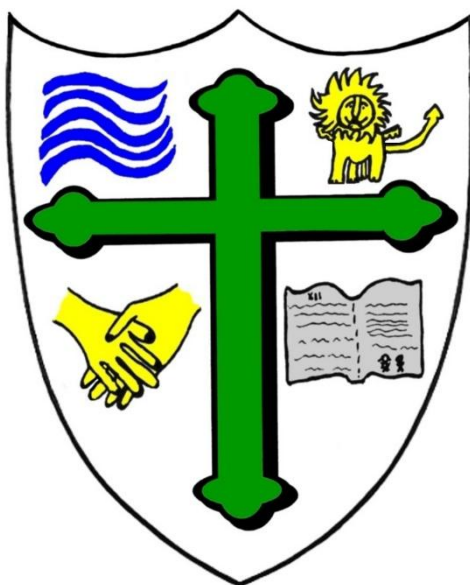


Highcliffe St Mark Primary School



Attendance

Reviewed (date)	September 2026
Reviewed by (name)	Claire Barker
Approved by Governors (if applicable)	September 2025
Review due (date)	September 2027

Attendance Policy

Introduction

High attendance is promoted through a culture of belonging, positive relationships, high expectations and early support, ensuring pupils feel safe, valued and ready to learn.

Regular and punctual school attendance is important. Pupils need to attend school regularly if they are to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them. Highcliffe St Mark Primary fully recognises its responsibilities to ensure pupils are in school and on time, therefore having full access to learning opportunities.

Our policy applies to all children registered at this school who are at compulsory school age and this policy is made available to all parents/carers of pupils who are registered at our school.

This policy has been written to adhere to the relevant Children Acts, Education Acts, Regulations and Guidance from the Department for Education in addition to guidance from the Local Authority.

Although parents/carers have the legal responsibility for ensuring their child's good attendance, the Headteacher and Governors at our school work together with other professionals and agencies to ensure that all pupils are encouraged and supported to develop good attendance habits. Procedures in this policy are followed to ensure this happens.

Children missing 10% or more sessions are defined by the DfE as "persistently absent". Children missing 50% or more of possible sessions are defined as "severely absent". The school monitors both persistent and severe absence and will work proactively with pupils, families and external agencies to identify barriers to attendance and provide appropriate support. Attendance difficulties are often a symptom of wider needs and the school is committed to understanding and addressing those needs wherever possible.

Children who are persistently late or absent soon fall behind with their learning. Children who are absent from school frequently develop large gaps in their learning which will impact on their progress and their ability to meet age related learning expectations. A child whose attendance drops to 90% each year will, over their time at primary school, have missed two whole terms of learning.

Aims and Objectives

This attendance policy ensures that all staff and Governors in our school are fully aware of and clear about the actions necessary to promote good attendance.

Through this Policy we aim to:

- Improve pupils' achievement by ensuring high levels of attendance and punctuality.
- Achieve a minimum of 97% attendance for all children, apart from those with chronic health issues.
- Create an ethos in which good attendance and punctuality are recognised as the norm and seen to be valued by the school.
- Raise awareness of parents, carers and pupils of the importance of uninterrupted attendance and punctuality at every stage of a child's education.
- Work in partnership with pupils, parents, staff and BCP Inclusion Team so that all pupils realise their potential, unhindered by unnecessary absence.
- Promote a positive and welcoming atmosphere in which pupils feel safe, secure, and valued, and encourage in pupils a sense of their own responsibility.

- Establish a pattern of monitoring attendance and ensure consistency in recognising achievement and dealing with difficulties.
- Recognise the key role of all staff, but especially class teachers, in promoting good attendance.
- Work collaboratively with pupils, families and external agencies to understand and remove barriers to attendance, ensuring support is provided at the earliest opportunity

We maintain and promote good attendance and punctuality through:

- Raising awareness of attendance and punctuality issues among all staff, parents and pupils.
- Ensuring that parents have an understanding of the responsibility placed on them for making sure their child attends regularly and punctually.
- Equipping children with the life skills needed to take responsibility for good school attendance and punctuality appropriate to the child's age and development.
- Maintaining effective means of communication with parents, pupils, staff and Governors on school attendance matters.
- Developing and implementing procedures for identifying, reporting and reviewing cases of poor attendance and persistent lateness.
- Supporting pupils who have been experiencing any difficulties at home or at school which are preventing good attendance.
- Developing and implementing procedures to follow up non-attendance at school.

