

Hartford Manor Primary School & Nursery



Attendance and Punctuality Policy

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INTRODUCTION

Overview

Attendance really does matter. Regular attendance at school is important for your child's learning, development, future opportunities and friendships.

Where children do not have good attendance, or punctuality, Hartford Manor will develop improvement plans with parents and carers. The most vulnerable pupils will be given the same opportunities; this may mean extra support in some cases.

This Policy is based on the premise of equal opportunities for all. It was developed through a process of consultation with the relevant professionals and the Governing Body.

Hartford Manor will do all that it can to encourage good attendance and punctuality; the processes for managing and recording attendance are summarised on page four.

What the law says:

The Education Act 1996, (the Act), requires parents and carers to ensure that their children receive efficient, full time education, either by regular attendance at school or by other means. The Act states that:

"The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him/her to receive efficient full time education...either by regular attendance at school or otherwise" (section 7).

"if a child of compulsory school age who is a registered pupil at a school fails to attend regularly at the school his parent is guilty of an offence" (section 444).

This policy aims to:

- foster a culture where regular attendance and punctuality are valued by all – teachers, parents and children;
- secure the support of parents and carers in ensuring that their children attend school regularly and that they arrive on time;
- improve the overall attendance of all children and reduce unauthorised absence, so that all children achieve 100% attendance - or as close as possible;
- develop positive and consistent communication between home and school with appropriate support and guidance; and
- provide a framework with clear roles and responsibilities.

Hartford Manor will also:

- maintain effective electronic records of attendance through school registers and take prompt action to follow up absences;
- investigate and act immediately where unauthorised absence is confirmed or suspected;
- work effectively with other agencies, including education welfare, to follow up attendance issues promptly and efficiently;
- monitor those children where attendance and punctuality gives cause for concern and work with parents or carers to secure improvement; and
- respond promptly where concerns are raised by the Education Welfare Officer and seek their advice and support where appropriate.

ATTENDANCE

Children need to attend school in order to receive their educational entitlement and to make the most of that education. They also need to recognise good attendance, and punctuality, as important qualities that are valued by employers and others. Children are expected to attend school for the full 190 days of the academic year, unless there is good reason for absence.

Every time a child misses school he or she is missing valuable learning; we want all of our pupils to have every opportunity available to them while they are at Hartford Manor. While 90% may seem like an acceptable level of attendance, the reality is that it means that a child will miss half a school day each week, 19 days a year – that is nearly 4 school weeks in every school year. Children with good attendance have the best opportunity to achieve and succeed, not just now but throughout their lives.

Leave of Absence

There are two types of absence:

- authorised (where the school approve the absence); and
- unauthorised (where school will not approve the absence).

Hartford Manor can only authorise absences due illness, medical or dental appointments or other exceptional circumstances. For example:

- close family bereavements; and
- religious observance days.

When a child is unwell, it can sometimes be hard deciding whether to send them to school. The NHS has developed some simple [guidelines](#) to help parents and carers. Wherever possible, medical or dental appointments must be made outside of school time.

Where a child is off sick, parents and carers must always provide the reason. Where a child's absence totals five days, (10 sessions), or more in any academic year, Hartford Manor will require a written explanation. If the absence is long-term, or repeated, we may also request medical evidence. This can be in the form of a doctor's note, a prescription, evidence of medication, or appointment letters/cards. If satisfactory medical evidence is not provided, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised.

Where a child has specific medical needs, preventing good attendance at school, we will take this into account when a request for exceptional additional leave is requested. This may include, for example, flexible start and finish times. All such decisions are at the discretion of the Principal. Teachers will provide school work to be completed at home only under exceptional circumstances where a child's medical condition necessitates a prolonged absence from school and where requested by parents or carers.

New Government Legislation from 1 September 2013 amended the provisions of the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 so that Principal's may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless:

- a written request is made in advance of the leave being taken and
- the circumstances of the requested leave are 'exceptional'.

There is no longer any provision for 'holidays' in the regulations, parents and carers do not have any entitlement to take their children on holiday during term time. We expect parents and carers

to plan their holidays during the 13 weeks when schools are closed. However, we recognise that there may be exceptional circumstances where this is not possible. In making a decision as to whether to authorise an absence the Principal will consider whether the circumstances are exceptional, for example:

- is it an unavoidable family event?
- is the parent or carer unable to take a holiday when the school is closed?

All authorised leave of absence is at the Principal's discretion and all decisions will be made in line with the guidance from the Local Authority and Department of Education in place at the time. Parents or carers requesting leave of absence for any reason other than medical must apply in writing in advance. The leave of absence request form is attached at appendix 1; it is also on the [school website](#) or available via the school office.

