

Hartsfield JMI School



Attendance Policy and Procedure

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Amended Sept 2022 re reflect
change in school day.

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Hartsfield Attendance Policy and Procedure

This policy should be read in conjunction with any time bound County and National guidance regarding, for example, the coding and reporting for Covid related absences.

Context:

At Hartsfield School we believe good attendance is essential if a child is going to receive the best education possible whilst at school. Children with good attendance come to school even when they are slightly under the weather. They also arrive at school on time so that they enter school every day in a calm and systematic way.

When children are extremely ill, for example, with a very high temperature, sickness or diarrhoea we would not expect them to attend school. However, if a child has, for example, a cold they can still attend school. If we feel that a child is struggling and appears to be too ill to be at school, we will always telephone parents to let them know. Our "Supporting Children with Medical Needs at School" policy explains how we can assist with medical needs at school such as with administering prescribed medications on behalf of parents.

Evidence suggests that:

- Overall, children with the highest attendance will make the most academic progress
- Socially, children find it very difficult to settle at school if they are often late or absent.

For these reasons we work very closely with parents to ensure that children are on time and attend well. On the rare occasion that a pupil's attendance drops below 95%, the Local Authority Attendance Officer may intervene. The Attendance Office works closely with the school and parents to ensure that attendance improves. This is because attendance at school is a legal requirement.

In order to promote good attendance, school will:

- Send children home if they are too ill to stay at school.
- Support parents if they are having difficulties at home and children's school attendance suffers because of this. We will support pupils' medical needs at school.

We expect that parents will:

- Book family holidays out of term time only.

Procedure for absence

Parents need to ensure that their children are ready for school and outside their classroom door by 8.45am.

To report an absence, parents must telephone/ email the school before 9.00am each day that their child is absent from school.

Children must always remain absent from school for a 48 hours after any illness that includes vomiting.

At 8.50 am each day the members of staff will close the cloakroom doors to all classrooms. If parents arrive after 8.50 am, their child/children will need to enter via the office and will be reported as late in the register for that day.

If school do not hear from parents as to why the child is absent by 9.30 am, school will phone/ text/ email the parents and all other contacts listed on the school's database to see what is preventing the child from attending school that day.

If school still do not know the reason for non-attendance by 10am as we have not heard from the family, this becomes a safeguarding concern. A senior member of staff and another school colleague will visit the known address of the child to ascertain the child's whereabouts and well-being. If the child is well enough to return to school with the staff members, they will invite the parent to allow the child to return to school with them.

If no contact can be made following a visit and the earlier phone calls/ texts/ emails, then the school will inform the police of a welfare concern. School has a duty of care to do this if we do not know where a child is or how they are, during normal school hours.

Authorising Absence

School can authorise absence for a number of reasons. These include:

- Sickness
- Medical/dental appointments
- Approved educational activities
- Religious observations
- Family bereavement
- Interviews at another school- for example at secondary transfer
- Educational activities such as residential trips.

Holidays will not be authorised by the school, unless there are exceptional circumstances such as terminal illness in the family. Requests for such circumstances will be considered by the Headteacher on an individual basis.

In cases of absence due to serious and prolonged illness, school will discuss with parents on an individual basis about possible phased return to school. School can plan with parents to provide education at home for pupils who are likely to be absent for a number of weeks due to health issues. School will contact the Educational Support for Medical Absences team (ESTMA) to see if home tutoring can be arranged.

Monitoring

Attendance and lateness are monitored internally each term. A minimum of 95% attendance is expected by the Local Authority.

Letters are sent to parents where lateness and/or absences are unsatisfactory. We will offer to meet with parents and offer them support- for example, referral to the school nursing team or our family worker. We will monitor the outcome of this offer of support and any agreed actions.

If this situation continues and the agreed actions and support do not result in improved attendance/ punctuality, the Headteacher will escalate the situation by contacting parents by letter/ phone call or email to log our concerns more formally. Parents are invited to discuss the situation.

School will discuss the absences/ lateness with the Local Authority's Attendance Improvement Officer (AIO.)

Persistent Absenteeism

If absenteeism/ lateness continues, in agreement with the AIO, school will refer the child/ family to them. The AIO will request an 'Early Intervention Meeting' between the AIO and the parents to agree actions on how the situation can be improved. Following the guidance of our Local Education Authority, school can request evidence of absences due to sickness, such as doctor's appointment cards, to be able to authorise these absences.

If all of the offers of support are not fruitful, school may issue a Penalty Notice, in line with the Herts. County Council guidelines. School will consider if the child's needs are being met and if the child is being neglected, as a result of non-attendance at school, school will report this to Children's Services.

Holidays

Changes to legislation, which came into force in September 2013, made clear that Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances.

If there are exceptional circumstances behind parent's request, they should discuss these with the Headteacher. If your child is absent from school because of a holiday which has not been agreed this will be classified as an unauthorised absence and you may be fined or legal action taken against you. In addition, we are also required to inform the Local Authority when any holidays of over 10 days or more are taken.

Penalty Notices

1. Should your child reach **5** unauthorised sessions (a session is a half day) in the current and/or previous term we will send a Penalty Notice warning letter to parents with parental responsibility.
2. Should your child reach **15** unauthorised sessions (a session is a half day) in the current and/or previous term, a Penalty Notice order will be applied for by the school. The absences may have occurred in a single block or a series of odd days and/or unauthorised holiday.

The local authority issues penalty notices on behalf of Hertfordshire schools to ensure consistency and in the event that a prosecution may need to be brought against the parent(s).

Should you receive a fine for persistent and/or unauthorised absence, details are below:

£60 per child per parent (if paid within 21 days of receipt of the notice)

£120 per child per parent (if paid after 21 days but within 28 days of receipt of the notice)

If the penalty notice is not paid fully by the end of the 28-day period, the local authority must prosecute for the offence under section 444 of the education act 1996 or withdraw the notice.

Further information can be obtained from:

<https://www.gov.uk/school-attendance-absence/legal-action-to-enforce-school-attendance>

Part- time timetables

Rarely, it may be suggested that a child has a part-time timetable for a short time. This is where the hours a child spends at school each day are reduced for a period of time and work is set for the child to complete while they are at home. This is always done in conjunction with an outside agency such as the North Herts. Education Support Centre and a Pastoral Support Plan will always be in place.

School will report this to the Local Authority and our Governing Body for their records. This is only a last resort and a short-term intervention and school will work to increase to time the child is in school.

Sometimes children with particular needs such as diagnosed autism who are joining the school will be allowed to make a phased introduction to the school. This would mean building the length of time attended at school up to full time over a couple of weeks. This is always done in collaboration with the parents and in the child's best interest.

Children who are “missing from education”/ start to be home educated

If children who are on roll with our school cannot be contacted, for example if we believe that the family has moved away without informing us, the children are said to be missing from education and we will notify our Attendance Officer (AIO) of this and seek advice. If parent(s) notify our Headteacher in writing that they intend to home-educate their child, we will pass this information onto the Local Authority within 5 working days before taking them off roll.