

# *Healdswood Infant and Nursery School*



## *Attendance and Punctuality Policy 2024/2025*

*Adopted by the full Governing Body on 4<sup>th</sup> February 2025*

*Review Date : September 2025*

## **Introduction**

Healdswood Infant & Nursery School is committed to providing an education of the highest quality for all pupils. We believe it is extremely important for pupils to attend regularly and on time. This will give them the best opportunity to progress and succeed at school.

Ensuring a child's regular attendance at school is a parent / carer's legal responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason may result in prosecution.

## **At Healdswood Infant & Nursery School we**

- Provide a welcoming and caring environment where all members of the school feel secure and valued
- Expect students to arrive on time every day
- Will support parents in their legal responsibility to ensure their child attends school regularly and on time
- Believe leave of absence should not be taken during term-time. We will not authorise requests for leave of absence during term-time, except in exceptional/unavoidable circumstances.

## **How to notify the school of an absence**

- If your child is unable to attend school due to illness or unavoidable circumstances, please contact the school on each day of absence by 9.15 a.m. This can be done by telephoning the school office on 01623 462449, emailing [office@healdswood.notts.sch.uk](mailto:office@healdswood.notts.sch.uk) or by messaging the office on Dojo.
- Please inform the school office of any planned absence in advance, this includes unavoidable medical appointments during the school day.

## 1. Aims

We are committed to meeting our obligations concerning school attendance by:

- Promoting good attendance and reducing absence, including persistent absence
- Ensuring every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled
- Acting early to address patterns of absence

We will also support parents to perform their legal duty to ensure their children of compulsory school age attend regularly, and will promote and support punctuality.

**Where parents decide to have their child registered at school, they have an additional legal duty to ensure their child attends that school regularly. This means their child must attend every day that the school is open, except in a small number of allowable circumstances such as being too ill to attend or obtaining permission for an absence in advance from the school.**

## 2. Legislation and Guidance

*This policy is based on the Department for Education's (DfE's) statutory guidance on [working together to improve school attendance \(applies from 19 August 2024\)](#) and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on [school attendance parental responsibility measures](#). The guidance is based on the following pieces of legislation, which set out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:*

- Part 6 of the [Education Act 1996](#)
- Part 3 of the [Education Act 2002](#)
- Part 7 of the [Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006 \(and 2010, 2011, 2013, and 2016 amendments\)](#)
- [The School Attendance \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2024](#)
- [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013 and the 2024 amendment](#)

*This policy also refers to the DfE's [School census guidance](#), which explains the persistent absence threshold.*

## 3. Roles and Responsibilities

### 3.1 The Governing Body

The Governing Body is responsible for monitoring attendance figures for the whole school on, at least, a termly basis. It holds the Head Teacher to account for the implementation of this policy. The Full Governing Body meetings discuss whole school attendance Each half term looking at patterns and persistent absentees. During these meetings the governing body examine recent trends and patterns in attendance and compare to historic trends and look at attendance for different vulnerable groups. The Governing body set realistic goals for school attendance with school leaders and support and challenge school leaders to improve overall school attendance.

### **3.2 The Head Teacher**

The Head Teacher is responsible for:

- Implementing this policy
- Setting a clear vision for improving and maintaining good attendance
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils
- Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies
- Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary, and or authorising the attendance assistant/family support worker to be able to do so
- Sharing the attendance policy with parents/ carers annually and ensuring it is accessible on the school's website
- Communicating the school's high expectations and punctuality regularly to parents through all available channels

### **3.3 The Family Support Worker**

The Family Support Worker is responsible for:

- Leading, championing and improving attendance across school and making referrals for families for external support.
- Making calls to parents and carers to arrange meetings.
- Holding meetings with parents/carers to discuss ways to improve attendance.
- Create attendance plans with parents/carers to improve school attendance.
- Completing home visits when there are concerns about a child's attendance or whereabouts.
- Meet with the Attendance assistant weekly to discuss attendance and identify children who are at risk of PA (persistent absenteeism).
- Liaising with other local schools and the local authority where absence is at risk of becoming persistent or severe.
- Having a strong grasp of absence data and oversight of absence data analysis.

