

Heelands School



Resilience, Responsibility, Respect, Restorative

ATTENDANCE POLICY

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Attendance Policy

At Heelands, we recognise the importance of regular school attendance and believe that children can only learn effectively if they attend school regularly. It is also vitally important that children arrive and leave school on time.

Pupils need to attend regularly if they are to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them. Irregular attendance seriously disrupts continuity of learning, undermines the educational process and leads to underachievement and low attainment.

The Law

By law, all children of compulsory school age must receive suitable education. Parents are responsible for making sure this happens, either by registering the child at a school or by arranging an effective alternative to school.

Local Authorities have various powers to ensure that parents meet their duties.

Responsibilities of Parents

All requests for leave of absence during term time must be made on a leave of absence form (*Appendix A*) obtained from the school office. Parents will be informed of the outcome of their request by letter (*Appendix B*)

There are legal obligations on parents to secure education for their children of compulsory school age, whether at school or otherwise, and to send them to school regularly once they are on the school roll. It is your legal responsibility to ensure your child's fullest possible attendance during school hours.

If children are to achieve their attendance targets, parents must see themselves as partners with the school in their children's education, and support the school in the following ways:

- ensure the fullest possible attendance
- when absence is unavoidable, please contact the school by telephone by 9am
- when absence continues for more than a day, contact the school by phone, or in person
- ensure that their child arrives at school on time for 9am registration

If a child has started at Heelands, it is understood that the parents/ carers are making a commitment to set the standard of excellent attendance, even if the child starts when four years old.

The Role of Ofsted

The school's Ofsted grade is dependent on pupil's attendance and punctuality and it is important that parents support the school to achieve high attendance and punctuality.

Ofsted Handbook April 2024

A good school is when:

- Pupils have high attendance. They come to school on time and are punctual to lessons. When this is not the case, the school takes appropriate, swift and effective action.

- There is demonstrable improvement in the behaviour and attendance of pupils who have particular needs.

The Role of the School

It is the responsibility of the school to support attendance and to deal with problems which may lead to non-attendance. The school will employ strategies to improve and encourage good attendance. The Headteacher will inform governors termly of the school's attendance analysis.

The Importance of Registration

Registers are important legal documents and are kept securely. The law requires schools to call the register twice-a-day:

- at the start of the morning session, 8.50am
- once during the afternoon session. At Heelands the register is called at the start of the afternoon session, 1pm

Calling the register is a key part of the school day and should be seen as such by staff, children and parents. Children are marked either present or absent. Particular attention is given to accurate registration; staff use consistent rules and coding for registration.

When a child is absent, the register must also show whether the absence was authorised by the school or unauthorised. This information is entered onto the computer by an office administrator.

Notification of Absence

All parents are asked to contact school if their child is absent before 8.50am, giving a reason for the absence. This can be done by:

- **Telephone, option 1:** an office administrator will then pass the message to the class teacher and enter the reason for absence directly onto SIMs
- **Email: office@heelands.milton-keynes.sch.uk.** This will inform the office administrator who will enter the reason for absence onto SIMs

If no notification is received about a child's absence, the following protocol will be actioned:

- Call to parents using the priority listing on contact sheets
- Should no contact be made, a home visit may take place by a member of school staff and it will be recorded on 'Safeguard my School'.

School Responses to Absence

Authorised and Unauthorised Absence

Where a child is absent at the time of registration, the law requires schools to indicate on their attendance register whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised.

Authorised absence means that the school has either given approval in advance for the child to be away or that an explanation offered afterwards has been accepted. The law requires that absences not agreed in advance are recorded as unauthorised, unless (and until) a satisfactory explanation is given.

By law, only the school can approve absence, not parents. The school need not accept a parental explanation for a child's absence if it doubts the explanation. If the school is satisfied that the circumstances are both genuine and exceptional, the absence may be authorised.

Excessive amounts of authorised absence can disrupt continuity of learning. The school will, therefore, watch for emerging patterns of authorised absence by individual children.

