

## 1. Introduction

Regular attendance is important to your child's **success** in school.

Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any pupil's absence disrupts teaching routines so may affect the learning of others in the same class. Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is your legal responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

The Supreme Court has given its judgement on the meaning of what is meant by 'attend regularly' at school for the purposes of section 444 of the Education Act 1996. The Supreme Court decided that 'regularly' meant 'in accordance with the rules prescribed by the school'. Therefore, it is the expectation that all children attending Heronshaw School attend every day the school is open.

## 2. Aims

This policy outlines the aims and expectations of Heronshaw School to support pupil attendance at school.

## 3. Overview

No pupil should be deprived of their opportunity to receive an education that meets their needs and personal development.

In the first instance, it is the responsibility of parents/carers and pupils to ensure attendance at school as required by law.

Situations beyond the control of pupils and/or parents/carers may impact on attendance. We will, with the agreement and support of parents/carers, work in partnership with external agencies to resolve these.

The vast majority of pupils want to attend school to learn, to socialise with their peer group and to prepare themselves fully to take their place in society as well-rounded and responsible citizens with their skills, knowledge and understanding necessary to contribute to the life and culture of the communities.

## 4. Expectations

We expect the following from parents/carers:

- To ensure their children attend school regularly and punctually
- To ensure that their children arrive in school well prepared for the school day and to check that they have done their homework (reading)
- To contact the school in confidence whenever any problem occurs that may affect their child's performance in school
- To ensure that they contact the School Office by either telephone before 09:00 to advise the school if their child will not be attending school that day and the reason why.

## 5. Responding to Non-Attendance

When a pupil does not attend, the school needs to respond effectively, for safeguarding purposes.

In cases where a problem may appear to be emerging, a member of the Senior Leadership Team may telephone the families concerned or invite parents/carers to meetings about attendance discreetly, to discuss the situation with them.

## 5.1 Recording Pupil Attendance and Absence

To ensure children's safety, and help us meet Government guidelines, we request that parents contact the school before 09:00 on the first day of absence to inform us of their children's absence. Parent/carers are required to call in to inform us about any children absent for any reason. Parents/carers can notify the school of their child's absence by calling **01908 608380**. If the school is not contacted, a call home will be made to ensure all children are accounted for. If school cannot make contact with any of the people on the contact list, a home welfare visit will be made.

### If Your Child is Absent

- Parent/carers are required to contact the School Office on the day of the absence, informing them of the reason for absence and before 09:00 (Please note that a clear reason should be detailed rather than stating 'unwell' or 'poorly').
- Each reason will be recorded on the child's sickness and absence record
- The parents/carers are required to contact the school EVERY day the child is absent
- If parents/carers do not contact the school and the school is unable to speak to anyone about the child's absence, the school will conduct a home welfare visit to check the child is safe. If we are concerned for the child's safety, a referral will be made to the Milton Keynes MASH (Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub – social care) or the police may be called.
- If the school are concerned about a 'Child Missing in Education', the procedures stated within the Children Missing in Education Policy will be followed.

If your child needs to be taken out of school for any reason during the school day, please notify the school in advance. Your child can be collected from the School Office. You will be asked to sign your child out. If your child is returning to school you will be asked to sign them in. This will ensure the safety of your child at all times.

Any absences not explained will be marked as unauthorised. Should the school not require parents/carers to telephone about an absence, e.g. when a child is expected to be absent for some time for hospitalisation etc, the school will inform parents whether they are required to telephone in. An accumulation of unauthorised absences may result in a FPN (Fixed Penalty Notice) being issued.

When a pupil is late into school, i.e. after 09:00 for the morning session, parents are required to sign in the pupil at the School Office on arrival. They will receive a late mark in the register. This lateness will be marked as unauthorised absence.

It is essential that your contact details are kept up to date and ask that if parents/carers change either address or phone numbers then these details are communicated to the office so that our records can be amended. School requires 4 contacts in case of emergencies. It is essential that any changes are shared directly with the office to ensure that up to date information is on the system.

