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This Policy was adopted by the governing body of

## Half Acres Primary Academy



## ATTENDANCE POLICY

Dated: Sept 2019

Date for Review: September 2020

## INTRODUCTION

We recognise the direct correlation between Attendance and Attainment. The aim of our Attendance Policy is to raise and maintain levels of attendance and punctuality for all pupils who attend our school, therefore maximising their opportunities for improved attainment.

### Attendance Targets

Target 2019-2020 = 97%

School Attendance 2018-19= R-6 95.85%, Y1-6 96.25%

Persistent Absence = below 90%

School PA =R-6 8.68%, Y1-6 7.65%

## OBJECTIVES

The objectives of our Attendance Policy are:

1. To reduce absence and lateness, and raise awareness of the importance of school attendance.
2. To include all school staff, parents, pupils and Governors in our attendance strategies.
3. To develop a robust electronic data handling system which enables school staff, the Trust, the Local Authority and Department for Education to access attendance data in order to work in partnership with school.
4. To work effectively with parents/carers and partner agencies, using a range of strategies to improve attendance of individual pupils and the whole school.

## THE LAW

In line with the 1996 Education Act, we expect all children on roll to attend school every day, when the school is in session, as long as they are fit and healthy enough to do so. Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act states that if a child of compulsory school age fails to attend school regularly, the parent is guilty of an offence. Parents, therefore have a legal responsibility to ensure their child's attendance at school. Failure to do this can lead to legal action being taken by the Local Authority in the Magistrates Court, or the need to issue Penalty Fines. Since March 2001 there has been a further offence, Section 444 (1A) where a parent **knowingly** allows their child to be absent from school. This offence can carry a custodial sentence.

## ABSENCE FROM SCHOOL

Any absence from school is detrimental to a child's education and progress. It disrupts learning, routines and progress. Government research shows that **17 days** lost learning in one school year can lead to a drop of one grade at SAT and GCSE level.

School will follow up any unexplained absences by contacting parents / carers on the first day of absence. Children with inadequate attendance will become part of our Key Focus Attendance Pupils. These children will have their attendance

monitored daily. Parents / carers will be invited into school to discuss attendance issues if there is a cause for concern. If attendance does not improve a referral will be made to the Education Welfare Service.

### **AUTHORISED ABSENCE**

Some absences are unavoidable, usually due to illness, bereavement or extreme family circumstances. These absences should be supported by medical evidence where possible or a written explanation from the parent / carer. The decision as to whether an absence is authorised or not lies with the Headteacher.

### **UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE**

An unauthorised absence is an absence which is not permissible in Law. Unauthorised absences include:- birthdays, shopping trips, days out, term time holidays and absences where no explanation has been received. School will discuss unauthorised absence with the Education Welfare Service and further action will be agreed.

The school does not authorise holidays taken in term time and works in partnership with the Education Welfare Service regarding the issue of Penalty Fines. Pupils have an entitlement to an education, not a term time holiday.

### **LEAVE OF ABSENCE/TERM TIME HOLIDAYS**

The Government have issued new regulations in September 2013 regarding leave of Absence; The Education (Pupil Regulations) (England) Regulations 2006 as amended by Education (Pupil Regulations) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013

- Headteachers shall not grant any Leave of Absence during term time unless they consider there are exceptional circumstances relating to the application. Exceptional circumstances being defined as being of unique and significant emotional, educational or spiritual value to the child which outweighs the loss of teaching time.
- Parents do not have any entitlement to take their children on holiday during term time. Any application for leave must establish that there are exceptional circumstances and the Headteacher must be satisfied that the circumstances warrant the granting of leave.
- Headteachers will determine how many school days a child may be absent from school if the leave is granted.
- Applications for Leave of Absence must be made in advance and failure to do so will result in the absence being unauthorised.
- The school can only consider applications for Leave of Absence which are made by the resident parent.
- Applications for Leave of Absence which are made in advance and refused will result in the absence being unauthorised which may result in legal action against the parent, by Penalty Notice, if the child is absent from school during that period.

- If a Penalty Notice is issued and is not paid within the timeframe set out in that Notice, the matter will be referred to Wakefield County Council's Legal Services to consider criminal prosecution proceedings under S444 of Education Act 1996.

