



Attendance Policy 2026

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Author	Rachel Jones
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Document Control Table

Document History			
Version	Date	Author	Note of revisions
1	September 2024	Rachel Jones	Page 3- responsibility Headteacher and added Attendance Leader Named Attendance Leader added. Changes throughout- where previously said Headteacher will ensure... now replaced with Attendance Leader.
2	September 2025	Rachel Jones	Page 7- changed Headteacher to Attendance Leader (Deputy Headteacher), and possibly a representative from Hampshire County Council. Page 10- <i>'Amount Payable Under a Penalty Notice: The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2024'</i> Sections 1, 2 and 3 added to explain the fining process.
3	August 2026	Rachel Jones	Gates changed to gate throughout as only one gate is used at school drop off and pick up. Page 5- Studybugs is added as this is the reporting tool we ask parents to use to report absences.

Person(s) responsible for implementing and monitoring the policy:

Headteacher and Attendance Leader

Named Attendance Leader: Rachel Jones (Deputy Headteacher)

National guidance

School attendance is subject to various education laws and this school attendance policy is written to reflect these laws and the guidance produced by the Department for Education and Hampshire County Council.

St Mark's School will:

1. Promote good attendance and reduce absence, including persistent absence
2. Ensure every child has access to full time education, when appropriate
3. Act early to address patterns of absence

Parents must perform their legal duty by ensuring children of compulsory school age who are registered attend regularly and on time. This includes children under 5 even though it is not statutory for them.

Section 1: Rationale

For any child to reach their full potential a high level of school attendance is essential.

We are committed to providing an education of the highest quality for all our children within a caring and nurturing environment. Parents and children play a part in making our school so successful. Every child has a right to access the education to which he or she is entitled and parents and teachers share the responsibility for supporting and promoting excellent school attendance and punctuality for all.

It is our duty to consistently strive to achieve a goal of 100% attendance for all children. Every opportunity will be used to convey to pupils and their parents or carers the importance of regular and punctual attendance.

For our children to take full advantage of the educational opportunities offered to them it is vital they are at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for absence is unavoidable, such as illness or medical appointments that cannot be arranged outside of school hours. High attainment, confidence with peers and staff and future aspirations depend on good attendance.

Good attendance is important because:

- statistics show a direct link between under-achievement and absence below 95%
- regular attenders make better progress, both socially and academically
- regular attenders find school routines, school work and friendships easier to cope with
- regular attenders find learning more satisfying and enjoyable
- regular attenders are more successful in transferring between primary school, secondary school, and higher education, employment or training.

Section 2: Operating the Policy

2.1 Promoting Good Attendance

The foundation for good attendance is a strong partnership between school, parents and children. Our Home/School Agreement will contain details of how we will work with you and our expectations of what parents will need to do to ensure your child achieves good attendance.

To help us to focus on this we will:

- Report once a year (unless there is a problem) to parents on how their child is performing in school, and what their attendance rate has been during the year.
- Keep parents up to date on any matters related to attendance via newsletters and on our website.
- Celebrate good attendance by:
 - Awarding 'Liquorice the dog', to the class with the best attendance in our weekly achievement assemblies.

- Awarding Termly 100% attendance certificates.

2.2 Roles and Responsibilities

The Attendance Leader will oversee, direct and co-ordinate the school's work in promoting regular and improved attendance and will ensure this Attendance Policy is consistently applied throughout school.

The school office will ensure that attendance is both recorded accurately and analysed regularly.

All staff will ensure that attendance issues are identified at an early stage and liaise with the Attendance Leader to ensure 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 parent/carer 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 pupil's home does not mean an absence becomes authorised. The decision to authorise an absence will always lie with the school.

2.3 Responsibilities of School Staff

School staff will:

- Ensure that the attendance register is completed accurately and quickly.
- Promote and reward good attendance at least termly.
- Communicate any concerns or underlying problems that may account for a child's absence.
- Ensure that any child arriving **after 8:55am** is marked late (L), and any child arriving from **9:00am onwards** is marked with a U (unauthorised).
- Support pupils with absence to engage with their learning once they are back in school.
- Each Register will have a summary sheet clearly outlining procedures and attendance codes.
- The school gate and door to the children's entrance are closed at 8:50am.
- Late arrivals are to use the main entrance and be signed in at the school office, giving reasons for lateness.