## 5.2 Absence Management

It is the Headteacher that authorises absence. Parents/carers provide a reason for children being absent from School. It is at the discretion of the Headteacher as to whether this reason is acceptable or not. The School may issue a Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN) to each Parent or Carer who fails to ensure the regular attendance of their child at school. This currently stands at £60 per child per parent if paid within 21 days but rises to £120 per child per parent for those paying within 28 days. Heronshaw School follows the Milton Keynes School Attendance Fixed Penalty Notices Code of Conduct (<https://www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/schools-and-lifelong-learning/information-for-parents/milton-keynes-council-school-attendance>) to ensure consistent approach across the school.

## Authorising Absence

Authorised absence is where the school has either given approval in advance for a pupil to be away or has accepted an explanation offered afterwards as a satisfactory reason for absence. An absence can only be authorised for the following reasons:

- Illness of the pupil concerned (not of the parent or another family member)
- A medical or dental appointment
- For the purpose of religious observation (one day only)
- It is an educational event/trip
- Family bereavements
- Fixed term exclusion or permanent exclusion until removed from roll or re-instated

It is important that you understand the circumstances when absence in term time will not be authorised by the school – such as:

- When a pupil is just starting the school. This is very important as your child needs to settle into their new environment as quickly as possible
- Immediately before and during assessment periods
- When a pupil's attendance record already includes any level of unauthorised absence

In cases of medical absence, where the school has initially authorised the absence, but the issue persists, the school may request the parent to complete the GP stamp form (**see appendix 1**) or request other GP/medical proof of absence from the parent; this change should be communicated to the parent in writing or included as part of a meeting with the school.

## Holidays and requests for a leave of absence during term time

We advise parents that Heronshaw School follows the guidance which can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/school-attendance-absence>.

Headteachers have the discretion to grant leave, but they should only do so in exceptional circumstances. If a Headteacher grants a leave request, it will be for them to determine the length of time that the child can be away from school. This, however, will not be granted for the purposes of a family holiday.

Parents who wish to request a leave of absence during term time are asked to complete a leave of absence form (**see appendix 2**) and submit any supporting evidence with it. Forms can be obtained from the school office or downloaded from the school website.

Parents can be issued with a Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN) for taking their child on holiday during term time without consent from the school. The school works within the guidelines set out in the Milton Keynes School Attendance Fixed Penalty Notices Code of Conduct. Fixed Penalty Notices (FPN) are issued to each parent and are for each child. A FPN is £60 per child per parent if paid within 21 days, and £120 per child per parent if paid between 22 and 28 days. If the fine is not paid, parents will be prosecuted in the magistrates' court.

## Absence will not be authorised under the following circumstances:

- Shopping trips
- Holidays in term time
- Minding the house or looking after siblings
- Lateness after 09.00 when the registers have been taken
- Medical appointments that cannot be verified
- No reason given

- School staff have cause to believe that the note is not genuine or not valid.

## **Attendance Monitoring**

Attendance of all pupils is monitored by the Headteacher, Office Manager the Attendance Officer. On a weekly basis, every child's attendance is considered, and an overall percentage figure is created based on attendance during this academic year.

Heronshaw School applies the following procedures in deciding how to deal with individual absences:

### **Attendance Below 96%**

Parents will be contacted with a letter (**see Appendix 3** – attendance letter 1) to outline the decline in attendance and the offer of support to the family via a member of the school's SLT (Senior Leadership Team)

### **Attendance Below 90%**

Parents will be contacted with a letter requesting a meeting with a member of the SLT (**see Appendix 4** – attendance letter 2) to outline the decline in attendance and the offer of support to the family. This letter will also identify procedures that will be followed should the attendance figure continue to drop. A child attending school only 90% of the time or less is considered to be 'persistently absent' according to the Government's expectations of attendance. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority and parents/carers will be informed of this immediately

### **Attendance of 85% or Less**

If a child's attendance reaches this level, parents/carers will be invited into a meeting outlining the school's concerns. Depending on the circumstances surrounding the attendance figure, an action plan will be set up and parents will be invited into school to discuss the situation in greater detail. The school will request where necessary medical evidence to support the reasons for failing to attend school.

