



Hazel Cottage
School

Attendance Policy

Date of last review	June 2025
Date of next review	October 2025

Introduction

This policy is based on the Pupil Registration Regulations (2006), the 1996 Education Act and Children Missing From Education, DfE 2016. There is a clear link between good attendance and educational achievement. Good attendance at school is essential so children can achieve their full potential.

The 1996 Education Act states that:

- Parents and guardians must ensure that children of compulsory school age receive a suitable fulltime education by regular attendance at school or otherwise.
- The school must complete attendance registers at the beginning of the morning and afternoon session.
- The school must report to the Local Authority children who fail to attend regularly or are absent for more than 10 days without explanations.
- The Local Authority has a duty to ensure parents/carers fulfil their legal responsibilities.
- Failure by parents/carers to ensure the regular attendance at school of a registered child is an offence punishable in law.

The school's Home School Agreement stresses the need for children to attend school regularly and on time. This policy sets out the systems in place to monitor children's attendance at school and outlines the procedures for non-attendance.

This policy is grounded in the Department for Education's (DfE) statutory guidance on working together to improve school attendance, which will come into effect on 19 August 2024. The guidance aims to support schools, local authorities, parents, and other partners in ensuring that pupils attend school regularly and are able to benefit fully from their education. It also outlines the responsibilities and measures available to enforce school attendance where necessary.

The policy draws upon the following key pieces of legislation, which collectively establish the legal framework governing school attendance in England:

- **Part 6 of the Education Act 1996:** This section of the Act places a legal duty on parents to ensure their children receive a suitable full-time education, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise. It also sets out local authorities' powers to intervene when attendance is poor, including issuing penalty notices and prosecuting cases of unauthorised absence.
- **Part 3 of the Education Act 2002:** This legislation gives schools and local authorities powers to enforce attendance and outlines their responsibilities to promote the welfare of children. It also underpins safeguarding duties and the involvement of educational welfare officers.
- **Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) – GOV.UK:** This statutory guidance highlights safeguarding obligations for schools, including the importance of monitoring attendance patterns as an indicator of potential child welfare or safeguarding concerns. Regular attendance is recognized as essential to children's safety and wellbeing.
- **Mental Health Issues Affecting a Pupil's Attendance: Guidance for Schools – GOV.UK:** This guidance acknowledges the complex relationship between mental health challenges and school attendance. It encourages schools to adopt a supportive, trauma-informed approach to attendance issues, recognizing that mental health difficulties may contribute to irregular attendance and require tailored interventions.

Together, these legislative provisions and guidance documents form the basis of our approach to managing and improving school attendance. They ensure that the school's attendance policy aligns with current legal requirements and best practices, balancing the need for accountability with a compassionate understanding of pupils' individual circumstances.

Roles and Responsibilities

The Headteacher:

- Has overall responsibility for attendance
- Receives weekly attendance data from the school administration team.
- Reports to the governing body regarding attendance on a termly basis.

The Family Liaison Officer (FLO):

- Make contact with parents/carers of absent children, after initial contact from the admin team.
- Follow procedures for responding to low levels of attendance.
- Writes Attendance Support Action Plans for pupils with persistently low levels of attendance.
- Reports to SLT regarding attendance of individual pupils.

The School Administration Team:

- Phones parents/carers on first day of absence
- Completes registers on ISams twice per day, and in line with codes specified below
- Produces a weekly attendance report for the SLT and Wellbeing Team

Parents:

- Inform the school as early possible of any absence
- Provide documentary evidence of medical appointments requiring time away from school.
- Submit requests for term-time absence in a timely manner, and with clear details of the exceptional circumstances.

Registration Procedures

- Morning and afternoon registers are completed daily, using the 'iSams' electronic information system.
- Pupils arriving after 9:30am will be marked as 'late', unless previously agreed (for example due to medical appointments)
- Pupils' attendance or otherwise will be recorded using the designated symbols shown below.

Absence

- On the first day of absence parents should inform the school before 8:45am by telephone or email, stating the reason for absence and when their son or daughter is expected to return to school (if known)
- School will attempt to contact parents if a pupil fails to arrive and no message has been received by 9:30am.
- The school administrator will pass on any messages regarding absence to the class teams.
- If no reason is provided for an absence, it will be recorded as 'N' for one week. If no information is received by the end of this period then the absence is classed as 'unauthorised' and a 'O' replaces the 'N'
- Absence from school for appointments should be notified in advance so that the correct mark is noted on the register. Evidence of the appointment needs to be seen by the school office, and the date, time and location of the appointment recorded on ISams. This procedure forms part of the school's enhanced safeguarding practice.
- Only the headteacher can authorise a child's absence from school, and requests for term-time absence will not be agreed, except in exceptional circumstances.