2.4 Responsibilities of students

- Attend school every day unless they are ill or have authorised absence.
- Arrive in school on time.
- Go to registration and lessons on time.

2.5 Responsibilities of Parents and Carers:

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.

Parents will:

- inform the school on the first day of absence, and update daily
- discuss with the school any planned absences well in advance
- support the school with their child in aiming for 100% attendance each year
- make sure that any absence is clearly accounted for by telephone on the first and subsequent days of absence.
- not taking their child out of school for non-urgent medical or dental appointments
- only request leave of absence if it is for an exceptional circumstance.

PLEASE NOTE: holidays are not deemed exceptional circumstances and will not be authorised

Section 3

3.1 Recording Attendance:

Legally our registers must be marked twice a day, once at 8:50am and once at 1:05pm

3.2. Lateness / Punctuality

It is important to be on time at the start of the morning and afternoon sessions. All children will start learning as soon as the register is marked. The start of school is used to give out instructions or organise work. If your child is late they can miss work time with their class teacher getting vital information, and cause disruption to other children. Lateness only disadvantages children, making them feel embarrassed and leading to possible further absence.

- The school gate will open at 8.40am and all children need to be in school at 8.50am and in their classroom by 8.55am. **All pupils are expected to be in school by 8.50am.**
- All lateness is recorded daily. This information would be required by the courts in the event of a prosecution for non-attendance or persistent lateness.
- Arrival after the close of the registers at 9:00am will be marked as unauthorised absence, code U, in line with Hampshire County Council and DfE guidance. This mark shows the child is on site, but has been legally recorded as an absence.
- If a child is late due to a medical appointment, they will receive an authorised absence code M. The school should be notified beforehand. Please be advised that, doctors and dentists appointments should be made outside of school hours or during school holidays.

Pupils who are consistently late are disrupting not only their own education but also that of other pupils. On-going and repeated lateness is considered **as unauthorised absence and will be subject to legal action** (see Section 6 for further details).

Parents, guardians or carers of pupils who have patterns of lateness will be contacted to discuss the importance of good time keeping and how this might be achieved. If lateness persists, parents, guardians or carers will be invited to attend the school and discuss the problem and support offered. If support is not appropriate or is declined and a child has 10 or more sessions (1 session is equivalent to a morning or afternoon) of unauthorised absence due to lateness recorded in any 10 week period then HCC is obliged to issue you with a penalty notice in accordance with Hampshire County Council's *Code of Conduct: issuing Penalty Notices for unauthorised absence from schools* (See Section 6 of this policy for further detail).

At our school we will discuss the issues with you and offer any help and support we can if necessary.

Please collect your child promptly at the end of the school day. Where late collection is persistent and/or significantly late, the school is obliged to take any uncollected pupil to a place of safety and share concerns, as necessary, with other agencies. If one is available, the school will place a child into the after-school club and provide the parent/carer with the bill. Parent/carers will be asked to sign their child out in the late collection register giving their reason for the late collection.

3.3 What to do if my child is absent

A child not attending school is considered a **safeguarding** matter. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required.

First Day of Absence

If your child is absent you must contact the school **before** the morning session to report absence, or as soon as practically possible. Please report your child's absence through Studybugs: [Studybugs](#). Telephone or face to face messages will firstly be passed verbally by the Headteacher/Deputy Headteacher and office staff to the class teacher and office staff will also record the details in the register giving the reason for the absence.

Office staff will contact the parents of absent children if a notification of absence has not been received by 9.30am and will continue to try and contact the parent throughout the day if they cannot be reached. This is because we have a duty to ensure your child's safety as well as their regular school attendance.

We expect parents to notify the school daily if an absence lasts more than one day.

If absences persist we will invite parents/carers to discuss the situation with the Attendance Leader. If absence is unauthorised and falls below 90% we will refer the matter to Hampshire County Council's Legal Panels.