### **Fixed Penalty Warning Letters and Prosecutions**

Any unauthorised leave of absence of ten consecutive sessions (5 consecutive days) will be subject to a Fixed Penalty Notice. Persistent absence/lateness will result in a warning letter being issued to each parent.

The warning letter will be effective for twelve weeks and during this time it is an expectation that the child's attendance increases. If there is no improvement to the attendance for that child, a Fixed Penalty Notice will be issued which will result in a fine of £60 per parent per child (£120 if not paid within 28 days)

For the standard Section 444(1) prosecutions, there is a requirement for an overall attendance of below 85% with some unauthorised in the last 4 weeks. There are no limits to the number of times a warning letter can be sent. For the higher level, also known as the 'aggravated offence', a 444 (1A) letter needs to be issued. In these cases, there is a requirement for the parent/carer to have knowledge of this offence.

If the issuing warning letters does not lead to the desired improvement, Colin Mayo (Senior Attendance Officer – Legal Interventions) will be contacted. At this stage, documentary evidence of the interventions already attempted should be provided by the school. If it meets the criteria, a FPN will be issued and a copy sent to the school. If the school would prefer a prosecution, and a warning letter had been sent, then Colin Mayo will write to the parent/carer(s) and invite them to an Attendance Interview. At that meeting, a review will be planned. However, if there is no improvement then parents will be written to again and invited to a PACE Interview. Information will be given at the Attendance Interview about the PACE Interview and the parent(s) right to legal representation.

The PACE Interview will be carried out following the guidelines given to Local Authorities by the Department for Education. A police caution will be given to the parent(s) in accordance with Code C of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (**PACE**).

Following the interview, the case will be booked into court. Colin Mayo will inform the parents of the court date and write a Section 9 statement based upon the PACE interview and other supporting information, which has been provided by the school and/or other agencies. This 'court pack' will be sent to parents two weeks prior to any legal proceedings.

### 5.3 Punctuality

#### Start of the School Day

The classroom doors are open at 08:40 and the children come straight into class. The register for the morning session will be taken at 08:55. Pupils arriving after this time will be marked late on the register, the register closes at 09:00. After this time, the lateness will be marked as an unauthorised absence.

School will notify parents/carers of pupils who are persistently late.

The school may issue a Fixed Penalty Notice to each parent/carer where the child has persistent late arrival at school after the registers has closed. This currently stands at £60 per child per parent (for those that settle with 21 days) and £120 per child per parent (for those who pay within 28 days). The school works with the guidelines set out in the Milton Keynes School Attendance Fixed Penalty Notices Code of Conduct.

#### Punctuality (start and end of the day)

Heronshaw School actively discourages late arrival at school by challenging those who are persistently late or arrive late without reasonable explanation.

Heronshaw School applies the following procedure in deciding how to deal with individual concerns about punctuality.

Heronshaw School discourages late pick up at the end of the school day at this can have a detrimental effect on a child's wellbeing. Late pick up is recorded by school staff and concerns will be followed up with parents.

#### Missed Sessions

Parents/Carers will be contacted with a letter to outline the decline in punctuality and the offer of support to the family via our safeguarding team and SLT (**see Appendix 6 – punctuality letter 1**). Should the punctuality figure continue to drop a further letter will be sent (**see Appendix 7 – punctuality letter 2**)

#### Missed Sessions

If a child's punctuality reaches this level, parents/carers will receive a phone call outlining the school's concerns. Depending on the circumstances surrounding the punctuality figure, an action plan may result in a fine. This currently stands at £60 per child per parent if paid within 21 days but rises to £120 per child per parent for those paying within 28 days.

