



**Hazelwood Schools**

**Attendance Policy  
& COVID-19 Addendum**

Reviewed and Adopted: Autumn Term 2020

Reviewed by: Full GB/DHT/Attendance Team

**Next Review: Autumn Term 2023**

**Review every three years**

# Hazelwood Schools' Attendance Policy

## 1. Introduction

Children who are frequently late for or absent from school, for whatever reason, are disadvantaged in their learning. The Schools offer a rich and varied curriculum which can only be accessed to its full advantage if children attend regularly and punctually.

It is important to encourage, in children, the notion that school matters. Irregular attendance and persistent lateness give the message that it does not matter.

Children who are poor attenders may not only be disadvantaging themselves but may also have an effect on other children, in terms of learning and their attitude to school.

Children who arrive late may seriously disrupt not only their own continuity of learning but also that of the rest of the class.

## 2. Aims of Policy

- To explain changes to our policy relating to COVID-19 Government Guidance;
- To improve pupil attendance;
- To make attendance and punctuality a priority for all those associated with the school and to communicate this effectively to pupils, staff, parents and governors;
- To raise educational achievement of all pupils;
- To provide support and guidance to parents and pupils;
- To develop a systematic approach to gathering and analysing attendance data; and
- To promote and reward regular school attendance at whole school, class and individual level.

## 3. Roles and Responsibilities

At Hazelwood the Governing Board have agreed that attendance matters for all children and therefore children under 5 years old who attend Nursery must attend daily and those who attend Reception, must stay in school on a full time basis. Only in exceptional circumstances and with the agreement of the school will part time be agreed for children under 5.

The Schools' Governors along with the Headteacher and Education Welfare Service (*EWS*) will at the beginning of each school year set an attendance target for the Schools. Our current target is **96.8%**. The Schools' Governors are also responsible for ensuring that pupil's names are recorded on the school admissions and daily register.

The Headteacher has a responsibility to ensure that the daily register of pupils attending the Schools is taken and designates the attendance officers to monitor and report on attendance. Parents have a responsibility to ensure their children attend school daily and on time. The EWS has a duty to ensure that parents meet this responsibility and the service can seek legal redress to secure a pupil's attendance if a parent fails in their duty.

#### 4. COVID-19 Addendum to the Attendance Policy

This addendum will be shared on our school website and communicated with our whole school community, including pupils, parents and staff.

##### 4.1 Government Guidance

This section contains details of how we have altered some of our usual practice based on the latest Government Guidance as at 01.09.2020 in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. This full Guidance can be accessed via the links below.

##### **Schools Attendance Main Guidance - Aug 2020**

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/907535/School\\_attendance\\_guidance\\_for\\_2020\\_to\\_2021\\_academic\\_year.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/907535/School_attendance_guidance_for_2020_to_2021_academic_year.pdf)

##### **Addendum: Recording Attendance in relation to Coronavirus – 1<sup>st</sup> Sept 2020 (updated May 2021)**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-attendance/addendum-recording-attendance-in-relation-to-coronavirus-covid-19-during-the-2020-to-2021-academic-year>

##### **Improving School Attendance – 1<sup>st</sup> Sept 2020 (updated May 2021)**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-attendance/framework-for-securing-full-attendance-actions-for-schools-and-local-authorities>

##### 4.2 Expectations

From the start of the Autumn term 2020/8<sup>th</sup> March 2021 pupil attendance will be **mandatory** and the usual rules on attendance will apply, including:

- parents' duty to ensure that their child of compulsory school age attends regularly at the school where the child is a registered pupil
- schools' responsibilities to record attendance and follow up absence
- the ability to issue sanctions, including fixed penalty notices, in line with local authorities' codes of conduct

##### 4.3 New For 2020 – 2021 'not attending in circumstances related to coronavirus (COVID-19)'

Although school attendance is mandatory, there are some circumstances where pupils cannot attend school due to coronavirus (COVID-19). To ensure schools record this accurately and consistently, the Government have made changes to the regulations governing school attendance registers to add a new category of non-attendance – 'not attending in circumstances related to coronavirus (COVID-19)'. Such absences should be recorded using code 'X'.

