Attendance Strategy 2022 – 2023

'Schools that improve attendance from a low baseline, maintain high levels of attendance and minimise persistent absence all have different starting points and take slightly different approaches. However, these approaches tend to have a number of features in common. They can best be summarised as 'Listen, understand, empathise and support – but do not tolerate'.

OFSTED February 2022 – Securing Good Attendance and Tackling Persistent Absence

There are 38 weeks in the year when school is open and 14 weeks (175 DAYS) when families can visit family overseas; go on holiday; travel or attend non-urgent medical appointments.

A child's attendance (and absence) is a legal parental responsibility. Children at this school are dependent on their parents/carers, who are responsible for their level of attendance and punctuality. It is vital that children enjoy coming to school, and whilst being encouraged to attend well and on time, will not carry blame and be made to feel unhappy if their parents are not supportive or effective in these areas.

In order to improve attendance, we must:

- have high expectations for every pupil's attendance at school
- communicate these expectations clearly, strongly and consistently to parents and to pupils
- set expectations about attendance from the outset explain to parents and pupils why good attendance is important and how it helps pupils to achieve
- listen to parents carefully to find out why their children are not attending well enough so that they can act accordingly
- challenge parents who do not make sure that their children attend, but also offer support where needed
- have the right people in place to have these conversations with parents
- ensure that attendance is always recorded accurately
- systematically analyse attendance information so that they can see patterns and trends
- use this analysis to target our actions, both for individuals and at a whole-school level
- make sure that attendance is 'everyone's business' in school
- understand that good attendance does not happen in isolation – there is an interrelationship between attendance and the quality of the school's curriculum, ethos, behaviour and inclusivity
- do not stop pushing for whole-school improvement once attendance reaches the national average

- see the process of securing good attendance for all pupils as an ongoing process, never something that is 'finished'

We continue to face challenges in tackling absence that is indirectly related to the pandemic, such as parents' and pupils' anxieties.

We need to be asking ourselves what, if anything, we need to do differently to remove barriers to pupils' attendance, and are systematically acting to do just that.

School Culture around Attendance

Staff mindset of high expectations around attendance

All staff will adopt a consistent approach to our attendance policy. To do this:

- Staff will use the necessary attendance vocabulary and encouraging soundbites, like "zero tolerance of low attendance" and "every school day matters"
- All staff must model a 100% expectation for pupils to attend and learn in every lesson.
- At the end of a day, staff are asked to tell the children they're looking forward to seeing them the next day and give them some exciting tasters of what will be happening.
- There is a need to make personal references to parents and their children with poor attendance.

Give pupils a purpose to be in school each day

Provide low-attenders with a task or responsibility each day, such as tidying the book corner or looking after younger pupils on the playground.

Staff to remind low-attenders about anything exciting happening the following day, such as, "it will be lovely to watch you play football tomorrow".

Establish a senior leadership team presence around school

- Senior leaders will greet and notice children throughout the school day.
- First interactions will be positive, avoiding telling pupils off for being late or not wearing the right uniform – these are issues that can be addressed later in the day.
- Leaders will show that they noticed when an often-absent pupil makes it to school that day. Greet them and let them know you're looking forward to seeing them the next day, too.

Offer pupils the tools to come to school

For children who are often late and are safe walking to school, we may provide an alarm clock to pupils to help hand over some responsibility for their punctuality.

There will be a daily Breakfast Club from 8:20 am, to encourage pupils who are often late or absent to join. This will involve settling in tasks and opportunities to address and discuss underlying anxieties to prepare the children to enter the classroom ready for registration.

Depending on need, we will consider the practicalities of organising a walking bus to support children to get to school in the morning.

Provide secure conditions for learning

We will provide a safe school environment; it is incredibly important for many reasons, including attendance. It will help to make sure your pupils want to attend every day.

Staff will be relentless with managing bullying or any other issues between pupils, including on social media in order to prevent pupil absence.

Staff will ensure that all pupils can name five trusted adults (home and school) and know who they can talk to if they're experiencing any issues.