## 6. School Organisation

In order for the attendance policy to be successful, every member of the staff must make attendance a high priority and should convey to pupils the importance and value of education.

#### Parents/Carers

Heronshaw School expects parents/carers to:

- Make contact with school on first day of absence and every subsequent day of absence thereafter, unless the School asks you not to do this, by the methods mentioned in section 5.1
- Support their child and the school achieving maximum attendance

## Definitions

Every half-day absence from school has to be recorded by staff at the school as either **authorised or unauthorised**. Any information about the cause of each absence is always required, if possible in writing, evidence will be required to support some absences.

**Authorised absences** are morning or afternoon sessions away from school where the school has either given approval in advance for a pupil to be away or has accepted an explanation offered afterwards as a satisfactory reason for absence. All other absence must be regarded as unauthorised. Authorised absences can only be agreed by the Headteacher.

**Unauthorised absences** are those missed sessions that the Headteacher does not consider reasonable, or for which no 'leave' has been given. The Government makes it very clear that Headteachers are not to authorise any term time absences unless for very exceptional circumstances.

**Other Circumstances** - Unusual circumstances may arise that lead to a young person being absent from school. It is for the Headteacher to decide whether the explanation offered is reasonable. In such situations, the individual circumstance, previous attendance pattern and frequency of such incidents should be considered.

## Ensuring Pupil Information is Up-to-Date

School will ensure, as far as possible, that the information it holds on pupils and parents is accurate and up to date. This will help to ensure that contact with families is productive and that referrals to other agencies are effective. Principle 4 of the Data Protection Act 1998 states 'Personal Data shall be accurate and, where necessary, kept up to date'. The School Office will send out Data Collection sheets periodically each year.

Parents are asked to:

1. Inform the School when contact details change
2. Ensure that there are also a minimum of 4 emergency contacts for school to reach

| Policy information                |                            |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Date of policy                    | January 2022               |
| Policy author(s)                  | Jamie Ainscow              |
| Role(s) of reviewer               | Headteacher                |
| Review date                       | August 2022                |
| Published on website?             | yes                        |
| Additional notes<br>(if required) | Appendix sections included |



Appendix 1 – GP STAMP FORM

To the GP Surgery

I am supporting xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx and his/her family with school attendance matters. I would appreciate if you could confirm, by surgery stamp, when xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx attends the surgery to see a GP/Nurse.

Thank you

Date

Surgery Stamp

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I, \_\_\_\_\_ parent/guardian give my permission for the surgery to confirm that I visited the surgery with xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx on the above dates.

## **Appendix 2 – LEAVE OF ABSENCE REQUEST FORM**

### **APPLICATION FOR PUPIL LEAVE OF ABSENCE DURING TERM TIME**

The Staff and Governors of Heronshaw School are confident that parents share our wish that all children make the most of their skills, talents and opportunities. Regular attendance at school is vital if we are to achieve this aim. Should you need to request a leave of absence during term time., please complete the attached form, after reading the guidance below.

From the start of the academic year 2013/14, Headteachers are no longer able to authorise leave of absence or holidays during school term time. The Secretary of State for Education has stated that all holidays during term time are unauthorised and could be subject to a Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN) of up to £60 per child per parent. A FPN will be issued to all persons known to be a parent or carer of the child in question.

Parents are advised not to seek approval for term time holidays from their child's Headteacher unless there is "exceptional circumstances", which is not deemed to be a 'holiday' and cannot be easily arranged outside of term time. It is at the discretion of the Headteacher of your child's school to grant leave in these circumstances.

