

Hassoeks Infant School

Attendance Policy



★ Explore ★ Respect ★ Flourish

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| Date policy agreed: | September 2025 |
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| Responsibility: | Head Teacher Approved by the Teaching & Learning Committee |

Document History

| Date | Version | Amended By | Comment (e.g Reason for version change) |
|--------|---------|----------------------|--|
| 1.9.25 | 2.0 | Adrian Bates-Holland | Latest DfE guidance adopted Information on FPNs updated Monitoring procedures reviewed |
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Introduction and Background: The importance of school attendance

At Hassocks Infant School, we believe in developing good patterns of attendance and punctuality for our pupils from the outset. It is a central part of our school's vision, values, ethos and day to day life. We recognise that good attendance is essential in order for pupils to get the most of their school experience, including their attainment, wellbeing and wider life chances. Therefore, we aim to work in partnership with families and other agencies to ensure that every child can get the best out of the educational opportunities provided.

The law entitles every child of compulsory school age to a full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude, and any special educational need they may have. It is the legal responsibility of every parent/carer to make sure that their child receives that education at a school or by education otherwise than at school.

Where parents decide to have their child registered at school, they have an additional legal duty to ensure their child attends that school regularly, on time. This means their child must attend every day that the school is open, except in a small number of allowable circumstances such as being too ill to attend or being given permission for an absence in advance from the school.

The Department for Education (DfE) has produced statutory guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools, and local authorities. It is called "[Working together to improve school attendance](#)" and it includes a National Framework in relation to absence and the use of legal sanctions. Our School Attendance Policy reflects the requirements and principles of that guidance.

In addition, all schools follow the DfE's statutory safeguarding guidance, Keeping Children Safe in Education, which emphasises the importance of understanding the potential vulnerabilities of children who are missing or absent from education.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2>

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 and maintaining a whole school awareness of the importance of good attendance and punctuality;
- Ensuring that attendance is monitored effectively and reasons for absences are recorded promptly and consistently.

We request that pupils must attend every day, unless there are exceptional circumstances, and it is the headteacher, not the parent, who can authorise the absence.

Key Principles

Good attendance is a learned behaviour. It is vital that families and schools work together to promote good attendance and punctuality. Our Attendance Policy reflects the key principles of the DfE guidance for maintained schools: '[Working together to improve school attendance](#)'.

The name and contact details of the Senior Attendance Champion – the senior leader responsible for the strategic approach to attendance in our school, is: Adrian Bates-Holland, Head Teacher.

The name and contact details of the school staff members pupils and parents should contact about attendance on a day-to-day basis are: Amanda Cole or Helen Blake.

The Teaching and Learning Committee are responsible for monitoring implementation of this policy and attendance data in the school.

All of the above can be contacted via the school office.

The attendance team will also ensure that attendance is both recorded accurately and analysed. They will ensure that attendance issues are identified at an early stage and that support is put in place to deal with any

difficulties. If absence is frequent or continuous, except where a child is clearly unwell, staff will discuss with parents/carers the need and reasons for their child's absence and will encourage them to keep absences to a minimum. A note or explanation from a child's home does not mean an absence becomes authorised. The decision whether or not to authorise an absence will always rest with the school.

Aims

For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend school regularly and are on time, every day that the school is open. We aim to provide support and challenge where appropriate, to ensure that attendance remains high for all pupils in our care.

We aim to raise and maintain levels of attendance by:

- Promoting a positive and welcoming atmosphere in which pupils feel safe, secure and valued
- Building strong relationships with our families, listening to them to understand barriers to attendance and work with them to remove those barriers.
- Raising and maintaining a whole school awareness of the importance of good attendance and punctuality;
- Ensuring that attendance is monitored effectively and reasons for absences are recorded promptly and consistently, and challenged where appropriate

Types of Absence

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school as either **AUTHORISED** or **UNAUTHORISED**. This is why information about the cause for any absence is always required. Each half-day is known as a 'session'.

Authorised absences are sessions away from school for a justified reason, such as illness, urgent medical or dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable cause. NB: Only the Headteacher (and not the parent / carer) can approve the reason for absence.

If repeated absence occurs for medical or dental reasons you will be asked to provide evidence of this from the GP/Dentist/Specialist before absence is authorised.

No absence requests will be authorised throughout the National Curriculum assessment periods for Year 1 during June.