Use the curriculum to entice pupils

Pupils need to feel that their learning is worthwhile and we aim to make our curriculum engaging and motivating. Staff will highlight each day what's coming up, so children don't want to miss out on any learning.

The curriculum in all subjects must be interesting, diverse and engaging for all pupils.

In lessons, teachers will:

- Use pre-learning and anticipation of the next lesson's content to interest children – for example, "tomorrow we are …"
- Link learning to past and future lessons – such as "you will remember in our last lesson we …"

Anticipate family patterns

These might include:

- Holidays during term time
- Birthdays off
- Younger siblings copying the behaviour of older family members

Historical attendance pattern over time (including from other schools)

We will not tolerate the days off school for family time being more important than school education time. Every day missed, is one hour of English and one hour of Maths missed and approximately 5 hours of learning missed overall.

Where possible, we might consider tagging our school INSET days onto school holidays to allow parents access to cheaper holidays.

Appoint an attendance lead who's passionate about high expectations

The Attendance Leader will:

- Analyse daily attendance
- Challenge the attendance of pupils
- Work on pupils' self-esteem and behaviour for learning, and make sure their conditions for learning suit them as a learner
- Understand attendance patterns linked to cultural holidays and safeguarding issues such as female genital mutilation (FGM)
- Work to develop relationships with hard-to-reach families
- Signpost parents to support for their child's attendances

- Meet regularly to support and manage a child's low attendance
- Develop individual targeted, attendance improvement plans with parents and their children
- Where necessary issue fines for holidays in term-time or consistent patterns of low attendance
- Deliver daily Breakfast Club to support and nurture children with low attendance.
- Report to SLT and the Governors on actions and impact to improve low attendance of individuals and groups of pupils.

Guidance on medical conditions that could result in time off school

Admin staff and parents should refer to the Department of Health (DoH) guidance on infection control in schools and other childcare settings (2016) for guidance on the length of absence. Whilst this will not eradicate absence through illness it may reduce the number of days lost.

https://www.publichealth.hscni.net/sites/default/files/Guidance_on_infection_control_in%20schools_poster.pdf

Longer absence through illness, injury or medical condition.

If absence is long-term or repeated, we will request proof that a child is genuinely unwell and unable to attend school as this is a key part of their safeguarding duties. Examples of evidence include copies of appointment letters or medical reports.

If a child has a long term or chronic condition and is expected to be absent from school for a longer period, has intermittent attendance due to an illness (such as epilepsy or anaemia) or is going to be absent from school for a period of therapy or surgery, the Attendance Leader will draw up a support plan and put in a referral for external support.

Education for pupils who are unable to attend school because of medical needs can be provided for in the following ways:

- Children who are in-patients can be taught through the hospital teaching service
- Children who are not in-patients, may receive home tutoring organised via the Educational Inclusion Service.

First Day Contact System

An active policy of first day contact makes clear to everyone that absence is a matter of concern and will be followed up. The main priority is always to establish that the child is safe.

- Parents have a responsibility to inform the school as soon as possible if their child will not be attending school or is likely to be late on a particular day, by no later than 9 am. This can be done via either sending an email to the school's admin or ringing the attendance line and leaving a message.
- Messages about absences should include the child's name, their class and a clear reason for absence. We ask that parents are not vague with their reasons e.g., 'not well' as this will not be authorised until further detail is clarified. For these parents, the admin staff or the Attendance Leader will ring in order to establish a more acceptable reason for absence.

- If children are absent with for example anxiety or not sleeping at night, the Attendance Lead will ring these parents/carers in order to help remove barriers for these children.

Absence without any parental explanation

- If a pupil is absent without explanation, school administrative staff or the Attendance Leader will contact the parents that same day to check why the child is not in school. This will be via a phone call and/or a text message.
- If by 10:00 am, there is no response or reason for the child's absence, the Attendance Leader will visit the home. A note will be left to contact the school e.g., 'I called at your home today as your child has not been present at school and we are unable to reach you by phone. I am sure you can appreciate that this is a Safeguarding concern as we need to know where all children are during school hours.'
- It is requested that the parent then contacts school before 3pm stating why their child is absent.
- If the child is from a known vulnerable family and/or under Social Services, and there is no answer from the home visit, the Attendance Leader will contact Social Services or the police.