Definitions

Authorised absence

- An absence is classified as authorised when a child has been away from school for a legitimate reason and the school has received notification from a parent or carer. For example, if a child has been unwell and the parent telephones the school to explain the absence.
- Only the school can make an absence authorised. Parents do not have this authority. Consequently, not all absences supported by parents will be classified as authorised.

Unauthorised absence

- An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of the school.
- Therefore, the absence is unauthorised if a child is away from school without good reason, even with the support of a parent.
- If the reason for a pupil's absence has not been established at the time that attendance registers are taken this must be recorded as unauthorised. Any subsequent correction to record an absence as authorised can be made once the reason is established, if parents do not provide a reason absence will remain unauthorised.

Procedures

Our school will undertake to follow the following procedures to support good attendance:

- To maintain appropriate registration processes.
- To maintain appropriate attendance data.
- To communicate clearly the attendance procedures and expectations to all staff, Governors, parents and pupils.
- To have consistent and systematic daily records which give details of any absence and lateness.
- To follow up absences and persistent lateness if parents/carers have not communicated with the school.
- To inform parents/carers what constitutes authorised and unauthorised absence.
- To strongly discourage unnecessary absence through holidays taken during term time.

- To work with parents to improve individual pupil's attendance and punctuality
- To refer to the BCP Early help service and/or BCP Inclusion Team any child whose attendance causes concern and where parents/carers have not responded to school initiatives to improve.
- To report attendance statistics to BCP and the DfE where requested.
- All staff should be aware that they must raise any attendance or punctuality concerns to the Headteacher with responsibility for monitoring attendance.

Responsibilities

All members of school staff have a responsibility for identifying trends in attendance and punctuality. The following includes a more specific list of the kinds of responsibilities which individuals might have.

Class teacher

Class teachers are responsible for:

- Keeping an overview of class and individual attendance looking particularly for either poor overall attendance, anomalies in patterns of attendance and/ or unusual explanations for attendance offered by children and their parents/ carers
- Informing the Headteacher where there are concerns and acting upon them
- Providing background information to support referrals
- Emphasising with their class the importance of good attendance and promptness
- Discussing attendance issues at consultation evenings where necessary

Headteacher

The Headteacher is responsible for:

- Overall monitoring of school attendance
- Trends in authorised and unauthorised absence
- Contacting families where concerns are raised about absence including arranging meetings to discuss attendance issues
- Monitoring individual attendance where concerns have been raised
- Making referrals to the Early Help service
- Providing reports and background information to inform discussion during team around the school meetings
- Liaising with other professionals to determine potential sources of difficulties and reasons for absence.

Governors

Governors are responsible for:

- Recognising the importance of school attendance and promoting it as part of the school's culture and ethos.
- Receiving regular attendance information and monitoring patterns and trends.
- Providing appropriate challenge and support to school leaders regarding attendance.
- Ensuring the school fulfils its statutory duties relating to attendance.
- Reviewing the effectiveness of attendance procedures and supporting continuous improvement.

Administration staff

Staff in the School Office are responsible for:

- Collating and recording registration and attendance information.
- Taking and recording messages from parents regarding absence

- Ensuring the Absence/Late Book is completed
- Contacting parents of absent children where no contact has been made.
- Recording details of children who arrive late or go home
- Keeping an overview of class and individual attendance looking particularly for either poor overall attendance, anomalies in patterns of attendance and/ or unusual explanations for attendance offered by children and their parents/ carers and reporting concerns to the Headteacher.

Parents

Parents are the key to ensuring that a child attends school.

