

# Herne Bay Infant School and Seashells Nursery

## Attendance Policy



**Amended:**

**Date: November 2020**

**Approved by the Governing Body:**

**Date: December 2020**

**Review:**

**Date: November 2021**

**Chair of Governors: K. Amos**

**Date: December 2020**

**Acting Headteacher:** 

**Date: December 2020**

## **Statement of Intent**

Herne Bay Infant School and Seashells Nursery is committed to the continuous raising of achievement of all our pupils. Regular attendance is critical if our pupils are to be successful and benefit from the opportunities presented to them.

One of our basic principles is to celebrate success. Good attendance is fundamental to a successful and fulfilling school experience. We actively promote 100% attendance for all our pupils and we use a variety of weekly, termly and annual awards to promote good attendance and punctuality. For example good attendance certificate and badge.

The Governors, Headteacher and Staff in partnership with parents have a duty to promote full attendance at Herne Bay Infant School and Seashells Nursery.

The term 'parent' includes all natural parents, any person who has parental responsibility and any person who has day to day care of the child.

## **Principles**

- Receiving a full-time, suitable education is a child's legal entitlement - it is a parent's/carer's legal responsibility to ensure this happens.
- Attending school regularly aids intellectual, social and emotional development and is essential if children are to benefit fully from their school life.
- Attending school regularly safeguards the welfare of children while they are not in the care of their parents.
- All children whose attendance is irregular will be considered vulnerable.

## **Aims**

- To ensure that all children attend school regularly and punctually, in order to maximise their educational achievement and social development. Statistics show a direct link between under-achievement and attendance below 95%.
- To safeguard pupils to the best of the school's ability.
- To ensure that all those responsible for children's education, including parents, carers, staff and Governors understand and accept their responsibilities in relation to attendance.
- To minimise absence from school, thereby reducing levels of persistent absence. Any pupil with attendance below 90% is classed by the DfE as a Persistent Absentee (PA). Schools are required to identify all PA pupils and report to the DfE at regular intervals during the academic year.
- To improve the life chances of the children attending school and prepare them to be fully contributing citizens when they reach adulthood. Regular attenders are more successful in transferring between primary school, secondary school, higher education and employment or training.

## **Promoting Attendance**

Herne Bay Infant School and Seashells Nursery will use all possible opportunities to promote the importance of good attendance and punctuality. These will include the Home-School agreement, newsletters, rewards and incentives for good or significantly improving attendance. The foundation for good attendance is a strong partnership between the school, parents/carers and children.

### **The School will:**

- Provide and promote a welcoming and positive atmosphere so that children feel safe and know that their presence is valued.
- Raise awareness of the importance of full attendance and punctuality using newsletters and other forms of communications with parents making attendance a high priority.
- Employ a key member of staff with responsibility for monitoring, improving and evaluating school attendance. At Herne Bay Infant School and Seashells Nursery this role is fulfilled by the Admissions and Attendance Officer and their contact details are available on the school website.
- Follow a structured process for managing poor attendance. This may include writing to parents, inviting them to attend meetings and making arrangements in school to support their child to attend school more regularly.
- Encourage our children to have a positive attitude towards attendance and punctuality so that they can retain this into adult life.
- Celebrate good attendance by issuing rewards, stickers, certificates and other incentives.
- Ensure that attendance is effectively monitored using our electronic registration system and that absences are followed up promptly.
- Communicate effectively with other agencies (GPs, Kent County Council Integrated Children's Services, School Health etc) to support children with any issues there might be.
- Meet the legal requirements for recording pupil absence using the correct registration procedures and codes with reference to authorised and unauthorised absence.
- Have procedures in place to help children settle in after a long absence. It is important that on return from an unavoidable absence all pupils are made to feel welcome. This will include ensuring that the pupil is supported to catch up on missed work and brought up to date with any information that has been passed to the other pupils. Please speak to the your child's teacher on their return.
- Make arrangements to meet the requirements of pupils with additional educational needs or an Education Health Care Plan.

## Parental Responsibility

Parents have a legal duty to ensure that their children attend school regularly and arrive on time. Regular attendance is essential to the all-round development of the child and they should be allowed to take full advantage of educational opportunities available to them in order to make good progress in their learning. Poor attendance undermines their educational attainment and progress and sometimes puts pupils at risk by encouraging anti-social behaviour.

