

Vigo Primary School



Attendance Policy

This policy has been approved and adopted by the Governing Body in October 2022 and will be reviewed in October 2024.

National guidance

School attendance is subject to various education laws and this school attendance policy is written to reflect these laws and the guidance produced by the Department for Education and Hampshire County Council. This Attendance policy should be read together with the following school policies:

- admissions
- child protection
- safeguarding
- special educational needs
- Teaching & Learning
- Behaviour
- Children Missing in Education protocols

It is expected that children at Vigo Primary attend school every day unless unwell and are punctual for school. Parents must sign the home-school agreement following their child's admission to the school.

It is very important that parents make sure that their child attends regularly and this Policy sets out how together we will achieve this.

This policy will be annually publicised in writing for all staff, parents and pupils via the school website www.vigo.hants.sch.uk

Rationale:

For a child to have high levels of educational achievement, a high level of school attendance is essential. We are committed to providing an education of the highest quality for all our pupil and endeavour to provide an environment where all pupils feel valued and welcome. Parents and pupils play a part in making our school successful. Every child has a right to access the education to which he/she is entitled. Parents and teachers share the responsibility for supporting and promoting excellent school attendance and punctuality for all. It is our duty to consistently strive to achieve a goal of 100% attendance for all children. Every opportunity will be used to convey to pupils and their parents the importance of regular and punctual attendance. For our children to take full advantage of the educational opportunities offered it is vital that a child is at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. The routines children develop around attendance and punctuality at school are the same as the expectations of any future employer in the world of work. High attainment, confidence with peers and staff and future aspirations depend on good attendance.

Good attendance is important because:

- Statistics show a direct link between under-achievement and absence below 95%
- Regular attenders make better progress, both socially and academically
- Regular attenders find school routines, school work and friendships easier to cope with
- Regular attenders find learning more satisfying
- Regular attenders are more successful in transferring between primary school, secondary school, and higher education, employment or training

Promoting Good Attendance & Punctuality:

The foundation for good attendance is a strong partnership between the school, parents and the child.

To help us all to focus on this we will:

- Provide information on all matters related to attendance in our regular newsletter
- Report to parents, 6 times a year what their child's attendance and punctuality rate is
- Celebrate good attendance;
- Reward good attendance with prizes for children and parents.
- Set targets (when and as needed) for the school and for children
- Provide opportunities for parents and staff can work together on raising attendance

Roles and Responsibilities:

The headteacher will oversee, direct and co-ordinate the school's work in promoting regular and improved attendance and will ensure the Attendance Policy is consistently applied throughout the school. The day-to-day application of this policy will be delegated to the Attendance Manager and School Administration Assistant. The headteacher will also ensure that attendance is both recorded accurately and analysed, this role will be carried out on a day-to-day basis by the Attendance Manager and School Administration Assistant. They will ensure that attendance issues are identified at an early stage and that support is put in place to deal with any difficulties. If absence is frequent or continuous, except where a child is clearly unwell, the school's child and family worker will discuss with parents the need and reasons for their child's absence and will encourage them to keep absences to a minimum. A note or explanation from a pupil's home does not necessarily mean an absence becomes authorised. The decision whether or not to authorise an absence will always rest with the school.

Responsibilities of Parents and Carers:

Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is a parents' legal responsibility (section of the 1996 Education Act) and permitting absence from school that is not authorised by the school creates an offence in law.

Parents will:

- Inform the school on the first day of absence in person, by phone or via the 'report your child's absence' page on the website.
- Discuss with the headteacher any planned absences well in advance.
- Support the school with their child in aiming for 100% attendance each year.
- Make sure that any absence is clearly accounted for on the first and subsequent days of absence.
- Avoid taking their child out of school for non-urgent medical or dental appointments.
- Only request for leave of absence if it is for an exceptional circumstance

Responsibilities of Classroom Staff:

- Ensure that all students are registered accurately and within the window of registers
- Promote and reward good attendance at all appropriate opportunities.
- Liaise with the Attendance Manager on matters of attendance and punctuality
- Communicate any concerns or underlying problems that may account for a child's absence.
- Report any attendance or punctuality concerns on CPOMS

Responsibilities of the Attendance Manager:

- Phone parents where attendance falls below 95% to agree a plan of action to increase attendance
- Arrange meetings with parents where attendance falls below 90%
- Liaise with the Headteacher on matters of attendance and punctuality
- Setting of attendance contracts with parents

