepare for a happy, healthy and productive life into adulthood. Therefore, all efforts to bring the child or young person back to school should have this in mind.

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's approach, School Attendance The Tip of The Iceberg? (Published April 2025).

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

Setting high expectations for the attendance and punctuality of all pupils

Working collaboratively with families to maximise school attendance. 'When working with families, in Portsmouth we believe in the power of relational and restorative practice. As can be seen in the diagram below, being restorative is about working WITH a child and family, which means giving high levels of warm and empathetic support but also giving high levels of challenge and structure. This is opposed to doing FOR a child and family or doing NOTHING, which could lead to lack of action to improve the attendance, or doing TO the child and family, which could lead to punishing and blaming for issues outside of their control.' (School Attendance The Tip of The Iceberg?)

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

Recognising that 'absence is a symptom and that improving pupils' attendance is part of improving pupils' overall welfare.' ([Working together to improve school attendance](#))

Using simple, clear, respectful language that describes the child's needs.

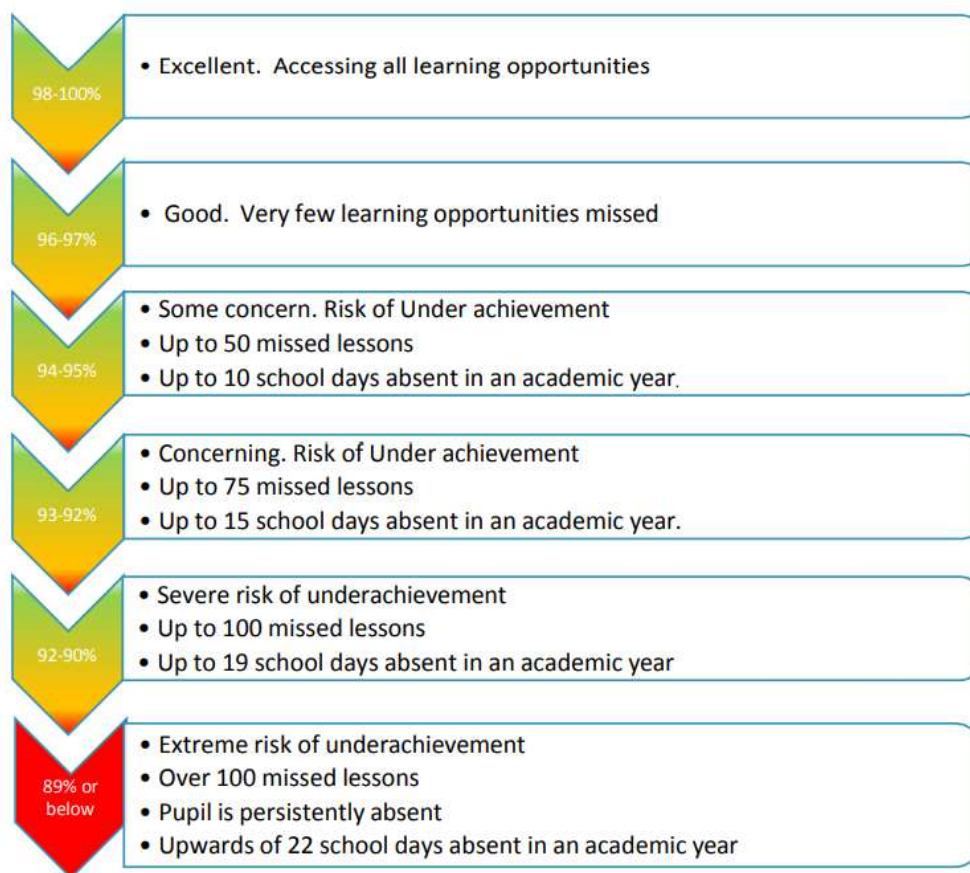
Listening to the child and finding out about their lived experience of school.

We will also promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

To support the attendance of our pupils, we are committed to the following:

- Providing a welcoming, stimulating and safe learning environment.
- Listening to parents and pupils to understand barriers to attendance.
- Having high expectations of our pupils and all staff
- Encouraging, rewarding and celebrating achievements where attendance is improved or improving.

