



Heber Primary School
Attendance Policy

Introduction

“Most parents want their child to get on well in life. Nowadays it is more important than ever to have a good education behind you if you want opportunities in adult life. Children only get one chance at school, and your child’s chances of a successful future may be affected by not attending school regularly.”

(Is Your Child Missing Out DFES 2002)

The same considerations also apply to pupils who are regularly or intermittently late. Their learning is disrupted. Their late entrance also disrupts the learning of others. Improving attendance and punctuality is therefore a key element in the drive to bring coherence and continuity to teaching and learning and to raising levels of achievement.

By having a whole school policy, agreed and implemented by all the staff, the school aims to support individual pupils, improve the continuity of teaching and learning for all, maintain a positive school ethos and promote equality and opportunity for all pupils.

Why regular attendance is so important

Learning: - Any absence affects the pattern of a child’s schooling and regular absence will seriously affect learning. Ensuring a child’s regular attendance at school is the legal responsibility of parents and legal guardians. Permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law under the Education Act 1996, and may result in prosecution.

Safeguarding:- Children may be at risk of harm if they do not attend school regularly. The failure of a child to attend school on a regular basis will be considered as a safeguarding matter.

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The legal duties of the school

Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 states that ‘the parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him / her to receive efficient full time education suitable:-

- (a) to age, ability and aptitude and
- (b) to any special educational needs he/ she may have

Either by regular attendance at school or otherwise’

The Law relating to safeguarding

Section 175 of the Education Act 2002 places a duty on local authorities and governing bodies to have regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State with regard to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and students under the age of 18.

Every school is required to provide information on attendance, for publication in comparative tables of school performance for example.

Attendance information relates to rates of authorised and unauthorised absence.

The school is required by law to report on poor attendance to the LA. Headteachers are also under a legal obligation to provide the Governing Body with this information for the school to comply with the law.

The legal duties of parents/carers

It is the legal duty of parent/carers to ensure that children of statutory school age receive appropriate education. For most parents this is by sending them to school and parents of the school pupils have a duty to ensure their regular attendance and that absences are for a bona fide reasons.

Parents are expected to notify school of the reasons for absence, which are now categorised according to Government regulation.

What is regular attendance?

Creating a pattern of regular attendance establishes a positive habit for life. It is the responsibility of parents, pupils and all members of school staff.

Regular attendance at Heber is defined as **96% or above**. To achieve this, children should not be absent for more than 7 days in any academic year. This is normally more than enough to cover absence for everyday illnesses such as stomach bugs, coughs and colds.

To achieve this objective of ensuring pupils children attend school regularly, the school will:

- Monitor attendance closely as a school and follow up with parents and carers on any attendance issues
- Support parents and carers who may, for whatever reason, find it difficult to get their children to school on time
- React promptly and firmly if parents and carers fail to support the school's attendance policy
- Celebrate good attendance by displaying individual and class achievements;
- Report to parents and carers on whole school attendance levels.
- Include attendance data in all school reports along with attainment and achievement levels
- Reward good or improving attendance through class competitions, certificates and outings/events.

Understanding absence

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by the parents), as either **authorised** or **unauthorised**. In order to classify the absence as authorised, the cause of the absence is required from the parent/carer in writing.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason like illness, medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable causes.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been given. This type of absence will lead to further action against the parents or legal guardians. Examples include:

- parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily
- absences which have never been properly explained
- truancy during the school day
- shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- day trips and holidays in term time which have not been agreed

Sometimes a child may be reluctant to attend school and a parent/carer or a school staff member may suspect this is for reasons other than illness. In this situation, it is never better to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter, avoids the issue and usually makes things worse. It is much better for parents/carers to raise the issue immediately with school staff and for all parties to support the child in order to solve the problem.

Persistent Absenteeism (PA):

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 15% or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason. This equates to around 5 days in a 7 week term, or 28 days across the whole school year. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we need parents' and carers' fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

We monitor all absence thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority. Parents/carers would be contacted and invited into school for a meeting to discuss and try to resolve the issues. An action plan would be put into place which may include additional support through a Learning Mentor for the pupil. Further action will be taken against the parents/carers if it is felt that the child is being kept off school on unreasonable grounds.

Absence Procedures:

If a child is absent, parents/carers should:

- Contact the school by telephone as soon as possible on the first day of absence.

- Provide evidence of appointments that require a child to miss school

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If a child is absent the school will:

- Text parents/carers on the first day of absence if the school has not heard from the family.
- Assess whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised;
- Call parents/carers to clarify reasons for all unexplained absence.
- Track absence patterns and contact parents/carers if absence falls below 90% in any given term, offering support where necessary.
- Invite parents/carers into school for a meeting and potentially refer the matter to the Local Authority for further action if attendance falls below 85% in any given term.