- Informing social workers of vulnerable child's absence
- Where attendance does not improve, report situation to the Headteacher who will arrange a meeting with parents and inform them of a referral to the Attendance Legal Panel if necessary
- Meet weekly with School Administration Assistant to monitor attendance
- Issue Penalty Code notice paperwork to be signed by Headteacher for 10 or more sessions of unauthorised absence in a 100 day period
- Complete referrals to Attendance Legal Panel

Responsibilities of the School Administration Assistant:

- Chase up all non-notified attendances by 10:30am and for looked after children or children on Child Protection plans by 9:30am.
- Meet weekly with Attendance Manager to monitor attendance

Recording Attendance:

Legally the register must be marked twice daily. This is once at the start of the school day 8.45am and again for the afternoon session at 12.45.

Lateness /Punctuality:

It is important to arrive on time to school. If a child is late they can miss work and time with their class teacher getting vital information; they can also cause disruption to the lesson for others and can be embarrassing leading to possible further absence.

The school opens for children from 8.35am with all pupils expected to be in school, in their classrooms for formal registration at 8.45am. Any child that arrives after 8.45 will need to enter school via the office. The register officially closes at 9:00am. All lateness is recorded daily. 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'. Please be advised that where possible doctors and dentists appointments are to be made outside of school hours or during school holidays. 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, guardians or carers of pupils who have patterns of lateness will be contacted 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 attend the school and 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 school or the Hampshire County Council will be required to issue parents with a penalty notice in accordance with Hampshire's Code of Conduct for issuing penalty. Please collect children promptly at the end of the school day.

What to do if my child is absent?

First Day Absence

A child not attending school is considered a safeguarding matter. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required.

If a child is absent parents must:

- Contact us as soon as possible on the first day of absence;

- Or, they can call into school and report to the office.

If a child is absent:

- office staff will telephone on the first day of absence if we have not heard from a parent by 10.30am; This is because we have a duty to ensure a child's safety as well as their regular school attendance

Three day absence

Please Note: If a child is not seen and contact has not been established with the named parents after three days of absence the school is required to start a child missing in education procedure as set down by Hampshire County Council Guidance. We will make all reasonable enquires to establish contact with parents and the child including making enquires to known friends, wider family. This may include a visit to the family home.

Ten Days Absence

We have a legal duty to report 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 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. It is therefore important that school always have an up to date contact number. There will be regular checks on telephone numbers throughout the year.

Continued or Ongoing Absence

If a child misses 10% (3 weeks/sessions) or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason they are defined as persistent absentees. Where this absence is authorised the school will contact parents to inform them of the overall picture of absence.

Absence for whatever reason disadvantages a child by creating gaps in his or her learning.

Research shows these gaps affect attainment when attendance falls below 95%. As such we monitor all absence thoroughly and all attendance data is shared with the Local Authority and the Department for Education.

We reserve the right to not agree any sickness absence without a doctor's note when attendance is below 90%. If absence falls below 90% we may make a referral to the Attendance Legal Panel. Children at this school are dependent on their parents, 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.

Request for Leave of Absence:

Amendments to school attendance regulations were updated and enforced from September 2013: (Pupil registration) (England) regulations state that Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances.

It is important to note that Headteachers can determine the length of the authorised absence as well as whether absence is authorised at all.

The fundamental principles for defining 'exceptional' are rare, significant, or unavoidable which means the event could not reasonably be scheduled at another time. There are no rules on this as circumstances vary from school to school and family to family. There is however, no legal entitlement for time off in school time to go on holiday and in the majority of cases holiday will not be authorised. Parents wishing to apply for leave of absence need to fill in an application form (available from the school office) in advance and before making any travel arrangements.

If term time leave is taken without prior permission from the school, the absence will be unauthorised and if the number of sessions absent hits the thresholds set down in Hampshire's

Code of Conduct parents will be issued with a fixed-penalty fine, or other legal action in accordance with the code.

Taking holidays in term time will affect a child's schooling as much as any other absence and we expect parents to help us by not taking children out during school time.

Understanding types of absence:

Pupils are expected to attend school every day for the entire duration of the academic year, unless there is an exceptional reason for the absence. There are two main categories of absences:

- **Authorised Absence:** is when the school has accepted the explanation offered as satisfactory justification for the absence, or given approval in advance for such an absence. If no explanation is received, absences cannot be authorised.
- **Unauthorised Absence:** is when the school has not received a reason for absence or has not approved a child's leave absence from school after a parent's request.