Examples of Unauthorised Absence

The school cannot accept any of the following as a reason to authorise an absence:

- shopping during school hours;
- special occasions, e.g. birthdays;
- no uniform, shoes, etc.;
- overslept;
- haircut;
- false illnesses;
- at home due to family illness.
- Children arriving at school after the register has closed (arriving after 09:10)
- Family Holidays
- Routine dental appointments

Parents can support their child by:

- Ensuring regular and early bedtimes
- Helping with homework
- Having uniform and equipment prepared the night before
- Providing a healthy breakfast
- Reporting any academic or social concerns promptly
- Retaining open and honest communication with your child's school
- Leaving home in good time to arrive at school punctually
- Being positive about school (even if your own experience was less than positive)

Holidays During Term Time

- Headteachers are no longer allowed to authorise requests for children to be taken out of school in term time for holiday. If you take a holiday which is not authorised by the school then they may refer the matter to the Local Authority who will consider the issue of a Fixed Penalty Notice. Summerfield follows the Local Authorities guidance.
- If Parents/Carers take children out of school for a holiday, which results in the child missing 10 or more sessions, (5 school days) a referral may be sent to the Local Authority. Fixed Penalty Notices (FPN) are issued to each parent and are for each child. A FPN is £60 if paid within 21 days, and £120 if paid between 22 and 28 days. If the fine is not paid, parents will be prosecuted in the magistrates' court.
- The school will follow the guidance as set out in the 'School Attendance Enforcement Policy in relation to non-school attendance and Code of Conduct for the issue of Fixed Penalty Notices'.

Examples of Authorised Absence

- *Sickness/Illness of the Child:* if the school is satisfied that a child is absent as a result of illness, the absence must be treated as authorised. Where there is doubt about the authenticity of absence attributed to illness, the school can refer the matter to the School Nursing Team or make contact with the child's GP, with parental permission, or request the parent provides evidence of each illness, as advised on the medical card (*Appendix C*). If a child is absent for a prolonged period, or the school notices a pattern of absence emerging, early contact will be made with the School Nursing Team.

- *Medical and Dental Appointments:* leave for medical or dental appointments requested by the organisation for treatment or procedures may be authorised (however this will still be recorded as an absence from school). Proof of appointment will be required. Where possible, parents should make such appointments out of school hours. Routine dental checks should be taken out of school hours.
- Where a child is present for registration, but then has to leave school to attend an appointment, this will be recorded on 'Entry Sign' The school's signing in and out system. Lateness will also be recorded on Entry Sign, as well as when a child comes in late due to an appointment
- *Close Family Bereavement:* the school will respond sensitively to requests for leave of absence for close family bereavements.
- *Days of Religious Observance:* children may be absent from school in order to participate in a day set aside exclusively for religious observance by the religious body to which the parents belong. Parents should give the school advance notification of religious observance days on a leave of absence form (*Appendix A*).

Both in the school prospectus, at the new intake evening, and as part of a new child induction pack, parents are informed that family holidays within term time will not be authorised so that their child's education is not disrupted. Parents will also be reminded termly in a Headteacher's newsletter.

In exceptional circumstances parents are asked to write a letter to the Headteacher outlining the circumstances. A meeting may be organised with the Headteacher to discuss the request focusing on the child's progress, current attendance, any previous term time absences, whether the absence coincides with a key assessment period and also the nature of exceptional circumstance. The school will respond in writing to these requests.

If a family takes extended leave their child's place at Heelands may be at risk if they fail to return to school on the agreed date. Subsequently, a meeting will take place to discuss the child's place where the parents will have the opportunity to provide evidence of extenuating circumstances. If the child's place has been withdrawn; following this meeting, the parents will need to reapply to the local authority for a school place. Parents need to be aware that this may not necessarily be at Heelands School.

Exclusions

Where a child has been suspended or permanently excluded, he or she will remain on the school roll. The absence will be regarded as authorised. Once a permanent exclusion is confirmed, the child will be removed from the school roll.

Parental Concerns

Children learn best when they are happy and relaxed. All the staff at Heelands are concerned about children's regular attendance and the importance of continuity in each child's learning. They are also concerned about each child's safety, welfare and happiness.

Parents are asked to share any worries their child might have in school. Sometimes, little things upset children, which mean they become unhappy and may not want to attend school. Parents are encouraged to bring their child to school, so that reasons for the child not wanting to attend can be discussed and, hopefully, resolved.

The class teacher or a member of the support staff team will talk to the child concerned to find out if there are any worries or problems in school that might make that child not want to attend. If there are, then these will be discussed with the parent/guardian and appropriate action taken.