Expected Levels of Attendance



Procedures

Our school procedures follow the expectations set out by the Department for Education in the guidance [Working together to improve school attendance](#).

The school's procedures are based around the principles of:

- Preventing irregular attendance
- Early intervention and Early Help to address early patterns of poor attendance and agree ways to improve for our pupils.
- Targeted interventions (including Early Help and Formal interventions) for those children who are persistently absent or severely absent.
- Understanding barriers to individuals' attendance and agreeing individual plans for children with specific needs.
- Formal statutory interventions where support has not been effective or engaged with.

Where attendance has deteriorated rapidly, there are concerning patterns of absence, unauthorised absences, or parents/carers have not responded to concerns raised, a referral may be made straight to the Local Authority. The Portsmouth City Council's attendance

process for addressing attendance concerns and where appropriate formal proceedings will be taken, including the use of penalty notices amongst other interventions.

2. Legislation and guidance

This policy is based on the Department for Education's (DfE's) statutory guidance on [working together to improve school attendance](#) and [school attendance parental responsibility measures](#). The guidance is based on the following pieces of legislation, which set 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 \(and 2010, 2011, 2013, and 2016 amendments\)](#)
- [The School Attendance \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2024](#)
- [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013 and the 2024 amendment](#)

It also refers to:

- [School census guidance](#)
- [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#)
- [Mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance: guidance for schools](#)

Parents of registered pupils have a legal duty under section 7 of the Education Act 1996 to ensure that children of compulsory school age attend school on a regular and full-time basis. Permitting unauthorised absence from school is an offence and parents may be reported to the Local Authority if problems cannot be resolved by agreement. Local authorities have a duty to establish, as far as it is possible to do so, the identity of children of compulsory school age who are missing education in their area. Parents are responsible for ensuring their children receive an education. Non-resident parents who have regular contact with their children and adults who have care of a child may face formal proceedings if the child's attendance is irregular. Each family's circumstances are judged upon its own merits.

NB: From November 2025, Ofsted inspections will assess attendance as a standalone graded category. This policy reflects statutory requirements and will be updated to remain compliant with both national legislation and Portsmouth City Council's guidance.

3. Roles and responsibilities

The governing board is responsible for:

Setting high expectations of all school leaders, staff, pupils and parents/carers

Making sure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties, including:

- Making sure the school records attendance accurately in the register, and shares the required information with the DfE and local authority
- Making sure the school works effectively with local partners to help remove barriers to attendance, and keeps them informed regarding specific pupils, where appropriate

Recognising and promoting the importance of school attendance across the school's policies and ethos

Making sure the school's attendance management processes are delivered effectively, and that consistent support is provided for pupils who need it most by prioritising staff and resources

Making sure the school has high aspirations for all pupils, but adapts processes and support to pupils' individual needs

Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data and helping school leaders focus improvement efforts on individual pupils or cohorts who need it most

Working with school leaders to set goals or areas of focus for attendance and providing support and challenge

Monitoring attendance figures for the whole school and repeatedly evaluating the effectiveness of the school's processes and improvement efforts to make sure they are meeting pupils' needs

Where the school is struggling with attendance, working with school leaders to develop a comprehensive action plan to improve attendance

Making sure all staff receive adequate training on attendance as part of the regular continued professional development offer, so that staff understand:

- The importance of good attendance
- That absence is almost always a symptom of wider issues
- The school's legal requirements for keeping registers
- The school's strategies and procedures for tracking, following up on and improving attendance, including working with partners and keeping them informed regarding specific pupils, where appropriate

Making sure dedicated training is provided to staff with a specific attendance function in their role, including in interpreting and analysing attendance data

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.

The school will work closely with Portsmouth City Council services, including Educational Psychology, Mental Health Support Teams, Neurodiversity Support, Family Hubs and the Local Authority School Attendance Team. Governors will ensure these local pathways are embedded in practice and reviewed annually.

