



Havannah Primary School

Attendance Policy

Spring 2021

One of the most important things a parent can do for their child's future is to make sure they go to school regularly and on time - it is a parent's legal responsibility to ensure that if their child is between 5 and 16 years of age they attend school regularly, as per Section 444 (1) of the Education Act, 1996:

"If a child of compulsory school age who is a registered pupil at a school fails to attend regularly at the school, his parent is guilty of an offence."

"Attendance matters..." As a school we aim to:

- Maintain a whole school attendance rate of a minimum of 96%. □

Encourage good attendance patterns and punctuality.

- Maintain parents' and pupils' awareness of the importance of regular, punctual attendance.
- Maintain our attendance registers in accordance with Local Authority policy.
- Report attendance to parents on an annual basis, unless there is cause for concern.

Good attendance is important because:

- Statistics show a direct link between under-achievement and poor attendance.
- Regular and on time attenders make better progress, both socially and academically.
- Regular and on time attenders find school routines and school work easier to cope with.
- Regular and on time attenders find learning more satisfying.
- Regular and on time attenders have an easier transfer to secondary school.

What school expects from parents:

- Telephoning on the first morning of all absences by 9:15am with the reason for the absence and saying when you think the child will return.

- Arranging dental and doctor's appointments out of school hours or during school breaks.
- Sending in a note explaining the reason for absence on the child's return to school after an illness.
- Keeping the school updated by telephone, letter or email if your child has an extended period of absence due to illness.

Actions school will take:

- Follow up unexplained absences by phone calls and letters as soon as possible.
- Remind parents of the importance of regular attendance and punctuality in newsletters, the school brochure and the Home-School agreement.
- Acknowledge and reward both good and improved attendance, celebrating them as a whole school and individual classes.
- Report to parents half termly regarding their attendance and punctuality.
- Let parents know if school has concerns regarding your child's attendance.
- If the school continues to have concerns, make a referral to the Education Welfare service, who visits the school regularly to review and support on attendance matters.

Authorised Absence

Some absences are allowed by law and are known as "authorised absences".

Absence will be authorised in the following circumstances:

- Where the school is **satisfied** that the child is too ill to attend. If the child is absent for more than a total of 10 sessions (NB. there are 2 sessions per day) in a rolling 12 months, then the school reserves the right to ask for medical evidence of illness.
 - Where the pupil has a medical or dental appointment confirmed with an appointment card/letter, although the school requests that such appointments should be taken out of school hours wherever possible.
 - A pupil is involved in an exceptional special occasion - for example an external music exam or is participating in an approved public performance.
 - The absence occurs on a day exclusively set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong.
 - The bereavement of a close family member (parent, sibling, grandparent).
- ☐ Sibling or parental graduation or passing out parade. ☐
Marriage of parent or sibling.

We realise that there are rare occasions when there might be other circumstances or difficulties that causes your child to be absent. Please let us know and we shall try to deal with it sympathetically.

Unauthorised Absence

Except in circumstances detailed above, absences will not be authorised. Some examples (not an exhaustive list) of reasons for not authorising absence would be:

- No explanation has been given after 5 days of the first day of absence.

- The school is not satisfied with the explanation for absence.

- Because the parent/carer or the person who normally brings the child to school is ill.
 - Waiting at home for a delivery.
 - Going shopping or for a haircut.
 - Going for a family day out.
 - Because it is your child's or any other family member's birthday.
 - Sleeping in after a late night.
- Treating headlice.
 - Unapproved holidays.

Unauthorised absences have to be reported to the Local Authority. The Education Welfare Service may contact parents and consider taking legal action potentially resulting in a fine and prosecution against parents if children have unauthorised absences.

Punctuality

- Morning registration is at 8:50am.
- Registers close at 9:00am. If a child arrives after the close of registers, their absence will not be authorised unless school is absolutely satisfied that there is a legitimate reason for the child being late. Such reasons will not include sleeping in, alarm clock not going off, missing a bus, bad traffic, clothes in washing machine/not dry, another member of the family is ill, lost shoes or treatment for head lice.
- It is important to be on time as the first few minutes of the school day are often used to give out important instructions or organise schoolwork for the rest of the day.

If your child misses this short but vital session, their work for the whole day may be affected.

- Arrival after the close of registration may be marked as an unauthorised absence in line with the DfE guidance.
- Children who are persistently late for school, but before the registers close, will be monitored closely. Parents will be asked to supply adequate reasons for the lateness. If persistent lateness continues for a period of one month after the parents have been alerted of concerns, school will contact the Education Welfare Service.