Second Day Absence

- Admin staff will contact parent by email and/or text via all contact details held on file
- Attendance Leader to visit the home to see if any contact can be made – if possible speak to neighbours.

Third Day Absence

- If a child is not seen and contact has not been established with any of the named parent/carers after three days of absence, the school is required to start a Child Missing in Education (CME) procedure as set down by Hampshire County Council Guidance.
- This procedure will be started after all reasonable enquires to establish contact with parents and the child including making enquires to known friends, wider family / contact numbers.

Ten Days Absence

We will report to Hampshire County Council the absence of any pupils who are absent without an explanation for 10 consecutive days. If the child is not seen and contact has not been established with the named parent/carer then the Local Authority is notified that the child is 'at risk of missing'. Children's Services Staff will visit the last known address and alert key services to locate the child.

Authorised and Unauthorised Absence. What is the difference?

Parents should be aware that merely providing an explanation for their child's absence does not automatically constitute an 'authorisation' for this absence. This is the school's decision.

Every school, by law, has to register pupils twice a day; first thing in the morning at the start of the school day, and again in the afternoon session. If a pupil fails to arrives between 8.45-

8.55am they will be classed as late. If a pull arrives after 8.55am they will be marked as absent for that session.

If a pupil of compulsory school age is absent, the register must show whether the absence was authorised (acceptable) or unauthorised (where no acceptable reason is given for absence). Only the school can approve the reason for absence.

The Attendance Leader, in consultation with the Head Teacher, will be responsible for determining if absences are to be authorised or unauthorised after analysing and challenging reasons for absence.

Authorised Absence

Where a pupil is absent due to sickness and is genuinely unable to attend school, then the school, after being informed, may authorise a child's absence.

The Department for Education (DfE) states that we can only allow a child to miss school if either:

- **they are ill**
- **the parents / carers have gained advance permission from the headteacher.**

In law, only the Headteacher can authorise a pupil's absence and may require additional evidence such as a letter from your GP or other medical proof, particularly if the child's attendance is already a concern and below 95%.

The following types of absence may also be marked as authorised:

- **Leave of absence authorised by the headteacher** (such as time off due to bereavement).
- **Absence authorised by the headteacher**, will specify how many days are approved. These should only be approved in exceptional circumstances.
- **Medical or dental appointments** if these cannot be taken outside of school hours and if supported by appointment cards.
- **Religious observance.**
- **Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence** when the family is travelling for occupational purposes.
- **Offsite educational activities:** this could include music, dance or drama exams, or participation in a sporting event. Approval is at the school's discretion.

Unauthorised Absence

School have the right to record a child's absence as unauthorised if there has been no contact from the parent or carer or if the reason provided for the absence is not accepted by school.

The law states that parents or carers must ensure that their child regularly attends the school where they are registered. Should a child fail to attend school regularly legal action may be taken.

It is a parent's legal responsibility to ensure that their child, when of statutory school age, accesses education appropriate to age, needs and ability.

Examples of absences which the school is unlikely to authorise can include:

- Going on holiday or travelling abroad in term time is not an entitlement
- Sickness of a parent, or other family member
- Days off for birthdays, shopping trips
- Child being used as a carer
- Feeling tired / Not sleeping at night
- Bad weather
- Non-urgent appointment
- Parent unwell to bring them to school
- Problems with transport
- Resting after a late night
- Relatives visiting or visiting relatives
- Birthdays
- School refusal
- Anxiety and mental health issues
- Weddings, other than that of the parent or carer

The Headteacher, will only grant a leave of absence for exceptional circumstances. A holiday or travelling abroad is not an exceptional circumstance and will not be authorised.

Penalty Notices (fines) for non-attendance at school

A Penalty Notice is a fine which may be issued as an alternative to prosecution. If it is paid it does not require a court appearance and does not result in a criminal record.