Examples of authorised absences could include:

- Genuine illness: If the school is satisfied that a pupil is absent as a result of illness the absence is treated as authorised. Ordinarily, children should not be absent from school for minor illnesses for more than two days. Parents are advised to consult NHS guidance which can be found here: <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/is-my-child-too-ill-for-school/>.
- Children who experience long term absences are supported both during and after their absence through direct contact with the parents/carers. The school reserves the right to ask for medical clarification if a child's absences are above the amount expected for a usually healthy child or if the child is absent for more than two days.
- Emergency medical or dental appointments: Pupils' absence for emergency medical or dental appointments may also be authorised. Parents are requested to make routine dental and medical appointments outside of school hours.
- Religious observance: Parents should give advance warning of absence if it is necessary for their child to take part in a day of religious observance. This at the discretion of the Head Teacher.
- Uncommon family emergencies e.g. bereavement.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no 'leave' has been given. This type of absence can lead to a referral to the Local Authority who may issue a Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN) and/or issue legal proceedings.

Unauthorised absence includes: *(NB this list is not exhaustive)*

- 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 never been adequately explained to school leaders.
- Children who arrive at school too late (after registers close), get a 'U' mark on the register, which is also counted as unauthorised.
- Shopping trips.
- Family events/day trips out.
- Their own or family birthdays/parties.
- Holidays taken in term-time without leave being granted by the Headteacher under exceptional circumstances, including any arranged by other family members or friends.
- Parent being too unwell to bring the child to school (other arrangements must be made).
- Disputes with the School or claims of bullying are not a legally permitted reason for absence.
- Where the school believes that the parent has not been honest with them about the reason for absence.

Our school Procedures

Our playground gates are open from 8.45am. At 8.50am classroom doors are opened, and the teacher and/or Teaching and Learning Assistant will meet and greet the children as they arrive in class. Doors close at 9am when registers are taken. The main school gates also close at 9am. At the end of the school day gates are opened at 2.55pm for collection of children at 3pm.

- Electronic registers are taken promptly at 9am. These are completed in the school's data system, Bromcom.
- Registers officially close at 9.30am. Pupils arriving after the register has been taken, but before 9.30am will be marked as Late ('L'), with the reason and the number of minutes late recorded in the comments section of the register. Parents will be asked to sign children in to the school office after the gates have closed and to provide an explanation for arriving late.
- Arrival after 9.30am is recorded as arrived in school after registration closed ('U') unless the school office has been informed in advance of some other circumstance (such as an emergency medical appointment).
- Afternoon registers are taken again at 1.00pm using Bromcom. Registers close at 1.30pm.

The school is registered with the Data Protection Register as a data user under the 1984 Data Protection Act.

What do we expect of our pupils?

- That children attend regularly, on time and ready to learn.
- Children are prepared for the day with appropriate equipment (book bag, water bottle).
- Children who arrive after registration time must report to the school office.
- Children tell a member of staff if there is any problem which may prevent them from attending school.

What do we expect of parents/carers?

- Notify school on the first day of absence, and every subsequent day of absence, before 9am and provide reason for absence (if a specific reason is not given, you will be asked for one). You can telephone **01273 842 549** (the school office opens at 8.30am) or e-mail office@hassocksis.com.
- Ensure that their children attend school regularly and on time to fulfil their legal responsibility.
- Complete a request form in advance for absence in term time for exceptional circumstances if you know your child is going to be absent.
- Be honest with the school about the reason for absence.
- Supply medical evidence when required. The following would be sufficient:
 - Hospital / GP appointment confirmations (letters, text messages, emails or appointment cards);
 - GP note or letter;
 - A copy of a prescription;

- An advice slip from a pharmacist.
- Ensure all parental and child contact details are up to date.
- Provide school with at least two emergency contact details.
- Speak to relevant members of staff if they know of any problem which may prevent their child/ren from attending.
- Avoid taking their child out of school for non-urgent medical or dental appointments.
- Attend attendance meetings with our attendance team when offered.

Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is a parent/carer's legal responsibility (Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act) and permitting absence from school that is not authorised by the school creates an offence in law.

What does the school expect of classroom staff?

- Meet and greet the children each morning and welcome them into class.
- Model respectful relationships to build positive relationships with families that can be the foundation of good attendance.
- Ensure that all students are registered accurately and in a timely manner.
- Liaise with the school office and Senior Leadership Team on matters of attendance and punctuality.
- Communicate any concerns or underlying problems that may account for a child's absence.
- Support children with absence to engage with their learning once they are back in school.

What can parents/carers expect from the wider school team?