### **3.4 The Attendance Assistant**

The Attendance Assistant will:

- Taking absence calls and checking Dojo for messages from parents/carers about absence on a-day-to day basis and recording it on the school system.
- Following up any messages where no specific reason has been provided e.g. parent/carer has said the child is unwell.
- Making first day phone calls across the school and at an individual level.
- Compiling attendance data each week and identifying children whose attendance is falling below the required level.
- Reporting concerns about attendance to the Family Support Worker.

- Completing home visits with the Head Teacher/Family Support worker when there are concerns about a child's attendance or whereabouts.
- Monitoring and analysing attendance data
- In conjunction with the Head Teacher/Family Support Worker, sending out letters to parents and Dojo messages in relation to attendance.

### **3.5 Class Teachers**

- Class Teachers are responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the school office by 9:15am
- Building strong relationships with parents/carers, listening to barriers for attendance and working towards removing them for families.
- Liaising with the Head Teacher/Family Support Worker and the office staff to raise concerns about attendance and punctuality of the children in their class and then work co-operatively with the Head Teacher and parents/carers to support any attendance plans.
- To provide background information, such as attainment, if a referral is made to outside agencies.
- To discuss attendance and punctuality at parent's evenings/review meetings.

### **3.6 Parents/Carers**

- Under Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 the parents and carers are responsible for making sure that their child receives efficient full-time education, suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and any special needs they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise. Regular attendance is defined, as "children must be at school every day that the school requires them to be"
- Parents/ carers must ensure that they are fully aware of the school's attendance policy, as any absence will have a huge impact on your child's learning
- To have children in class ready for teaching the doors open at 8.45 a.m. and we expect all children to be in their classroom by 9.00 a.m.
- To inform school of any absence and keep us up to date of any prolonged absence. If school are not informed of a reason for absence, this will be considered as unauthorised
- To request leave at least 4 weeks in advance
- To make applications for leave in writing on the school's 'Request to Remove a child from Education, giving the reason for the request
- To work with the school and The Family Service to improve lateness and attendance
- To avoid medical and dental appointments during the school day. Medical appointments do not normally need a full day so children should only be absent for the length of the appointment. They should attend school before the appointment and return to school immediately after
- If parents, guardians or carers are worried about their child's attendance at school they should: Talk to their child; it may be something simple that needs your help in resolving and then contact school to seek support.

## **4. Recording Attendance**

### **4.1 Attendance Register**

We will keep an attendance register and place all pupils onto this register. We will take our attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day the doors open at 8.45 a.m. and all children need to be in the classroom by 9am and during the second session (1pm).

It will mark whether every pupil is:

- Present
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity
- Absent
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

- The original entry
- The amended entry
- The reason for the amendment
- The date on which the amendment was made
- The name and position of the person who made the amendment

We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

### Nursery

Pupils must arrive at school for the morning Nursery session at 8.35 a.m. (or 12:20pm for afternoon nursery session).

Registers are sent to the office and the office staff will check them twice a day and ensure all absences are accounted for.

### **4.2 Unplanned Absence**

The pupil's parent/carer must notify the school on the first day of an unplanned absence by 9:15am or as soon as practically possible.

This can be done by telephoning school (01623 462449) and speaking to an office member or leaving an answer phone message. Parents/carers can also report the absence on the office page on Class Dojo and can email the office at : [office@healdswood.notts.sch.uk](mailto:office@healdswood.notts.sch.uk).

We will mark absence due to illness as authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness. If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may ask the pupil's parent/carer to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment text/ email or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents/carers will be notified of this in advance.

#### **4.3 Planned Absence**

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the pupil's parent/carer notifies the school in advance of the appointment.

However, we encourage parents/carers to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

The pupil's parent must also apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence.

#### **4.4 Holiday Request in Term Time**

The DfE introduced, in August 2024, statutory guidance stating no holidays will be authorised in a school term. If parents/carers still wish to remove their child from education during term-time, they must apply as far in advance as possible of the requested absence. They should do this by collecting a 'Request to Remove a Child from Education' form from the school office or download and print one from the school website.

