



Halfway Nursery Infant School

Attendance Policy

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Contents:

1. Introduction
2. Aim of the policy
3. The Law Relating to Attendance
4. What the School Expects of Pupils
5. What the School Expects of Parents/Carers
6. Term-time Holidays
7. What Parents/Pupils Can Expect of the School
8. Issue of Fines
9. Understanding Different Types of Absence
10. Persistent Absenteeism (PA)
11. Attendance Procedures
12. Responding to Lateness
13. Responding to Attendance Issues
14. Responding to Absence - Support from Multi Agency Support Team (MAST)
15. Promoting Regular Attendance
16. Safeguarding
17. Children Missing from Education
18. Children Looked After
19. Contacting Parents/Carers
20. School Attendance Officer
21. Requests for Leave of Absences
22. Summary
23. Appendices

HALFWAY NURSERY INFANT SCHOOL ATTENDANCE AND PUNCTUALITY POLICY

This policy has been developed in conjunction with DfE and LA Guidance.

(Reference to Parent/Carer throughout this document also includes any person who has parental responsibility or who cares for children.)

Good attendance and punctuality are vital if pupils are to achieve their maximum potential. Halfway Nursery Infant School is committed to working with parents/carers and pupils to ensure that each pupil benefits from the academic, personal and social opportunities available to them during their years with us. Children who miss out on education are at an immediate disadvantage relative to their peers and at a great cost to themselves and the community as a whole.

- Only 30% of pupils with attendance of 90% and below achieve good outcomes.
- 90% of pupils with attendance of 96% or more achieve good outcomes.

By working together, with families, we can keep absence at school to the lowest possible figure. This will ensure that children get the absolute most from their education at school. The young child, however, is dependent upon the adults in his/her life to get them to school regularly and on time. The focus in both Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 programmes is to establish good habits and to work with parent/carers to improve attendance.

We work closely with other schools in our locality and are committed to a Family of Schools approach to attendance and a partnership relationship with parent/carers.

Aims

- To encourage all pupils to achieve their maximum potential.
- To raise awareness of the importance of attendance and its impact on progress and attainment.
- To recognise pupils who achieve more than 96% attendance during the school year.
- To give additional and special recognition to pupils who achieve 100% attendance.
- To encourage parents/carers to play a vital role in supporting the school and encouraging their child to reach good attendance levels.
- To monitor and track pupils' attendance and punctuality through effective systems.
- To utilise this information to support the school and parents to improve attendance.
- To address poor attendance through clear, consistent and effective procedures.

School Attendance Target - 96%

The Law relating to attendance (Section 444 of the Education Act 1996)

- Parents must ensure that children of compulsory school age, who are registered at a school, attend regularly.
- The Sheffield Children and Young People & Families (CYPF) must provide a school place to parents who wish their child to be educated at school.
- The school must complete attendance registers at the beginning of the morning and afternoon sessions.

- The Local Authority has a duty to ensure that parents fulfil their legal responsibilities.
- Failure by parents to ensure the regular attendance at school of a registered pupil is an offence punishable by law.

Expectations

What parents/carers and pupils can expect of the school:

- Provide a broad and balanced education that is dependent on regular attendance at school.
- Encourage and celebrate good attendance and punctuality through certificates, letters home and a very special attendance reward at the end of the year.
- Make accurate recordings of attendances and punctuality and ensure that any barriers to attendance is dealt with efficiently.
- Attendance information is included during parent consultation meetings and end of year reports.
- Attendance Policy available via the school website
- Make first day contact with parents/carers when a pupil fails to attend school and hasn't given a valid reason for absence.
- Inform parents/carers if a pupil's attendance and/ or punctuality has fallen below the expected school target of 96% and/or at risk of falling into PA (Persistent Absence). Notification to parents/carers of attendance and punctuality will operate through a system of telephone calls, letters and reports home.
- Support for parents/carers where attendance and/or punctuality falls below 93% will be offered to improve attendance and/or punctuality. Where appropriate, other services such as the Local Authority may be also invited to the meeting.
- The school works within the framework of the Sheffield City Council "School Guidance for the management of Attendance".