- A broad, balanced education.
- Prompt action when a problem has been identified.
- Efficient and accurate recording and monitoring of attendance.
- Contact with parents and carers on the first day when absence is unexplained.
- Liaison with school staff on how we can work together to improve your child's attendance.
- Regular communication with parents and carers.

What is the role of the Attendance Team?

- Ensure the recording of attendance and absence data is accurate (Codes are in Appendix A).
- Submit a daily attendance return to the Department of Education, in line with the legal expectations placed on all schools.
- Ensure robust day-to-day processes are in place.
- Track and follow up absence and poor punctuality.
- Provide appropriate support and challenge to establish good registration practice.
- Carry out robust first day calling procedures including priority routines for vulnerable children, including children with a social worker. If we are unable to make contact with parents/carers by telephone, we will telephone emergency contact numbers and a home visit may be made, in the interests of safeguarding (see below).
- Identify any absences that are not explained for each session and contacting parents to understand why, and when the pupil will return to school.
- Where absences are recorded as unexplained in the register, inputting the correct code as soon as the reason is ascertained, but no later than 5 school days after the session.
- Regularly analyse attendance and absence data to identify pupils, cohorts or groups that require support with their attendance and put strategies in place.
- Keep parents informed on a regular basis of their child's attendance and absence record.
- Hold regular meetings with the parents of pupils whom the school (and/or Local Authority) consider to be vulnerable or are persistently or severely absent to discuss attendance and engagement at school.
- Put into place an attendance contract (a formal written agreement) with families when a pupil has irregular attendance, outlining details of requirements in relation to regular attendance, barriers to attending regularly and support offered.

- Identify children who need support from wider partners as quickly as possible and making the necessary referrals.
- Undertake home visits in line with safeguarding responsibilities to engage families and ensure children are safe.
- Identify and, where possible, mitigating potential barriers to good attendance in liaison with families and relevant support agencies.
- Implement children missing education (CME) procedures when appropriate.

Safeguarding children not in attendance

- In the case where it has not been possible to ascertain the whereabouts of a child from the first contact, all other contacts held by the school will be tried. Parents are requested to provide at least two alternative contacts when completing the annual data collection form.
- If it is not possible to ensure that a child's whereabouts and safety is known via the contact numbers given, the school secretary will discuss the child with the Headteacher and/or Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL).
- Where appropriate, the Headteacher and/or DSL will take further steps to ensure the wellbeing of the child, which may include contacting other schools where there are siblings, home visits, a referral to Integrated Front Door or seeking further advice from the local authority's team for Child Missing Education.
- Repeated absence, particularly where explanation for absence is not given, may be a safeguarding concern in its own right, or indicative of other risks to a child's wellbeing. Such cases will be referred to the Designated Safeguarding Lead for consideration through the usual procedures.

Children with a Social Worker

In addition to the benefits for all pupils, good attendance at school also provides an additional safeguard for vulnerable pupils.

The attendance of this group of pupils is closely monitored and the school works effectively with the local authority to report individual attendance and inform a pupils' social worker if there are unexplained absences from school.

Lateness

Poor punctuality is not acceptable and can sometimes lead to irregular school attendance patterns. Good time-keeping is a vital life skill which will help children as they progress through their school life and out into the wider world.

Pupils who arrive late disrupt lessons and, if a child misses the start of the day, they can feel unsettled and embarrassed and risk missing vital work and important messages from their class teacher.

- Children arriving after **9am** are required to come into school via the school office. Their parent/carer they must sign them in and provide a reason for their lateness, which is recorded;
- At **9.30am** 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 that they have an unauthorised absence;
- The school may contact parents/carers regarding punctuality concerns;

Unauthorised lateness could result in the school referring to the Local Authority for sanctions and/or legal proceedings. If your child has a persistent lateness record, you may be asked to meet with a member of the school's Senior Leadership team, but you can approach us at any time if you are having difficulties getting your child to school on time.

Understanding barriers to attendance

Whilst any child may occasionally have time off school because they are too unwell to attend, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any barriers preventing regular attendance are best resolved between

the school, the parents and the child. If a parent thinks their child is reluctant to attend school, then we will work with that family to understand the root problem and provide any necessary support. If a parent thinks their child is reluctant to attend school, then they should speak to the class teacher in the first instance in order to help them understand the difficulties. The class teacher will then be able to make adaptations and provide additional support for example, having a 'meet and greet' on the door, talking to other children if there are relationship difficulties, circle time, individual incentives or provide additional support at key times in the school day.