**It is parents' responsibility to contact the school on the first day their child is absent. This is a safeguarding requirement so that all parties know your child is safe and their whereabouts are known. Parents should regularly update the school during any period of absence from school and inform the school when their child is returning.**

### We expect parents to:

- Promote the importance of good attendance and punctuality, with their child aiming for 100% attendance each year.
- Keep absences to a minimum.
- Ensure that their child arrives at school on time each day.
- Provide up to date contact numbers and changes of address.
- Telephone the school when their child is unable to attend on the first day of the absence and each day thereafter with the reason for this. Parents should also let the school know if their child is going to be late eg if a car breaks down or an urgent appointment has been made.
- Parents should provide medical evidence indicating attendance at the dentist, doctor or optician, if asked to do so. Whenever possible all medical/dental appointments should be made outside of school hours unless an emergency has arisen.
- Contact the school at the earliest opportunity if their child is experiencing any difficulties and the school will do everything possible to resolve the issues.

Ensuring a child's regular attendance at school is a parent/carer's legal responsibility under **Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act** and permitting absence from school that is not authorised by the school may create an offence in law.

### We expect pupils to:

- Attend every day unless they are too ill, or the absence has been authorised by the school.
- Arrive at school on time.
- Go to registration and all lessons on time.

## **The Role of the School Staff**

At Herne Bay Infant School and Seashells Nursery, there is a whole school responsibility and approach for improving school attendance, with specific staff taking individual responsibility.

The Headteacher has overall responsibility for monitoring attendance issues.

Class teachers or form tutors complete a register at the beginning of each morning and once during the afternoon session. Marking the attendance registers twice daily is a legal requirement. (The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006). Teachers mark pupils present, absent or late. The class teacher notifies the Attendance Officer and the Family Liaison Officer of children whose attendance is causing concern.

It is the responsibility of our Admissions and Attendance Officer to ensure:

- Attendance and lateness records are up to date
- If no reason for absence has been provided, parents are contacted on the first day of absence.
- Where no reason for absence has been received the appropriate attendance code (O) (unauthorised absence) is entered into the register (see National Attendance Codes)
- Where a reason for absence is received from parents, the register is marked using the appropriate attendance code (see National Attendance Codes)
- Parents are regularly informed of their child's attendance figure

## **Timeline of the Staged Approach for Managing Poor Attendance**

- Attendance is regularly monitored by Attendance Officer and Family Liaison Officer (FLO).
- 96 - 100% attendance – Attendance Officer/FLO to contact parent if appropriate.
- 90 - 96% attendance - school intervention, phone calls/letters/meeting with parents, Admissions Officer/FLO/Senior Leadership Team.
- Where the level of absence has not improved and there are unauthorised absences, the school will make a referral to the KCC Inclusion and Attendance Service using the Digital Front Door. If it is not clear a referral to the Service is appropriate, the school will consult with the Local Authority School Liaison Officer for advice.
- For the cases that require intensive family support, the school may make an Early Help Notification.

## **Lateness**

At Herne Bay Infant School and Seashells Nursery, the register is taken at 8.55 am and 1.00 pm. Pupils arriving after these times must enter school by the main entrance and report to Reception where their name and the reason for lateness will be recorded. The pupil will be marked as "late before registration has closed" (Code 'L').

The register will close at 9.10 am and 1.10 pm. Pupils arriving after the register has closed will be marked as “late after registration has closed” (Code ‘U’) and this will count as an unauthorised absence.

Frequent lateness “before registration has closed” (Code “L”) will be discussed with parents. Frequent lateness “after the register has closed” (Code “U”) will be discussed with parents and could provide grounds for prosecution or a Penalty Notice.

### **Penalty Notice Proceedings for Lateness**

**Penalty Notices are issued in accordance with Kent County Council’s Education Penalty Notices Code of Conduct effective from January 2016, as revised in April 2017, when:**

- 10 incidents of late arrival “after the registers have closed” (U) during any possible 100 school sessions leads to a Penalty Notice Warning Letter.
- The Penalty Notice Warning Letter sets out 15 school days during which no unauthorised absence is to be recorded
- If unauthorised absence is recorded during the 15-day period, a Penalty Notice(s) will be issued (one per parent per child)
- Where a Penalty Notice is not paid within 28 days of issue the Local Authority will instigate court proceedings

### **Absence**

A child’s absence will be authorised if approval has been given by the school in advance or an acceptable reason has been given afterwards.

Only the Headteacher can authorise absence. A letter or telephone message from a parent does not in itself authorise an absence. If absences are not authorised, parents will be notified. If no explanation is received, absences will not be authorised.