Third Day Absence

Please Note: If your child is not seen and contact has not been established with any of the named parents/carers, after three days of absence the school is required to start *child missing in education* procedures as set down by Hampshire County Council Guidance. We will make all reasonable enquires to establish contact with parents/carers and the child, including making enquires to known friends and wider family. This may include visiting the home address by a member of staff.

Ten Days Absence

We have a legal duty to report the absence any pupil who is absent without an explanation for 10 consecutive days. If the child is not seen and contact has not been established with the named parent/carer then the Local Authority is notified that the child is '*at risk of missing*'. Children's Services Staff will visit the last known address and alert key services to locate the child.

Please help us to help you and your child by **making sure we always have an up to date contact number**.

Continued or ongoing absence

If your child misses 10% (three weeks) or more schooling across the school year, for whatever reason, they are defined as *persistent absentees*. Absence for whatever reason disadvantages a child by creating gaps in his or her learning. Research shows these gaps affect attainment when attendance falls below 95%. As such, we monitor all absence thoroughly and all attendance data is shared with the local authority and the Department for Education.

If your child has had absence and their attendance level is falling towards 90% we will contact you, and depending on the reasons for the absence may ask you to attend a meeting with the Attendance Leader (Deputy Headteacher), and possibly a representative from Hampshire County Council. We can then work together to help you, possibly drawing up an Attendance Action Plan with review dates.

Section 4

Request for Leave of Absence:

For national guidance refer to 'School Attendance & Absence' at <https://www.gov.uk/school-attendance-absence>

Amendments to school attendance regulations were updated and enforced from September 2013. The Education Regulations state that state that Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. It is important to note that Headteachers can determine the length of the authorised absence, as well as whether absence is authorised at all. The fundamental principles for defining exceptional are rare, significant, or unavoidable, which means the event could not reasonably be scheduled at another time. There are no rules on this as circumstances vary from school to school and family to family. There is, however, no legal entitlement for time off in school term time to go on holiday and in the majority of cases holiday will not be authorised.

However, parents wishing to apply for leave of absence need to fill in an application form (available from the school office) in advance and before making travel plans.

If term time leave is taken without prior permission from the school, the absence will be unauthorised and if the number of sessions absent hits the thresholds set down in HCC Code of Conduct, parents will be issued with a fixed-penalty fine by the County.

Taking holidays in term time will affect your child's schooling as much as any other absence and we expect parents to help us by not taking children out during school time.

Section 5

Understanding types of absence – Authorised & Unauthorised

There are two main categories of absence:

1. Authorised Absence is when the school has accepted the explanation offered as satisfactory justification for the absence, or given approval in advance.
2. Unauthorised Absence is when the school has not received a reason for absence or has not approved a child's absence from school after a parental request. This includes for example:
 - a. Parents taking their child out of school for a holiday, visit to relatives, birthday treat, shopping or because a sibling is ill etc.
 - b. Arriving late after the registers have closed (code U on register).
 - c. Truancy before or during the school day.

The school will, if needed, change an authorised to unauthorised (or vice versa) if new information is presented. An example of this would be where a parent has told us the child was unwell but upon their return there is evidence they have been on holiday.

Section 6

Penalty Notices for Non Attendance and other Legal Measures:

In Education law, parents/carers are committing an offence if they fail to ensure the regular attendance of their child of compulsory school age at the school at which the child is registered, unless the absence has been authorised by the school.

Legal Measures for tackling persistent absence or lateness

Hampshire Schools and Hampshire County Council will use the full range of legal measures to secure good attendance. Legal measures will only be considered through a referral to Hampshire's Attendance Legal Panels where:

1. The child or family do not require the support from any agency to improve the attendance
2. The child has 10 or more sessions of unauthorised absence in any continuous 100 session period, and parents are complicit in the child's absence.

The following legal measures are for pupils of compulsory school age who are registered at a school:

- Parenting contracts set at Education Planning Meetings
- Parenting orders
- Penalty notices
- Education Supervision Orders
- Prosecution

Where a child has unauthorised absence the school must enforce Hampshire's Code of Conduct for issuing Penalty Notices or follow its guidance on other Legal Measures for Non-Attendance. The Code of Conduct is a statutory document that ensures that powers for legal sanctions are applied consistently and fairly across all schools and their families within the authority.