3.2 The Headteacher

The headteacher is responsible for the organisation of the following. They will delegate actions to the appropriate qualified staff where necessary:

The 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

Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary

Working with the parents/carers of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) to develop specific support approaches for attendance for pupils with SEND, including where school transport is regularly being missed, and where pupils with SEND face in-school barriers

Communicating with the local authority when a pupil with an education, health and care (EHC) plan has falling attendance, or where there are barriers to attendance that relate to the pupil's needs

Communicating the school's high expectations for attendance and punctuality regularly to pupils and parents/carers through all available channels

Sharing information from the school register with the local authority, including:

- Notifying the local authority when a pupil's name is added to or deleted from the school admission register outside of standard transition times
- Providing the local authority with the details of pupils who fail to attend school regularly, or who have been marked with an unauthorised absence for a continuous period of 10 school days
- Providing the local authority with the details of pupils who the school believes will miss 15 days consecutively or cumulatively because of sickness

3.3 The designated senior leader responsible for attendance

The designated senior leader is responsible for:

Leading, championing and improving attendance across the school

Setting a clear vision for improving and maintaining good attendance

Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes in attendance

Having a strong grasp of absence data and oversight of absence data analysis

Establishing and maintaining effective systems for tackling absence, and making sure they are followed by all staff

Liaising with pupils, parents/carers and external agencies, where needed

Building close and productive 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 at Portsmouth City Council to tackle persistent absence

Advising the Headteacher when to consider the issuing of fixed-penalty notices

The acting Attendance Officer is Mrs Durow who can be contacted via the school's office.

The school (through the Attendance Officer with support, where appropriate from Portsmouth City Council) 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/carers will be phoned, sent an email, sent letters and/or offered meetings as appropriate. 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 (the school's safeguarding system) and shared as necessary, including where a child moves to another school.

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 the parents with more detailed support on attendance

Deputise for the Attendance Officer in their absence.

3.7 Parents

Where this policy refers to a parent, it refers to the adult the school and/or local authority decides is most appropriate to work with, including:

- All natural parents, whether they are married or not
- All those who have parental responsibility for a child or young person
- Those who have day-to-day responsibility for the child (i.e. lives with and looks after them)

Parents are expected to:

Make sure their child attends every day on time

Ensure that their children arrive in school well prepared for the school day, having eaten breakfast.

Be willing to talk to a member of school staff about any problem or reason that may be preventing their child/children from attending school.

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). Where the absence is for sickness and diarrhoea -where there is a 48 hour period- then the parent should phone if the 48-hour period needs to be extended. The school will discuss with the parent how often they should contact school on a case-by-case basis for absences over an extended period of time, for example, where the child is in hospital. While speaking to a member of staff is also an option, the school office is not open until 8:45am and is usually very busy until after 9am.

Keep to any attendance plans that they make with the school and/or local authority

Provide the school with more than 1 emergency contact number for their child and update these as soon as they change

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.

Be appropriately prepared for the day, having eaten breakfast.

Be willing to talk to a member of staff about any problem or reason that may be preventing them from attending school.

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 6 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.

Recording the Attendance at Alternative Education Providers

On rare occasions, a small number of pupils may be accessing an alternative education provider or they are dual registered with another school, agreed by this school for all or part of their timetable. In this instance, the pupil remains on roll at our school. Attendance to approved alternative providers is monitored. When pupils are dual registered at another school or alternative provider their attendance will be recorded in the register as a D code (on days they are required to attend the other school/provision). The other school/provision will record the attendance or absence.

For children who are Educated Off site but not dual registered, their attendance will be recorded in our school register with the appropriate code if they are confirmed present or the appropriate absent code if absent.

The responsibility of ensuring pupils are safeguarded and receiving appropriate education remains with the school.

4.2 Unplanned absence

Not all illness requires an absence from school. For minor childhood ailments such as coughs, colds, earaches we would not expect children to be absent. However, when a parent makes the assessment that their child is unfit for school, they should follow the school's absence process.

More guidance on when to keep your child away from school can be found using the following link: [Is my child too ill for school? - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/when-to-keep-your-child-away-from-school/)

The pupil's parent 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 using the Studybugs App or by calling the school office staff on 02392 378991.

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.