Please be aware of the following prior to making an application:

- All leave must be applied for at least two working school weeks in advance of the first day of requested leave. Only in emergency situations will requests be considered in shorter timescales.
- We strongly advise you not to make any travel arrangements until the Headteachers decision of the request for leave of absence is made final.
- Failure to request leave in the appropriate way, is likely to result in unauthorised absence and a possible fixed penalty notice (see further details below).
- The definition of parent generally includes all those with day to day responsibility for a child
  - All natural parents, whether they are married or not
  - Any person who has parental responsibility for a child or young person; and
  - Any person who has care of a child or young person i.e. lives with and looks after the child.

### **Important information about the Fixed Penalty Notice:**

A fine becomes effective if a child has had more than **ten unauthorised sessions or five days absence**. Further details of the FPN are included below:

- A FPN can be issued to each parent, per child
- A fine of £60 per child per parent is payable in 21 days and, if there is a failure to pay after that time, it raises to £120 per child per parent payable in 28 days
- If the fine remains unpaid after 28 days, then the parent(s) or carer(s) may be prosecuted under S444 (1) of the Education Act 1996 for the period of non-attendance and is subjected to a fine of up to £1000 per parent.

More information is available on the Milton Keynes Council Website by visiting: <https://www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/schools-and-lifelong-learning/information-for-parents/milton-keynes-council-school-attendance>

**APPLICATION FOR LEAVE OF ABSENCE FOR YOUR CHILD DURING TERM TIME**

As a parent/carer, you should complete this form and return it to your child's school where possible, **AT LEAST FOUR WEEKS** before the date when you want the period of absence to start.

**NOTE ABSENCE FROM SCHOOL RESULTS IN MISSED LEARNING. CONSIDER THIS CAREFULLY BEFORE MAKING PLANS TO TAKE YOUR CHILD OUT OF SCHOOL DURING TERM TIME.** Applications can only be made for **EXTREME CIRCUMSTANCES** that are unavoidable. Taking absence that is unauthorised can result in a fixed term penalty.

Name(s) of pupil(s) for which leave of absence is being applied for

| Name of Child | DOB | Years/Months |       |
|---------------|-----|--------------|-------|
| Child 1       |     |              | Class |
| Child 2       |     |              | Class |
| Child 3       |     |              | Class |

Dates (inclusive for which leave of absence is being applied for)

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| From:  | To: |
| How many school days do you require the pupil(s) to have leave of absence for? |     |
| On which date will the pupil(s) return to school?                              |     |

Please use the space below to justify the 'exceptional circumstances' for which the leave of absence is being requested (Use overleaf if necessary). If the leave request is to return to your home country, please give an address in your home country and contact number where you can be reached on.

|   |  |
|---|--|
| The school will consider these points before authorising leave: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Your child's previous attendance history, which currently stands at _____%</li> <li>Your child's stage of education and ability to catch up on missed schooling</li> <li>The time of year (Assessments)</li> <li>The nature of the request (e.g. exceptional circumstances)</li> </ul> | Notes from discussion about the leave request..... |
|---|--|

You are also required to provide copies of evidence to support your justification of 'exceptional circumstances'. Please state below the evidence you have attached.

| Name of parent(s) making the application and who will be responsible for the pupil whilst they are absent from school | Parental signature | Date |
|---|--------------------|------|
| 1.  | 1.                 | 1.   |
| 2.  | 2.                 | 2.   |

**For office use only**

| Decision                      | Code for register   | Code | Signed/Date |
|-------------------------------|---|------|-------------|
| Unauthorised<br>Or Authorised | G – Holiday not authorised  |      |             |
|                               | O – Unauthorised absence  |      |             |
|                               | C – Other authorised circumstances  |      |             |
| School Action                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Previous holidays checked</li> <li>Supporting evidence required</li> <li>Headteacher to authorise</li> <li>Education welfare to be informed</li> </ul> |      |             |
|                               |   |      |             |
|                               |   |      |             |
|                               |   |      |             |

**Appendix 3 – Attendance letter 1 – Attendance Below 96%**

Date

Dear Parents/Carers

We are writing to you as it has been recognised that XXXXXXXX has been absent from school for a period of time during this academic year resulting in an attendance rate of XXXXXXXXXX.

