



**ANTON INFANT SCHOOL**

**ANDOVER**

## **ATTENDANCE POLICY**

**THIS POLICY WAS PREPARED BY L SKEATES**

**AGREED BY STAFF IN SPRING 2025**

**APPROVED BY GOVERNORS IN SPRING 2025**

**DATE FOR REVIEW: SPRING 2026**

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ (Headteacher)

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ (Chair of Governors)

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. This Attendance policy should not be viewed in isolation; it is a strand which runs through all aspects of school improvement. It is supported by the following school policies:

- Admissions
- Anti-bullying
- Child protection
- Safeguarding
- Special Educational Needs
- Teaching & Learning
- Behaviour management

The level of attendance & punctuality expected from all our pupils is included in our school's home-school agreement which families must sign following their child's admission to school.

It is very important therefore that you make sure that your child attends regularly and this policy sets out how together we will achieve this. This policy will be annually published in writing for all staff, families and pupils via our school website.

## **Rationale**

For a child to reach their full educational achievement a high level of school attendance is essential.

At Anton Infant School we are committed to providing an education of the highest quality for all our pupils and endeavour to provide an environment where all pupils feel valued and welcome.

Families and pupils play a part in making our school so successful. Every child has a right to access the education to which they are entitled. Families and teachers share the responsibility for supporting and promoting excellent school attendance and punctuality for all.

Children at Anton Infant School are dependent on their families who are responsible for their level of attendance and punctuality. It is vital that children enjoy coming to school, and whilst being encouraged to attend well and on time, will not carry blame and be made to feel unhappy if their families are not supportive or effective in these areas. We will work with families to identify the reasons for poor attendance and try to resolve any difficulties at the earliest opportunity.

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 families the importance of regular and punctual attendance.

For your child to take full advantage of the educational opportunities offered it is vital your child is at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. The routines children develop around attendance and punctuality at school are the same as the expectations of any future employer in the world of work. 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 attendance 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
- Regular attenders are more successful in transferring between primary school, secondary school, and higher education, employment or training

## **Promoting Good Attendance**

The foundation for good attendance is a strong partnership between the school, families and the child. The Home/School agreement contains details of how we will work with families and our expectations of what parents will need to do to ensure their child achieves good attendance.

To help us all to focus on this we will:

- Provide information on attendance in our weekly newsletter
- Report to you on how your child is performing in school, what their attendance and punctuality rate is and how this relates to their attainments
- Send letters to families where attendance is falling below the threshold offering support to increase this.
- Promote positive support systems and advocate multi-agency approaches to improve attendance

## **Roles and Responsibilities**

### **Responsibilities of the School's Attendance Leader:**

The Headteacher and Senior Leadership Team will oversee, direct and co-ordinate the school's work in promoting regular and improved attendance and will ensure the Attendance Policy is consistently applied throughout the school. They will also ensure that attendance is both recorded accurately and analysed. They will ensure that attendance issues are identified at an early stage and that support is put in place to support with any barriers. They will regularly review attendance data, discussing, challenging trends and focussing improvement efforts on the individual pupils who need it most.

The Headteacher and Senior Leadership will ensure high aspirations are maintained for all pupils and processes for support are adapted to the individual needs of pupils, including those with long term illnesses, special educational needs and disabilities, pupils with a social worker and those pupils under the virtual school.

If absence is frequent or continuous, except where a child is clearly unwell, staff will discuss with families 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 whether or not to authorise an absence will always rest with the school.

## **Attendance Interventions**

Anton Infant School use a range of interventions in order to promote, support and address school attendance. These include but are not limited to;

- Sharing changes to attendance laws and policies to the whole school community through newsletter and information on the website.
- Welfare phone calls to families to identify if support is needed should attendance percentage be decreasing or if patterns of absence are emerging
- Highlighting attendance concerns to families by letter. These letters increase in severity depending on the level of engagement and signs of improvement
- Offering use of breakfast club to support smoother transition into class and or address lateness

## **Support Systems**

At Anton Infant School we recognise that poor attendance can be an indication of difficulties in a family's life. This may be related to problems at home and or in school. Families are encouraged to inform the school of any difficulties or changes in circumstances that may affect their child's attendance and/or behaviour in school, for example bereavement, divorce/separation, emerging health concerns. This will help school identify any additional support that may be required.