- Do not let your child stay at home unless you are certain that they are genuinely ill. School staff are happy to check a child's temperature if you are unsure.
- Join with school in stressing to your child the importance of good attendance and punctuality at the start of the day.
- Avoid making dental or doctor's appointments during school time unless it is absolutely necessary. Under new government guidelines pupils away for such treatment are considered absent. We do require to see evidence of any appointments.
- If your child does have to have an appointment during school time, do not keep them away for the whole day – only for the time necessary for the appointment. Remember - there are separate attendance marks for morning and afternoon sessions.
- It is particularly important that children in Years 2 & 6 have full attendance, as this is when Statutory Assessment tasks / tests (SATs) take place.
- Talk to your child about their school work, to make sure they do not have worries which may stop them wanting to come to school. All staff at school are very approachable and willing to discuss any concerns you may have about your child. This includes our Inclusion Team and School Nurse.
- Make a careful note of term dates and day closures from the weekly newsletter or the website.
- Contact your child's teacher or the Inclusion Team if you have any concerns about your child's attitude to school.

Registration

Each class teacher has the responsibility for keeping an accurate record of attendance. Any pupil who is absent must be recorded at the beginning of the morning and afternoon session. The attendance register must be completed by the class teacher by 9.10am and by 1.30pm. (Attendance code / and \ for pupils who are present). These registers are then returned to the school office.

All attendance records are documented using our MIS software, Arbor, which is supported by the Local Authority. Attendance registers are legal documents and these must be kept secure and preserved for a period of three years after the date they were last used.

Lateness

- Gates close at 8.55am.
- Children arriving after 8.55am enter via the office.
- Arrival time is recorded.
- Children arriving before 9.00am are marked present.
- Children arriving from 9.00am onwards are marked late.

Any child who arrives for school later than 9:25am will be marked as having an unauthorised absence for the morning. (Attendance code U). Any child arriving after 9am must be signed in by their parent at the office.

Children who have attended a dentist or doctor's appointment and subsequently come to school later than 9.25am will have the absence recorded as a medical absence (Attendance code M).

Children who are persistently late miss a significant amount of learning, often the most important aspect, as the beginning of the day is where the teacher explains the learning and what each child is expected to achieve.

Where there have been persistent incidents of lateness parents/carers will receive a letter advising them of the concerns and the school will provide opportunities for parents/carers to seek support and advice to address these issues.

Absences

Parents/carers should contact the school on the first day of their child's absence and each subsequent day of absence. When parents/carers notify us of their child's absence it is important that they provide us with details of the reason for their absence by 10.30am.

All absences are recorded as either authorised or unauthorised absences on the computer. It is important that we receive accurate information from parents with reasons for the child's absence. This information is used to determine whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised. The Headteacher has the responsibility to determine whether absences are authorised or unauthorised.

Where we have not received reasons for a child's absence we will request details. If we do not receive details then the absence will be recorded as an unauthorised absence (Attendance Code O).

When There is Concern About Attendance

The school expects attendance of at least 97%. An audit of attendance is carried out monthly by the office staff and School Leadership Team. The school will analyse the reasons and days taken as absence and will make a decision on the next steps.

It is important for children to establish good attendance habits early on in their primary school career. It is the responsibility of the Headteacher and the Governors to support good attendance and to identify and address attendance concerns promptly. In primary school we rely upon parents to ensure their child attends school regularly and punctually and therefore where there are concerns regarding attendance parents are always informed of our concerns.

When attendance is causing concern we aim to work with parents adopting a positive, personalised approach which is supportive of both parent and child. The school recognises that absence can be linked to a range of factors including physical health, mental health, special educational needs, disability, family circumstances and wider safeguarding concerns. Attendance support will therefore focus on understanding individual circumstances and implementing reasonable and proportionate support strategies before considering enforcement action.

Specific members of staff, who know the family well will lead Team Around the Family meetings. This could include any one or combination of: the class teacher, phase leader, pastoral lead or member of the Senior Leadership Team. The following procedures are followed when attendance is a cause for concern:

- The child's class teacher will speak to the parents directly.
- A standard letter will be sent to any parent/carers whose child's attendance has dropped just below 90% and attendance is a cause for concern

- If attendance does not improve, a more targeted letter will be sent to parents/carers, clearly identifying the cause for concern and stating what is expected from parents/carers. This can include being asked for medical evidence from a GP for any absences thereafter.
- If absence does not improve, parents/carers will be invited to a meeting in school with the School Leadership Team.
- During these meetings any agreed action will be recorded. Again, this could include requesting medical evidence from the date of the meeting onwards, and if necessary, a review date specified.
- Where attendance remains a concern despite support and intervention, the school may seek advice from the BCP Inclusion Team, Early Help Service or other relevant agencies. Where appropriate, formal attendance procedures may be considered in line with local authority processes and statutory guidance.