Under the terms of the education related provisions of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act, each parent/carer(s) may be issued with a Penalty Notice of £60 if they:

- Fail to ensure that their child attends school regularly
- Allow their child to take leave of absence in term time without a school's authorisation
- Fail to return their child to school on an agreed date after a leave of absence
- Allow their child to persistently arrive late for school after the register is closed

As set down by the Department for Education, Penalty Notices can be issued for unauthorised absence. In Hampshire, **Penalty Notices are issued when a pupil has had 10 or more half-day sessions (equivalent to five school days) of unauthorised absence, in the last 10 school week period.**

Unauthorised absence is absence not approved by the school and will be coded on your child's attendance record as one of the following:
O: unauthorised absence
U: late after close of registration
G: non-approved leave of absence (holiday).
Persistent Lateness (L) code which reaches the threshold may result in the issuing of a Penalty Notice

Who can be issued with a Penalty Notice?

Where absence warrants the issuing of a Penalty Notice, anyone with Parental Responsibility, or having day to day care of the child can be issued with one Penalty Notice for each of the children with unauthorised absence. If two parents have two children this may result in four Penalty Notices, two Penalty Notices per parent.

Lateness /Punctuality

It is important to be on time at the start of the morning and afternoon school sessions. If a child is late they miss work, time with their class teacher getting vital information, cause disruption to the lesson for others, and this can lead to personal embarrassment leading to possible further absence.

The school gates are open from 8:30 am and all pupils are expected to be in school before the gates shut at 8:38 a.m.

Children arriving after 8.46am will be marked as 'late before registration closes. If they arrive after 8.55am they will be marked as 'late after registration closes' which will count as an unauthorised absence.

All lateness is recorded daily, it will be analysed daily and action taken to address if by the Attendance Leader. This information will be required by the courts, should a prosecution for non-attendance or lateness be necessary

Arrival after the close of registration will be marked as unauthorised absence code 'U' in line with county and Department for Education (DfE) guidance. This mark shows them to be on site, but is legally recorded as an absence.

If a pupil is late due to a medical appointment, they will receive an authorised absence coded 'M'. Where possible doctors and dentists' appointments are encouraged to be made outside of school hours or during school holidays.

The use of both scheduled and unscheduled checks can be used to monitor lateness.

Pupils who are consistently late are disrupting not only their own education but also that of the other pupils. On-going and repeated lateness is considered as unauthorised absence and will be subject to legal action.

Parents / carers of pupils who have patterns of lateness

The Attendance Leader will contact parents to discuss the importance of good time keeping and how this might be achieved. If lateness persists, parents, guardians

or carers will be invited to a meeting with the Attendance Leader to discuss the problem and support offered. If support is not appropriate or is declined and a child has 10 or more sessions of unauthorised absence due to lateness recorded in any 10-week period the Attendance Leader or Hampshire County Council will be required to issue parents with a penalty notice in accordance with Hampshire's Code of Conduct for issuing penalty notices for non-attendance.

Raising the profile of attendance

- Attendance Leader to drive improvement for all attendance and lateness and ensuring improvement occurs
- Teachers given individual historical attendance concerns and 'live' access to their class's attendance
- Arbor System – Allowing parents/carers to view their 'live' child's attendance
- Home-school agreement
- Early intervention focus
- Parents' evenings and meetings
- Promotion on newsletter

- Regular reminders to parents of school procedures for notifying the school of a pupil's absence.
- Recognition in the weekly celebration assembly of the house will the best attendance
- Attendance section on website
- When welcoming and inducting new parents and pupils, the importance of punctuality and attendance to be raised.
- As part of staff induction new staff to be briefed on the school's philosophy on attendance and introduce them to their responsibilities for attendance management.
- Meetings with parents to discuss strategies in school and at home which encourage regular school attendance and the production of an action plan for improving attendance.
- Rewards for pupils in assemblies with 'Most Improved' certificates

Attendance Grading

90% attendance and below = pupils classed as Persistently Absent

Add table here to show x number of days over a school year equates to x% attendance

