



## Marchwood Church of England Infant School

### Attendance Policy

*Headteacher/Responsible Manager: Sally Atkins*

*Date approved: July 2026*

*Signed:*

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. Atkins'.

*Review due: July 2027*

This policy has been written in accordance with the Department for Education's 'Working together to improve school attendance' guidance and Hampshire County Council's 'Attendance Guidance for Parents/Carers' and model attendance policy. This policy also reflects the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Statutory Framework, including safeguarding requirements relating to children's attendance, absence monitoring and follow-up.

#### **Section 1**

##### **Rationale/Statement of Intent**

A high level of school attendance is essential for a child to reach their full educational achievement. At Marchwood C of E Infant school, we are committed to providing an education of the highest quality for all our pupils in an environment where all pupils feel valued and welcome. Parents and pupils play a part in making our school so 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.

We promote excellent attendance and seek the highest possible attendance for every child. Every opportunity will be used to convey to pupils and their parents or carers the importance of regular and punctual attendance. The school will monitor attendance patterns, repeated absences and prolonged absences for all children, including those in Reception. Where concerns are identified, leaders will consider the child's individual circumstances, vulnerabilities and any safeguarding concerns, and will work with families and external agencies where appropriate.

For our children to take full advantage of the educational opportunities offered, it is vital they are 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.

Effective attendance practice and protocols also support safeguarding. Following up on absence ensures proper safeguarding action is taken when required.

## **Section 2:**

### **Promoting Good Attendance and Punctuality**

The foundation for good attendance is a strong partnership between the school, parents and the children. Promoting regular attendance is everybody's responsibility and Marchwood C of E Infant School will focus on this by:

- Raising awareness of the importance of good attendance and punctuality.
- Promoting a welcoming and positive atmosphere in school, where children feel safe and that their presence is valued.
- Ensuring that attendance is effectively monitored and absences are followed up promptly.
- Monitor attendance and punctuality regularly, identifying and following up on patterns of absence and lateness.
- Addressing and working with parents/carers to improve attendance and punctuality where needed.
- Referring to other agencies as appropriate.
- Reporting attendance levels to parents/carers termly as part of our parent consultation and reporting systems.
- Promoting attendance and providing information on matters related to this in our newsletters and on our website.
- Presenting attendance and punctuality data to Governors.
- Liaising closely with the Junior School and other settings in respect of shared families.
- Liaising effectively with other schools/settings when a change of school occurs.

### **Roles and responsibilities:**

#### **Responsibilities of the senior leadership team**

The senior leadership team 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.

Attendance information, concerns, communications with families and actions taken will be recorded and reviewed regularly as part of the school's safeguarding systems

They will also ensure that attendance is both recorded accurately and analysed. They will regularly review attendance and ensure that attendance issues are identified at an early stage and that support is put in place to deal with any difficulties.

If absence and or lateness is frequent or continuous, except in specific circumstances agreed by the headteacher, staff will discuss with parent/carers 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 mean an absence becomes authorised. The decision whether or not to authorise an absence will always rest with the school.

If, despite these interventions, attendance does not improve sufficiently, the senior leadership team will refer to outside agencies as appropriate. These may include Our Attendance and Welfare Officer, the Early Help Hub or Attendance Legal Panel.

#### **Responsibilities of administrative staff**

- Record all absences accurately twice per day.
- Record any contact from parents about absence and contact parents where no reason has been given for absence.
- Liaise with the SLT or class teachers about attendance and punctuality as required.
- Produce individual and group attendance and punctuality reports as required.

#### **Responsibilities of teaching staff**

- Ensure that all students are registered accurately.
- Promote good attendance at every opportunity.
- Liaise with the Headteacher on matters of attendance and punctuality.
- Communicate any concerns or underlying problems that may account for a children's absence.
- Support students who have been unable to attend Marchwood C of E Infant School to re-engage with their

learning once they return.

## **Responsibilities of parents/carers**

Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is a parent/carer's legal responsibility (Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act) and permitting absence from school that is not authorised by the school creates an offence in law.

Parents will ensure their child:

- Attends every day unless they are ill or have an authorised absence.
- Arrives on time.
- Attends registration and lessons on time.
- Is registered at the school office if they are late

Parents will also:

- Inform the school on the first day of absence
- discuss with the tutor/class teacher 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 by telephone or text on the first and subsequent days of absence, or by letter if a phone is unavailable
- avoid taking their child out of school for non-urgent medical or dental appointments
- only request leave of absence if it is for an exceptional circumstance

## **Section 3**

### **3.1. Recording Attendance**

Legally, the register must be marked twice daily. This is once at the start of the school day at 9.00am and again for the beginning of the afternoon session at 1.15pm.

### **3.2. Lateness /Punctuality**

It is very important that children arrive on time so they can begin the day alongside their peers. The start of school is used to explain activities and practise key skills. For young children this is often a crucial time in their social development and a time that encourages their independence and resilience. If your child is late, not only is it detrimental to them, it causes disruption to the rest of the class, who can become distracted from their learning.