We also recognise that some pupils are more likely to require additional support to attain good attendance. The school will implement a range of strategies to support improved attendance based on the individual need and circumstances of a child. Support offered will always be child-centred and planned in discussions and agreement with families.

### **Responsibilities of classroom staff:**

- Ensure that all students are registered accurately
- Promote good attendance at all appropriate opportunities.
- Liaise with the Headteacher and SLT on matters of attendance and punctuality
- Communicate any concerns or underlying problems that may account for a child's absence.

### **Responsibilities of families:**

Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is a family's legal responsibility (section of the 1996 Education Act) and permitting absence from school that is not authorised by the school creates an offence in law.

Families will:

- Inform the school on the first day of absence.
- Discuss with the class teacher/Headteacher 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 phone or email on the first and subsequent days of absence.
- Avoid taking their child out of school for non-urgent medical or dental appointments.
- Only request for leave of absence if it is for an exceptional circumstance

### **Recording attendance**

Legally the register must be marked twice daily. This is once at the start of the school day (8.40am) and again for the afternoon session at 1.00pm.

### **Lateness/punctuality**

It is important to be on time at the start of the morning and afternoon school sessions. 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, cause disruption to the lesson for others, and can be embarrassing leading to possible further absence.

- The school day begins at 8.40am and all pupils are expected to be in school at that time. Morning registration is at 8.45am and it closes at 9.15am. A pupil will receive a late mark 'L' if they are not in the classroom when the registers are taken.
- All lateness is recorded daily. This information will be required by the courts, should a prosecution for non-attendance or lateness be necessary
- Arrival after the close of registration will be marked as unauthorised absence code 'U' in line with county and Department for Education (DfE) guidance. This mark shows them to be on site, but is legally recorded as an absence.

- If a pupil is late due to a medical appointment, they will receive an authorised absence coded 'M'. Please be advised that where possible doctors and dentists appointments are to be made outside of school hours or during school holidays.

It is extremely important that children arrive at school on time so that they begin their learning alongside their peers. The start of lesson is often a time when new learning takes place and activities are explained. Lateness can be detrimental not only to your child but also the rest of the class who can become distracted from their learning. On-going and repeated lateness is considered as unauthorised absence and will be subject to legal action (see section below for further details).

Families 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, families will be invited to attend the school and discuss the problem and support will be offered. If support is not appropriate or is declined and a child has 10 or more sessions of unauthorised absence due to lateness recorded in any 10 week period the school or the Hampshire County Council will be required to issue parents with a penalty notice in accordance with Hampshire's Code of Conduct for issuing penalty notices for non-attendance (See section below for further details).

## **What to do if my child is absent?**

### First Day of Absence

A child not attending school is considered a safeguarding matter. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required. If your child is absent you must:

- Contact us as soon as possible on the first day of absence with an explanation why they are not able to attend school

### If your child is absent we will:

- Send a text by 9.30am on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you. This is because we have a duty to ensure your child's safety as well as their regular school attendance. If by 09.45am we still have not heard from you we will follow up with a telephone call and email.
- Please note, if your child is not seen and contact has not been established with you any of the named parent/carers by 10.00am on the first day of absence the school will follow these steps
- Make all reasonable enquires to establish contact with families and the child including making enquires to known friends and wider family, who are emergency contacts listed on our system
- Two members of staff will visit the child's address to carry out a safeguarding check.
- If your child's welfare is still in question we will undertake a risk assessment and contact emergency services accordingly. This is a 'safeguarding first' approach recommended by the Multi Agency review of the death of Chadrack Mbala-Mulo.
- We will notify families where possible, that if we do not receive contact within 15 minutes then the police or children's services will be called to ensure the safety of the child. Help us to help you and your child by making sure we always have an up to date contact number. There will be regular checks on telephone numbers throughout the year.
- Following this we may be required to start a child missing in education procedure as set down by Hampshire County Council Guidance. If the child is not seen and contact has not been established with the family then the Local Authority is notified that the child is 'at risk of missing'.

## **Continued or Ongoing Absence**

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, half-termly, 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.