Where leave of absence is not approved and the child does not attend school it will be recorded as unauthorised. Teachers will not provide school work to be completed during any period of unauthorised absence.

Each application for a Leave of Absence will be considered on a case by case basis and on its own merits.

Fixed Penalty Notices

Parents and carers should be aware that the school has a duty to report unauthorised absence/holidays to Cheshire West Council, who may then issue a Fixed Penalty Notice.

This can be for:

- 10 unauthorised absences across the term (without medical evidence).
- 10 consecutive unauthorised absences (eg. unauthorised holiday).
- 10 unauthorised absences in a term due to lateness beyond 9.15am.

Please note that for unauthorised holidays, a £60 fixed penalty notice may be issued to **each** parent or carer who fails to ensure their children's regular attendance at school. For example, in a family with two children and two parents, each parent will receive a fine of £120 to be paid within 21 days. This rises to £120 per child, per parent, if payment is made after 21 days. In all cases payment must be made within 28 days. Non-payment of the fixed penalty notice may result in prosecution in the Magistrates Court.

PUNCTUALITY

Children regularly arriving late not only interrupt their education, but also that of their peers. This affects the positive start to the day that we want for all our children. Children with regular absence also miss continuity of teaching and their progress may be impaired.

Arriving at school on time is key to ensuring a prompt start to the day:

- children are asked to be ready to come into school at 8.40am;
- the pupil entrance is locked at 8.55am;
- registers are taken by class teachers at 8.55 am with lessons starting at 9.00am;
- Children arriving after 8.55am must be brought into school via the school office to be signed in. Parents and carers will also be asked to provide a reason.

Where a child is persistently late we will discuss this with parents or carers and agree an improvement plan.

PROCEDURES

Rightly, parents and carers hold the school to account for the quality of education provided. Likewise, the school holds parents and carers to account for supporting their child by:

- ensuring they come to school promptly each day at 8.40am; and
- not taking time off school unnecessarily.

Hartford Manor's procedures for managing and recording attendance are set out below.

Registers

Registers provide the daily record of attendance for all children; they are legal documents and have to be marked twice daily. A register may also be required in a court of law as evidence in prosecutions for non-attendance. Registers are marked using the codes advised by the Department of Education; one school day is marked as two sessions – morning and afternoon. Teachers complete registers electronically at 8:55am and again after lunch.

Hartford Manor operates a 'first day' response system. In practice this means that parents and carers are asked to telephone school using the dedicated answering machine on the first morning of their child's absence. We also ask that you ring on any subsequent days of absence to ensure reasons are recorded accurately and timely.

Office staff check registers promptly each morning; where there has been no message to say why a child is absent, a text message is sent requesting an explanation. A note is then placed in the electronic register recording the reason for the absence. The office staff will also follow up those cases where there is no response to the text message. Where we fail to establish contact, or the reason given is not accepted, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised.

Registers are checked regularly and any patterns of absence or unexplained absence noted and discussed with parents or carers and, where appropriate, the Education Welfare Officer.

Promoting good attendance and punctuality

Hartford Manor is proactive with regard to encouraging children and families to improve attendance. Children achieving 100% attendance for the whole school year, will receive a certificate. The class with the best attendance each week receives a certificate and the Hart Mascot as part of our celebration assemblies.

Children arriving between 8.55am and 9.15am are recorded as late with an explanatory note placed on the electronic register. Children arriving after 9.15am are marked absent for the morning session and an explanatory note is placed on the electronic register.

Persistent lateness disrupts a child's learning. Children who are five minutes late each day lose three school days over the year, those who are 15 minutes late lose up to 10 days. Registers are checked regularly as outlined above.

What can parents and carers do to help?

- let the school know straight away why your child is absent from school - call 01606 6643800
- make all non-urgent medical/dental/optician/other appointments outside of the school day;
- ensure your contact details are up to date by informing the school office of any changes;
- talk to your child's teacher if you have any concerns.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE REQUEST FORM

In exceptional circumstances, parents can request authorisation for leave of absence from school for their child, from the Principal

We urge parents and carers to consider any request for absence carefully and, if at all possible, to make alternative arrangements. Requests which are not considered to be exceptional in circumstance will be recorded as unauthorised, and a Fixed Penalty Notice may be issued.

Child's name: _____ Class: _____

First day of absence: _____

Date of return to school: _____

Number of school days that will be missed: _____

Reasons for requesting term time leave:

Requests cannot be considered for authorisation unless reasons are given.

Requested by Name: _____ Signature: _____ Date: _____

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY

Current % attendance

Unauthorised absence to date

The leave of absence above is authorised:

unauthorised:

Notes

Where a request is unauthorised, you may be issued with a Fixed Penalty Notice.

Signed: _____ Mr Kidwell, Principal /Mrs J Diamond, Head of School

Date _____