- **Doors are open from 8.45am. Registers open from 8.45 am until 9.00am and all pupils are expected to be in school at this time. The register closes at 9.15am.**
- 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 Local Authority and Department for Education (DfE) guidance. This mark shows them to be on site, but is legally recorded as an absence.
- If a child 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. Ongoing and repeated lateness is considered as unauthorised absence and will be subject to legal action (see Section 6 for further detail).

Parents/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 appropriate.

If support is not appropriate, declined or not fully engaged with and a child has 10 or more sessions (equivalent to 5 days) of unauthorised absence due to lateness recorded in any 10 week period, the school is required by Hampshire County Council to issue parents with a Penalty Notice in accordance with Hampshire County Council's Code of conduct

for issuing Penalty Notices for unauthorised absence from schools (See Section 6 of this policy for further detail).

### **Collection from school**

The school day ends at 3.15pm with the option of parents of children in Year R to collect from 3.10pm. Please collect your child promptly at the end of the school day. Where late collection is persistent and/or significantly late, the school is obliged to take any uncollected pupil to a place of safety and share concerns, as necessary, with other agencies. If space is available, the school will place a child into the after-school club and provide the parent/carer with the bill.

### **3.3. What to do if my child is absent?**

#### **First Day of Absence**

A child not attending school is considered to be a **safeguarding** matter. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required. In accordance with the EYFS statutory framework, unexplained, repeated or prolonged absences may be considered a safeguarding concern. Staff will promptly follow up absences and record actions taken.

If your child is absent you must

- Contact the school office as soon as possible on the first day of absence on 023 8086 8819 and leave a reason for absence. Messages can be left at any time on the school answerphone. Alternatively, you can call into school and report the absence to the office.
- If no contact is made then this will be recorded on the school attendance system as unauthorised.

If your child is absent we will:

- Telephone, text or email you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you – this is because we have a duty to ensure your child's safety as well as their regular school attendance
- invite you in to discuss the situation if absences persist
- refer the matter to the Hampshire County Council's Legal Intervention Team if absence is unauthorised and falls below 90%.

#### **Second Day of Absence**

As part of our safeguarding procedures, if your child is not seen and contact has not been established with you or any of the named parent/carers on the second day of absence, we will contact other adults named by you on their Emergency Contact Form. If your child's welfare is still in question, we will attempt a home visit. We will then undertake a Risk Assessment and contact emergency services accordingly if we believe a child's absence suggests the need for "immediate assistance due to a health condition, injury or some other life threatening situation."

#### **Third Day of Absence**

If your child is not seen and contact has not been established with any of the named parents/carers, after three days of absence the school is required to start 'child missing from education' procedures as set down by Hampshire County Council guidance. We will continue to make all reasonable efforts to establish contact with parents/carers and the child, including making enquiries to known friends and wider family.

#### **Tenth Day of Absence**

We have a legal duty to report the absence of any pupil who is 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. We ask parents to support us to help you and your child by making sure we always have an up to date contact number and address. We make regular checks on telephone numbers throughout the year.

#### **Continued or Ongoing Absence**

If your 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. 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.

If a child's attendance falls below 90% the school will:

- contact the parent/carer to inform them of their child's attendance has fallen below 90%

- arrange a meeting to discuss possible ways to support and improve their attendance when attendance continues to fall below the 90% expectation.
- Send follow up letters where attendance and punctuality do not show signs of improvement. This can include referring to outside agencies and investigating issues that may be preventing attendance.

#### **Section 4:**

##### **Request for Leave of Absence:**

Amendments to school attendance regulations were updated and enforced from September 2013: **The regulations state that Head teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances.**

Exceptional circumstances are principally defined as rare, significant, or unavoidable and that the event could not reasonably be scheduled at another time. The Head teacher can determine the length of the authorised absence as well as whether absence is authorised at all.

There is no legal entitlement for time off in school time to go on holiday and **in the majority of cases holiday will not be authorised.** There are no rules on this as circumstances vary from school to school and family to family.

Parents/carers wishing to apply for leave of absence need to fill in an application form in advance and before making any travel arrangements. Application forms are available from the school office or the school website. Parents may be asked to attend a meeting to discuss the request. 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, will be issued with a fixed-penalty fine or other legal action in accordance with the code (see Section 6 for detail).

Schools are now authorised to issue Penalty Notices to parents who attempt to avoid penalties by scheduling holidays that fall below the threshold, including during weeks containing Bank Holidays or INSET days.

**We expect parents to help us by not taking children out during school time.**

#### **Section 5:**

##### **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, an absence 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:
  - o Parents giving their children permission to be absent unnecessarily, such as:
    - o a shopping trip
    - o because a relative has offered a special treat/ holiday
    - o birthdays
    - o to look after siblings/family members
    - o because the parent or other family member has an appointment to attend

The headteacher 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/carers. 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.

