



HARMONY
Primary School

Attendance Policy

Sep 2023 V4.0

Introduction and Background

Harmony Primary recognises that positive behaviour and good attendance are essential in order to raise standards of pupil attainment and to give every child/young person the best educational experience possible.

This policy is written with the above statement in mind and underpins our school ethos to:

- promote children's welfare and safeguarding
- ensure every pupil has access to the full time education to which they are entitled
- ensure that pupils succeed whilst at school
- ensure that pupils have access to the widest possible range of opportunities at school, and when they leave school

For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. **It is a rule of this school that pupils must attend every day, unless there are exceptional circumstances and it is the *headteacher*, not the parent, who can authorise the absence.**

Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any pupil's absence or late arrival disrupts teaching routines and so may affect the learning of others in the same class. Ensuring a child's regular attendance at school is a parental responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

This policy has been developed in consultation with school governors, teachers, the Local Authority and parents and carers. It seeks to ensure that all parties involved in the practicalities of school attendance are aware and informed of attendance matters in school and to outline the schools commitment to attendance matters. It details the responsibilities of individuals and groups involved and the procedures in place to promote and monitor pupil attendance.

Our policy aims to raise and maintain levels of attendance by:

- Promoting a positive and welcoming atmosphere in which pupils feel safe, secure and valued.
- Raising awareness of the importance of good attendance and punctuality
- Ensuring that attendance is monitored effectively and reasons for absences are recorded promptly and consistently.

Promoting Regular Attendance

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is the responsibility of parents, pupils and all members of school staff.

To help us all to focus on this we will:

- Give parents/carers details on attendance in our newsletters
- Report to parents/carers annually on their child's attendance with the annual school report.
- Contact parents/carers should their child's attendance fall below the school's target for attendance.
- Celebrate excellent attendance by displaying and reporting individual and class achievements
- Reward good or improving attendance

Understanding Types of Absence

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by the parent/carer), as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required. Each half-day is known as a 'session'

Authorised absences are morning or afternoon sessions away from school for a genuine reason such as illness (although you may be asked to provide medical evidence for your child before this can be authorised), medical or dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable cause. **Unauthorised absences** are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no 'leave' has been given. If a student accumulates more than 10 unauthorised absences during the school year, they will be reported to the local authority (LA) as a child missing in education (CME). With local authority confirmation first we will proceed to off-roll the student from our school. Parents wish their child to return to Harmony primary School, they will have to re-apply and pay a £250 administrative charge. Re-admission will be subject to the successful completion of our entry assessment. However, we cannot give assurances that their place will still be available as we will offer the place to new applicants who wish to peruse education at Harmony Primary School.

Unauthorised absences include but are not limited to:

- parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily e.g. because they had a late night or for non-infectious illness or injury that would not affect their ability to learn.
- absences which have not been explained
- shopping trips
- looking after other children or children accompanying siblings or parents to medical appointments
- Time off for their own or family birthdays
- holidays taken during term time without leave, not deemed 'for exceptional purposes' by the headteacher.
- other leave of absence in term time which has not been agreed

School Attendance and the Law

There is no longer any entitlement in law for pupils to take time off during the term to go on holiday. In addition, the Supreme Court has ruled that the definition of regular school attendance is “in accordance with the rules prescribed by the school”.

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 were amended in September 2013. All references to family holidays and extended leave have been removed. The amendments specify that headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are “exceptional circumstances” and they no longer have the discretion to authorise up to ten days of absence each academic year.

It is a rule of this school that a leave of absence shall not be granted in term time unless there are reasons considered to be exceptional by the headteacher, irrespective of the child’s overall attendance. Only the headteacher or his/her designate (not the local authority) may authorise such a request and all applications for a leave of absence must be made in writing. Where a parent removes a child when the application for leave was refused or where no application was made to the school, the issue of a penalty notice may be requested by this school.

At *Harmony Primary* ‘exceptional circumstances’ will be interpreted as:

...being of unique and significant emotional, educational or spiritual value to the child which outweighs the loss of teaching time. The fundamental principles for defining ‘exceptional’ are events that are “rare, significant, unavoidable and short”. By ‘unavoidable’ we mean an event that could not reasonably be scheduled at another time.

We will not consider applications for leave during term time:

- at any time in September. This is very important as your child needs to settle into their new class as quickly as possible.
- during assessment and test periods in the school’s calendar affecting your child.
- when a pupil’s attendance record already includes any level of unauthorised absence or they have already been granted authorised leave within that academic year.