The school procedure for contacting regarding absence is as follows:

- A first attendance letter will be sent to advise you that your child's absence has fallen below 90%.
- If absence continues, and is still below 90%, then a second letter will be sent. If your child's absence has started to increase then this will be reflected in the letter and we will continue to work together to support increasing your child's attendance at school. If your child's absence is still below 90% and shows no sign of increasing then a telephone call or letter will invite you in to discuss the situation with the Headteacher or member of Senior Leadership Team
- Refer the matter to Hampshire's Attendance Legal Panel if absence is unauthorised and falls below 90%.

If your child misses 10% (3 weeks) or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason they are defined as persistent absentees. Where this absence is unauthorised the school will contact the family and invite them in to discuss the impact of their absence.

The school reserves the right to unauthorise absences below 90% without evidence, such as a doctor's note, appointment letter or prescription notice etc.

### **Request for Leave of Absence**

Amendments to school attendance regulations were updated and enforced from September 2013 and regulations state that a Headteacher may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. It is important to note that a Headteacher 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 time to go on holiday and in the majority of cases holiday will not be authorised. Families wishing to apply for leave of absence need to fill in an application form (available from the school office) in advance and before booking or making any travel arrangements. If needed, families may be invited into school to discuss the request.

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 Hampshire's Code of Conduct parent/carers will be issued with a fixed-penalty fine, or other legal action in accordance the code (see section below for details).

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

### **Understanding types of absence**

Pupils are expected to attend school every day for the entire duration of the academic year, unless there is an exceptional reason for the absence. There are two main categories of absences:

- Authorised Absence - when the school has accepted the explanation offered as satisfactory justification for the absence, or given approval in advance for such an absence. If no explanation is received, absences cannot be authorised.
- Unauthorised Absence - when the school has not received a reason for absence or has not approved a child's leave absence from school after a parent's request. This includes families

giving their children permission to be off school unnecessarily such as for shopping, birthdays, to look after siblings, truancy before or during the school day, absences which have not been explained.

A school can, if needed, change an authorised absence to an unauthorised absence and vice versa if new information is presented. Any changes will be communicated to families. An example of this would be where a family states a child is unwell but on return to school there is evidence they have been on holiday.

### **Penalty Notices for Non Attendance and other Legal Measures**

In Education law, families 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 (5 days) of unauthorised absence 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

### **Legal measures for absence taken when the Headteacher has declined families request for leave of absence**

Where a pupil has unauthorised absence due to either a non-approval of a families' request for leave of absence or a holiday that has been taken without permission and the unauthorised absence is for 10 or more sessions (5 days) in any rolling 10 school week period then a penalty notice for non-attendance will be issued.

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>

The code of conduct states that:

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

- Unauthorised absent for 10 or more half-day sessions (five school days) over a rolling 10 school week period.
- Persistently late (coded U) for 10 or more half-day sessions after the register has been closed.

- Persistently late before the close of the register (coded L), for 10 or more school sessions.

*These do not have to be consecutive and can be any combination of unauthorised absence type. The 10 school week period can be across terms or school years.*

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

Families 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/carers 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.

Where multiple offences take place with a rolling 3 year period each offence will carry a different penalty.

#### First Offence

For a first offence the penalty will be £160 per parent per child if paid within 28 days, reduced to £80 per parent per child if paid within 21 days.

#### Second Offence

For a second offence the penalty will be £160 per parent per child if paid within 28 days. There is no reduced fine for early payment.

#### Third Offence

A Penalty Notice will not be issued and the case will be taken forward for prosecution to the Magistrate's Court. Prosecution can result in criminal records and a fine of up to £2500 per parent per child. Cases found guilty on the Magistrate's Court can show on the parents future DBS certificate due to 'failure to safeguard a child's education'.

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

### **Leavers**

If your child is leaving our school (other than when transferring to a junior school) families are asked to:

- Give the Headteacher comprehensive information about their plans including any date of a move and your 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.

### **Absence through child participation in public performances, including theatre, film or TV work & modelling**

Families 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.

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

Families 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.

### **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.

*Further support and guidance is available from Hampshire County Council's Ethnic Minority and Traveller Achievement Service (EMTAS). <https://www.hants.gov.uk/educationandlearning/emtas>*

### **Absence through completing alternative provision**

As part of SEND support, some child may have alternative provisions put in place to help support an individuals need and meet outcomes from the child's EHCP. School will ensure the alternative provision has been attended. If it has been attended it will be coded as B (educated off site). If your child is unable to attend their alternative provision, families are asked to follow the school's absent policy and to inform the school by 9am.

### **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.