Any request to remove your child from education for **5 days/ 10 sessions over a ten-week rolling period** could lead to the local authority issuing a penalty notice or prosecution under section 444(1) of the Education Act 1996.

If issued with penalty notice this must be paid directly to the local authority

**1<sup>st</sup> penalty notice** - is set at **£160 per child per parent/carer** and should be paid within 28 days of the date of which the notice is issued. If payment is made in 21 days the penalty is reduced to £80.

**2<sup>nd</sup> Penalty notice** - issued to the same parent in respect of the same pupil, the parent must pay £160 if paid in the 28 days.

**3<sup>rd</sup> Penalty notice** - If a parent has received two penalty notices over a three year rolling period, and removes their child for a third time, (within the three year rolling period) the local authority may prosecute via the Magistrates court. This decision is the Local Authorities' and not the schools.

## **4.5 Lateness and Punctuality**

A pupil who arrives late:

- Before the register has closed (9:30am) will be marked as late, using the appropriate code (L)
- After the register has closed (After 9:30am) will be marked as an unauthorised absence for the whole session and recorded as a U.

If the lateness is regular and sustained and/or impacting upon a child's progress, the Family Support Worker/Head Teacher will arrange a meeting in order to discuss reasons for the lateness and to offer support in order to improve the punctuality.

## **4.6 Following Up Absence**

Where any child we expect to attend school does not attend, or stops attending, the school will:

- Follow up on their absence with their parent/carer to ascertain the reason, by making a first day phone call by 9:30am
- Ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not
- Identify the correct attendance code to be use
- Completing a home visit if necessary

## **4.7 Reporting to Parents**

Parents are informed of their child's attendance in the Autumn and Spring Term parents evening and formally in the Annual Report to Parents in the Summer Term. Where a child's attendance falls below 90% a letter is sent to parents to inform them that their child's attendance will be monitored.

Attendance meetings will be organised with parents/carers if a child's attendance is of concern. This is normally when a child's attendance is below 90% and there has been no sustained improvement. A discussion will be held in private between the child's parents/carers and the Family Support Worker or Head Teacher. Support will be offered and a plan put in place for the following 6 weeks. An expectation will be that the child's attendance will improve over the 6 week period.

## **5. Authorised and Unauthorised Absence**

### **5.1 Approval for Term-time Absence**

The Head Teacher will only grant a leave of absence to pupils during term time if they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'. A leave of absence can be granted at the Head Teacher's discretion.

**We define 'exceptional circumstances' as circumstances that could not be reasonably foreseen and for which there was insufficient time to take the necessary action to resolve the situation arising from those circumstances.**



The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

- Taking part in a regulated performance
- Family bereavement: The death of a close relative or significant other
- Illness and hospital appointments if unable to attend outside of the school day
- Serious illness: A short-term illness or accident or short-term outbreak of a long-term health condition
- Family crisis: A family members serious illness or crisis
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart
- Traveller pupils travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh Gypsies, Irish and Scottish Travellers, Showmen (fairground people) and Circus people, Bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and New Travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a Traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision

## 5.2 Legal Sanctions

The local authority can request penalty notices for unauthorised absences, where the child is of compulsory school age.

If issued with a penalty notice, the penalty is set at **£160 per child per parent/carer** and should be paid within 28 days of the date of which the notice starts. The payment must be made directly to the Local Authority.

The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice may take into account:

- The number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year
- One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time
- Where an excluded pupil is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason

If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the Local Authority can decide whether to prosecute.

## 6. Strategies for Promoting Attendance

Weekly assemblies take place and attendance is celebrated.

- Weekly attendance – the class with the highest attendance receives the Healdswood Attendance trophy which is displayed in their classroom for the following week.
- The class with the best attendance over a half term receives a whole class reward.
- Weekly attendance for each class will be shared and celebrated with parents on the school website.
- Half termly – children with 96+% receive a certificate and a letter of congratulations.
- Yearly – all children who have had 96% or above attendance over the year will be entered into a prize draw with a chance to win a special prize

## 7. Attendance Monitoring

The office staff at our school monitor pupil absence on a daily basis.