Whilst any child may occasionally have time off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents and the child. If a parent thinks their child is reluctant to attend school, we will work with that family to understand the root problem and provide any necessary support. We can use outside agencies to help with this such as the School Nurse, Local Authority Attendance Compliance Team or a Child and Family Support Worker.

Persistent Absenteeism (PA)

A pupil is defined by the Government as a ‘**persistent absentee**’ when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason. Absence at this level will cause considerable damage to any child’s education and we need a parent/carer’s fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

We monitor all absences and the reasons that are given, thoroughly. If a child is seen to have reached the PA mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark, we will inform the parent/carer. PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully. We also combine this with academic tracking where absence affects attainment. All our PA pupils and their parents

are subject to a school based meeting and the plan may include: allocation of additional support through the School Nurse, Local Attendance Adviser, Home School Liaison

Worker, Local Authority, Family Solutions or Social Care. We may also use circle time, individual incentive programmes, individual targets and participation in group activities to support us in raising attendance.

Absence Procedures

If a child is absent from school the parent/carer must follow the following procedures:

- Contact the school by a phone call on the first day of absence before **9:00am**. The school has an answer phone available to leave a message if nobody is available to take your call, or call into school personally and speak to the office staff
- Contact the school on every further day of absence, again before 9:00am
- Ensure that your child returns to school as soon as possible and you provide any medical evidence if requested to support the absence.

If your child is absent we will:

- Phone you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you however it is your responsibility to contact us
- If we have not heard from you by **9.15 am** then we will start to call all the contact numbers that you have provided in order to gain an explanation for the absence. If we still have not been able to ascertain where your child is then we will make a home visit. However, if we still haven't been able to get a response then we will report it to the police as your child will then be classed as a 'missing child'.
- Write to you if your child's attendance is **below 93%**
- Invite you to school to discuss the situation with our School Welfare Officer, or Headteacher if absences persist
- Refer the matter to the Local Authority to request a formal School Attendance Meeting if attendance deteriorates following the above actions

Attendance Compliance Team

Parents are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any problems together. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, the school may refer the child to the Local Authority. Local Authority Attendance Specialists work with schools, families and other professionals to reduce persistent absence and improve overall attendance. If attendance does not improve, legal action may be taken in the form of a Penalty Notice prosecution in the Magistrates Court or the application of an Education Supervision Order, designed to strengthen parental responsibilities and ensure improved attendance.

Lateness

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If a child misses the start of the day they can miss work and do not spend time with their class teacher getting vital information and news for the day. Late arriving pupils also disrupt lessons, can be embarrassing for the child and can also encourage absence. Good time-keeping is a vital life skill which will help our children as they progress through their school life and out into the wider world.

How we manage lateness:

The school day starts at **8.40 am** when children can begin to come into school. Registers are taken at **8.45 am** and your child will receive a late mark if they are not in by **8:55am**. Children arriving after **8.40am** are required to come in to school via the school office if accompanied by a parent or carer, the parent/carer will inform our attendance and punctuality officer and provide a reason for their lateness which is recorded. The school may send home 'late notes' in order to keep parents and carers informed. From time to time the Child and Family Support Worker, Headteacher or will undertake a 'Late Gate' check, greeting late arrivals at the main entrance to the school. At **9.00 am** the registers will be closed. In accordance with the Regulations, if your child arrives after that time they will receive a mark that shows them to be on site 'U', but this will **not** count as a present mark and it will mean they have an unauthorised absence. This may mean that you could face the possibility of being issued with a Penalty Notice if the problem persists. If your child has a persistent late record, you will be asked to meet with the School Welfare Officer and/or Child and Family Support Worker, but you can approach us at any time if you are having problems getting your child to school on time. We expect parents and staff to encourage good punctuality by being good role models to our children and celebrate good class and individual punctuality. If leave of absence is authorised, the school will not provide work for children to do during their absence. Parents are however advised to read with their children and encourage them to write a diary while they are away.

Deletion from Roll

For any student leaving *Harmony Primary School*, other than at the end of Year 6, parents/carers are required to complete a 'Student moving from school' form which can be obtained from the school office. This provides school with the following information: Child's name, class, current address, date of leaving, new home address, name of new school, address of new school. This information is essential to ensure that we know and safeguard the whereabouts of all of our pupils.

It is crucial that parents keep school updated with current addresses and contact details for key family members in case of emergency.

Summary

All school staff and the Governing Body are committed to working with parents and pupils as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible.