

# Hannah Ball School

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## Attendance Policy



**Approved by:** Full Governing Body

**Date:** Summer 2019

**Next review due by:** Summer 2020

### Introduction

At Hannah Ball School we believe that good attendance and punctuality are essential if a child is to achieve their full potential. We recognise that attendance is a matter for the whole school community. Our Attendance Policy should not be viewed in isolation; it is a strand that runs through all aspects of school improvement, supported by our policies on safeguarding, bullying, and behaviour and learning. Frequent absence and / or lateness disrupt pupils' learning which leads to them missing key concepts and thereby hampers their progress. Encouraging good attendance and punctuality helps to prepare pupils for their adult life and the responsibilities of full time employment. We seek to support parents and pupils in enabling them to attend school regularly and to arrive on time. The school acknowledges and celebrates those pupils who have good attendance and are punctual.

There are several ways in which we do this:

- Weekly attendance rewards are given out in assembly to the class with the highest percentage that week. Extra rewards to those classes that achieve 100% in a week.
- Children with termly attendance of **96% or above** feature on our attendance display board in the school reception area and children who have had **100% attendance for a week** will be rewarded with house tokens. Parents will also be recognised as valuable supporters of the school in these instances.
- At the end of each term, certificates are sent out to those children achieving 100%. Those below 96% will receive a "red" letter.
- At the end of the school year, those children who have 100% for the whole year will receive a gift, certificate and a special activity. The class with the highest percentage for the year will also have a special reward (ie special activity, or an afternoon out)

## Recording Absence

### **Categorising absence**

Where pupils of compulsory school age are recorded as absent, the register must show whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised. Absence can only be authorised by the school and cannot be authorised by parents. All absences will be treated as unauthorised unless a satisfactory explanation for the pupil's absence has been received.

Parents should advise the school by telephone on the first day of absence and provide the school with an expected date of return. This should be followed up in the form of a written note from the parent/carer, though verbal explanations may be acceptable where this is considered appropriate. Alternative arrangements will be agreed with non-English speaking parents/carers.

Absence will be categorised as follows:

**Illness:** In most cases a telephone call or a note from the parent informing the school that their child is ill will be acceptable. Parents may be asked to provide medical evidence where there are repeated absences due to reported illness. This will usually be in the form of an appointment card, prescription etc.

**Medical/Dental Appointments:** Parents are advised where possible to make medical and dental appointments outside the school day. Where this is not possible, pupils should attend school for part of the day. Parents should show the appointment card to school.

**Other Authorised Circumstances:** This relates to occasions where there is cause for absence due to exceptional circumstances, for example family bereavement, visiting a parent in prison or part time timetable agreed as part of a reintegration package.

**Excluded (no alternative provision made):** Exclusion from attending school is counted as an authorised absence. The school will make arrangements for work to be sent home.

**Late Arrival:** Registration begins at 8.50 a.m. Pupils arriving after this time will be marked as present but having arrived late. The register will close at 9.20 a.m. Pupils arriving after the close of register will be recorded as absent. This will not be authorised and will count as an absence for that school session.

On arrival after the close of register, pupils must immediately report to the school office to ensure that we can be responsible for their health and safety whilst they are in school.

The absence will only be authorised if a satisfactory explanation for the late arrival can be provided, for example, attendance at a medical appointment (Code M).

The absence will be recorded as **unauthorised** if the pupil has arrived late after the registers close without justifiable cause, for example, if they woke up late or were waiting for their uniform to dry (Code U).

Teaching starts at 8:50am, meaning that if a child arrives for school late, they will be missing important aspects of their learning which the class teacher will not cover again. Children arriving into the classroom late not only impact negatively upon their own learning, but also disrupt the learning of the entire class.

**Unauthorised absence:** Absence will not be authorised unless parents have provided a satisfactory explanation that has been accepted as such by the school.

**Leave of Absence and Extended Leave:** Parents do not have an automatic right to remove their child from school during term time for the purpose of a holiday and are strongly advised not to do so. Parents should be aware that if their child is absent for 10 school days they will miss 5% of their education during that academic year.

At Hannah Ball School holiday requests will be unauthorised unless there are exceptional circumstances and such requests must be put in writing to the school. Some exceptional circumstances are:

- Where, on relocating, holiday previously booked in another authority fell during holiday time but in Bucks the term dates are different
- Exceptional circumstances mean that a holiday request is not repeated a following year
- Other circumstances are left to the discretion of the Headteacher

All requests for leave of absence will receive a written response. Where a request has been granted, the letter should state:

- The expected date of return
- That parents must contact school should any delays occur

If the permission to take leave is not granted and the pupil is absent, the absence will be **unauthorised**. In such cases the school may refer the matter to the Education Welfare Service who may issue a Penalty Notice. We will inform parents if the school makes a referral to the EWS. This is in line with Section 444 of the Education Act, Local Authority Guidelines and agreed School Policy. The penalty notice may be issued at a fine of £60 per parent/carer, per child if paid within 21 days. This would rise to £120 per parent/carer, per child, if paid between 21 in 28 days and could lead to further court proceedings if unpaid.

Ultimately it is the school's decision how to categorise the absence. These decisions will be made by the Headteacher and in some instances by the Chair of Governors. If for any reason we doubt the reason given e.g. the child was ill but it is clear that they have been away then the absence will be unauthorised.

Unauthorised absences will mean that a child's overall percentage attendance for that year will drop and may become a cause for concern.

**Religious Observance:** Hannah Ball School acknowledges the multi-faith nature of British society and recognises that on some occasions, religious festivals may fall outside school holiday periods or weekends and that this necessitates a consideration of authorised absence or special leave for religious observance (Code R).

It is reasonable for a parent to allow their children not to attend school on any day of religious observance if recognised by the parent's religious body.

Parents are requested to give advance notice to the school if they intend their child to be absent.

However, in the interests of fulfilling the academic requirements of the school and limiting the authorised absence rate of the school, it is identified as reasonable that no more than one day be designated for any individual occasion of religious observance/festival and no more than three days in total in any academic year. Absence in excess of this will be categorised as unauthorised.

### **Attendance Monitoring**

The expected level of attendance for a primary school pupil is 96%. Hannah Ball School has an electronic register system which is able to run off each pupil's individual attendance record at any given time.

Attendance figures are monitored weekly at the school and after 5 weeks, if it is seen that a child's attendance percentage has dropped below 98% the parents/carers may be contacted. Any child who has dropped below 98% during a 5 week period will receive an 'Amber traffic light letter' informing parents/carers that their child's attendance could become a cause of concern if it does not improve. If a child's attendance dips below 96%, the parent/carer will receive a "Red traffic light letter" stating that attendance is too low and needs to improve to avoid further action. Regular monitoring starts and absences may not be authorised unless some sort of medical evidence is provided. If attendance continues to be poor the parents/carers are invited to a Parental Contract Meeting (PCM). This is the first stage of the process which may lead to prosecution for failing to ensure a child attends school. During this meeting any barriers to attending are discussed and parents/carers sign a contract saying they will work with the school to improve the situation. A total of three PCMs take place. At the final PCM we would hope attendance has improved and no further action is required. However, if this is not the case, parents/carers will be referred to the Education Welfare Service and a pre-court meeting will be arranged. No improvement at this stage leads to the parents/carers being taken to court. The procedure for addressing poor punctuality is similar. If it is felt to be a cause for concern, parents/carers will be contacted and asked to meet with the Headteacher to discuss how it can be improved.

Attendance figures are monitored on a termly basis by the Governing body, who review the policy and procedures to ensure their effectiveness.