A pupil's parent/carer is expected to call the school in the morning if their child is going to be absent due to ill health. It is the responsibility of the parent/carer to phone school every day that their child is absent to give an update.

**Day 1** - If we have not received a phone call from parent/carer by 9:15am, the office staff will make a first day call. Until contact with the parent/carer is made, this absence will remain unauthorised.

**Day 2** - In the event of a parent/carer not answering the first day call a message will be left (if this option is available) and a dojo message will also be sent. For children who are absent for a second consecutive day the office staff will telephone parent/carer again in the morning and leave a message/send a dojo message.

**Day 3** – If parents/carers have not made contact by day 3, the Family Support Worker will be informed and a home visit will take place to ascertain the whereabouts of the child. A letter will be posted through the home address of the parent/ carer of the child stating a home visit has taken place and school need to be contacted as soon as possible by the parent.

If a pupil's absence goes above the expected number of days for the specific illness, the school will contact the parent/carer of the pupil to discuss the reasons for this. The school uses the Public Health guidance to ascertain the recommended number of days required for illnesses.

If a pupil's attendance continues to decline after contacting their parent/carer, we will consider involving the School Attendance Support Team (Early Help). The persistent absence threshold is 10%. If a pupil's individual overall absence rate is greater than or equal to 10%, the pupil will be classified as a persistent absentee.

### **Informal school support:**

**Step 1** – Letter 1 will be sent to any child’s parents/carers whose attendance falls below 90% explaining the attendance has fallen below the acceptable level.

Parents/carers will be invited into school to speak to the Family Support Worker or the Head Teacher and offered support and help in order to increase the attendance.

NB: If after letter 1, attendance falls again within 6 weeks they will automatically receive letter 2.

**Step 2** - If a child’s attendance improves, a message will be sent via Dojo in recognition of this.

If a child’s attendance continues to fall, they will receive letter 2. This will ask parents/carers to make an appointment to speak to the Family Support Worker or the Head Teacher. At this meeting, they will be offered further support in order to improve attendance and inform parents/carers a 6-week monitoring period will begin. The purpose of this period is to increase the attendance of the child. Support through the Early Help unit will be offered. At this meeting parents/ carers will be advised that if attendance does not begin to improve a request for a penalty notice may in the future be sent.

### **Specialist service support:**

**Step 3** – If a child’s attendance improves after the 6-week monitoring period, a message will be sent via Dojo in recognition of this.

If a child’s attendance continues to fall, parents/carers will be sent letter 3 requesting they meet with the Family Support Worker or the Head Teacher so a more formal attendance plan or referral to relevant support services can be made. At this meeting, the Family Support Worker or Head Teacher will guide parents/carers towards specialist services that may be able to support parents/carers more in ensuring good attendance for their child. The Family Support Worker or Head Teacher and parents/carers will write a plan and agreements put in place. This will be monitored on a daily basis by the office staff and reported back to the Family Support Worker and the Head Teacher.

### **Issuing fixed penalty notice:**

**Step 4** – If a child’s attendance improves at the end of the written plan a phone call to parents/carers in recognition of this will take place.

If child’s attendance continues to fall, parents/carers will be referred to specialist support and may be issued a fixed penalty notice through the Local Authority.

NB: All attendance letters, meetings, discussions and plans will be added to scholar pack as a record of the support and help offered.

Pupil-level absence data will be collected each day by the Local Authority and published at National and Local Authority level through the DfE’s school absence national statistics. The school will compare attendance data to the National average, and share this with the Governing Body.

## **9. Monitoring Arrangements**

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the Local Authority or DfE is updated, and as a minimum annually by the Head Teacher. At every review, the Full Governing Body will approve the policy.

## **8. Links With Other Policies**

This policy links to the following policies:

Child protection and safeguarding policy

Behaviour policy

Policy written and reviewed January 2025

Agreed by Governors 4.2.2025 at FGB meeting