

Attendance & Absence Policy

Table of Contents

1. Aims	2
2. Legislation and guidance	2
3. Roles and responsibilities	2
4. Recording attendance.....	3
5. Authorised and unauthorised absence	5
6. Strategies for promoting attendance.....	8
7. Attendance monitoring	8
8. Monitoring arrangements	9
9. Links with other policies	9
Appendix 1: attendance codes.....	9
Appendix 2: attendance letter 1	12
Appendix 3: attendance letter 2	13
Appendix 4: attendance letter 3	14
Appendix 5: attendance letter 4	15
Appendix 6: attendance letter 4a	16
Appendix 7: attendance letter 5	17
Appendix 8: late letter 1.....	19
Appendix 9: late letter 2.....	20
Appendix 10: leave of absence request form.....	21

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Approved By	HISP Executive Team
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HISP Multi Academy Trust

Portswood Primary School

Attendance & Absence Policy

1. Aims

We are committed to meeting our obligations with regards to school attendance by:

- Promoting good attendance and reducing absence, including persistent absence
- Ensuring every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled
- Acting early to address patterns of absence

We will also support parents to perform their legal duty to ensure their children of compulsory school age attend regularly and will promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

2. Legislation and guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the [school attendance guidance](#) from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on [Working together to improve school attendance \(applies from 19 August 2024\) \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#).

These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- Part 6 of [The Education Act 1996](#).
- Part 3 of [The Education Act 2002](#)
- Part 7 of [The Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006](#) (and [2010](#), [2011](#), [2013](#), [2016](#) amendments)
- [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)

This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the [school census](#), which explains the persistent absence threshold.

3. Roles and responsibilities

3.1 The Academy Committee

The Academy Committee is responsible for monitoring attendance figures for the whole school on at least a termly basis. It also holds the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy.

3.2 The Headteacher

The Headteacher is responsible for:

- Implementation of this policy at the school
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils
- Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary

HISP Multi Academy Trust Portswood Primary School Attendance & Absence Policy

3.3 The attendance officer

The school attendance officer:

- Monitors attendance data across the school and at an individual pupil level
- Reports concerns about attendance to the Headteacher
- Works with education welfare officers to tackle persistent absence
- Arranges calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues
- Advises the Headteacher when to issue fixed-penalty notices

3.4 Class teachers

Class teachers are responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the school office.

3.5 School office staff

School office staff are expected to take calls from parents about absence and record it on the school system.

4. Recording attendance

4.1 Attendance register

We will keep an attendance register and place all pupils onto this register.

We will take our attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day. It will mark whether every pupil is:

- Present
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity
- Absent
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

- The original entry
- The amended entry
- The reason for the amendment
- The date on which the amendment was made
- The name and position of the person who made the amendment

See appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes.

We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

Pupils must arrive in school by 8.55am on each school day.

The morning register will be taken at 8.55am and will be kept open until 9.05am. The afternoon register will be taken at 1.00pm and will be kept open until 1.05pm

HISP Multi Academy Trust Portswood Primary School Attendance & Absence Policy

4.2 Unplanned absence

The pupil's parent must notify the school on the first day of an unplanned absence by 9.00am or as soon as practically possible (see also section 7).

Please call the school before 9.00am and choose option 1 to leave a message or stay on the line to talk to a member of the office staff.

We will mark absence due to illness as authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may ask the pupil's parent to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents/ will be notified of this in advance.

4.3 Planned absence

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the pupil's parent notifies the school in advance of the appointment.

Please call the school and choose option 1 to leave a message or stay on the line to talk to a member of the office staff.

However, we encourage parents to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

The pupil's parent must also apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence. Go to section 5 to find out which term-time absences the school can authorise.

4.4 Lateness and punctuality

A pupil who arrives late:

- Before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code
- After the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code

Repeated lateness will be brought to the attention of the Headteacher and Late Letter 1 issued (Appendix 8). If there are more than six occurrences in a term, a letter will be sent to the parent – Late Letter 2 (Appendix 9).