A copy is available from <https://www.hants.gov.uk/educationandlearning/behaviour-attendance-parents>

Penalty Notices for non-attendance- Hampshire's Code of Conduct

The code of conduct states that:

Schools or Hampshire County Council will issue a Penalty Notice for any unauthorised absence where the pupil has been:

- absent for 10 or more half-day sessions (five school days) of unauthorised absence during any 100 possible school sessions – these do not need to be consecutive (codes G, U or O on the register)
- persistently late (coded U) for up to 10 sessions (five days) after the register has closed

- persistently late before the close of the register (coded *L*), but the school has met with parents and has clearly communicated that they will categorise as unauthorised any further lateness (code *O*), and where the threshold of 10 sessions (five days) has been met
- absent for any public examinations of which dates are published in advance
- absent for any formal school assessments, tests or examinations where the dates have been published in advance

unless the issuing of a Penalty Notice would conflict with other intervention strategies in place or other sanctions already being processed.

Legal Measures for absence taken when the Headteacher has declined parent/carers request for leave of absence

Where a pupil has unauthorised absence due to either:

- non approval of a parent/carer's request for leave of absence, or
- a holiday that has been taken without permission and the unauthorised absence (coded *G*) is for 10 or more sessions (5 days) in any 100 possible school sessions/10 week period then a penalty notice for non-attendance will be issued.

If a child has other types of unauthorised absence (coded *O* and *U*) and the family or child do not require any agency support to improve the attendance then a single Penalty Notice is issued for either:

- 1 10 sessions (five days) of unauthorised absence or lateness in any 100 possible school sessions/10 week school period**
- 2 one or more sessions of unauthorised absence during a public exam, formal school assessment of testing where dates are published in advance.**

Persistent Lateness (L) code which reaches the threshold may result in the issuing of a Penalty Notice.

Parents and Carers will be warned of the likelihood of a penalty notice being issued for unauthorised absence either via a letter, through the leave of absence request form, or through the schools attendance policy and website. The penalty notice is a fine that is issued to each parent/carer who condoned (or was responsible for the child) during the period of unauthorised absence for which the fine has been issued. For each case of unauthorised absence the school or Hampshire County Council will decide whether a Penalty Notice is issued to **one or more parent/carers for each child**.

N.B This could mean four penalty notices for a family with two siblings both with unauthorised absence for holiday i.e. one Penalty Notice for each child to each parent

Amount Payable Under a Penalty Notice: The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2024.

1. If a parent/carer has not incurred a penalty notice relating to the relevant child/children since 19 August 2024, then the penalty notice will be charged at the rate of £160.00, **per parent/carer per child**, if paid within 28 days. This will be reduced to £80.00 if paid within 21 days of receipt of the notice. Failure to pay the Penalty Notice will result in Hampshire County Council considering legal proceedings against you in the Magistrates Court.

2. If you have incurred a penalty notice relating to this child/children since 19 August 2024, the rolling 3 year period will be activated from the date of the first penalty notice and the second penalty notice will be charged at the flat rate of £160.00, **per parent/carer per child**, if paid within 28 days. There will be no reduction for payment within 21 days. Failure to pay the Penalty Notice will result in Hampshire County Council considering legal proceedings against you in the Magistrates Court.

3. If you have incurred 2 penalty notices relating to this child/children in the rolling 3 year period since the first penalty notice was issued, then you will NOT receive a third penalty notice – Hampshire County Council will have no option but to consider a prosecution, **per parent/carer per child**, in the Magistrates Court under section 444 Education Act 1996.

Penalties are to be paid to Hampshire County Council and revenue resulting from payment of Penalties is used by the County Council to help cover the costs of issuing Penalty Notices and/or the cost of prosecuting recipients who do not pay.

Please note: If you pay the Penalty Notice and your child has further unauthorised absences additional legal action will be taken. For example, in the event that a Penalty Notice has previously been served to you due to unauthorised holiday, should your child have any future unauthorised leave this will result in further legal action for you, such as prosecution or an Education Supervision Order.