What the school expects of our pupils:

- To attend regularly and on time, ready to learn.
- To be prepared for the day with any appropriate equipment e.g. PE kit, school uniform and appropriate clothing for visits etc.
- To report to the school office, should they arrive after the official registration time.
- To tell a member of staff if there is any problem which may prevent them from attending school.
- To work towards a target of at least 96% attendance

What the school expects of parents/carers:

- It is vitally important that parents are actively involved in promoting good attendance and fulfil their legal parental responsibility by ensuring their children attend school regularly.
- To report any absences to the school office by 9:30am each day via the telephone, absence line or email. Telephone number 0114 2482360. *It is a legal requirement of parents to inform school of a child's absence on the first day and thereafter should the absence continue.*
- Ensure your child arrives on time and is well prepared for the school day.

- Parents are encouraged to make contact with school to discuss any issues that are or could be impacting on their child's attendance.
- Contact the school in confidence whenever any problem occurs that may keep your child away from school.
- Inform the school of any forthcoming appointments and, where possible, arrange appointments outside of the school day.
- Where appointments are booked for after 11am, pupils must attend school first. For any appointments before 1:30pm, the pupil needs to return to school as soon as possible.
- Provide medical/ circumstantial evidence for absences of more than 4 days and where an illness falls on either side of an unauthorised holiday taken.
- If a pupil leaves the school premises with a parent/carer for any reason during the school day, staff will ensure that this is recorded (together with signing back in if they return) to comply with Health & Safety Regulations.
- Take holidays during the school holiday period and not during term time. Holidays taken during school time will not be authorised and may be fineable. Illness absence, falling alongside a holiday, may not be automatically authorised. In line with the Sheffield City Council policy for "Exceptional Leave during Term Time", if parents choose to take their child on holiday in term time, they may be issued with a fixed penalty notice (a fine).
- To understand that the Headteacher does not have the option to authorise term time holidays unless exceptional circumstance can be applied.

Term-time Leave

All requests (one form per child, per request) for term time leave must be made to the Headteacher on the *Leave of Absence in Term Time Request Form*, available from the school office or website, 20 days in advance of the leave of absence. A return date must be provided and a prompt return is essential.

Only in exceptional circumstances will request of leave in term time be authorised.

An example of exceptional circumstances may be: religious observation; approved sporting activity or bereavement where the family must travel together, abroad, to a funeral. If the visit abroad is for the wedding of a close family member, the day of the wedding will be authorised but surrounding days will not.

For further guidance on exceptional circumstances please refer to the policy on 'Exceptional Leave during Term Time'. This can be found on the school website under the policy section.

Legally there is no entitlement for parents to take their child on holiday during term time and unauthorised absence may result in prosecution. If the request for exceptional leave/ term time absence is not authorised by the school, and a fixed penalty fine is issued, any further correspondence must be made through the Local Authority as per the letter received.

If queries are raised about holidays, parents/carers may be asked to provide evidence of the days taken e.g. flight tickets or accommodation receipts.

If the school has reason to believe a term time leave has been taken without request, it is the parents' responsibility to prove otherwise (e.g. doctor's appointment card, proof of medication etc).

Please be aware that absence fines from the Local Authority **do not** come back into school; the Local Authority reinvests this money into education across the city.

Irregular attendance

When a pupil's attendance falls to 90% or below this is considered as irregular attendance which may result in prosecution (fixed penalty notice) under section 444 of the Education Act and Anti-Social behaviour Act 2003. If there is no improvement parents/carers will be asked to attend Attendance Concern Meetings. Where appropriate, other services such as the Local Authority may also be invited to the meeting.

Exclusion

It is the parents' responsibility to ensure that during the first five days of a period of pupil exclusion (whether fixed-term or permanent), they make sure that the excluded child, who is of compulsory school age, is not present in a public place during school hours, unless there is a reasonable justification.

There are three occasions where a fine can be issued:

1. Holidays taken in term time.
2. Irregular attendance and/or punctuality at school.
3. Excluded child in a public place during the first 5 days of exclusion.