HISP Multi Academy Trust Portswood Primary School Attendance & Absence Policy

4.5 Following up absence

Where any child we expect to attend school does not attend, or stops attending, the school will:

- Follow up on their absence with their parent to ascertain the reason, by making a telephone call during the morning and/or send a truancy call.
- Ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not
- Identify the correct attendance code to use
- Issue attendance letter if no reply from phone call (see appendix 2-7)

4.6 Reporting to parents

Parents will be informed of their child's attendance in their annual report. The Annual report will include:

- The total number of sessions (half days) for the year.
- The total number of absences for each child for the year.
- The total number of unauthorised absences.

Parents will also receive a termly update concerning their child's attendance as part of the pupil progress/attainment reporting process.

5. Authorised and unauthorised absence

5.1 Approval for term-time absence

The Headteacher will only grant a leave of absence to pupils during term time if they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'. A leave of absence is granted at the Headteacher's discretion.

You will need to complete a leave of absence request form (appendix 10) in advance.

Examples of any exceptional circumstances where leave may be granted during term time are as follows:

- If a parent is service personnel and is returning from a tour of duty abroad where it is evidenced the individual will not be in receipt of any leave in the near future that coincides with school holidays.
- Where an absence from school is recommended by a health professional as part of a parent or child's rehabilitation from a medical or emotional issue.
- The death or terminal illness of a close relative, only if Headteacher is satisfied that the circumstances are truly exceptional;
- Out of school programmes such as music, arts or sport operating at a high standard of achievement. Documentary evidence of this event will be required.

If a request meets the above exceptional circumstances but falls within the following times, the Headteacher must be convinced that absence from school is the only option:

- 1) The first half term of any academic year (applies to all pupils).
- 2) Year six transition day (for pupils in year six).
- 3) Year six SATs week (for pupils in year six).

HISP Multi Academy Trust

Portswood Primary School

Attendance & Absence Policy

- 4) Key Stage 1 phonics screening week
- 5) Year 4 Timestable checking window.

When considering exceptional term time leave requests, the following factors may help to reach a decision:

- Time of the academic year when the leave has been requested
- Duration of the absence – number of school days being missed
- The child's current attendance and punctuality rate
- Exceptional Term time leave requested/taken in previous academic years for a similar purpose
- Whether parents have considered limiting the amount of time the child would be absent from school e.g. wrapping around school holiday
- Have alternative care arrangements been considered by the parent/carer to limit the time away from school
- Impact on any interventions, assessments or referrals being undertaken with the child or family e.g. family support, social care assessments, CAMHS, SEN
- The impact that the absence will have on the child.
- Whether it falls within any key stage national tests or exams;

Examples of circumstances NOT considered as exceptional

- Holidays abroad for the purpose of visiting a sick relative, excepting where that person is seriously ill. Medical evidence may be requested.
- Holidays taken in term time due to lower cost/parental work commitments.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments (see sections 4.2 and 4.3 for more detail)
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart
- Traveller pupils travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh Gypsies, Irish and Scottish Travellers, Showmen (fairground people) and Circus people, Bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and New Travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a Traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision
- There being no suitable transport (and school is not within walking distance).
- The child's participation in an approved public performance.
- Other possible 'exceptional circumstances' where the Headteacher may grant term-time holiday e.g., absence following the death of a close member of the family.

HISP Multi Academy Trust

Portswood Primary School

Attendance & Absence Policy

5.2 Reducing persistent absence

Parents will be made aware of actions which the school will take to follow up absences.

- Every unauthorised absence should be followed up by the school using the letters included as Attendance Letter 1 & 2 (appendix 2 & 3).
- Repeated absences (i.e., attendance falls to 90% or below national average) should be brought to the attention of the Headteacher. A further letter should be sent to the parent and a meeting may be requested to discuss the reasons for absence. These are included as Attendance Letters 3 & 4 (appendix 4-6).
- The Education Welfare Officers should be informed.
- A penalty notice is issued.

Registers should always be available for inspection by the Education Welfare Officer. The Headteacher will arrange regular meetings with the Education Welfare Officer to discuss all concerns related to attendance matters. Issues raised will be dealt with in accordance with the service level agreement between the Education Welfare Service and the Governing Body.

The Education Welfare Officer should also be notified by the school office:

- Of any unauthorised absences of more than 20% of total attendance.
- Of any reasons where, having checked with the parents, the school has doubts about the reasons given for a pupil's absence.

If a child has a large number of absences through illness, and this gives cause for concern, then the parents should be interviewed by the Headteacher or the Education Welfare Officer. A medical can be arranged by making a referral to the school nursing team.