It is the school's decision whether to accept a reason for a child's absence and whether to authorise that absence. In most cases, a parent's explanation of their child's illness can be accepted without question or concern. However, if the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents 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 notifies the school in advance of the appointment. Please let the school office know of any planned absence.

However, we encourage parents 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 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

Morning registers are taken at 8:55 a.m. and close at 9:00 a.m.

A child arriving between 8:55 a.m. and 9:00 a.m. will be marked present but late, using the code **L**.

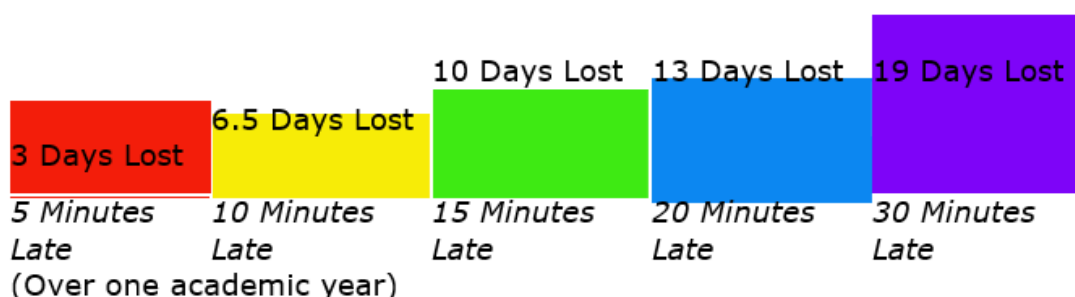
A child arriving after 9:00 a.m. but before 9:30 a.m. will also be recorded as late with code **L**, with the reason logged in SIMS (via Studybugs).

Any child arriving after 9:30 a.m. is considered to be late after the register has closed. This is recorded as an unauthorised absence for the whole session using code **U**.

Parents are asked to bring their child to the school office if they arrive after 8:55 a.m. and to provide an explanation for the lateness.

Lateness and ongoing punctuality issues are monitored by the Attendance Officer, who will discuss concerns with parents, send letters where appropriate, and celebrate improvements.

If a pupil arrives late to school every day, their learning begins to suffer with the amount of learning time lost shown in the graph below:



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 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, the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (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 for which the child was absent.

Call the parent 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. (These are the contacts on SIMS and provided initially by the parent 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 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 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.

Attendance, Safeguarding and Children Absent from Education

A child absent from education is a potential indicator of abuse or neglect. Our staff will follow the school's aforementioned procedures for dealing with children that go absent from education, particularly on repeat occasions, to help identify the risk of abuse and neglect, including sexual exploitation and criminal exploitation, and to help prevent the risks of their going missing in future.

All schools are required to make the local authority aware of every registered pupil who fails to attend school regularly and any children who have been absent from school, where the

absence has been treated as unauthorised for a continuous period of not less than 10 school days education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 regulation 12).

Schools are permitted to remove compulsory-school-aged children from roll on the limited grounds set out in regulation 8 of the Education (Pupil Registration)(England) Regulations 2006 as amended by the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2016.

Removing a child from the school roll is a very important decision. Children who fall out of the education system are likely to have poor outcomes and may be exposed to increased risk of harm. Portsdown Primary School and Early Years will follow correct procedures to ensure that they do not breach their legal and safeguarding duties.

The school will notify the local authority when they are about to remove a pupil's name from the school admission register. At Portsdown Primary School and Early Years, we will make reasonable enquiries to establish the whereabouts of the child jointly with the local authority Children Missing in Education (CME) officer, before deleting the pupil's name from the register. It is only when these reasonable enquires by the school (in conjunction with the Local Authority) have concluded, that the child's name will be removed from the school roll.

As a school, we will not retrospectively delete a child's name from the school roll. A pupil's attendance will be recorded up until the date that their name is deleted from the admission's register.

4.6 Reporting to parents

The school will regularly inform parents about their child's attendance and absence levels. We will use Studybugs in the Autumn Term to keep parents informed about their child's attendance. In the Spring Term parents' evenings each child's attendance will be discussed. In the Summer Term, parents 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.