Understanding Different Types of Absence

Only school can authorise absence as authorised or unauthorised, not parents. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required to ensure a pupil's attendance is correctly categorised.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for an acceptable reason, for example: illness and/or medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in the school day, emergencies or other unavoidable reasons.

If your child has a medical appointment within the school day, medical evidence is needed e.g. appointment letter/ card or confirmation appointment on parent's mobile phone

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider to be reasonable and for which no "leave" has been given. This type of absence can lead to a fixed penalty notice and/or prosecution. This includes:

- Parents keeping children away from school unnecessarily.
- Truancy during the school day.
- Absence that has never been properly explained.
- Shopping, looking after other children or birthdays.
- Day trips and holidays in term time.

Whilst most pupils will be away from school because of illness, some individuals can be reluctant to attend. Any such problems with regular attendance are best resolved between the school, the child and the family. If a parent thinks their child is reluctant to attend school, then we

encourage the family to work with all involved to understand the root problem. When necessary we engage the support of other agencies such as the Local Authority.

The fact that a parent has sent a note or other notification (telephone call or personal contact) in relation to a child's absence does not mean that the absence is automatically coded as authorised.

Persistent Absenteeism (PA) less than 90% attendance

A pupil is classified as a 'persistent absentee' if they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's education prospects and we need parent/carers fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

The school and Local Authority will monitor all absence thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority and you will be informed of this immediately. Illness will not be authorised without medical/ circumstantial evidence for pupils classified as persistently absent.

ATTENDANCE PROCEDURES

The school will monitor and record attendance using class registration systems:

- Any child arriving after their registration time must report to the school office, providing a reason for their late arrival. They will be marked as being late (L). The morning register closes at 9:30am. If a child arrives after this time it will be recorded as an unauthorised absence (U), unless proof of a medical appointment is presented to the school office.

Please contact the school as soon as possible on the first day (and thereafter) of absence before 9:30am on 0114 2482360. We will call you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you and could invite you in to discuss the situation.

The school will respond to lateness (punctuality) in the following ways:

- Pupils arriving after morning or afternoon registration will report to the school office, where a late record will be completed (time and reason for the lateness recorded by the parent/carer when they sign them in. If a parent/carer is not present a phone call will be made so we can record this information).
- Persistent lateness will be discussed with parents/carers during parent consultation meetings and also with the school attendance team should this be necessary.
- Referrals may be made to external agencies within the Local Authority to assist and support pupils and their families in arriving at school on time.
- Punctuality fining

Dealing with absence

- Attendance will be monitored to achieve the school target of 96%. Children achieving or exceeding this will receive a green attendance letter.

- **Attendance below 96%** will be closely monitored by school. If attendance continues to fall, parents may be asked to provide medical evidence to support unexplained absences. This will result in a written notification to parents to bring this to their attention and offer support if it is felt necessary (Amber letter - See the school's response to poor attendance stated in the section below.)
- **Attendance below 90%** will be closely monitored by school and the Local Authority. Parents may be invited to a professionals meeting to discuss the reasons for continued absence. The aim of this will be to identify any issues and provide support to ensure the child's attendance improves (red letter also issued).
- **Attendance below 90%** may be subject to prosecution.

Parents are required to contact the school on the first day of their child's absence, either by telephone or email, stating the reason for absence and the expected date of return. If an absence continues, parents are requested to contact the school office again on the second day and thereafter.

As a safeguarding precaution, telephone contact is made with parents/carers of any pupil who is absent where school has not been provided with a reason for absence. This is made on the morning of the absence by 9:30am.

Absence will only be authorised when a satisfactory reason has been provided by the parent or carer. In cases where parents have been asked to provide medical evidence for absence, this should be taken to the office in order for the absence to be authorised.

Home contact will be made by the school if several day's absences remain unauthorised. If this is unsuccessful then the case may be referred to the Local Authority, where 'Child Missing from Education' procedures may commence.