Responding to Low Rates of Attendance

Given the link between attendance and all forms of progress for our young people, and that close monitoring of attendance forms part of the school's wider safeguarding duties, Hazel Cottage School undertakes to follow-up any unexplained

absence as quickly as possible. While we will always take an individualised and supportive approach, typically we will do the following:

- Weekly monitoring of attendance by relevant senior staff, with supportive contact offered to parents as required.
- Half-termly review conducted by FLO and SLT to agree families in need of support with attendance.
- A wellbeing phone-call on the first day of every absence for every pupil, with subsequent calls until they return
- A phone-call from Family Liaison Officer if a pupil's attendance falls below 90%, where supportive strategies will be discussed and agreed.
- A meeting or home visit with the FLO, and/or SLT if attendance falls below 80%, OR remains below 90% following support.
- A further meeting involving the Local Authority during which further support and procedures may be considered
- Request for medical evidence that a child is too ill to attend school may be sought when a child's attendance falls below 90%
- The individual needs of pupils attending Hazel Cottage may mean that a different approach to that outlined above is required. Where this is the case, it will be discussed with parents and agreed with the Local Authority.

This policy reflects our unwavering commitment to meeting all statutory obligations regarding school attendance as outlined in the Department for Education's **Working Together to Improve School Attendance** guidance, which comes into effect from 19 August 2024. We understand that consistent school attendance is vital not only for academic achievement but also for the social, emotional, and personal development of every pupil.

To embed this commitment, we promote a whole-school culture and ethos that values attendance as a priority for success and wellbeing. Our policy is centred on the following key objectives:

- **Setting High Expectations for Attendance and Punctuality:**
We believe that clear and high expectations provide a foundation for positive attendance habits. All members of the school community—pupils, parents, staff, and governors—are made aware of the importance of attending school regularly and arriving on time. We maintain a consistent approach to attendance monitoring and celebrate punctuality as an essential life skill.
- **Promoting Good Attendance and its Benefits:**
We actively communicate the advantages of regular attendance through assemblies, newsletters, and parental engagement activities. Good attendance supports uninterrupted learning, enhances social development, and improves pupils' confidence and wellbeing. We ensure that pupils understand how attendance connects to future opportunities, such as higher education and employment.
- **Reducing Absence, Including Persistent and Severe Absence:**
Our school utilises robust monitoring systems to identify pupils who are at risk of frequent absence. We work collaboratively with families and external agencies to understand and address underlying causes, whether they be health-related, social, or emotional. Tailored interventions are designed to support pupils in overcoming barriers, with the ultimate aim of reducing absence rates.

- **Ensuring Access to Full-Time Education:**

Every pupil has a legal right to a suitable full-time education. We are committed to ensuring that this right is upheld by removing obstacles to attendance. This includes providing reasonable adjustments and additional support for pupils with special educational needs, disabilities, or mental health challenges. We also work with local authorities to provide alternative education arrangements where appropriate.

- **Acting Early to Address Patterns of Absence:**

Early identification and swift action are critical in preventing attendance issues from escalating. Our attendance team analyses attendance data regularly and responds to emerging trends or concerns with timely interventions. This might include home visits, meetings with parents, or referrals to educational welfare services. Early action helps us to provide the right support at the right time.

- **Building Strong Relationships with Families:**

We recognise that attendance is a shared responsibility. Positive, trusting relationships with families enable open communication and effective problem-solving. We engage parents and carers through regular contact, attendance workshops, and collaborative planning to support pupils. We aim to create a supportive environment where families feel confident to seek help and work with the school to improve attendance.

Through these commitments, our school strives to create an inclusive, supportive, and motivating environment where pupils want to attend school and are enabled to do so regularly. We believe that good attendance is foundational to a successful educational journey and to preparing pupils for lifelong learning and achievement.