This usually resolves any issues quickly, however if the problem persists then we will work with the family to understand the problem and provide any necessary support such as time with our ELSA (Emotional Literacy Support Assistant), or small group time. We may be able to refer to an external agency for additional support, for example the Early Help service or the school nurse.

Some pupils face greater barriers to attendance than their peers. These can include pupils who suffer from long-term medical conditions or who have special educational needs and disabilities, or other vulnerabilities. High expectations of attendance remain in place for these pupils, however we will work with families and pupils to support improved attendance whilst being mindful of the additional barriers faced. We can discuss reasonable adjustments and additional support from external partners, where appropriate.

In very exceptional circumstances, where it is in a pupil's best interests, there may be a need for a temporary part-time table to meet a child's individual needs. A part-time timetable will be in place for the shortest time necessary and there will be formal arrangements for regularly reviewing it with the parents. In agreeing to a part-time timetable, a school has agreed to a pupil being absent from school for part of the week or day and therefore this absence will be treated as authorised.

Under the DfE's statutory guidance, schools are required to submit a sickness return to the Local Authority for all pupils who have missed/are likely to miss 15 or more school days (consecutive or cumulative) due to medical reasons/illness.

Legislation and Guidance

In 2024 new legislation was passed. The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 introduced a National Framework in England. By law all children of compulsory school age must receive an appropriate full-time education (Education Act 1996). Parents have a legal duty to ensure their child attends school regularly at the school at which they are registered.

Parents may be recognised differently under education law, than under family law. Section 576 of the Education Act 1996 states that a 'parent', in relation to a child or young person, includes any person who is not a parent (from which can be inferred 'biological parent') but who has parental responsibility, or who has care of the child.

A person typically has care of a child or young person if they are the person with whom the child lives, either full or part time and who looks after the child, irrespective of what their biological or legal relationship is with the child.

Persistent Absenteeism (PA) and Severe Absenteeism (SA)

A pupil is defined by the Government as a 'persistent absentee' (PA) when they miss 10% or more schooling across the year for whatever reason; this can be authorised or unauthorised absences. Absence at this level will cause considerable damage to any child's education and we need the parents fullest support and cooperation to tackle this.

A pupil is defined by the Government as a 'severe absentee' (SA) when they are absent from school more than they are present (those missing 50% or more of school).

We monitor all absence, and the reasons that are given, rigorously. If a pupil is seen to have reached the PA mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark, we will inform the parent. PA pupils are tracked and monitored

closely. We also combine this with academic tracking where absence affects attainment.

Where PA is identified, parents will be requested to attend a meeting with a member of the school's Senior Leadership Team to draw up a plan of additional support for the family. This may include support from the School Nurse, Early Help team or other relevant agencies. An attendance target will be set and this will be closely monitored until attendance improves.

If there is not improvement in attendance then a Fixed Penalty Notice may be issued along with a referral to the Pupil Entitlement Team or Social Care.

Where attendance has fallen to the severe absence (SA) level, more intensive support is needed and a concerted effort is therefore needed across all relevant services to prioritise them. This may include specific support with attendance or a whole family plan, but it may also include consideration for an education, health and care plan or an alternative form of educational provision.

National Framework for Penalty Notices

There is now a single consistent national threshold for when a penalty notice must be considered by all schools in England, of 10 sessions (usually equivalent to 5 school days) of unauthorised absence within a rolling 10 school week period. The 10 sessions of absence do not have to be consecutive and can be made up of a combination of any type of unauthorised absence (G, O and/or U coded within the school's registers). The 10-school week period can span different terms, school years or education settings.

Sanctions may include issuing each parent (for each child) with a Penalty Notice for £160, reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days (for the first offence). A second Penalty Notice issued within a three-year period will result in a fine of £160 per parent, per child. If a third offence is committed the matter may be referred to the local authority for consideration of prosecution via the Magistrates Court. If prosecution is instigated for irregular school attendance, each parent may receive a fine of up to £2500 and/or up to 3 months in prison. If a parent is found guilty in court, they will receive a criminal conviction.

As mentioned previously there is no entitlement in law for pupils to take time off during the term to go on holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure or recreation, or to take part in protest activity in school hours. 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 School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 set out the statutory requirements for schools. 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 do not have any 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, in advance, on the prescribed form provided by the school (see Appendix B). The school will usually consider that the parent who has made the application is therefore allowing the leave of absence, and also that all parents who are on the holiday are allowing the leave. Where a parent removes a child after their application for leave was refused or where no application was made to the school, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised. It is likely that penalty notices will be requested, in line with the National Framework and West Sussex Code of Conduct (Appendix A), in respect of each parent believed to have allowed the absence.