The school's response to poor attendance

- Attendance is monitored, and any areas of concern are identified, regularly by the school's attendance team and the Local Authority.
- Where there is a concern over a child's absence, initial communication is made with the parents and appropriate support is offered. This will include written notification (amber/red letters etc.), telephone conversation or during an arranged meeting.
- Where attendance is seen as a concern e.g. if the trend is not improving, support from the Local Authority may be requested.
- Parents will be kept informed about their child's attendance. This may be via a conversation with the class teacher, school's attendance team, a letter or end of term attendance certificate.
- Where persistent non-attendance continues to be an issue, parents may be asked to provide evidence of attendance at all medical appointments.
- Where there is no improvement in attendance, a referral will be made to the Local Authority.
- Each case will be dealt with depending on needs and circumstances.

Safeguarding

Your child may be at risk of harm if they do not attend school regularly. Safeguarding the interests of each child is everyone's responsibility and within the context of this school, promoting the welfare and life opportunities for your child encompasses: -

- Attendance
- Behaviour Management
- Health and Safety
- Access to the Curriculum
- Anti-bullying
- Failing to attend school on a regular basis must be considered as a safeguarding concern, this will be reported to Social Care professionals.

Roles and Responsibilities

Governors

- Reports on persistent absences will be monitored by Governors and the Local Authority.
- Have a named governor with responsibility for attendance.

The Senior Leadership Team

- Has overall responsibility for attendance within the school
- Has responsibility for reviewing and updating the Attendance Policy in line with local/national changes.
- Provides advice and support to school staff regarding attendance and punctuality issues
- Liaises with the named governor and LA
- Provide reports to governors each term
- Works with colleagues to implement targets, review statistics and amend the policy as necessary
- Works with other schools and agencies to promote attendance and punctuality within the Family of Schools
- Has responsibility for monitoring the progress of children Looked After by the LA
- Has responsibility for investigating and, where necessary, reporting incidents of children who are Missing from Education.
- The School has been given authorisation from the Child Missing in Education (CME) Team to remove a child from role when the child has been continuously absent for a period of not less than 20 school days, absence has been unauthorised and both the school and local authority have been unable, after reasonable enquiries, to ascertain where the child is.

The School Attendance Admin Officer/s

- Ensure attendance is closely and carefully monitored.
- Receive, update and maintain accurate class registers in line with Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006
- Maintain SIMS attendance database.

- Ensure correct codes are allocated for absences.
- Meet weekly to review attendance for each class and pupil. Agree action for any attendance concerns.
- Where a specific need has been highlighted, ensure medical evidence is requested and followed up.
- Have responsibility for ensuring parents/carers have access to accurate information and appropriate forms.
- Provide relevant information to LA officers making contact with families regarding attendance and punctuality.
- Have responsibility for investigating and, where necessary, reporting incidents of children who are 'Missing from Education'.
- Prepare requests for a penalty notice to be made to the LA.
- Have responsibility for ensuring requests for term time leave are dealt with in a timely and effective manner in line with the school policy on attendance.

Parents/carers are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any problems together. We will always try to resolve the attendance issues by agreement, however if efforts to try to improve the child's attendance fail and unauthorised absences persist, sanctions such as fixed Penalty Notices and/or prosecutions will be pursued.

Children Missing from Education

The school's Attendance Team liaise with the children and Young People's Directorate Children Missing from Education Team. Pupils who cannot be located will be considered missing. The Children Missing from Education Team will be informed and will pursue the matter in accordance with Local Authority procedures.

Children Looked After

The nominated 'Looked After' member of school staff liaises with the Children and Young People's Directorate Children Looked After Team. Looked After Children will be set up as a discrete attendance group on the school motoring system and individual attendance checked each half term.

Summary

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents and to promote attendance. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend. School staff are committed to working with parents as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible.

The Headteacher, or staff delegated by her will be responsible for analysis of attendance data and for the administration of procedures deemed necessary following any unusual trends in attendance. If possible data should be used in a positive way to help form class or whole school targets. Wherever possible positive action will be taken by the school to improve a pupil's attendance and investigate and address any underlying cause of problems before considering whether to make a referral to Local Authority.