The above procedures are reviewed during a joint audit between the Office Staff, Leadership Team and the BCP Inclusion Team on a regular basis. At any time during the academic year, school can contact the BCP Inclusion Team if there is particular concern about a child's attendance.

Where a child's attendance record does not improve over an agreed period of time then the school has a responsibility to make a referral to the Early Help Service or the Inclusion team.

If a child is returning to school after being absent for a period of time the school will work closely with parents and a plan will be put in place to support their successful return to school.

First Day Contact

Where a child is absent from school and we have not received any verbal or written communication from the parent, then we initiate a first day contact process. Office staff check all of the registers from 9.00am to 9.30am on a daily basis, to identify those pupils who are absent.

Office staff complete our First Day Response to absence

1. We call year 5 and 6 parents/carers if there is an absence
2. If we receive a phone call re absence we add names and reason for absence into an 'absence book'.
3. If a pupil is absent (years F to 4) and we haven't been provided with a reason we phone home.
4. In cases of vulnerable children the office would alert the Leadership Team if they were absent and parents would be contacted.

To avoid taking the above steps unnecessarily, we ask parents to inform us via email or phone on each day that their child is absent from school by 10.30am unless the absence is due to an infectious disease which requires a specified amount of time off from school, for example a sickness bug and parents have already informed us of this.

Illness

When children have an illness that means they will be away from school for an extended period of time, the school will do all it can to send material home, so that they can keep up with their school work.

If the absence is likely to continue for an extended period, or be a repetitive absence, the school will contact the support services to see if arrangements can be made for the child to be given some home tuition outside school.

The school will not routinely request medical evidence for short periods of illness. However, reasonable medical evidence may be requested where there is a genuine and reasonable concern about the authenticity of an illness absence, where absence is frequent or prolonged, or where information is required to help the school understand and support a pupil's medical needs. Medical evidence may include an appointment letter, prescription, healthcare professional advice or other appropriate documentation.

The school recognises that some pupils may experience attendance difficulties related to special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), medical conditions or mental health needs.

In such cases the school will work closely with families and, where appropriate, health and other professionals to understand barriers to attendance and identify suitable support strategies.

The school will consider reasonable adjustments, individual support plans and phased returns where appropriate and proportionate. Any support will be reviewed regularly to ensure it remains effective in helping the pupil access education successfully.

Child Missing Education

The Government has placed a duty on local authorities to make arrangements to establish (as far as it is possible to do so) the identities of children in their area who are of compulsory school age and not receiving a suitable education.

Children Missing in Education (CME) refers to all children of compulsory school age who are neither on a school roll nor being educated other than at school or who have been out of any educational provision for a substantial period of time.

- When children stop attending school and the school has been unable to contact the parents of these children and they are believed to have left the area without parents notifying the school: The school will try to make telephone contact.
- The school will write to the known home address.
The school will make informal enquiries to relations or friends of the child and refer to the Locality Social Worker or inclusion team.
- If the child has been missing, with no contact from parents or carers and no information as to where the child is for 10 days, a Child Missing Education form will be completed and sent to BCP.
- If the school has any Child Protection concerns about the child it will follow the Child Protection Procedures detailed in the school's Child Protection Policy and contact social care immediately.

The school will inform the local authority of any pupil who is going to be deleted from the admission register where they:

- Have been taken out of school by their parents and are being educated outside the school system e.g. Home education.
- Have ceased to attend the school and no longer live within reasonable distance of the school at which they are registered.
- Have been taken out of school and parents have given no indication of their new school place
- Have been permanently excluded.
- Have been certified by the school medical officer as unlikely to be in a fit state of health to attend school before ceasing to be of compulsory school age.