At Hassocks Infant School '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 (as determined by the headteacher). 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, outside of school term time, regardless of who has planned or paid for the holiday or absence (including grandparents or other family or friends).

The Headteacher/school may discuss the leave of absence request with other education settings and/or the Local Authority to determine any exceptional circumstances.

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

Except at the end of Year 2, parents wishing to remove their child from the school will be asked to inform the school in writing (this can be through email), providing a forwarding address and details of the school to which the child is expected to transfer. We ask that you provide school with the following information:

- Child's name
- Class
- Date of leaving
- New home address
- Name and address of new school, address

This information is essential to ensure that we know the whereabouts and may appropriately safeguard all of our pupils, even those who leave us. It is crucial that parents keep school updated with current addresses and contact details for the pupil and key family members, in case of emergency.

In the case of families electing to home educate, notice should be given in writing to the school of this decision. The school has a duty to report this change to the local authority.

Under Pupil Regulations 2006, all schools are now **legally required** to notify their Local Authority of **every new entry** to the admission register **within five days** of the pupil being enrolled. In addition to this, **every deletion** from the school register must also be notified to the Local Authority, as soon as the ground for deletion has been met in relation to that pupil, and in any event no later than the time at which the pupil's name is deleted from the register. This duty does not apply when a pupil's name is removed from the admission register at a standard transition point – when the pupil has completed the final year of education normally provided by that school (Year 2)

Pupils leaving the school cannot be removed from the school roll until such time as it is confirmed that they are enrolled in another school, or in accordance with the advice of the Children Missing Education team.

Dealing with Truancy

Due to the age of children attending our school, it is unlikely that a pupil will be truant. We do expect all pupils to be dropped off and collected from the school by an adult. Adults should remain with children until they enter the school building. If a pupil is thought to be playing truant then the school will immediately inform:

- the parent/carer
- the police

All truants will receive:

- support, including a review from the school's Designated Safeguarding Lead
- a programme of monitoring and support
- an individualised risk assessment and support plan

The Police must be informed immediately if a pupil leaves school without prior permission.

