



First Approved by the Governing Body: 21 May 2014

<b>Date Policy approved and adopted:</b>	<b>02 October 2017</b>
<b>Date Due for review:</b>	<b>September 2020</b>

This policy takes into account guidance from Hampshire County Council and the Department for Education.

### **Principles**

- Continuity of learning for all our pupils is very important. The school expects and encourages high attendance (over 95%) from all pupils.
- The school recognises that there will be exceptional circumstances requiring authorised absence and aim to give clarity to families on what this might be.
- Each request for leave of absence will be treated individually.

### **Why high attendance matters**

High levels of attendance ensure continuity of learning and supports the pupil's personal development. Research shows that pupils with higher levels of school attendance are more likely to benefit from education, achieve better examination results both at primary and secondary school levels and go on to have more successful careers.

Similarly, irregular or poor attendance at school can lead to pupils underachieving and underperforming in examinations and therefore have a detrimental effect upon their careers. It can also hinder the maintenance of relationships within the pupil's peer group.

### **Impact of Absence from school**

Absence from school can be disruptive not only for the individual pupil but also for the pupil's whole class. Whilst there may be occasions when a pupil is unable to attend school eg due to illness, all other absences should be kept to a minimum and if at all possible avoided. Absence can lead to gaps in learning which hinder future progress.

- Minimum attendance of 95% (10 days absence per year) means that during primary years the child will miss more than a term of education.
- If attendance is between 90% - 95% (10-20 days absence per year) it means that during primary years the child will miss 2 or more terms of education.
- If attendance is between 85%- 90% (20-30 days absence per year) it means that during primary years the child will miss over a year of education.

### **School attendance and the Education Act 1996**

Section 7 of the Act requires all parents (and carers) of a child of compulsory school age who is registered at a school to ensure that the child attends that school regularly and punctually. **Failure to do so is an offence.**

School Guidance for Families on Taking Time off School

**Time off for a Family Holiday:** Parents/carers do not have the right or an entitlement to take a child out of school for the purposes of a family holiday during term time. Government guidance states that:

*"Parents should not normally take students on holidays in term time" and "Schools can only agree to absence for a family holiday if they believe there are special circumstances which warrant it"*

- Any request for leave of absence, including for a family holiday, during term time must be made in advance and in writing by the parent with whom the student normally resides
- Parents/carers should not expect any request for leave of absence, including for a family holiday, to be approved and, in most cases, such requests will be refused by the Headteacher.
- The request can only be approved by the Headteacher if there are special circumstances relating to the application and, apart from exceptional circumstances, no more than 10 school days leave of absence can be granted in any one school year
- Unique or one-off situations such as work/employment commitments or a family crisis are more likely to be approved if they are unlikely to arise in the future.
- Each request for leave of absence, including for a family holiday, is considered on an individual basis and factors taken into account include:
  - the overall pattern of attendance of the pupil (if the pupil's attendance is below 95% in the last 12 months then authorisation will not be given)
  - the pupil's progress (pupil's are expected to be on track to reach their end of year targets)
  - the time of year proposed for the holiday (we will not authorise in September when children are settling into their new class or during the period from Easter to May half term when all children take national or internal tests)
  - the reasons why the absence has to be during term time

**The Headteacher decides if the circumstances are 'special' or 'exceptional' e.g.**

- Leave of Service personnel which is dependent upon shore leave or troop deployment.
- Work commitments of parents / carers, with whom the child normally resides, which prevent holiday during school breaks (we cannot take account of work / holiday times of grandparents, extended family or friends)
- Extended period abroad prior to emigrating
- A wedding of a close family member which is scheduled on a weekday

## Leave of Absence Policy

Circumstances which are not normally considered as special or exceptional e.g.

- Cost of holiday being cheaper during term time
- The need to meet everyone's commitments if a large group (family or friends) are going on holiday together
- The time of year and climate / weather conditions in the holiday location
- A holiday won as a prize or dates given by a Newspaper promotion
- Another family member buys the holiday as a surprise
- A time-share accommodation is offered only during term time

If the request is approved, the student's absence will be recorded as authorised for the period requested. If the request is not approved, and the parent proceeds to take the student out of school, all of the absence during this period will be recorded as unauthorised.

**For compassionate leave:** Compassionate leave will normally be authorised where there is death or very serious illness in the family. Circumstances may require travel to another part of the country or time to care for a close relative. Please come and talk to the Headteacher to explain the circumstances and the time needed.

**For a medical, dental or optician appointment:** You will need to ask the school's permission and provide evidence of the appointment, e.g. an appointment card or letter. In general you are asked to make these appointments outside school time, or if this is impossible, to schedule them as early or as late as possible in the day to keep your child's time away from school to a minimum.

**For occasional days:** Authorised leave of absence will be considered for - e.g.

- Pupil competing in local, district or national sporting events
- Pupil taking part in a dance, musical performance
- Pupil taking external examinations
- Funerals, weddings, religious observance

Absence will not normally be authorised for occasional days for e.g.

- family days out or visiting relatives
- birthday treats
- long weekends
- leaving early for travel
- going to see a show
- shopping eg. For school uniform

**Leave of Absence Policy**

If a child is taken out of school without the school's permission, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised. Persistent unauthorised absence can result in prosecution.

Further information is available from:

<http://www3.hants.gov.uk/education/hias/learning-behaviour-attendance/attendance-guidance-for-parents/family-holidays-school-holidays.htm>

<https://www.gov.uk/school-attendance-absence>

This policy was agreed by Whole Governing Body on 9<sup>th</sup> July 2011

Reviewed Date: July 2014

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