5.3 Legal sanctions

The school or local authority can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age.

From autumn term 2024, only 2 penalty notices can be issued to the same parent in respect of the same child within a 3 year rolling period and any second notice within that period is charged at a higher rate:

- The first penalty notice issued to a parent in respect of a particular pupil will be charged at £160 if paid within 28 days. This will be reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days.
- A second penalty notice issued to the same parent in respect of the same pupil is charged at a flat rate of £160 if paid within 28 days.
- A third penalty notice cannot be issued to the same parent in respect of the same child within 3 years of the date of issue of the first. In a case where the national threshold is met for a third time (or subsequent times) within those 3 years, alternative action should be taken instead. This will often include considering prosecution.

HISP Multi Academy Trust Portswood Primary School Attendance & Absence Policy

Penalty notices can be issued by a Head of School, local authority officer or the police.

The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice may take into account:

- The number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year
- One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission
- Where an excluded pupil is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason

If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute or withdraw the notice.

6. Strategies for promoting attendance

Attendance is rewarded in a number of ways both individually and collectively. Pupils attendance is recognised weekly in assembly with the strongest attendance from each Key Stage receiving a golden ticket. The classes from each Key Stage with the least number of 'lates' also receives a golden ticket. These tickets are 'cashed in' at the end of term for golden time. The more a class earns the more golden time they receive. Children also contribute to their 'houses' attendance figures. At the end of term house points are distributed to each house depending on their position with regard to attendance. These points contribute to a houses overall collection of points and results in a termly house wide reward.

7. Attendance monitoring

The attendance officer at our school monitors pupil absence on a daily basis.

A pupil's parent is expected to call the school in the morning if their child is going to be absent due to ill health (see section 4.2). You are expected to make a call each day your child is ill.

If a pupil's absence goes above 3 days, the school will contact the parent of the pupil to discuss the reasons for this.

If a pupil's absence continues to rise after contacting their parent, we will consider involving an education welfare officer.

The persistent absence threshold is 10%. If a pupil's individual overall absence rate is greater than or equal to 10%, the pupil will be classified as a persistent absentee.

Pupil-level absence data will be collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. The school will compare attendance data to the national average and share this with the governing board.

HISP Multi Academy Trust Portswood Primary School Attendance & Absence Policy

8. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the local authority or DfE is updated, and as a minimum yearly by Deputy Head of School Inclusions. At every review, the policy will be approved by the Trust.

9. Links with other policies

This policy links to the following policies:

- Child protection and safeguarding policy
- Behaviour policy

Appendix 1: attendance codes

The following codes are taken from the DfE's guidance on school attendance.

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	Pupil is present at morning registration
\	Present (pm)	Pupil is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Pupil arrives late before register has closed
B	Off-site educational activity	Pupil is at a supervised off-site educational activity approved by the school
D	Dual registered	Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
J	Interview	Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
P	Sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
V	Educational trip or visit	Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised, or approved, by the school
W	Work experience	Pupil is on a work experience placement

HISP Multi Academy Trust

Portswood Primary School

Attendance & Absence Policy

Code	Definition	Scenario
Authorised absence		
C	Authorised leave of absence	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
E	Excluded	Pupil has been excluded but no alternative provision has been made
H	Authorised holiday	Pupil has been allowed to go on holiday due to exceptional circumstances
I	Illness	School has been notified that a pupil will be absent due to illness
M	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment
R	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance
S	Study leave	Year 11 pupil is on study leave during their public examinations
T	Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence	Pupil from a Traveller community is travelling, as agreed with the school
Unauthorised absence		
G	Unauthorised holiday	Pupil is on a holiday that was not approved by the school
N	Reason not provided	Pupil is absent for an unknown reason (this code should be amended when the reason emerges, or replaced with code O if no reason for absence has

HISP Multi Academy Trust

Portswood Primary School

Attendance & Absence Policy

		been provided after a reasonable amount of time)
O	Unauthorised absence	School is not satisfied with reason for pupil's absence
U	Arrival after registration	Pupil arrived at school after the register closed

Code	Definition	Scenario
X	Not required to be in school	Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
Y	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances	School site is closed, there is disruption to travel as a result of a local/national emergency, or pupil is in custody
Z	Pupil not on admission register	Register set up but pupil has not yet joined the school
#	Planned school closure	Whole or partial school closure due to half-term/bank holiday/INSET day

HISP Multi Academy Trust Portswood Primary School Attendance & Absence Policy

Appendix 2: attendance letter 1

[Date]

Dear

Re:

According to our records, your child has been absent for the sessions that are listed on the attached slip.