This category must only be used to record sessions that take place in the 2020 to 2021 academic year where a pupil does not attend because their travel to, or attendance at, school would be:

- contrary to guidance relating to the incidence or transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19) from Public Health England (PHE) and/or the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC)
- prohibited by any legislation (or instruments such as statutory directions) relating to the incidence or transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19)

In line with the Secretary of State's expectation that no parent will be penalised for following official Public Health advice for their child not to attend a given session, this new category of non-attendance will not count as an absence (authorised or unauthorised) for statistical purposes.

#### **4.4 Examples in which 'not attending in circumstances related to coronavirus (COVID-19) could apply**

In line with current legislation, and current guidance from PHE and DHSC, examples are as follows:

##### **a) Pupils who are required to self-isolate as they, or a member of their household, has symptoms or confirmed coronavirus (COVID-19)**

- Pupils who have symptoms should self-isolate and get a test:
  - If a pupil tests negative and if they feel well and no longer have symptoms similar to coronavirus (COVID-19), they can stop self-isolating and return to school. If the pupil remains unwell following the test (such as with a different illness), then they should be recorded as code I – illness, as would usually be the case. Code X should only be used up until the time of the negative test result. Schools should not retrospectively change the attendance register due to a negative test result.
  - If a pupil tests positive, they should continue to self-isolate for at least 10 days from the onset of their symptoms. They should only return to school if they do not have symptoms other than a cough or loss of sense of smell or taste (anosmia). This is because a cough or anosmia can last for several weeks once the infection has gone. Code X should be used for the period of self-isolation until the test. After the pupil tests positive they should be recorded as code I (illness) until they are able to return to school.
- If someone in the pupil's household has symptoms, the household should self-isolate and the member of their household should get a test:
  - If the member of the household tests negative, the pupil can stop self-isolating and can return to school. Code X should only be used up until the time of the negative test result when the pupil can return to school.
  - If the household member tests positive, the pupil should continue self-isolating for the full 10 days from when the member of their household first had symptoms. Code X should be used during this period.

In all cases of self-isolation, schools should ask parents to inform them immediately about the outcome of a test. Schools should not require evidence of negative test results or other medical evidence before admitting children or welcoming them back after a period of self-isolation.

**b) Pupils who are required to self-isolate because they are a close contact of someone who has symptoms or confirmed coronavirus (COVID-19)**

Pupils may not have symptoms themselves but may be required to self-isolate if they are a close contact of someone with coronavirus (COVID-19).

The NHS test and trace guidance states that a person should self-isolate for 10 days if they have had recent close contact with a person who has tested positive for coronavirus (COVID-19). In the event of a confirmed coronavirus (COVID-19) case in the school community, the Local Health Protection Team will provide advice on who this applies to, advising them to self-isolate for 10 days since they were last in close contact with the person that has tested positive when they were infectious. Code X should be used for these pupils during this period.

**c) Pupils who are required by legislation to self-isolate as part of a period of quarantine**

As usual, parents should plan their holidays within school breaks and avoid seeking permission to take their children out of school during term time. Families should also consider that their child may need to self-isolate following trips overseas that require a period of quarantine. If a pupil is required to be in quarantine on arrival in, or return to, the UK, code X should be used in the register.

**d) Pupils who are clinically extremely vulnerable in future local lockdown scenario only**

Shielding advice for all adults and children paused on 1 August 2020. This means that even the small number of pupils who will remain on the shielded patient list can return to school, as can those who have family members who are shielding.

If in future, rates of the disease rise in local areas, children still on the shielding list (or family members still on the shielding list) from that area, and that area only, may be contacted by the Government and advised to stay at home and shield during the period where rates remain high. Families will receive a letter if they are required to shield again that parents will be able to share with the school. Non-attendance in accordance with guidance from PHE or the DHSC should be recorded as code X.

Schools should contact parents of pupils who are shielding when measures in the local area are lifted and shielding is paused again, to set out the expectation that they can return to school. Code X should not be used for sessions after the pupil has been advised to return to school.

#### **4.5 Local Lockdown**

If rates of the disease rise locally, schools may need to prevent some pupils from attending. Schools should follow PHE or DHSC guidance on what measures are necessary in the event of local lockdown. Where attendance is to be limited to certain groups, 'not attending in circumstances related to coronavirus (COVID-19)' - code X - should be used for pupils who are asked not to attend.