This includes:

- parents giving their children permission to be off school unnecessarily such as for holidays, day trips, shopping, birthdays, haircuts or to look after siblings
- truancy before or during the school day
- absences which have not been explained

A school can, if needed, change an authorised absence to an unauthorised absence and vice versa if new information is presented. Any changes will be communicated to parents. An example of this would be where a parent states a child is unwell but on return to school there is evidence they have been on holiday.

Penalty Notices for Non Attendance and other Legal Measures:

In Education law, parents are committing an offence if they fail to ensure the regular attendance of their child of compulsory school age at the school at which the child is registered, unless the absence has been authorised by the school.

Legal Measures for tackling persistent absence or lateness:

Hampshire Schools and Hampshire County Council will use the full range of legal measures to secure good attendance. Legal measures will only be considered through a referral to Hampshire's Attendance Legal Panels where:

1. The child or family do not require the support from any agency to improve the attendance
2. The child has 10 or more sessions of unauthorised absence and parents are complicit in the child's absence.

The following legal measures are for pupils of compulsory school age who are registered at a school:

- Parenting contracts set at Education Planning Meetings
- Parenting orders
- Penalty notices
- Education Supervision Orders
- Prosecution

Legal Measures for absence taken when the headteacher has declined parents request for leave of absence:

Where a pupil has unauthorised absence due to either:

1. non-approval of a parent's request for leave of absence or

2. a holiday that has been taken without permission and the unauthorised absence is for 10 or more sessions (5 days) in any 100 possible school sessions then a penalty notice for non-attendance will be issued.

Where a child has unauthorised absence the school must enforce Hampshire's Code of Conduct for issuing Penalty Notices or follow its guidance on other Legal Measures for Non Attendance. The Code of Conduct is a statutory document that ensures that powers for legal sanctions are applied consistently and fairly across all schools and their families within the authority. A copy is available from <http://www3.hants.gov.uk/education/hias/learning-behaviour-attendance/attendanceguidancefor-parents/possible-penalties.htm>

The code of conduct states that:

Schools or Hampshire Local Authority will issue a Penalty Notice for any unauthorised absence where the pupil has been:

- absent for 10 or more half-day sessions (five school days) of unauthorised absence during any 100 possible school sessions – these do not need to be consecutive
- persistently late (coded U) for up to 10 sessions (five days) after the register has closed
- persistently late before the close of the register (coded L), but the school has met with parents and has clearly communicated that they will categorise as unauthorised
- any further lateness (code O), and where the threshold of 10 sessions (five days) has been met
- absent for any public examinations of which dates are published in advance
- absent for any formal school assessments, tests or examinations where the dates have been published in advance
- unless the issuing of a Penalty Notice would conflict with other intervention strategies in place or other sanctions already being processed.

If a child's unauthorised absence meets any of the above criteria and the family or child do not require any agency support to improve the attendance then a single Penalty Notice is issued for either:

1. 10 sessions of unauthorised absence or lateness in any 10 week school period
2. 1 or more sessions of unauthorised absence during a public exam, formal school assessment or testing where dates are published in advance.

Parents will be warned of the likelihood of a penalty notice being issued for unauthorised absence either via a letter, through the leave of absence request form, or through the schools attendance policy and website.

The penalty notice is a fine that is issued to each parent who condoned (or was responsible for the child) during the period of unauthorised absence for which the fine has been issued.

For each case of unauthorised absence the school or Hampshire County Council will decide whether a Penalty Notice is issued to one or more parents for each child. N.B This could mean four penalty notices for a family with two siblings both with unauthorised absence for holiday i.e. one PN for each child to each parent. Each penalty notice carries a fine of £60 if paid within 21 days of the penalty notice being posted. If the fine is not paid within 21 days the Penalty is automatically increased to £120 if paid within 28 days. If the fine remains unpaid the Hampshire County Council will consider prosecution for the non-attendance.

Payment methods are detailed on the Penalty Notices themselves. Penalties are to be paid to Hampshire County Council and revenue resulting from payment of Penalties is used by the County Council to help cover the costs of issuing Penalty Notices and/or the cost of prosecuting recipients who do not pay. For further information parents can request a leaflet from their school and should visit Hampshire County Councils website at:

<http://www3.hants.gov.uk/education/hias/learning-behaviour-attendance/attendanceguidancefor-parents/possible-penalties.htm>

If a child is trying to avoid coming to School. What should a parent do?