Absence will always be considered in context. Where a pupil's attendance begins to fall below 95%, the school will engage parents and carers in early discussions and, if required, initiate a **Personal Attendance Plan** to agree supportive strategies. At 90% or below (persistent absence), multi-agency involvement may be sought in line with Portsmouth's graduated response.

The headteacher will allow pupils to be absent from the school site for certain educational activities, or to attend other schools or settings.

The headteacher will only grant a **leave of absence** to a pupil during term time if the request meets the specific circumstances set out in the [2024 school attendance regulations](#). These circumstances are defined within these regulations as :

- Taking part in a regulated performance, (or regulated employment abroad –not applicable in a primary school)

- Attending an interview e.g. for a bursary at a private school
- Study leave –not applicable in a primary school
- A temporary, time-limited part-time timetable
- 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. The Headteacher will only grant a leave of absence to a pupil during term-time if they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'. Any request should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated and, where possible, at least 4 weeks before the absence. Any leave of absence should be requested on a leave of absence 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/ or the LOAF has not been completed and submitted to the school, the absences cannot be authorised.

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 belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents'/carers' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart

Parent(s) travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh gypsies, Irish and Scottish travellers, showmen (fairground people) and circus people, barges (occupational boat dwellers) and new travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a traveller 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

If the pupil is currently suspended or excluded from school (and no alternative provision has been made)

Other reasons the school may allow a pupil to be absent from the school site, which are not classified as absences, include (but are not limited to):

Attending an offsite approved educational activity, sporting activity or visit or trip arranged by the school

Attending another school at which the pupil is also registered (dual registration)

Attending provision arranged by the local authority

If there is any other unavoidable cause for the pupil not to attend school, such as disruption to travel caused by an emergency, a lack of access arrangements, or because the school premises are closed

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
- Leave of absence will not be granted for a pupil to take part in protest activity during school hours.

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. 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

NB: Ten week rolling period definition.

For the purposes of attendance, the first chosen unauthorised absence is the beginning of the 10 week rolling period.

If a child reaches 8 sessions of absence (4 days) -authorised or unauthorised- in a rolling period of ten school weeks an attendance letter 'Attendance Letter 1(medi 1) ' is sent to the parents. This letter informs the parents of their child's current attendance. It also outlines the school's 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) -authorised or unauthorised- in a rolling period of ten school weeks a further letter is sent to the parents. This letter is named 'Attendance Letter 2 (medi 2)' 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 a rolling period of ten school weeks, the school will have no alternative but to request that a notice to improve (penalty notice warning) be issued to them with regards to their child's irregular attendance.

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 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 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 Sanctions

Our school will make use of the full range of potential sanctions – including, but not limited to, those listed below – to tackle poor attendance. Decisions will be made on an individual, case-by-case basis.

The school, local authority or police can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age, by issuing a penalty notice.

If the school issues a penalty notice, it will check with the local authority before doing so, and send it a copy of any penalty notice issued.

Before issuing a penalty notice, the school will consider the individual case and evidence. This will include evidence of interventions carried out by the school. The school will need to consider:

- Whether the national threshold for considering a penalty notice has been met (10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks)
- Whether a penalty notice is the best available tool to improve attendance for that pupil
- Whether further support, a notice to improve or another legal intervention would be a more appropriate solution
- Whether any obligations that the school has under the Equality Act 2010 make issuing a penalty notice inappropriate

10 + sessions of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of ten school weeks

If a child has 5 days or more (10 sessions) of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of ten school weeks, 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. This can be made up from unauthorised holiday sessions and unauthorised absences (including lateness after the register has closed).

If no further unauthorised absence is recorded within the ten week period, then the notice to improve will not be issued.

If a child reaches 15 sessions of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of ten school weeks 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.

If a child has had multiple irregular Penalty Notices to improve their attendance from the Local Authority and these have not worked to improve attendance, then a school attendance panel could be requested as an alternative by the Local Authority or the school.

Each parent who is liable for the pupil's offence(s) can be issued with a penalty notice, but this will usually only be the parent/parents who allowed the absence.

The payment must be made directly to the local authority, regardless of who issues the notice. If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute or withdraw the notice.