#### **4.6 Remote Education**

If a pupil is not attending school due to circumstances related to coronavirus (COVID-19), we expect schools to be able to immediately offer them access to remote education. Schools should keep a record of, and monitor engagement with this activity, but this does not need to be tracked in the attendance register.

#### **4.7 Data Collection**

Collection of school attendance data as part of the school census will resume in January 2021, collecting data for the autumn term 2020. Subject to the necessary legislation being made, from January 2021, the census will collect attendance codes in addition to absence codes.

Further information will follow on what, if any, additional attendance data will be required during the 2020 to 2021 academic year to monitor the impact of coronavirus (COVID-19) and support the Government's planning.

### **5. Working with the Local Authority**

Our Education Welfare Officer (EWO) visits the Schools on a regular basis to advise staff on managing absences, making appropriate referrals and to meet with parents.

### **6. Expectations set out by Ofsted on Pupil Absence**

Hazelwood Schools are inspected approximately every three years by the Office of Standards in Education (Ofsted). When inspectors visit, they will be looking at the Schools' efforts to improve attendance. Issues they will consider are:

- Where a school's attendance lies in comparison with the national average;
- Use of data to improve attendance;
- Whether attendance has improved as a result of actions taken by the school, including agreeing realistic targets with its local authority and meeting them;
- Whether the school has been active in monitoring and promoting the attendance of different minority groups;
- How attendance compares with schools in similar socio-economic circumstances;
- Whether reductions in overall and persistent absence have been sustained;
- The impact of systems put in place to help learners catch up following periods of non-attendance; and
- The support available to those pupils who are unable to attend.

It is therefore very important that Hazelwood Schools make attendance a priority.

## **7. How Hazelwood Schools Manages Pupil Absence**

At Hazelwood Schools the attendance of pupils is recorded electronically. This helps us to produce termly data through the School Census for the Department for Education (DFE). It also helps us provide information on pupil attendance for Ofsted inspectors and Governors. Each reason for pupil absence has a special code and this assists the Schools to monitor persistent absentees.

At Hazelwood Schools, we expect pupils to have at least 96.8% or above attendance. We want to encourage all pupils to have excellent attendance. To support this aim, we use a number of approaches to praise and reward good attendance. This includes giving out certificates to pupils whose attendance is really good. We also print a report of every child's attendance record and hand them out to parents at parents' consultation evenings.

Parents of pupils attending Hazelwood Schools have a responsibility to make sure their children reach or exceed 96.8% attendance. Through data analysis we can see which pupils fall below this threshold and take action. The parents of children with below 96.8% attendance will be contacted by the Schools in order to discuss their attendance. When we have exhausted our attempts to improve a pupil's attendance, we will make a referral to our EWO.

## **8. Unauthorised Absences**

At Hazelwood Schools we have an expectation that parents ring us on the first day of their child's absence and send a note on their return. We may not accept a parent's reason for absence especially if the child's attendance is below 96.8%. Regular unauthorised absences where a parent has not provided a reason for absence mean that a parent or parents may be breaking the law and could be:

- Issued with a fixed penalty charge notice of £60 per parent per child by the local authority; and/ or
- Found guilty in a magistrates court and fined up to £2,500.

The Schools have the full support of our Governors and the local authority in the matter. In very severe cases, parents can be imprisoned for up to three months and children can lose their school place. Because school attendance is a very serious matter, we aim to have good communication about attendance matters with parents through our newsletter, parents' evenings and Schools' assemblies. If there is a problem, it is better if a parent speaks with a member of staff rather than allow a situation to escalate.

## **9. Regular Pupil Sickness**

If a child is regularly absent due to sickness, a parent will be invited into school to discuss their child's absences, this discussion may include the EWO or Schools' nurse. When a child is regularly absent due to illness, the Schools may request a parent to provide medical details from their doctor before continuing to authorise further absences. (Further information is set out in the Medical Policy.)

## **10. Requests for Pupil Leave of Absence in Term Time**

Hazelwood Schools actively discourages parents making requests to take their children out of school during term time. We have a request form (keep in the office) that a parent may complete in exceptional circumstances. It must be returned to the Headteacher for consideration well in advance. The Schools are closed for 14 weeks of the year and parents are expected to use this time for taking holidays and visiting family abroad. Parents should not under any circumstances make travel arrangements during term time without discussing it with the Headteacher first, as they risk losing money.

