

# **HATHEROP C OF E PRIMARY SCHOOL**



## **ATTENDANCE POLICY**

**(Information for Parents)**

Parents have a duty to ensure that their children receive an appropriate education. Parents who have chosen to send their children to Hatherop C of E Primary School are asked to sign a Home School Agreement, indicating they will do their best to ensure their children attend school regularly. They are given information in the Prospectus as to how they can make their child's time in school happy and safe.

Children are expected to attend school each day unless they are unwell or in exceptional circumstances, authorised by the Head Teacher. Attendance is measured by the number of sessions your child is present for. There are two sessions in each school day. Registration is taken at the start of each session to determine a child's presence for that half of the day. The expected level of attendance is a minimum of 96%, unless there is a long term illness. This allows for the occasional day or two of absence through illness, without a child falling behind with their work. Parents are given feedback on the level of their child's attendance on their Annual report, or earlier should there be a concern.

Staff do their best to encourage children to attend school regularly, following up unexplained absences and requesting reasons from parents for these. Awards are given for attendance. Attendance awards are presented in Collective Worship three times a year for children whose attendance is 96% or more. Children with 100% attendance receive a Head Teacher award sticker.

The Governors at Hatherop C of E Primary School actively promote the aims of the school, and recognise that children must attend school regularly if they are to make the best of the opportunities they have to learn and make best progress.

Gloucestershire County Council discourages parents from taking their children out of school for family holidays. Gloucestershire County Council say 'It might sound ok to say your child attends school 90% of the time. However, this effectively means they are missing half a day of school per week. Over one year, this equates to a child missing 4 weeks of school. During the course of their education, half a year of schooling will be lost'.

The school evaluates attendance at least termly and is compared to national figures. These figures are reported termly to Governors. Evaluation of attendance and the effectiveness of strategies to increase attendance forms part of an OFSTED inspection. High levels of absence will limit the ability of pupils to make the progress they are capable of and this will lead to the school's effectiveness being down-graded. High attendance will lead to an increase in progress and will assist in the school reaching a better grading by OFSTED.

This policy has been written after researching advice from the County and reading the Attendance Policies of other schools.

## **VALUES**

Our twelve values underpin the life of the whole school community. Those particularly pertinent to attendance are:

**Friendship:** all members of the school community are encouraged to offer friendship to one another by attending school regularly

**Encouragement:** we encourage all members of the school community to achieve their potential

**Truthfulness:** everyone is expected to tell the truth at all times

**Respect:** we expect members of the school community to be respectful to one another, their property, the wider community and the environment

**Perseverance:** everyone is expected to persevere through their tasks

## **‘Authorised’ and ‘Unauthorised’ Absence**

Unauthorised absence is when a pupil is absent from school when they should have been in school, or school have not been given a reason for the absence. Only the Head Teacher can authorise absence. To do this, he needs to know that the reason the child was away is a legitimate reason not to come to school. Illness, for example, or attending a family funeral, are legitimate reasons for a child to be absent, and are authorised absences. If parents feel there are other genuine reasons to request absence, such as family illness, or the wedding of a close relative, these should be discussed openly with the Head Teacher, as perhaps such absence may be able to be authorised if a child’s attendance is normally excellent.

Having time off for no real reason is unauthorised absence. Absences for day trips, no-one able to provide a lift, staying home because a brother or sister is ill, are examples of absences that are not legitimate.

Without a reason given, the Head Teacher cannot authorise absence, so this remains unauthorised. If we do not receive a phone call or a letter, we will follow this up on the day with a telephone call asking why your child is away, in case you have just forgotten to let us know the reason. If there is no reply, a message will be left.

### **Absence due to Illness**

#### **What should I do if my child is unwell?**

Children should not come to school if they are obviously unwell. You must telephone the school as soon as you know your child will not be attending that day from 8am – 8.30am. You are expected to give the reason for absence, and indicate if it is likely your child will be absent longer than one day. On your child’s return, you must send a written note, giving the reason for absence.

*Absence for genuine illness is always authorised.*

#### **How long should my child stay home if they are ill?**

We have regularly updated detailed information from the Health Authority regarding absence periods related to illnesses. This gives information about the length of time children should remain home once symptoms are clearing. Should your child be ill with a ‘named’ illness and you would like to know when they may return to school, please do ring the school and we shall be able to tell you. This will be very helpful, as often children are able to return to school sooner than you may think, provided they are well in themselves, as the infectious periods of illnesses vary greatly.

*If children have vomiting and/or diarrhoea, they must stay home from school for 48 hours after the last episode. This is to ensure children are free from infection, and are well enough to attend school. We need to make sure that we avoid any ‘epidemics’ if we possibly can, so this rule is strictly enforced.*

#### **I need to take my child to the dentist/doctor. What do I do about them coming to school?**

Most routine appointments can be made outside of school hours. Sometimes you need to see a doctor more urgently, so be guided by what they say as to whether your child comes to school afterwards. If your child is absent due to attending a medical or dental appointment, please let us know in writing.

### **Requests for Holiday Absence**

**Extract from Department of Education website published April 2013**

*Amendments to the 2006 regulations [Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#) remove references to family holiday and extended leave as well as the statutory threshold of ten school days. The amendments make clear that Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are*

*exceptional circumstances. Headteachers should determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted.*

### **Therefore at Hatherop C of E Primary:**

#### **Who authorises absence?**

The Head Teacher authorises absence, only under exceptional circumstances.