Children are sometimes reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents and the child. If a child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and may make things worse. Contact the child's class teacher immediately and openly discuss worries. The child could be avoiding school for a number of reasons – difficulties with school work, bullying, friendship problems, family difficulties. It is important that school identify the reason for a child's reluctance to attend school and work together to tackle the problem. In some cases parents may find it helpful to discuss the circumstances of a child's difficulties with another professional.

What can parents do to encourage a child to attend School?

- Make sure a child gets enough sleep and gets up in plenty of time each morning.
- Ensure that he/she leaves home in the correct clothes and properly equipped.
- Show a child, by interest, that their education is valued
- Be interested in what a child is doing in school, chat to them about the things they have learnt, what friends they have made and even what they had for lunch!
- For many parents, a child attending school may be the first experience of being separated from them. This can seem daunting at first for both parent and child but consistency and a caring supportive home and school life will make the transition a quick and easy experience for both of you.

Leavers

If a child is leaving Vigo Primary (other than when transferring to secondary school) parents are asked to give the school office comprehensive information about their plans including any date of a move, new address and telephone numbers, child's new school and the start date when known. This should be submitted to our school in writing. If pupils leave and we do not have the above information, then the child is considered to be a 'Child Missing in Education'. This requires schools and Local Authorities to then carry out investigations to try and locate the child, which includes liaising with Children's Services, the Police and other agencies. By giving us the above information, these investigations can be avoided.

Absence through child participation in Public Performances, including theatre, film or TV work & Modelling.

Parents of a child performer can seek leave of absence from school for their child to take part in a performance. They must contact the Headteacher to discuss the nature and frequency of the work, whether the child has a valid performance licence and whether education will be provided by the employer during any future leave of absence. Any absence recorded as part of a child's participation in a public performance is recorded as C, an authorised absence.

Absence through competing at regional, county or national level for Sport.

Parents of able sportsmen and women can seek leave of absence from school for their child to take part in a regional, county, national and international events and competitions. It is however, down to the headteacher's discretion whether to authorise this and they will wish to discuss with parents the nature and frequency of the absence and how learning will continue if absence occurs. Permission for a child to leave early or arrive late to attend coaching and training sessions are also

at the discretion of the Headteacher and are not likely to be approved if it is a regular event, unless the sports club or association are providing an education tutor as part of their coaching.

Gypsy Roma Traveller families

Absence of a child from a traveller family may be authorised if;

- the absence is for work purposes only and it is believed that the family intends to return.
- the child is on roll, over six years old and has attended at least 200 sessions at school in each rolling 12 month period

This does not automatically reduce the number of days that a GRT child is expected to attend full time (380 sessions a year). Parents must notify the school in advance of their intention to travel and confirm a return date.

Monitoring and recording of pupil absence

If a child on roll is recognised as GRT (based on the legal definition) and they request additional time from school, then the school can and should use the following codes:

- T code – on days when a GRT pupil is known to be out of the area travelling and is not in any other educational provision
- D code (counts as not required to attend) where a GRT pupil is travelling and attending another school.
- B code (counts as present) where a GRT pupil is travelling and the child is a guest pupil on roll or is attending educational provision other than school

Further support & Guidance is available from Hampshire's EMTAS Service

Record preservation

School registers are legal documents. We will ensure compliance with attendance regulations by keeping attendance records for at least 3 years. Computer registers will be preserved as electronic back-ups

Appendices

The Law

The Education Act 1996 Part 1, Section 7 states:

The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him to receive efficient fulltime education suitable-

[a] To his age, ability and aptitude and

[b] To any special needs he may have.

either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

For educational purposes the term parent is used to include those that have parental responsibility and/or those that have the day to day care of the child.

The legislation that appertains to children who are of compulsory school age and are registered at school is contained within this Act.

Part V1 Section 444 contains the details of when an offence is committed if a child fails to attend school.

Register and Admission Roll keeping.

The legal requirements are found in: The Education [Pupil Registration] (England) Regulations 2006

Guidance documents on attendance.

The following DfE documents are used to guide attendance recording.

Absence and Attendance codes (Guidance for Schools and Local Authorities)

Keeping Pupil Registers (Guidance on applying the Education Pupil Registration Regulations)

These and other guidance documents are available on the DfE website including 'Working together to improve school attendance'

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1099677/Working_together_to_improve_school_attendance.pdf

Hampshire County Council Guidance is available on Hantsweb at

<http://www3.hants.gov.uk/atten-guidance>