The following reasons are examples of absence that will not be authorised:

- Persistent nonspecific illness e.g. ‘poorly’ or ‘unwell’
- Absence of siblings if one child is ill
- Oversleeping
- Inadequate clothing/uniform
- Confusion over school dates
- Medical/dental appointments of more than half a day without very good reasons
- Child/family birthday
- Shopping trip
- Family Holidays (see ‘leave of absence’ above)

The Headteacher may authorise other absences in ‘exceptional circumstances’ but this must be requested in advance and agreement to each request is at the discretion of the Headteacher, acting on behalf of the Governing Body. Each case will be judged on its merits and the Headteacher’s decision is final. The principles for defining ‘exceptional’ are: rare, significant, unavoidable and short. An absence might be considered unavoidable if the event could not reasonably be scheduled at

another time. Once a child has been absent without permission, the absence cannot be authorised retrospectively.

Persistent unauthorised absence may result in statutory referral to the Local Authority. The school will follow the appropriate procedures prior to referral and parents will be notified in writing.

When a referral is made, the pupil's Registration Certificate, copies of all letters sent to parents and minutes of any meetings will be attached to the completed referral form with any other relevant information.

#### **Local Authority Action may include:-**

- Attendance Improvement Meeting
- Home visits
- Liaison with other agencies
- Fast Track to Prosecution

#### **Children Missing Education**

Parents must inform the school in writing if they are planning to remove their child from the school roll. This must include the details of the arrangements that will be put in place for the child's education.

The school will follow the Department for Education guidance relating to Children Missing Education (CME). If after ten day's continuous absence the school has been unable to ascertain the whereabouts of a pupil, they will make a referral to the Local Authority.

#### **Penalty Notices**

Herne Bay Infant School and Seashells Nursery may make use of Penalty Notices to address poor school attendance in accordance with Kent County Council's Education Penalty Notice Code of Conduct.

A penalty notice can be issued as a result of the following:

- Parentally condoned absence
- Unauthorised leave for the purpose of a family holiday in term-time
- Delayed return from leave of absence without prior school agreement
- Persistent late arrival at school (after the register has closed)
- Where an excluded child is found in a public place during school hours during the first five days of exclusion.

A Penalty Notice may be issued when a pupil has been absent for 10 or more half day sessions (5 school days) without authorisation during any 100 possible school sessions or period of 50 school days – these absences do not need to be consecutive.

Penalty Notices are issued to each parent of each child and the amount of the penalty will be £120 to be paid within 28 days, reduced to £60 if paid within 21 days. Failure to pay the penalty in full at the end of the 28-day period may result in prosecution by the local authority.

Herne Bay Infant School and Seashells Nursery asks that parents fully support this policy as a vital contribution towards their child's education.

**COVID addendum - Attendance Policy.**

From the start of the autumn term 2020 pupil attendance will be mandatory and the usual rules on attendance will apply, including:

- parents' duty to ensure that their child of compulsory school age attends regularly at the school where the child is a registered pupil
- schools' responsibilities to record attendance and follow up absence
- the ability to issue sanctions, including fixed penalty notices, in line with local authorities' codes of conduct

Government guidance reiterates the importance of children's attendance at school.

*'Being at school is vital for children's education and their well-being. Time spent out of school is detrimental for children's cognitive and academic development, particularly for disadvantaged children. This impact can affect both current levels of education, and children's future ability to learn.'*

*'The risk to children themselves of becoming seriously ill from coronavirus is very low and there are negative health impact of being out of school. For the vast majority of children, the benefits of being back in the classroom far outweigh the low risk from coronavirus and schools can take action to reduce risks still further.'*

A new category of attendance code will be used 'not attending in circumstances related to coronavirus(COVID-19)' – children under this category will be coded as 'X' Code 'X' is not counted as an absence in the school census.

Code 'X' would be used for:

- pupils who are required to self-isolate as they, or a member of their household, has symptoms or confirmed coronavirus (COVID-19)
- pupils who are required to self-isolate because they are a close-contact of someone who has symptoms or confirmed coronavirus (COVID-19)
- pupils who are required by legislation to self-isolate as part of a period of quarantine
- pupils who are clinically extremely vulnerable in a future lockdown scenario only

Local lockdowns - If rates of the disease rise locally, the school may need to prevent some pupils from attending. PHE or DHSC guidance will be followed on what measures are necessary in the event of local lockdown. Where attendance is to be limited to certain groups, 'not attending in circumstances related to coronavirus (COVID-19)' - code X - will be used for pupils who are asked not to attend.

Late Codes

Staggered entry times are currently in place as part of our Health and Safety COVID-19 precaution measures. The pupil will be marked as “late before registration has closed” (Code ‘L’) if arriving via the office having missed their allotted gate slot.

Pupils arriving after the register has closed minutes after their allotted gate time) will be marked as “late after registration has closed” (Code ‘U’) and this will count as an unauthorised absence.