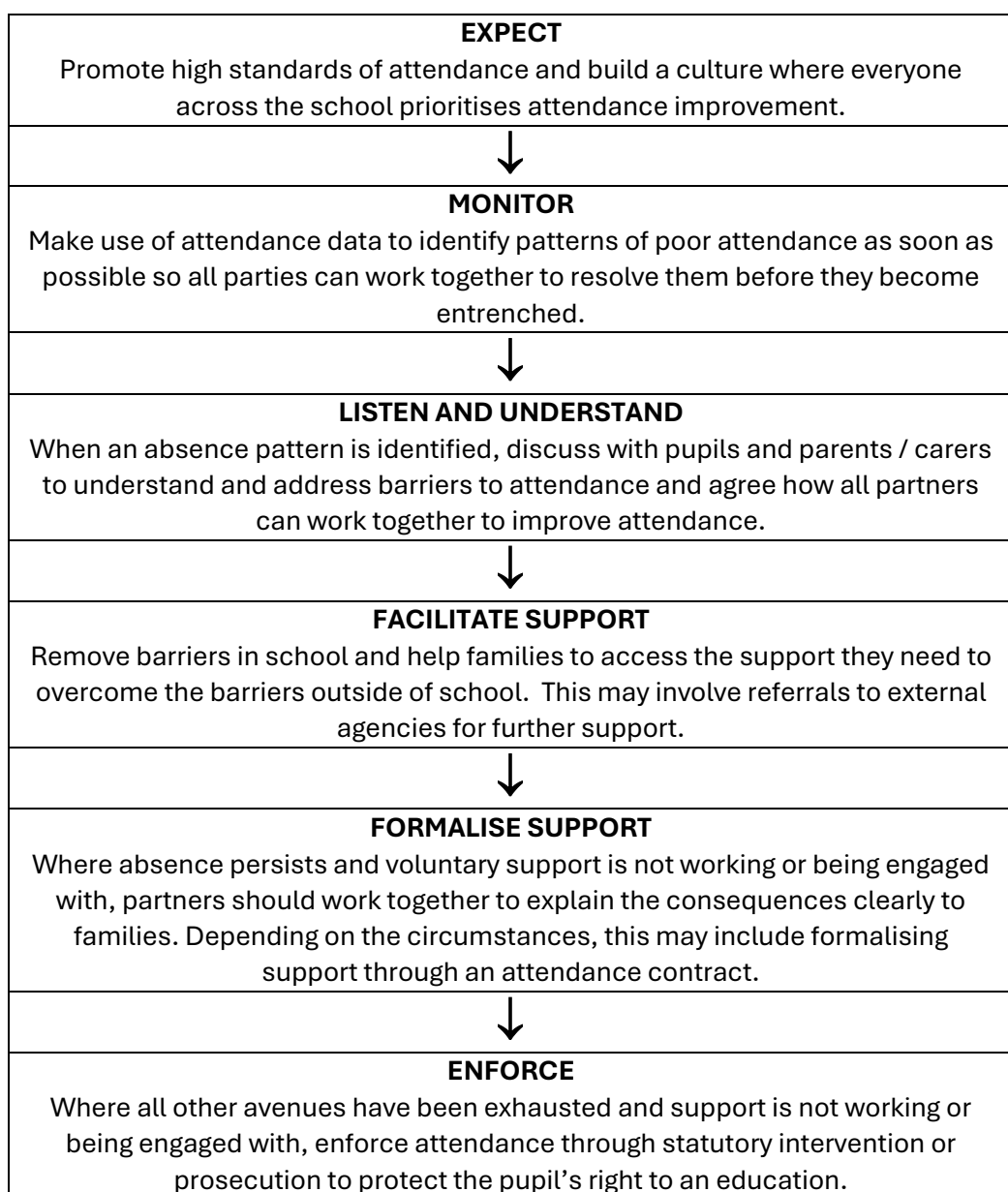
Absence data

We use data to monitor, identify and support individual pupils or groups of pupils when their attendance needs to improve, and schools are required to submit pupil attendance data to the Department for Education on a daily basis Education (Information about Individual Pupils) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2024. Persistently and severely absent pupils are tracked and monitored carefully. We also combine this with academic tracking, as increased absence affects attainment.

We share information and work collaboratively with other schools in the area, local authorities, and other partners, when absence is at risk of becoming persistent or severe.

Monitoring of Attendance and Thresholds for Intervention

The school will work in close partnership with parents and carers to promote good attendance. Addressing the root causes of absence and removing barriers to attendance and punctuality requires schools to work collaboratively with parents:



- School attendance is monitored daily by the school office. The school office or Class Teachers will alert a Designated Safeguarding Lead or the Head Teacher immediately if there are any concerns relating to pupil attendance or punctuality.
- The school's Designated Safeguarding Leads will review attendance during half-term DSL meetings. Any actions to support attendance will be agreed and followed up by the DSL team.

- The Head Teacher will meet with the school office team on a half-termly basis to review pupil attendance. The school has a target of 97% for attendance. (an absence of 5 days in a school year)
The following actions will be taken when attendance drops below this threshold:

| Attendance | |
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| Threshold | Action |
| 96% | The Class Teacher will contact the parents to discuss the child's absence. Any barriers to attendance, as well as supportive actions will be discussed. An attendance summary from Insight and Letter 1 will be sent to parents. |
| 95% | Letter 2 is sent to the parents. The parent will be invited to meet with a Key Stage Leader. The child's attendance will be monitored. |
| 90% | Letter 3 is sent to parents. The parent will be invited to meet with the Head Teacher. A target for attendance and a plan for improving attendance will be agreed. |
| Attendance remains below 90% | The school may seek guidance and support from the West Sussex Fair Access Team, Early Help or an external agency. Regular meetings with parents will be scheduled to improve attendance. The school will review attendance and consider if a referral for a fixed penalty notice should be issued. |
| Punctuality | |
| Two late arrivals without an exceptional reason. | A letter will be sent to parents reminding them of the school's expectation for punctuality. |
| Four late arrivals without an exceptional reason | The key stage leader will contact parents reminding of the school's expectation for punctuality and to offer support / guidance to improve punctuality. |
| Continued late arrivals after a letter has been sent | A letter will be sent to parents inviting them to meet with the Head Teacher to improve the child's punctuality. The school may work with external agencies, including Early Help and the Pupil Entitlement Investigation team to address persistent lateness. |

- The Head Teacher will provide termly attendance reports to the Teaching and Learning Committee, including a breakdown of groups within the school. The full governing body will receive a report on whole school attendance data each term.