If issued with a **first** penalty notice, the parent must pay £80 within 21 days, or £160 within 28 days.

If a **second** penalty notice is issued to the same parent in respect of the same pupil, the parent must pay £160 if paid within 28 days.

A **third** penalty notice cannot be issued to the same parent in respect of the same child within 3 years of the date of the issue of the first penalty notice. In a case where the national threshold is met for a third time within those 3 years, alternative action will be taken instead.

A penalty notice may also be issued where parents allow their child to be present in a public place during school hours without reasonable justification, during the first 5 days of a suspension or exclusion (where the school has notified the parents that the pupil must not be present in a public place on that day). These penalty notices are not included in the National Framework, not subject to the same considerations about support being provided, and do not count towards the limit as part of the escalation process.

In these cases, the parent must pay £60 within 21 days, or £120.

Notices to improve

If the national threshold has been met and support is appropriate, but parents do not engage with offers of support, the school may offer a notice to improve to give parents a final chance to engage with support.

Notices to improve will be issued in line with processes set out in the local code of conduct for the Portsmouth City Council.

They will include:

- Details of the pupil's attendance record and of the offences
- The benefits of regular attendance and the duty of parents under [section 7 of the Education Act 1996](#)
- Details of the support provided so far
- Opportunities for further support, or to access previously provided support that was not engaged with
- A clear warning that a penalty notice may be issued if attendance doesn't improve within the improvement period, along with details of what sufficient improvement looks like, which will be decided on a case-by-case basis
- A clear timeframe of between 3 and 6 weeks for the improvement period
- The grounds on which a penalty notice may be issued before the end of the improvement period

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 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
- Using 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
- Providing 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 (for Years 3 to 6) and the Attendance Teddy (for Years R to 2) 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.

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 and children as they come into the school.

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 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/carers 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.

Where a pupil has an education health and care (EHC) plan and their attendance falls, or the school becomes aware of barriers to attendance that related to the pupil's needs, the school will inform the local authority.

Pupils returning to school after a lengthy or unavoidable period of absence will be welcomed back to school by the staff in the classroom. Where possible and appropriate, missed learning will be recapped with the child and additional support provided with the aim of helping the child to catch up to their peers.

The school will implement **graduated reintegration plans** for pupils returning after prolonged or emotionally based absence (EBSA). This may include phased timetables, safe spaces, mentoring, and gradual exposure strategies agreed with the family and external professionals. This needs to be considered in line with the Portsmouth City Council's process and procedure, which includes seeking expert advice from relevant professionals and co-ordinating a multi-agency meeting. Consideration will be given to any special needs the pupil may have and appropriate support identified. Consideration will be given to a package of support which may include providing a mentor (staff member/student). Class Teachers will ensure that the pupil feels welcomed back to school in an appropriate way and take any necessary steps to support their re-integration.

Personalised support plan to help a child's attendance

The school uses the local authority's school planning template for schools and parents/carers to use to help provide opportunities to share perspectives and collaboratively plan the actions that need to be taken to support a return to school for the child or young person ([Return to School Attendance Plan](#)). The Return to School Attendance Plan will be completed collaboratively by the school, the wider professional network and the family. The aim is to understand the context in which the child lives and how this may be affecting their school attendance.

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.

7.2 Analysing attendance

The school will:

Attendance will be monitored weekly, with thresholds triggering early intervention at below 95% and formal escalation at 90%. Data will be analysed by pupil group (e.g. SEND, disadvantaged, EAL) to identify patterns and risk cohorts. The school will also monitor **severe absence (50% or below)** and engage with the Local Authority in any required reviews.

Identify pupils whose absences may be a cause for concern, especially those who demonstrate patterns of persistent or severe absence

Conduct thorough analysis of half-termly, termly, and full-year data to identify patterns and trends

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:

- Develop targeted actions to address patterns of absence (of all severities) of individual pupils, groups or cohorts that it has identified via data analysis
- Provide targeted support to the pupils it has identified whose absences may be a cause for concern, especially those who demonstrate patterns of persistent or severe absence, and their families (see section 7.4 below)
- Provide regular attendance reports to class teachers, to facilitate discussions with pupils and families, and to the governing board and school leaders (including special educational needs co-ordinator, designated safeguarding leads and pupil premium lead)
- Use data to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place in order to modify them and inform future strategies
- Share information and work collaboratively with other schools in the area, local authorities and other partners where a pupil's absence is at risk of becoming persistent or severe, including keeping them informed regarding specific pupils, where appropriate

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
- 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.