Green
97% - 100%

Yellow
96% - 96.9%

Amber
94 - 95.9%

Pink
90 - 93.9%

Red
0 - 89.9%
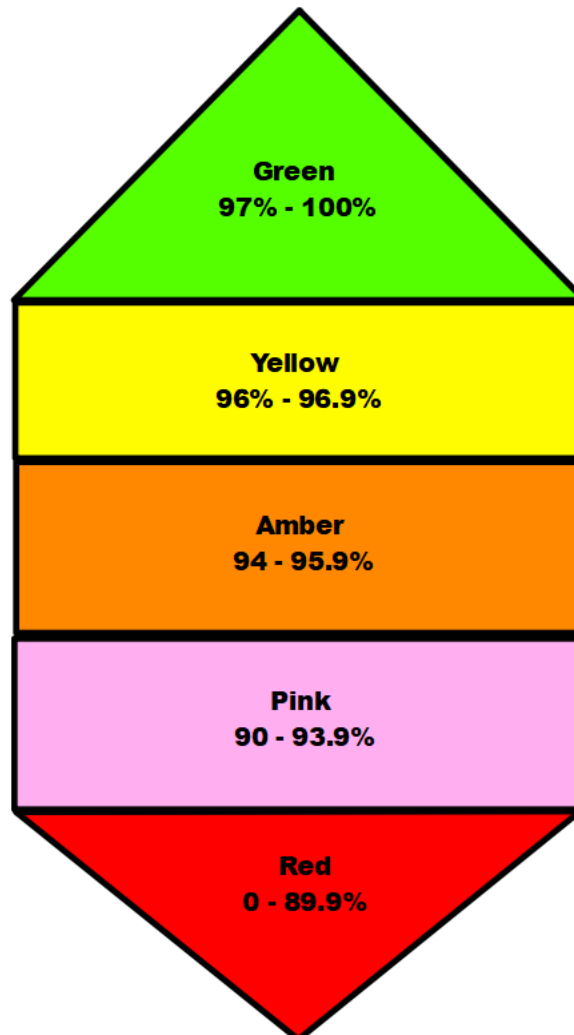
Strategy for addressing decreasing attendance

Children with no - attendance concerns

Parents / Carers made aware of their child's attendance through the Arbor Pupil Management System.

Teachers can access attendance on Arbor and identify the children with good attendance in their class.

Attendance Leader will monitor children's daily attendance and celebrate positive attendance in weekly newsletter

Early, daily intervention (children whose attendance is dropping out of the green zone)

Teachers will engage these children by strategies such as developing further relationship bond, verbalising that they are looking forward to seeing them tomorrow, giving children run down of things that will be happening to look forward to, giving these children a morning responsibility, etc.

Attendance Leader will monitor all children -, taking early intervention to discuss any drops in attendance with parents to prevent further absence.

Attendance Leader will invite parents to discuss the number of days' absence and/or lateness, and absence patterns so that parents are informed as early as possible about the impact of absence on their child's learning. A record of this conversation will be recorded on CPOMs as part of the tracking process.

The Attendance Leader will draft an individual attendance improvement action plan with attendance targets with the parents to implement in partnership with the school.

Where necessary the Attendance Leader may seek support of external agencies.

The Attendance Lead will monitor attendance on a daily basis and contact parents if the child's attendance continues to slip/targets on the action plan not being met.

Adaptions to the personal attendance plan with the child and parents to identify any continued barriers to attending. Renewed actions will be put in place for individual children and their family, to be reviewed on a weekly basis.

A referral to the Early Help Hub will be considered at this point.

When children have become Persistently Absent (90% attendance or below)

If a child misses 10% (3 weeks) or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason they are defined as Persistent Absentees. Absence for whatever reason disadvantages a child by creating gaps in his or her learning.

From September, where a child has attendance of 90% or less, absence will be classified as unauthorised unless the school receives evidence that the child has attended a medical appointment or is taking prescribed medication for a recurring condition. Five days of unauthorised absence in a single term will result in a referral to the Local Authority for an Education Penalty Notice.

We are dedicated to children's education and growing their potential. **We cannot as a school accept Persistent Absence being the norm for any child.**

At this stage, if progress against plan has shown lack of engagement by parents or no improvement, referrals to external agencies will be made. Each case will be considered as an individual circumstance.