The Supreme Court Judgement on 6<sup>th</sup> April 2017 defined 'regular' attendance as being in school every day that the school is open. This is therefore the expectation for all children attending Heronshaw School.

Attending school every day is essential for your child and their learning and social development.

Holidays during term time will be recorded as unauthorised and this will affect your child's attendance record.

Should you have any difficulty getting your child to school every day, we can work with you and your family, so please contact the School Office to arrange this further.

Yours sincerely

Mr J Ainscow  
Headteacher



**Appendix 4 – Attendance Letter 2 – Attendance below 90%**

Dear Parents/Carers,

We are writing to you as it has been recognised that xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx

Has been absent from school for a period of time during this academic year resulting in an attendance rate of \_\_\_\_\_%.

The Supreme Court Judgement on 6<sup>th</sup> April 2017 defined ‘regular’ attendance as being in school every day that the school is open. This is therefore the expectation for all children attending Heronshaw School.

Attending school every day is essential for your child and their learning and social development. Holidays during term time will be recorded as unauthorised unless otherwise granted and this will affect your child’s attendance record.

We invite you in to school to attend a meeting to discuss the reason for your child’s persistent absence on \_\_\_\_\_.

Should you have any difficulty getting your child to school every day we can work with you and your family, so please contact the School Office to arrange this further.

Should your child’s attendance fail to improve, you may be issued with a formal warning.

Yours sincerely

Mr J Ainscow  
Headteacher



**Appendix 6 – Punctuality Letter 1**

Dear Parents/Carers

I am writing to you as it has been recognised that xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx arrived late \_\_\_\_\_ last term.

Arriving late to school is not in the best interest of your child as they miss vital learning.

I would like to clarify that our classroom doors open at 08:40 for your child to arrive at school. Registration and early morning work takes place from 08:40 to 08:55. When a child arrives after 08:55 they are marked as late.

Any child arriving after 09:00 will have an unauthorised marked session for the first half of the day.

Should you have any problems getting your child to school then we can work together to ensure your child gains the most from their school day.

Please contact the School Office should you wish to discuss this.

Yours sincerely

Mr J Ainscow  
Headteacher



## **Appendix 7 – Punctuality Letter 2**

Dear Parents/Carers

We are writing to you as a follow up from our previous letter in which we were highlighting your child's lateness to school. Your child has now been late \_\_\_\_\_times, totalling \_\_\_\_\_ minutes of lost learning.

Arriving late to class is not in the best interest of your child as they miss vital learning.

I would like to clarify in writing that our doors open at 08:40 for your child to arrive in school. Registration and early morning work takes place from 08:40 to 08:55 and any time after 08:55 children are marked as late. If they arrive after 08:55 they need to come through the main reception to be signed in by the adult who brings them to school with an explanation given for the lateness.

Any child arriving after 09:00 will have an unauthorised marked session for the first half of the day.

We have wrap-around care onsite from 07.45 should this be easier for you. Please contact the School Office to get more information.

Should your child continue to keep arriving late to school then you will be invited in to discuss this matter. This will now be monitored over the coming weeks.

If you have any issues regarding this, or have any problems getting your child to school then please contact us as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely

Mr J Ainscow  
Headteacher

**Appendix 8 – Punctuality Letter 2**

Dear Parents/Carers

I am writing to you as it has been recognised that xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx has been collected late from school on

\_\_\_\_\_ occasions between \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.

Arriving late to collect from school is not in the best interest of your child.

I would like to clarify that our school day finishes at 15:10. Any child collected after 15:15 will be recorded in the school attendance records.

Should you have any problems collecting your child from school then we can work together to find a solution.

Please contact the School Office should you wish to discuss this.

Yours sincerely

Mr J Ainscow  
Headteacher