#### **What do I do if I think I have a genuine reason for having a term time holiday?**

Firstly, bear in mind that the reason which may seem good to you may not fall within those determined by the Regulations. There is no automatic right to go on holiday each year during term time and no entitlement for leave of absence for your child for a family holiday.

If you believe you do have a genuine reason which is an exceptional circumstance, then you need to write a letter explaining your reasons and return it to the Head Teacher via the school office.

These regulations are that:

- Families may make only **one** request for a child to be absent from school for a family holiday during the academic year, of no more than ten days, at least six weeks before the proposed absence.
- Long weekends are not considered holiday, and will not normally be authorised.
- The cost of holidays, or a family's financial situation, is not a consideration when authorising holiday leave of absence. This includes holidays paid for by other family members such as Grandparents. Parents are expected to ensure other family members are aware of these regulations.
- The child's attendance at school during the preceding twelve weeks must be at least 96%. This means that requests in the Autumn Term will take attendance in the previous Summer Term into account. A child with 96% attendance will have had approximately half a day a week away from school in a two week period. Higher rates of absence are considered to be below average: a family holiday will contribute significantly to a child's absence rate.
- Working parents must ensure they book their leave well in advance to ensure they can take a break outside of term time. Parents are expected to ensure that other family members are aware of the term dates if they are likely to be booking a family holiday.
- Parents who are self employed must also ensure they organise family holidays outside of term time. The regulations apply equally to all parents.

*Please note that no holiday absences will be authorised under any circumstances during times when internal assessments and tests or external SATs tests or revision are being undertaken.*

*These dates are on the school website, along with term dates for both the coming academic year and the year following. If you are unsure of these dates, please ring to check before booking a holiday.*

#### **What will happen if holiday absence is not authorised?**

In reality, there are few circumstances in which absence for a holiday will be authorised.

The Head Teacher will respond to your letter within two weeks, confirming if the absence is authorised or unauthorised.

*Please note it is the **Head Teacher** who gives authorisation for absence.*

At this point, you must decide if the holiday is still to be booked – the expectation is that it is not, and that you book a holiday during the twelve weeks of the year outside of school term dates, booking well ahead.

### **What if we go on holiday anyway?**

The school follows the Gloucestershire County Council policies which states that:

- If your child is absent from school for 10 sessions\* in a ten-week period, without authorisation from their school, we will issue a warning letter. (Unauthorised absence also includes sessions where your child has arrived after the school's registration period without an acceptable reason.)
- If there are no unauthorised absences in the next 15 school days, no further action will be taken. If there are further unauthorised absences there will be no further warning and a Penalty Notice will be issued. Therefore it is vital for parents and carers to have contact with the school on the first day of absence.

*\*Each school day contains two sessions.*

### **What happens if we just go on holiday without requesting authorisation?**

If families go away on holiday without asking for authorisation this also counts as unauthorised absence, and will be treated accordingly. You will be asked to attend a meeting on your return to discuss the circumstances of your child's absence.

### **What if I say my child is ill to avoid a fine?**

If a child has been absent and a parent sends a letter saying they have been unwell and it is thought this is not true, you may have to attend a meeting at the school to explain your child's absence.

### **What if I make up a reason that I think will convince the Head Teacher to authorise absence?**

In the same way, should the information given in your letter requesting absence be incorrect, any authorisation will immediately be withdrawn. Examples of this include attending a wedding or visiting sick relatives, spending time with a parent not living with the child, which turn out to be untrue.

It is completely unacceptable to involve a child in such a lie: this causes immense stress for the child concerned, who of course knows it is wrong to not tell the truth.

The end result is that a warning is issued as before, and you will be required to come to a meeting and explain the real reason for the absence.

### **Where can I find out more about the Gloucestershire Code of Conduct on Penalty Notices?**

This is the guidance that schools must follow, before a Penalty Notice may be issued to the parents of a child who attends a Gloucestershire school. A copy of this can be found on [www.gloucestershire.gov.uk](http://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk) The guidance also states when a Penalty notice will be given regarding unauthorised absences.

### **What happens to my child's attendance records when they change schools?**

Attendance records, along with information about any Penalty Warning Notices etc form part of your child's formal records. These are passed on to secondary school, or to another primary school should your child change schools before the end of their primary education.

All schools are expected to follow the same regulations with regard to their policy for attendance.

## **Lateness**

The school day begins at 8:45am with all external doors and the gate being closed.

Children who arrive after 8:50am are late, and must come into school to the Main Entrance to the office. They must be accompanied to the office. Parents must provide a reason for lateness. Continued lateness will lead to the Head Teacher contacting you to discuss the reasons for this with support and advice offered.

Children who arrive after 9:15am are considered absent, and recorded in the register with the reason for this accordingly.

This policy was written in June 2013 and approved at the Full Governors' Meeting on 19<sup>th</sup> June 2013.  
Policy approved 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2014

Other related policies

This policy should be read in conjunction with other related policies, namely:

Safeguarding/child protection policy

Medical Conditions in School policy