Could you therefore complete the attached slip and return it or telephone the school, within 10 days in order that our records may be updated.

Thank you for your help in this matter.

Yours sincerely

Tony Head
Headteacher

.....

Class Teacher:

Pupil:

Dates and sessions of absences(s)

Reason(s)

Signed (Parent/Guardian)

HISP Multi Academy Trust Portswood Primary School Attendance & Absence Policy

Appendix 3: attendance letter 2

[Date]

Dear

Re:

With reference to my previous letter regarding absences for _____ we do not appear to have received a response. Your child has now had total of _____ unexplained sessions/days of absence which will affect his/her learning. Please find enclosed your child's attendance report.

As your child's attendance is at an unsatisfactory level, we would like to invite you into a meeting in school on _____ at _____ in order that this matter can be resolved.

If you do not attend this meeting and your child's attendance does not improve, we will have no alternative but to make a referral to the Education Welfare Service.

If you feel that school can offer you any support, please make an appointment through the school office.

Yours sincerely

Tony Head
Headteacher

HISP Multi Academy Trust Portswood Primary School Attendance & Absence Policy

Appendix 4: attendance letter 3

[Date]

Dear

Re:

Please find enclosed your child's latest Attendance Report. You will see that 's attendance is only percentage attendance, which means that he/she has had days of absence since September.

I understand that these absences have been due to holiday/illness but as 's attendance is less than/close to 80%, it could be/will be monitored by the Education Welfare Service and may be followed up by them.

Regular attendance is important to help your child achieve and reach their potential. Please try to ensure your child attends school regularly in the future.

If you feel that school can offer any support, please make an appointment through the school office.

Yours sincerely

Tony Head
Headteacher

HISP Multi Academy Trust Portswood Primary School Attendance & Absence Policy

Appendix 5: attendance letter 4

[Date]

Dear

Re:

As there has been little or no improvement regarding’s attendance and there has been no medical evidence to support these absences I have no option but to refer your child’s absence to the Education Welfare Service.

Yours sincerely

Tony Head
Headteacher

HISP Multi Academy Trust Portswood Primary School Attendance & Absence Policy

Appendix 6: attendance letter 4a

[Date]

Dear

Re:

As there has been little or no improvement regarding’s attendance I have no option but to refer your child’s absence to the Education Welfare Service.

Yours sincerely

Tony Head
Headteacher

HISP Multi Academy Trust Portswood Primary School Attendance & Absence Policy

Appendix 7: attendance letter 5

Dear Parent,

The Local Authority has brought to the attention of every school in Southampton the powers in the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 to tackle poor attendance.

This came into force 1 September 2007 and it will mean that the Education Welfare Service can issue Penalty Notices for pupils with unauthorised absence from school (i.e., absence that the school has not given permission for).

The Penalty Notice will be issued by post to a pupil's home, after one warning letter. Cases of unauthorised absence include pupils caught on Truancy Sweeps, persistent late attendance after the register has closed, internal truanting from lessons and unauthorised holiday. In the case of unauthorised holiday, a Penalty Notice may be issued straight away without a warning letter.

Penalty Notices provide an alternative to prosecution under s444 (1) of the Education Act 1996 and payment within 28 days of receipt of a Penalty Notice is £60 and if it remains unpaid after 28 days the amount will increase to £100. If a Penalty Notice remains unpaid after 42 days, the case will progress to the Magistrates Court for the original offence of poor attendance – this can mean a fine of up to £2500.

At Portswood Primary School we consider that regular attendance is so important and these new powers so significant that we are now bringing this legislation to the attention of every parent with a child in this school.

It means that any parent of a pupil with a level of unauthorised absence may now be issued with a Penalty Notice by the Education Welfare Service.

If you believe at any stage that your child's absence record from school may leave you liable to receive a Penalty Notice, it is extremely important that you take action to secure their regular attendance.