In addition, Governors will receive regular reports on persistent and severe absence, including updates on intervention strategies. Data analysis will inform school improvement priorities and ensure accountability under the Ofsted 2025 framework.

9. Links with other policies

This policy should be read alongside the Behaviour Regulation Policy, Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, Anti-Bullying Policy, Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions Policy, and Portsmouth's *Supporting School Attendance* guidance. Together these documents outline the graduated, multi-agency approach required to address the causes of absence as well as attendance itself.

Appendix 1: attendance codes

The following codes are taken from the DfE's [guidance on school attendance](#).

ATTENDANCE CODES, DESCRIPTIONS AND MEANINGS

CODE	DESCRIPTION	MEANING
/	Present (AM)	Present
\	Present (PM)	Present
B	Attending any other approved educational activity	A pupil can only be recorded as attending a place for an approved educational activity if the activity is of an educational nature - the school has approved the pupil's attendance at the place for the activity - the activity is supervised by a person considered by the school to have the appropriate skills, training, experience and knowledge to ensure that the activity takes place safely and fulfils the educational purpose for which the pupil's attendance has been approved.
C	Leave of absence for exceptional circumstance	All schools are able to grant a leave of absence at their discretion. A leave of absence should not, and from school maintained by a local authority or a special school not maintained by a local authority, must not be granted unless there are exceptional circumstances
C1	Leave of absence for the purpose of participating in a regulated performance or undertaking regulated employment abroad.	All schools can grant leaves of absence for pupils to undertake employment (paid or unpaid) during school hours. Schools maintained by a local authority and special schools not maintained by a local authority can only do so in the following circumstances (under regulation 11(2)): - Where the local authority has granted a licence for the pupil to take part in a performance regulated by section 37(2) of the Children and Young Persons Act 1963. - Where a pupil does not need a licence for such a performance because an exception applies under section 37(3) of the Children and Young Persons Act 1963, including where a Body of Persons Approval (BOPA) covering the pupil has been issued by the local authority in whose area the performance will take place or the Secretary of State. - Where a Justice of the Peace has given the pupil a licence to go abroad for a performance or other regulated purpose under section 25(2) of the Children and Young Persons Act 1933.
C2	Leave of absence for a compulsory school age pupil subject to a part-time timetable	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
D	Dual registered at another school	The law allows a pupil to be registered at more than one school. This code is used to indicate that the pupil is absent with leave to attend the other school at which they are registered. The main examples of dual registration are pupils who are attending a pupil referral unit, a hospital school or a special school on a temporary basis.
E	Suspended or permanently excluded and no alternative provision made	The pupil is suspended from school or permanently excluded from school, but their name is still entered in the admission register, and no alternative provision has been made for the pupil to continue their education.
G	Holiday not granted by the school	The school has not granted a leave of absence and the pupil is absent for the purpose of a holiday.
I	Illness (NOT medical or dental etc. appointments)	The pupil is unable to attend due to illness (both physical and mental health related). Schools should advise parents to notify them on the first day the child is unable to attend due to illness.