School Procedure for Managing Persistent Absenteeism

Absence Level	School Response
Absence dips below 90% over a term	Letter 1 to alert parents/carers to concerns 4 week window for attendance to improve Any further absence – phone call made/ logged.
No improvement after additional 4 weeks	Letter 2 and informal meeting with Mrs Jefford. Agree strategies to improve attendance and in-school monitoring
Absence dips below 85% over a term	Letter 1 to alert parents/carers to concerns 4 week window for attendance to improve Any absence – phone call made and logged
No improvement after additional 4 weeks	Letter 2 – parents/carers invited to attend attendance panel meeting with LA and Mrs Jefford. Agree strategies to improve attendance and in-school monitoring

No improvement after 4 more weeks	School produces CAF and makes referral to LA for court proceedings
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Holidays

The school holiday dates are published a term before the next academic year begins. If leave from school in term time is unavoidable, a 'leave of absence' request must be made in advance to the Headteacher. The Headteacher will then decide whether or not to authorise the absence.

Headteachers, on behalf of the Governing Body, can grant leave, at their discretion. The Local Authority advises Headteachers to only authorise absence for leave in exceptional circumstances. Where leave of absence is granted, the Headteacher will determine the number of days a pupil can be away from school. Where 'leave of absence' is denied and parents still take their children out of school the register code will show 'G' (Holiday not authorised by school). If pupils do not return to school by the date set / agreed, the 'G' code will also be used.

It must be noted that regulations do not allow schools to give retrospective approval. If parents do not apply for leave of absence, the absence must be recorded as unauthorised

Telephone numbers:

The Keeping Children Safe in Education document published by the Government in September 2018 advises schools to have a minimum of 3 contacts for each child. It is essential that the contact numbers for parents, carers and other key family members are up to date at all times. The Parents and carers have a responsibility to keep the school updated. The school commits to updating contact lists on a regular basis and asking parents for updated contact information once per year.

Lateness:

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If a pupil misses the start of the day they will struggle to catch up with the first lesson. Late arriving pupils also disrupt lessons for other pupils. This can be embarrassing for the child and can stimulate further absence.

How the school manages lateness:

Registering Procedures

The school gate opens at **8.45am** and KS2 are able to go straight up to class. All children should be in class by 8.50 ready for morning work to begin. For KS2 the register will be completed by **9am**.

For KS1 the bell rings at **8.55am** and the children need to be in class by 9am to begin their morning work. The register will be completed by **9.05am**.

Pupils arriving after this time **MUST** report to the office to be signed in. This is very important. If the child enters class after the register has been taken, they will be in school but marked absent. In the event of a fire or other emergency, this would mean we could not ensure the pupil's safety.

Monitoring of Lateness

It is all parents and carers' responsibility to ensure their children are in school on time. The school requires all parents and carers to agree to that responsibility. If parents/carers are having problems getting their child(ren) to school on time, they can approach the school at any time and the school will work to support the family wherever possible.

Office staff will check the lates each morning and will change any late pupils marks from 'Absent' to 'Late'. Late marks will be monitored and if a child is late on more than 7 occasions a letter will be sent inviting parents to a meeting with Mrs Jefford or Lewwis Spence, the school Learning Mentor.

Late Collection

Similarly, late collection of pupils from school causes significant problems. The school understands that sometimes there are unavoidable reasons why a parent/carer may be late collecting a child from school. However, persistent late collection is not acceptable.

Children can easily become distressed if they are not collected on time. In addition, the school does not have staff available with the time or the training to manage children after regular school hours.

KS1: The school day finishes at 3.20pm. Children are escorted to the playground and should arrive by 3.25pm at the latest.

KS2: The school day finishes at 3.30pm. Children are escorted to the playground and should arrive by 3.35pm at the latest.

Late collection will be recorded and monitored. If late collection becomes an issue parents/carers will be invited to attend an attendance panel meeting with Mrs Jefford.

Those people responsible for attendance matters in this school are:

Rivka Rosenberg – Headteacher

Lyndsey Jefford – Assistant Headteacher

Victoria Walters – School Business Manager

Jaqueline Hamm – Administration Manager

Lewwis Spence - Learning Mentor

Approval and Review Record

Policy Approved by Governors on (date)..... 26/3/2019

Signed by Chair of Governing Body/Committee:.....  (date)..... 26/3/2019

Due for Annual Review by Governors (date) Spring 2022