Support and guidance is always available from the school and the Education Welfare Service. If you have any questions regarding Penalty Notices or any other attendance issue, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Yours sincerely,

Education Welfare Service and Tony Head (Headteacher)

HISP Multi Academy Trust

Portswood Primary School

Attendance & Absence Policy

5 DAYS OF ABSENCE

If your child has five days of unauthorised absence during the year for a family holiday and takes no other time off for illness or other reasons, their attendance over the school year will be 97.4%.

PENALTY NOTICES

Unauthorised absence and persistent lateness may result in the issue of a Penalty Notice (currently £60.00) to each parent, for each child.

Five days of unauthorised absence which forms all or part of a family holiday will automatically result in the issue of a Penalty Notice to each parent, for each child.

What does your child's attendance figure mean as learning time lost?

Attendance Figure	Days absent by the end of the school year	School time missed by the end of Year 11
100%	0	0
95%	10	$\frac{1}{4}$ of the year
90%	20	$\frac{1}{2}$ of the year
85%	30	$\frac{3}{4}$ of the year
80%	40	1 whole year

HISP Multi Academy Trust Portswood Primary School Attendance & Absence Policy

Appendix 8: late letter 1

[Date]

Dear

Re:

It has been noticed that has been late into school times last week, which is causing some concern.

Unfortunately, pupils who arrive late after class has started can cause some disruption and a late mark is recorded against them.

May I remind you that pupils are allowed into the playground from 8.45am and it would therefore be appreciated if you could ensure that arrives at school before start of school at 8.55am.

Yours sincerely

Tony Head
Headteacher

HISP Multi Academy Trust Portswood Primary School Attendance & Absence Policy

Appendix 9: late letter 2

[Date]

Dear

Re:

Further to my previous letter, advising you that has been late into school, unfortunately there has been no improvement in his/her punctuality. He/She has arrived late into school a further ... times last week and this is causing concern as his/her class will have already started. This does cause disruption to the teacher and other pupils and late marks will be recorded on his/her school record.

If there are any concerns you wish to discuss with me, please contact the school to arrange an appointment but in the meantime, I look forward to seeing an improvement in’s punctuality.

Yours sincerely

Tony Head
Headteacher

HISP Multi Academy Trust Portswood Primary School Attendance & Absence Policy

Appendix 10: leave of absence request form

APPLICATION FOR LEAVE OF ABSENCE FOR EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES

Parents have a legal duty to ensure their child's attendance at school. At Portswood Primary School we may authorise leave of absence for exceptional circumstances. The Headteacher has to consider the reasons for the request, the effect of the continuity of the child's learning and his/her overall attendance.

(Leave of absence will not be authorised if your child's attendance is less than 95%)

If you take unauthorised holiday leave, then the School Attendance and Safeguarding Team may issue you with a penalty notice.

The application should be made well in advance and parents are strongly advised to apply for leave of absence as soon as reasonably possible. Please also provide evidence of why you need to take leave, such as flight confirmation or appointment letter.

You will receive a response to this request within 5 days.

✂.....

To the Headteacher, Portswood Primary School.

Child's Name Class

I apply for leave of absence for my child.

Number of school days:

First day of absence: Last day of absence:

Please give the reasons which prevent this holiday being taken during a school holiday period:

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

Supporting evidence attached

Signed: Date:

HISP Multi Academy Trust

Portswood Primary School

Attendance & Absence Policy

APPLICATION FOR LEAVE OF ABSENCE FOR EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES
Cont....

5 DAYS OF ABSENCE

If your child has 5 days of unauthorised absence for a family holiday or authorised absence during the year for a family holiday and takes no other time off for illness or other reasons, their attendance over the school year will be 97.4%

PENALTY NOTICES

Unauthorised absence and persistent lateness may result in the issue of a Penalty Notice (currently £60.00) to each parent, for each child.

Five days of unauthorised absence which forms all or part of a family holiday will automatically result in the issue of a Penalty Notice to each parent, for each child.

SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

If your leave absence goes beyond your original request, we will require further evidence to support your reasons for not returning. This could include original flight details and amendments, or medical proof.

What does your child's attendance figure mean as learning time lost?

Attendance Figure	Days absent by the end of the school year	School time missed by the end of Year 11.
100%	0	0
95%	10	¼ of the year
90%	20	½ of the year
85%	30	¾ of the year
80%	40	1 Whole year