Lateness

It is our policy at Heelands to actively discourage the late arrival of children at school. Classroom doors open at 8.45am and all children are encouraged to arrive then. A child who arrives late may seriously disrupt not only his or her continuity of learning, but also that of others. A firm line is taken on late arrivals. Where children miss registration altogether, they are marked in late along with their time of arrival with the reason for lateness. Particular attention is paid to emerging patterns of late arrival. If a child is regularly late for school or is often absent, then the Attendance Lead or Headteacher will contact the parent concerned to notify them about this. If a child arrives between 8.50am and 9.10am then they will be considered late. Arrival after 9.10am is an unauthorised absence as the school registers are closed from this time. Persistent lateness can result in a penalty notice. Parents may be phoned to discuss how the child's punctuality can be improved (*Appendix D*)

Communication with Pupils

At Heelands we believe that children need to develop an awareness of the importance of good attendance and punctuality. Attendance is celebrated regularly in the following ways to support this:

- Weekly Attendance trophy awarded to the classes with the highest attendance.
- Attendance display in the school hall to celebrate achievements.
- Termly certificates are awarded to children who achieve 100% attendance.
- Certificates for improved attendance will be awarded when appropriate.
- School newsletters regularly identify class attendance.
- Medals awarded at the end of the school year for 100% attendance for the year.

Communication with Parents

As attendance is crucial to effective learning and the continuity of learning experiences, the school places great emphasis on this in its communication with parents.

- All children, including those joining mid-year, are issued with a copy of 'Attendance Matters' (*Appendix E*). (Dual language versions are available and advertised)
- **School Prospectus:** information on lateness, illness and absence is given to parents in the school prospectus. This highlights the importance of being at school on time and notifying school if their child is absent for any reason.
- **Children starting in Early Years:** Early Years staff liaise with pre-schools to discuss any attendance issues. At the new intake evening held for children about to enter our Foundation Stage, the importance of regular attendance is discussed and explained. This talk also includes parents and children arriving at school on time so that each child can be given the best possible start to each school day. Being collected at the end of the day on time is also stressed, especially for young children who can be very upset if they are the only child left in the building. This information is repeated by Early Years staff when they conduct their home visits prior to children starting school. Two members of staff conduct home visits.
- **Mobile Children:** children are also admitted to school at various times of the year into various year groups. All parents requesting a place are given a tour of the school. Upon allocation of a place, an appointment for the parent to meet the Headteacher or Deputy Head will be

made. At this meeting, the importance of regular attendance will be highlighted, along with other school routines.

- **Parent Consultation Meetings:** individual attendance data is shared at parent consultation meetings and discussions take place where attendance or lateness may be an issue.

Monitoring Attendance

The Attendance team looks at individual pupil attendance regularly and analyses individual data using the timeline below. This timeline can be accelerated for cases of severely poor attendance. The order of follow-up is usually in this order:

- Stage One Letter which makes the parent/ carer aware of concerns over attendance.
- Stage Two phone call and follow up letter. This call is used to make the parent aware of the concerns over attendance, find out if there are any issues inside or outside school causing the issues, set a target for attendance for the next review and see what support needs to be in place to help this target be achieved.
- Stage Three attendance interview followed by a warning letter.
- Fixed Penalty Notice
- PACE interview with senior attendance officer from the Local Authority.

If attendance improves then a letter is sent to parents to inform them of the improvements and to congratulate the child. Attendance review flow charts will be followed at a review (*Appendix I*)

July/ September	Write to all families whose children were classed as persistently absent (PA) for the year (<i>Appendix F</i>). Medical card included to be stamped by a doctor for every incidence of illness from September
Mid October	1 st attendance review
End November	Attendance week and Attendance Matters newsletter sent out.
Mid December	2 nd attendance review
Beginning of January	Update of PA list to include Autumn PA data – PA letter to go out (<i>Appendix G</i>)
Mid January	Attendance Matters newsletter sent out.
Beginning of February	Review attendance
End of March	Review attendance
End of April	Update of PA list to include Spring PA data – PA letter to go out
End of May	Review attendance
Beginning of June	Attendance week and Attendance Matters newsletter sent out.
End of June	Review attendance
Beginning of July	Write to all parents of PA children for the year informing them of how their attendance etc will be monitored the following academic year (<i>Appendix F</i>) and include a copy of Attendance Matters leaflet (not newsletter).

The Role of School Staff

Attendance guidance for staff will be shared annually with all staff (*Appendix H*)

The Role of the LA

LAs are charged in law with enforcing school attendance and must ensure that schools and parents are fulfilling their statutory obligations including, where necessary, the taking of action through the courts.