



Hipswell Church of England Primary School

Pupil Attendance Procedure

Our vision is to "Live generously and graciously towards others, the way God lives towards us" (Matthew 5:48). We nurture supportive relationships within our often-changing community. We aspire for our children to be resilient and to flourish - happily, confidently and with enthusiasm.

Rationale

Every pupil has a fundamental right to full-time education. Parents have the responsibility to ensure maximum attendance under Section 36 of the Education Act 1944. Parents should also ensure their children arrive at school on time, appropriately dressed and ready to learn. Pupils need to attend regularly if they are to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available and "to flourish - happily, confidently and with enthusiasm." Irregular attendance undermines the educational process, as does poor punctuality. At Hipswell, 95% is the minimum acceptable attendance; every effort must be made to maintain individual and overall attendance at or above this figure.

Reporting Absences

It is the responsibility of parents to contact the school office giving the reason for their child's absence before the start of the school day. If an absence is prolonged, interim information is required. In the event of no contact having been made regarding a child's absence, the parents will be contacted by the school office (first call). If unexplained absence continues, or the school is concerned regarding irregular attendance, the Education Welfare Officer will be contacted. The 1991 Regulations state that registers must state whether an absence is authorised or unauthorised. Only the school, within the context of the law, can approve absence (section 199, Education Act 1993).

Illness, Medical and Dental Appointments

If the school is satisfied that a pupil is prevented from attending school because of illness, the absence will be treated as authorised. Leave for medical or dental appointments may be authorised on production of an appointments card/medical letter.

Lateness

We actively discourage lateness as it can seriously disrupt lessons and progress. If a child is late and misses registration, a late mark will be recorded. If a child arrives after 9.15am then the lateness will be marked as unauthorised unless an acceptable explanation is given. If a pattern of lateness starts to emerge, parents will be invited to discuss the matter with the headteacher. Any pupils arriving late MUST report to the school office.

Absence in exceptional circumstances

School will determine whether an absence in this category should be authorised or not: much will depend on the circumstances of the particular case. Only exceptional circumstances will be sanctioned as authorised absence after discussion with the headteacher.

Family Bereavements

The headteacher has the discretion to authorise absence linked to family bereavement and to attend funerals or associated events.

Holidays

It is unlikely that requests for leave of absence for the purpose of holiday will be authorised unless deemed by the headteacher to be exceptional such as a request for leave following the return from active deployment by a parent serving in the Armed Forces. Requests for leave of absence should be made on a Leave of Absence Form and returned with supporting evidence such as a letter from the Army Welfare Officer. This form can be obtained from the school office. It is essential that requests are made PRIOR to booking any holiday.

Days of Religious Observance

Absence of a pupil for participation in a day set aside exclusively for religious observation by the religious body to which the parents belong can be classified as authorised. It is essential that the school is given advance notice of religious observance days.

Prosecutions by the local authority

If a child of compulsory school age fails to attend regularly, the parents may be guilty of an offence and can be prosecuted. Only local authorities can prosecute parents and they must fund all associated costs. Local authorities have the power to prosecute parents who fail to comply with a school attendance order (section 443 of the Education Act 1996) or fail to ensure their child's regular attendance at a school (section 444 of the Education Act 1996). We work closely with North Yorkshire County Council to ensure attendance is high. <http://cyps.northyorks.gov.uk/sites/default/files/Education%20reform/Information%20for%20Parents%20V3.docx>

Penalty Notices

Penalty notices are fines of £60/£120 imposed on parents. They are an alternative to the prosecution of parents for failing to ensure that their child regularly attends school. Penalty notices can be issued to each parent liable for the attendance offence. Penalties can be used where the pupil's absence has not been authorised by the school. The Education (Penalty Notices) Regulations 2007 set out the details of how the penalty notice scheme must operate. This includes a requirement that every local authority must draw up and publish a Code of Conduct for issuing penalty notices, after consulting all schools, including academies, and the police. The code should set out the criteria that will be used to trigger the use of a penalty notice. These could include: a number of unauthorised absences, perhaps within a rolling academic year; one-off instances of irregular attendance such as holidays taken during term time without the school's permission; and where an excluded child is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason. The local authority administers the scheme for all schools in its area.

Payment of Penalty Notice

The penalty is £60 if paid within 21 days, rising to £120 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days. The payment must be paid directly to the local authority. The parents can only be prosecuted if 28 days have expired and full payment has not been made. There is no right of appeal by parents against a penalty notice. If the penalty is not paid in full by the end of the 28-day period, the local authority must decide either to prosecute for the original offence to which the notice applies or withdraw the notice. Only local authorities can make decisions on whether parents should be prosecuted for school attendance offences. All schools have a duty to refer regular absence (authorised and unauthorised) to the relevant local authority. This may include any evidence to show how they supported the pupil and parent to improve attendance. It is for each local authority to judge each referral on its own merits and make a decision on the next probable cause of action.