Children Missing From Education

*Please read **Children Missing From Education, DfE 2016**, for full details on school responsibilities and duties.*

- All children over the age of 5 must be in full-time education.
- If a child requires a part-time timetable for any reason, this must be agreed at an EHCP meeting with relevant professionals, including representatives from the Local Authority. Part-time timetables should be reviewed at least half-termly, and there should be a plan to support the child to attend full time as soon as possible.
- The Local Authority will be informed of any child who has been missing from school without a valid reason for 10 days or more, or of any child who fails to attend regularly.
- Where a child is absent and attempts to contact the family have not been successful, school staff will attempt to carry out a home visit. The timing of this visit will depend on individual circumstances, but will typically be on the same day of an unexplained absence. If this visit is unsuccessful then a call to the Local Authority's Safeguarding Team will be made, and advice sought.

Designated Symbols for Recording Absence

/	Present (AM)
\	Present (PM)
B	Educated off site (not dual registration)
C	Other Authorised Circumstances
D	Dual Registration
E	Excluded
F	Extended Family holiday (Agreed)
G	Family Holiday (Not Agreed)
H	Family Holiday (Agreed)
I	Illness
J	Interview
L	Late
M	Medical/Dental Appointment
N	No Reason Given
O	Unauthorised Absence
P	Approved Sporting Activity
R	Religious Observance
S	Study Leave
T	Traveller Absence
V	Educational Visit or Trip
W	Work Experience
#	School closed
Y	Enforced Closure

Term-Time Absence

The Children's Commissioner for England, in January 2024, talked of 'endemic' levels of school absence across the country, and rates of persistent absence have more than doubled since before COVID (Department for Education). Nationally, about 1 fifth of children currently miss 10% or more of their school time (centreforsocialjustice.co.uk).

There are multiple, complicated reasons why children miss school, and any conversation about falling attendance that does not also tackle the huge issue of mental health and anxiety amongst our young people is somewhat missing the point.

However, the government guidance in 2024 remains very clear, that parents have a duty to ensure their children access a full-time education that meets their needs. It goes on to clarify that parents can allow their child to miss school on two grounds only - if they are too ill to attend, or if they have advance permission from the headteacher. As a school, our role is to support parents in this. We are not in the business of issuing fines, nor are we going to set arbitrary percentages of attendance figures that apply to all children and families, regardless of their circumstances. We will, however, work with you and your son or daughter to make school an attractive, exciting and productive place to be, and set clear, individualised expectations about what 'success' looks like as far as attendance goes.

Current regulations state that holidays during term time can only ever be authorised when two criteria are met- firstly, that an application has been made in advance to the headteacher, and secondly, that there are "exceptional circumstances" to justify the absence. We understand and agree with the need to keep term time absence to a minimum- like any other school the challenge of delivering a meaningful, ambitious curriculum is only made harder when teachers cannot be sure which pupils will be attending on which days. However, at Hazel Cottage we also know that our pupils are individuals, and the circumstances of every family are unique, and we want to work with together for the best possible outcomes. Specifically, parents need to bear in mind the following when asking us to authorise time away from school:

1. The school need at least two weeks to process and respond to any request for absence,
2. Current rate of attendance will be taken into consideration. There is no specific figure to be achieved, and individual circumstances will be considered.
3. Holidays of more than 1 week (5 school days) are unlikely to be authorised,
4. Multiple holidays in the same school year are unlikely to be authorised.

If you need to request a term-time absence during the 2024-25 academic year, please be advised that the necessary application form is available from the main office.

We kindly ask all parents/guardians collect the form in person and complete it with the required details. Early submission of the completed form is recommended to allow sufficient time for review and approval.

Please note that term-time absences are subject to the school's attendance policy and must be authorised by the appropriate staff members. If you have any questions or require assistance with the process, feel free to contact the main office during regular school hours

Please note:

The leadership team meet every week to look at pupil attendance, and local authorities typically now require detailed absence data to be submitted on a regular basis. In these circumstances, it is all the more important that school and parents work closely together and communicate clearly with each other. While the school's decision not to authorise, an absence would of course not prevent any family from proceeding with their time away, persistent high levels of unauthorised absence may lead to a review of the suitability of a placement.

Once a term, we will provide you with a detailed copy of your child's attendance record. This will help you stay informed about their presence at school and support their ongoing progress. In addition to this, we will also send out the term dates well in advance. This way, you can plan your family schedule around school holidays and important events with ease.

We believe that keeping you informed is an important part of supporting your child's education, and we encourage you to reach out if you have any questions or concerns about attendance.