## **11. Religious Observance**

Parents and carers may apply for a child to be absent from school on the day of the religious festival, so that children can enjoy celebrations with their families. In most circumstances the Schools will authorise one day's absence. However, this absence will contribute to the child's overall attendance figures.

## **12. Punctuality – There are staggered drop off and collection times during the pandemic.**

COVID-19 Addendum: Parents and carers should ensure that they are no earlier or later than the staggered time stated in order to reduce the risk of transmission from over-crowding and congestion and to ensure safety measures/controls are followed and therefore more effective.

Usually (preCOVID-19) and when deemed safe again, pupils are expected to arrive at Hazelwood Schools by 8:50am. Nursery children are expected to arrive at 9:00am if they are full time or, either 8:30am or 12:00pm depending on whether they have a morning or afternoon placement. Punctuality is very important and parents should ensure their children come to school on time.

The register is taken twice a day, once at the beginning of the morning and again at the beginning of the afternoon. Pupils arriving after 8:55am will be marked in the register as late or as having an unauthorised absence if they are frequently late. Members of SLT will be at the school gate to record pupils who are late and to take pupils to their class as we do not permit parent/carers on the school premises after 8:55am to take their children to class. This is to ensure that children are recorded as being in school and is in line with our safeguarding policy.

Children should be collected from Hazelwood Schools at 3:15pm for Infants and 3:20pm for Juniors. Full time Nursery children must be collected at 3:00pm. Nursery morning/afternoon placement children either need to be collected at 11:30pm or 3:00pm respectively. If a parent is going to be late collecting their child they should ring the School Office. Any parent who regularly collects their child late will be invited to meet with the Headteacher.



### **13. Schools Census Data**

Hazelwood Schools must submit data to the Department for Education on the number of pupil's that are persistently absent, for whatever reason. Currently the DFE are focusing on pupils with **90%** and below attendance.

- 20% absence is the equivalent to one day's absence, every week throughout the school year; and
- 20% absence over 5 years is the equivalent to a whole year missed!

It is well researched that a pupil's attainment is linked to attendance. 'If a school can improve attendance by 1%, they will see a 5-6% improvement in attainment' (DFE). Hazelwood Schools' clear message is "every lesson counts".

### **14. Children with Special Educational Needs (SEN)**

We have high expectations of attendance for children with SEND and there should be no reason why children with SEND have different levels of attendance. Children with SEND may require a higher proportion of medical appointments as a result of their particular needs. As for all children, parents should be encouraged to make appointments out of school time whenever possible. Children with a statement of SEND or an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) will have this reviewed annually and, at Hazelwood Schools, attendance will be considered as an important part of the review process as well as on an ongoing basis.

### **15. Children on Long Term Leave due to Illness or Disability**

Occasionally some children have to be away from school over a long period of time due to illness or disability. We will ensure that if they are well enough, they can continue their education either in hospital or by arranging home tuition.

### **16. Dental & Medical Appointments**

Parents should make every effort to arrange medical or dental appointments after school or during holidays. If there is no alternative and a child has to be absent, the School Office should be informed. An appointment at the beginning of the school day should not result in a whole day's absence from school, parents should bring their child in as soon as possible after the appointment.

### **17. Be aware**

If a child has frequent days off for minor illnesses, e.g. tummy ache, feeling sick, it may be a sign that there is a problem at school. Parents should contact the school and discuss the problem.

## **18. The Schools' Governors**

The Headteacher has a responsibility to report on attendance issues at every full meeting of the Governing Board. Our Governors support the Headteacher in managing requests for pupil leave of absence and take the position that families have “no right” to such leave. Our Governors decide the start and finish of the Schools’ day and confirm the dates for the Schools’ term and holiday dates in line with the local authority. Our Chair of Governors can be contacted via the School Office or our website.

## **19. Safeguarding Children**

Hazelwood Schools must be able to demonstrate to Ofsted that they know the whereabouts of each child and reason for their absence. Parents should always ensure that Schools’ have their current contact details. It is very important for the local authority to be able to track children if they are not attending school and in some cases for schools to make a referral to Social Care.

If a parent is moving house it is important that they let us know if they will no longer require a place for their child, with the date that they will be leaving. It is also helpful to us to have the name of the new school that the child will be attending. If this information is not available at the time of leaving Hazelwood Schools, we request that parents leave a forwarding address and telephone number.