Term Time Leave of Absence

Amendments were made to the 2006 Regulations in the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013. These amendments came into force on 1 September 2013.

The Headteacher will only authorise leave of absence in exceptional circumstances. There is no legal entitlement to time off in school time to go on holiday and parents can be fined for taking their child on holiday during term time without consent from the school. This fine (Fixed Penalty Notice) can be issued to each of the child's parents:

| Penalties for Unauthorised Absence | | |
|---|--|---------------------------------|
| Timeline | One Child | Two Children |
| Paid within 21 days | £60 per parent as per the definition in the Education Act, section 576 | £60 per child = £120 per parent |

| | | |
|----------------------------------|--|---|
| After 21 days and before 28 days | £120 per parent | £120 per child =£240 per parent |
| After 28 days | A summons to appear before the Magistrates' Court on the grounds you have failed to secure your child's regular attendance | A summons to appear before the Magistrates' Court on the grounds you have failed to secure your children's regular attendance |

Please note - it is the responsibility of the parent to check the school's holiday timetable prior to booking any holiday. If holiday dates are not published on the school website, clarification should be sought with the school before booking.

In the exceptional circumstance where holiday is approved, the Headteacher can determine the length of the authorised absence.

If leave of absence is authorised, this does not set precedent for future absence requests; each application is made on a case by case basis.

Monitoring of Attendance

The school assesses individual and whole school attendance on a weekly basis. In the case of persistent absence or lates, the school will contact the parent concerned and discuss how they can work together to improve attendance. If no improvement is seen, the school will contact the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) and arrange a meeting with the parent, the EWO and the school. If no improvement is made, the Education Welfare Service may issue a Fixed Penalty Notice. In certain circumstances, including regular absence due to illness, the school will ask for medical evidence of illness.

Monitoring of Absence

Absence will be monitored in the following way:

| Event | Timing | Action | Responsibility |
|------------------|--|--|-----------------------|
| Absence | Day 1 | Parent phones in before 9am. | Parent |
| Absence | Day 1 | Office phones home if no report of absence. | School |
| Return to school | Day 1 of return | Letter from parent explaining absence, even if phone call made. | Parent |
| Return to school | Day 3 of return | If no letter or telephone call, send letter requesting reason for absence. | School |
| | 5 th day after 1 st day of absence | If no reason for absence given, the absence will be unauthorised and parents will be informed. | School |

Children Missing in Education

When pupils leave and we have not been given information regarding their new school, and we cannot contact parents/carers, then the child is considered to be a *Child Missing*

Education. This means that the Local Authority has a legal duty to carry out investigations, which may include liaising with Children's Services the Police and other agencies, to try to track and locate your child.

By giving us the above information, unnecessary investigations can be avoided.

NB

Please see Appendix 1 (Addendum to this Attendance Policy) dated February 2021. This document relates to government and Cheshire East Guidance in relation to children returning to school following March 2021 Lockdown .



Attendance Policy Addendum February 2021

Havannah Primary School Principles of Attendance (in line with Cheshire East) are: -

1. All children to return to school in March on a **full-time timetable**.
2. All children will be **supported with their mental health and wellbeing** to be able to attend and sustain attendance in school.
3. If a de-registration letter is received for a child to become **Elective Home Educated a joint meeting will be arranged** within 5 working days involving parents, children, school and the Local Authority.
4. **Robust support will be offered** to children and families to address barriers and increase attendance prior to penalty notices being considered.
5. **Transition plans will be in place to support children with an EHCP** for the first half of term if a child requires it with agreement with the parent, Head and SEND keyworker.

Returning in March will be an anxious time for some pupils after being away from school over the last three months. It is understandable therefore that levels of anxiety/stress for both pupils and parents may be higher.

Following the announcement on the 22nd February 2021 there will be a return to compulsory attendance from the 8th March 2021. The DfE guidance states that they expect schools to have a reasonable response to support parents to sending their children back. The DfE and Cheshire East would encourage all schools to have a measured approach to any legal interventions they instigate. An expectation would be for schools to engage with parents and understand the

families individual concerns, offer bespoke solutions to support the family and enable them to gain confidence for their children to return to school. Some measures may include a tour of the school and talking through the schools protective measures that are in place.

Please remember to use the tools and resources shared in the Wellbeing for Education Recovery training to support children and young people's wellbeing, resilience and recovery in the context of Covid-19.