#### **Section 6:**

##### **Penalty Notices for Non Attendance and other Legal Measures:**

In education law, parents/carers 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 County Council will use the full range of legal measures to secure good attendance. Legal measures will only be considered through a referral by our school 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 parent/carers request for leave of absence**

Where a child has **unauthorised absence** the school **must** enforce Hampshire County Council's Code of Conduct: issuing Penalty Notices for unauthorised absence from schools 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: [www.hants.gov.uk/education/hias/learning-behaviour-attendance/attendance-guidance-forparents/possible-penalties](http://www.hants.gov.uk/education/hias/learning-behaviour-attendance/attendance-guidance-forparents/possible-penalties).

### **Penalty Notices for non-attendance – Hampshire's Code of Conduct**

The code of conduct states that:

Schools or Hampshire County Council 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 (codes G, U or O on the register)
- 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.

### **Legal measures for absence taken when the headteacher has declined parents/ carers' request for leave of absence**

Where a pupil has unauthorised absence due to either:

- 1 non-approval of a parent/carer's request for leave of absence or
- 2 a holiday that has been taken without permission

and the unauthorised absence (coded G) is for 10 or more sessions (five days) in any 100 possible school sessions/10 week period then a Penalty Notice for non-attendance will be issued.

**If a child has other types of unauthorised absence (coded O and U) 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 and carers 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 school's attendance policy and website. The penalty notice is a fine that is issued to each parent/carers 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, Hampshire County Council will decide whether a penalty notice is issued to **one or more parent/carers 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 penalty notice for each child to each parent.

Each penalty notice carries a fine of £80 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 £160 if paid within 28 days. If the fine remains unpaid, 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.

Please note: If you pay the Penalty Notice and your child has further unauthorised absences additional legal action will be taken. For example, in the event that a Penalty Notice has previously been served to you due to unauthorised holiday, should your child have any future unauthorised leave this will result in further legal action for you, such as prosecution or an Education Supervision Order.

For further information parents/carers can request a leaflet from their school and should visit Hampshire County Council's website at: [www.hants.gov.uk/education/hias/learning-behaviour-attendance/attendance-guidance-for-parents/possible-penalties](http://www.hants.gov.uk/education/hias/learning-behaviour-attendance/attendance-guidance-for-parents/possible-penalties).

## **Section 7:**

### **7.1 My child is trying to avoid coming to school. What should I 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 at the earliest opportunity. If a child is reluctant to attend, giving into pressure and excusing them from attending or covering up the reason for their absence is never a good idea and may make things worse. Contact your child's class teacher immediately and openly discuss your worries. Your child could be reluctant to attend school for a number of reasons. It is important that we identify the reason for your child's reluctance to attend school and work together to address the problem.

### **What can I do to encourage my child to attend school?**

Make sure your child gets enough sleep and gets up in plenty of time each morning.

Ensure that he/she leaves home on time in the correct clothes and are properly equipped.

Be interested in what your 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! This shows that you value their education.

For many parents, your child attending school may be your first experience of being separated from them. This can seem daunting at first for both of you but consistency and a caring supportive home and school life will make the transition a quick and easy experience for you both.

## **Leavers**

If your child is leaving our school (other than when transferring to the junior school) parents are asked to:

Give the school comprehensive information about their plans, including any date of a move and your new address and telephone numbers, your 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 your 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 your 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 a child participating in public performances, including theatre, film or television work and 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. It is, however, the Headteacher's discretion as to whether to authorise this. 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**

Leave of absence from school can be applied for any child selected to take part in regional, county, national and international events and competitions.

It is, however, at the Headteacher's discretion as to whether to authorise this and they will wish to discuss with you 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 is also at the discretion of the Headteacher and is not likely to be approved if it is a regular event, unless the sports club or association is providing an education tutor as part of their coaching.

### **Gypsy, Roma, Traveller and Showman families**

Absence of a child from a Traveller family that has left the area may be authorised if the absence is for **work purposes only** and it is believed that the family intends to return. To ensure the continuity of learning for Traveller children, dual registration is allowed. That means that a school cannot remove a Traveller child from the school roll while they are travelling. When the Traveller is away the home school holds the place open and records the absence as authorised through the *T* code. Distance learning packs for Traveller children are not an alternative to attendance at school.

*For further advice and guidance on attendance and Gypsy, Roma, Traveller and Showman families see Hampshire County Council guidance at: <http://documents.hants.gov.uk/childrens-services/HIAS/Promotingpupilattendanceandrecordingabsence-Section6.pdf>.*

*Further support and guidance is available from Hampshire County Council's Ethnic Minority and Traveller Achievement Service (EMTAS).*

## **Section 8**

### **Record preservation**

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