J1	Leave of absence for the purpose of attending an interview for employment or for admission to another educational institution	This interview must take place during the session for which it is recorded.
K	Attending education provision arranged by the local authority	The pupil is attending a place, other than the school or any other school at which they are a registered pupil, for educational provision arranged by a local authority under section 19(1) of the Education Act 1996 (exceptional provision of education), section 42(2), or 61(1) of the Children and Families Act 2014 (special educational provision off site).
L	Late (before registers closed)	The pupil was absent when the register started being taken but arrives before the register is closed. Schools should actively discourage late arrival and be alert to patterns of late arrival.
M	Leave of absence for the purpose of attending a medical or dental appointment	Schools should encourage parents to make appointments out of school hours. Where this is not possible, they should get the school's agreement in advance and the pupil should only be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary for the appointment.
N	The school has not granted a leave of absence and the pupil is absent for the purpose of a holiday.	Schools must follow up all unexplained and unexpected absence in a timely manner. Every effort should be made to establish the reason for a pupil's absence. When the reason for absence has not yet been established before the register closes, the absence must be recorded with code N
O	Absent in other or unknown circumstances	Where no reason for absence is established or the school is not satisfied that the reason given is one that would be recorded using one of the codes statistically classified as authorised.
P	Participating in a sporting activity	The pupil is attending a place for an approved educational activity that is a sporting activity. The sporting activity must take place during the session for which it is recorded.
Q	Unable to attend the school because of a lack of access arrangements	The pupil is unable to attend the school because a local authority has a duty set out in regulation 10(12) or (13) to make access arrangements to enable the pupil's attendance at school and have failed to do so.
R	Religious observance	As a general rule, 'a day exclusively set apart for religious observance' is a day when the pupil's parents would be expected by the religious body to which they belong to stay away from their employment in order to mark the occasion. If in doubt, schools should seek advice from the parent's religious body about whether it has set the day apart for religious observance
S	Leave of absence for the purpose of studying for a public examination	Schools maintained by a local authority and special schools not maintained by a local authority can grant leave of absence, under regulation 11(5), for a pupil to study for a public examination and the leave has been agreed in advance with a parent who the pupil normally lives with
T	Parent travelling for occupational purposes	The pupil is a mobile child, and their parent(s) is travelling in the course of their trade or business and the pupil is travelling with them. A mobile child is a child of compulsory school age who has no fixed abode and whose parent(s) is engaged in a trade or business of such a nature as to require them to travel from place to place.
U	Arrived in school after registration closed	Where a pupil has arrived late after the register has closed but before the end of session.
V	Educational visit or trip	The pupil is on an educational visit or trip arranged by or on behalf of the school and supervised by a member of school staff. The visit or trip must take place during the session for which it is recorded

W	Attending work experience	The pupil is attending a place for an approved educational activity that is work experience provided under arrangements made by a local authority or the school as part of the pupil's education. The work experience must take place during the session for which it is recorded.
X	Non-compulsory school age pupil not required to attend school	Not counted in possible attendances
Y1	Unable to attend due to transport normally provided not being available	The pupil is unable to attend because the school is not within walking distance of their home and the transport to and from the school that is normally provided for the pupil by the school or local authority is not available.
Y2	Unable to attend due to widespread disruption to travel	The pupil is unable to attend the school because of widespread disruption to travel caused by a local, national, or international emergency.
Y3	Unable to attend due to part of the school premises being closed	Part of the school premises is unavoidably out of use and the pupil is one of those that the school considers cannot practicably be accommodated in those part of the premises that remain in use.
Y4	Unable to attend due to the whole school site being unexpectedly closed	Where a school was planned to be open for a session, but the school is closed unexpectedly (e.g. due to adverse weather), the attendance register is not taken as usual because there is no school session. Every pupil listed in the admission register at the time must be marked with code Y4 to record the fact that the school is closed
Y5	Unable to attend as pupil is in criminal justice detention	The pupil is unable to attend the school because they are: • in police detention • remanded to youth detention, awaiting trial or sentencing • detained under a sentence of detention.
Y6	Unable to attend in accordance with public health guidance or law	The pupil's travel to or attendance at the school would be: • contrary to any guidance relating to the incidence or transmission of infection or disease published by the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care (or the equivalent in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland) • prohibited by any legislation relating to the incidence or transmission of infection or disease.
Y7	Unable to attend because of any other unavoidable cause	An unavoidable cause, that is not covered by one of the other 'unable to attend' codes detailed above, is preventing the pupil from attending the school.
Z	Prospective pupil not on admission register	To enable schools to set up registers in advance of pupils joining the school to ease administration burdens.
#	Planned whole school closure	Whole school closures that are known and planned in advance such as: • days between terms • half terms • occasional days (for example, bank holidays) • weekends (where it is required by the management information system) • up to 5 non-educational days • use of the whole school as a polling station.