As a school at Havannah in preparing for good attendance we aim to:

- Communicate with parents / carers and children around additional control measures introduced to reduce the risk of transmission
- Check for the latest coding guidance from the DfE, as codes have been amended for COVID-19.
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-attendance>
- Consider what the effect of COVID-19 may have had on the emotional wellbeing of all pupils when they return to school and how this will impact on the strategies you use to encourage attendance. We may notice more anxiety-based non-attendance.
- Obtain a list from our SENCO of any pupils with an EHCP to support return to school.
- Follow our first day calling procedures for all pupils who do not return to school and where the parent has not made contact.
- Where this is an emerging concern or pattern of lateness. Explore with the family what has changed and is impacting with a view to supporting the family to address this e.g. has parent changed jobs, has the way the child comes into school changed e.g. cycling rather than on public transport? Is the child having to take other siblings to school, are they affected by staggered school start times etc.

Havannah Primary School Attendance Actions Flow Chart

Child does not attend school as expected, if no reason to authorise the absence is established then the child will be coded in the register with an unauthorised mark.

Step 1 - Each day of unauthorised absence - School make a telephone call to parents / carers, exploring barriers to attending and measures to support child back into school if fit and well. Where the child or parent has specific anxieties, this may highlight the need for a further discussion either face to face or remotely

Step 2 - If absence continues - school to invite parents in for a meeting / video meeting and or complete a home visit to discuss attendance, explore barriers and offer support to enable child to attend. The Attendance and Children Out of School Team can support home visits and meetings in school as part of the traded service via Chess, please speak with your locality lead to gauge availability of the team to help with your required support. Please see guidance to support good attendance. If mental health is identified as a barrier to attendance, consider a conversation with the Together in Education Lead.

Step 3 - At 6-8 unauthorised absences the school send a letter to each parent / carer to advise that if there are 10 unauthorised absences an Attendance and Children Out of School Team (ACOOS) referral for a 15-day warning period will be made, resulting in penalty notice if there is an unauthorised absence in the advised time period.

Step 4 - Following a series of 10 unauthorised absences schools make a Penalty Notice Warning Period request to the Attendance and Children Out of School Team (ACOOS) alongside evidence of the contact made and support offered to family to increase attendance.

Attendance and Children Out of School Team process

The ACOOS team will triage the request within 5 working days and allocate to a locality worker for contact with family within 3 days. The locality worker then updates the request with information established from the family - this additional step has been introduced as a response to COVID19 and in the Principles of Attendance guidance to ensure children receive adequate support to return to school.

The ACOOS team panel will then review the request to decide whether a 15-day warning period will be issued. ACOOS panels meet on a weekly basis.

- If the panel feel a warning period is not appropriate and more support is required to the family to support the child into school, this recommendation will be made to the school. Recommendations could include: staff at gates to meet and greet, direct contact from a member of staff that has good relationship with the child, a package put in place to support transition back to school, a conversation with the Together in Education Lead or the school to lead on an Early Help to support the parent and child.
- If decided at the panel that a 15 day warning period is appropriate, parents / carers are issued with letter from the ACOOS team to advise them of the date the 15-day warning period commences and expectations in the period. A link to the DFE site regarding the opening of schools during COVID 19 will be provided.
- School will be advised of the outcome of the panel by email within 2 working days.

If there is unauthorised absence in the 15-day warning period, then the panel will look at the case and agree whether a penalty notice will be issued.

Penalty notice fines are £60 if paid within 21 days or £120 if paid within 28 days per parent. If the fine is not paid a request is sent to the ACOOS Team Manager, Head of Service and Legal team for authorisation for prosecution.

Havannah Primary School Leave of Absence checklist and request

There is no entitlement to leave during term time for the purpose of a holiday. Each Headteacher can determine what constitutes an exceptional circumstance and authorise leave based on individual cases.

Due to the pandemic and restrictions on travel, schools will need to consider some additional factors when assessing requests for exceptional leave. Whilst we expect every child to attend school, some families will want to travel to see other family members who they have not been able to visit since lock-down or to pay respects to those who have passed away. There will also be families who have been asked to rebook a holiday or are in receipt of travel vouchers; these may have a use by date.

Key workers may also be restricted to when they can take leave from their workplace. All requests for exceptional leave will need to be treated sensitively backed with supporting evidence to support a parent's request. It is advised that you may want to put some information on your website to remind parents to keep holidays within school holiday breaks.

Parents should provide evidence that children are required to quarantine following travel.