For further information parents/carers can request a leaflet from their school and should visit Hampshire County Councils website at: <https://www.hants.gov.uk/educationandlearning/behaviour-attendance-parents>

Section 7

7.1 What can I do to encourage my child to attend School?

Most parents understand the importance of a regular school routine. However, there may be times when you need to contact either the Class teacher, Attendance Leader or Headteacher to ask for help and we are always happy to provide support.

Make sure your child gets enough sleep and gets up in plenty of time each morning. Ensure that he/she leaves home in the correct clothes and properly equipped. Show your child, by your interest, that you value his/her education.

Be interested in what your child is doing at school, chat to them about the things they have learnt, what friends they have made and what they had for lunch.

For many parents, your child attending school may be your first experience of being separated from them. This can seem daunting at first for both of you, but consistency and a caring, supportive home and school life will make the transition a quick and easy experience for you both.

7.2 Leavers

If your child is leaving our school other than leaving at the end of Year 6, parents will be asked to give the school comprehensive information about their plans, including any date of a move and new address and telephone numbers, your child's new school and the start date when known. This should be submitted to our school in writing

If pupils leave and we do not have the above information, then your child is considered to be a child missing in education. This requires schools and local authorities to then carry out investigations to try and locate your child, which includes liaising with Children's Services, the Police and other agencies. By giving us the above information, these investigations can be avoided.

7.3 Absence through child participation in public performances, including theatre, film or television work and modelling

Parents/carers of a child performer can seek leave of absence from school for their child to take part in a performance. They must contact the Headteacher to discuss the nature and frequency of the work, whether the child has a valid performance licence and whether education will be provided by the employer during any future leave of absence. It is, however, down to the Headteacher's discretion as to whether to authorise this and they will wish to discuss with you the nature and frequency of the absence and how learning will continue if absence occurs. Any absence recorded as part of a child's participation in a public performance is recorded as C, an authorised absence.

7.4 Absence through competing at regional, county or national level for sport

Parents of able sportsmen and women can seek leave of absence from school for their child to take part in regional, county, national and international events and competitions. It is, however, down to the Headteacher's discretion whether to authorise this and they will wish to discuss with you the nature and frequency of the absence and how learning will continue if absence occurs. Permission for your child to leave early or arrive late to attend coaching and

training sessions is also at the discretion of the Headteacher and is not likely to be approved if it is a regular event, unless the sports club or association is providing an education tutor as part of their coaching.

7.5 Gypsy Roma Traveller Showman and Showman families

Absence of a child from a traveller family that has left the area may be authorised if the absence is for **work purposes only** and it is believed that the family intends to return. To ensure the continuity of learning for Traveller children, dual registration is allowed. That means that a school cannot remove a Traveller child from the school roll while they are travelling. When the Traveller is away the home school holds the place open and records the absence as authorised through the T code. Distance Learning packs for traveller children are not an alternative to attendance at school.

Section 8

Record preservation

School registers are legal documents. We will ensure compliance with attendance regulations by keeping attendance records for at least 3 years. Computer registers will be preserved as electronic back-ups or microfiche copies.

This policy was developed by the staff and governors of the school.

It was ratified by the Governors September 2026.

This policy is due for review in September 2027

Appendices

The Law

The Education Act 1996 Part 1, Section 7 states:

The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him to receive efficient full-time education suitable-

- [a] To his age, ability and aptitude and
- [b] To any special needs he may have.

either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

For educational purposes the term parent is used to include those that have parental responsibility and/or those that have the day to day care of the child.

The legislation that appertains to children who are of compulsory school age and are registered at school is contained within this Act.

Part V1 Section 444 contains the details of when an offence is committed if a child fails to attend school.

Register and Admission Roll keeping.

The legal requirements are found in: The Education [Pupil Registration] (England) Regulations 2006

Guidance documents on attendance.

The following DfE documents are used to guide attendance recording:

Absence and Attendance codes (Guidance for Schools and Local Authorities)

Keeping Pupil Registers (Guidance on applying the Education Pupil Registration Regulations)

These and other guidance documents are available on the DfE website

Further information can be found at: [Attendance guidance for parents | Hampshire County Council](#) (hants.gov.uk)