The DFE website is clear that leave of absence is unlikely to be granted for the purpose of a family holiday. As such the Governors have made the decision to refuse requests for term time holidays unless there are exceptional circumstances. In order to enforce this decision the Governors have agreed to the issuing of Penalty Notices for parents taking their children out of school during term time for holidays without permission. The school will work closely with the Education Welfare Service to enforce this policy.

The policy is in line with Wakefield Council Code of Conduct on Penalty Notices and falls under section 44 of the Education Act 1996. The Education (penalty Notices) Regulations 2007 set the framework for the operation of the Penalty Notice scheme. The Code of Conduct states that a Penalty Notice may be issued where there are at least 10 sessions (half days) recorded as unauthorised absence.

Payment of a Penalty Notice is £60 per child, per parent if paid within 21 days, rising to £120 if paid within 28 days. If a parent fails to make payment the matter will be progressed to court by the Education Welfare Service. This could result in prosecution in the Magistrates Court and fines of up to £2,500.00 and/or a range of other measures such as Parenting Orders or Community Sentences depending on the circumstances.

### **PERSISTENT ABSENCE**

A pupil becomes a persistent absentee if he/she has missed 10% or more of school for any reason and has an attendance of below 90%. The school will invite parents/carers in to discuss the situation, and referrals will be made to the Education Welfare Service. This will result in a range of strategies being deployed to improve attendance, including participation in the Fastrack Attendance Programme, Parenting Contracts, referral to School Health and Penalty Fines.

### **PUNCTUALITY**

The law states that children should arrive at school on time, everyday. Schools are legally required to take a register of pupils first thing in the morning and at some point in the afternoon. On a morning the register will remain open for 10 minutes - if a pupil is late but the register is still open they are marked as late. The register will be closed after 10 minutes and if a pupil arrives after this time this will be classed as unauthorised absence. If a pupil has a period of 10 lates in the academic year, the school has the right to record any further lates as unauthorised absence. Poor punctuality is unacceptable and persistent lateness

will be referred onto the Education Welfare Service and parents may risk legal action.

## **ROLES / RESPONSIBILITIES**

### **SCHOOL**

The responsibilities in relation to attendance are as follows:-

1. Set high expectations for pupil attendance, and monitor individual and whole school attendance on a daily and weekly basis,
2. Identify causes of concern with regard to pupil attendance.
3. Conduct first day response where there is unexplained absence.
4. Invite parents/carers into school to discuss pupil attendance which is a cause of concern.
5. Work with parents of individual pupils to try to improve attendance and punctuality.
6. Work in partnership with Wakefield Authority and the Education Welfare Service and the Inspire Partnership MAT.
7. Maintain electronic registration data systems effectively and deploy them robustly to facilitate presentation reports.
8. To provide attendance data for parents.
9. Promote attendance at all levels.
10. Celebrate excellent and improved attendance.

### **PARENTS / CARERS**

1. To ensure pupils arrive at school on time everyday and that routines are in place at home to support this.
2. To contact school by 9.30am on each day of absence if the absence is unavoidable.
3. To obtain evidence where possible to support medical absence.
4. To avoid term time holidays, and attempt to minimise school time appointments.

### **PUPILS**

1. To arrive at school, on time everyday with correct equipment and ready to learn.
2. Comply with school regulations regarding attendance and punctuality
3. Discuss any concerns they may have with staff regarding attendance and punctuality.

### **EDUCATION WELFARE SERVICE**

1. The Education Welfare Service will work in partnership to promote and facilitate improved attendance, at an individual level, by supporting the Fastrack to Attendance Programme; and at a whole school level using proactive strategies and action plans.

2. The Education Welfare Service will work with children and families to ensure their school attendance and safeguarding is maintained.
3. The Education Welfare Service will provide guidance with regards to Children Missing Education.
4. The Education Welfare Service will work in partnership with other agencies and will offer advice and signposting for referrals to appropriate organisations.
5. The Education Welfare Service will undertake legal action on behalf of the school.
6. Wakefield Local Authority will support the school with networking and training events and with individual School Audits and Action Plans.

The Policy was reviewed in July 2019 and the next review will be July 2020.

Signed by Acting Headteacher		Date:	03.10.2019
Signed by Chair of Governors		Date:	03.10.2019