Elective Home Education

Following a period at home, some parents may now feel they want to Electively Home Educate their children. As part of the Principles of Attendance guidance, before de-registration, a meeting with the parents, school and the Attendance and Children Out of School team will be held to explore the reason for the de-registration and to ensure parents understand their responsibilities to provide a suitable education following de-registration. Schools will need to invite the ACOOS team to the meeting by emailing EHE@cheshireeast.gov.uk .

Exclusions

Please be aware that any students that are sent home following a breach of policy will need to be recorded as a fixed term exclusion and notification in writing sent home.

Schools should be mindful that COVID 19 and the time away from school will impact on some children's behaviour on their return to school and strategies to avoid any fixed term exclusions and support around behaviour should be considered before the issue of any fixed term exclusions. It's worth remembering that 45 days of fixed term exclusions can result in a permanent exclusion for a child.

Please contact Anne Vaughan Griffith, Education Access Officer, for support, advice and guidance if there are students that are accumulating a series of fixed term exclusions. Anne can explore a range of options with schools to reduce risk of exclusion.

Transition plans for children with Education, Health Care Plans (EHCP)

If children with EHCPs are finding it difficult to transition back to full time education following this long period out of school, parents may request a transition plan to support them back in. The plan will need to be short term (between 2 - 4 weeks), capture the reasons why it is required and demonstrate how the hours onsite will increase to a full time timetable in agreed timescales. The plan will also need to demonstrate the support measures in place for children with EHCP's returning to school.

The plan should be registered with the Local Authority by emailing it to SchoolPartTimeTables@cheshireeast.gov.uk

Part time timetable guidance and forms can be accessed on the Attendance and Children Out of School page on the Chess site <https://www.chesshub.co.uk>

How has the process changed?

- The Attendance and Children Out of School (ACOOS) team can now support home visits, parent meetings, transition and education family support work in Academy and Maintained schools in Cheshire East via the traded service in Chess.
- The Wellbeing in Education Recovery programme has provided training resources to schools to support children's anxiety and mental health to support children to return to school and sustain attendance. There is a

locally co-ordinated approach to access appropriate mental health support for children and young people.

- At the point of request from schools, contact will be made from an ACOOS locality worker with the family to establish the reasons for the child's absence.
- The ACOOS panel make a decision on whether a 15 day warning period is appropriate to be issued with additional information gained.
- Penalty notices will not be issued without evidence of communication and support offered to the family.
- Families wishing to de-register their children to Electively Home Educate them will be offered a multi-agency meeting to explore reason for their decision and explore the expectations of the Local Authority.

The Attendance and Children out of school team can be contacted on 01270 375255, useful email addresses for the team are:

Penalty notices: cepenaltnotices@cheshireeast.gov.uk

Children missing education: cechildrenmissingeducation@cheshireeast.gov.uk

Elective home education: ehe@cheshireeast.gov.uk

Child employment: childemployment@cheshireeast.gov.uk.

Exclusions and Fair Access Protocol: ExclusionCE@cheshireeast.gov.uk

Part time timetables: SchoolPartTimeTables@cheshireeast.gov.uk

Appendix 2 - Template Warning letter

Warning Letter

Insert Date

Dear insert parent name

It has been brought to my attention that your child has not been attending regularly at school. According to the Attendance Register, insert child's name attendance is currently insert %, this is below the schools expected attendance.

Insert child's name currently has xx unauthorised sessions, if this reaches 10 authorised sessions within 2 half terms then school can apply to the Local Authority to issue you with a Penalty Notice warning period, which could result in each parent receiving a £60.00 fine, increasing to £120.00 if not paid within 21 days.

I must remind you that S.444, Education Act 1996 requires you to make sure that your child comes to school, on time, every time the school is open. I am writing this letter to give you an opportunity to make sure that from now on and in future, your child attends school regularly.

If your child continues not attend regularly, I will have to refer you to the Local Authority and they may decide to pursue further action. These interventions may include,

- (A) Issuing you with a Fixed Penalty Notice under S.444A Education Act 1996 which will make you liable to a penalty of up to £120. **(As above)**
- (B) Initiating legal proceedings in the Magistrates Court under S.444(1) Education Act 1996. If convicted under this section, you may be fined up to £1000.
- (C) Initiating legal proceedings in the Magistrates Court under S.444(1A) Education Act 1996. If convicted of this offence you may be fined up to £2,500 or be sent to prison for up to 3 months or both.

In order to avoid Local Authority intervention, please ensure your child attends school regularly and on time.

If there are any issues that may be impacting on your child's attendance, please contact insert appropriate named person to discuss further.

Yours sincerely,

Insert name signature and role