Parental Request for Absence from School for Holiday or Other Circumstances

With effect from September 2013 the government abolished the right of Headteachers to authorise absence specifically for holidays of up to 10 days per year if special circumstances exist. Instead, Headteachers will only be allowed to grant leave of absence for any reason if they are satisfied exceptional circumstances exist.

No leave of absence will be granted during term time, except in exceptional circumstances. For this reason, should you wish to take your child out of school for any leave of absence (holidays or otherwise) requests will not be routinely granted. It is essential that any requests for leave of absence are made in writing. Any absence which has not been authorised by the school will be recorded as 'unauthorised'.

The Headteacher will consider each request on its merits but will usually only agree to leave in **exceptional and unavoidable circumstances**.

Exceptional means rare, significant and short. **Unavoidable** means that the event could not reasonably be scheduled at another time.

The most important considerations are:

- Whether the leave of absence could be taken during the 13 weeks of normal school holidays.
- Whether due consideration has been given to the timing of the leave of absence, e.g. at the start of a new term.
- No authorised absence will be given during Year6's SATs periods; this will include all siblings within the family.

Leave of absence during term time will be authorised for up to 5 days in one rolling 12- month period for any child who has a parent living with them, who is in the Armed Forces and has returned from overseas duty or 'held at readiness to move'. Evidence of the overseas duty or 'held at readiness to move' may be requested.

Leave of absence during term time to attend a wedding or funeral will only be authorised if a close family member is getting married and will be for a maximum of 3 days. 3 days allows for the day of the event and a day either side for travel. A religious requirement would also be considered in the request for leave of absence. We require a brief explanation of this on the leave of absence request form. Close family member is defined as a parent, grandparent or sibling of the child.

It is important that, unless in exceptional circumstances, parents submit any request for absence in writing at least 3 weeks in advance, if a request is for 5 days or more days then the school may contact parents to discuss their request with them.

Penalty Notices

The National Framework for Penalty Notices is published in statutory guidance 'Working together to improve school attendance'. From August 2024, the statutory procedure for responding to poor attendance and requests for leave during term time changed. This policy reflects those changes.

When may a Penalty Notice for absence be appropriate? When the national threshold has been met: when a school becomes aware that the national threshold has been met, they must consider whether a Penalty Notice can and should be issued or not. The national threshold has been met when a pupil has been recorded as absent for 10 sessions (usually equivalent to 5 school days) within 10 school weeks, with one of, or a combination of the following codes:

- code G (the pupil is absent without leave for the purpose of a holiday),
- code N (the circumstances of the pupil's absence have not yet been established),
- code O (none of the other rows of Table 3 in regulation 10(3) of the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 applies), and
- code U (the pupil attended after the taking of the register ended but before the end of the session, where no other code applies)

The National Framework for Penalty Notices sets out that a maximum of 2 Penalty Notices per child, per parent can be issued within **a rolling 3-year period**. If the national threshold is met for a third time (or subsequent times) within 3 years, another tool should be used. This might include prosecution or one of the other attendance legal interventions available to the Local Authority. For the purpose of the escalation process, previous Penalty Notices include those not paid (including where prosecution was taken forward if the parent pleaded or was found guilty) but not those which were withdrawn.

Payment of Penalty Notices: Fines per parent are capped to two fines within any three-year period. Once this limit has been reached, other action like a parenting order or prosecution will be considered. The first fine is £80 if paid within 21 days, or £160 if paid within 28 days. If this is a second fine for the same child within any three-year period, this will be charged at the higher rate of £160. Parents should note that penalty notices are per parent and per child.

More information on BCP Penalty Notices can be found

<https://www.bcpCouncil.gov.uk/documents/schools-and-learning/bournemouth-christchurch-poole-penalty-notice-code-of-conduct-for-failure-to-ensure-regular-attendance-at-school-of-a-registered-pupil.pdf>

Record Keeping to Aid Response to Absence

A record is kept of all absences and the reasons for absence.

A record is kept of all contact, including letters and contracts with parents/carers over absence.

VERSION	DATE	REVIEWER	COMMENT
1	October 2023	CB	First published
2	January 2024	CB	Changes made to reflect recommendations from BCP attendance audit including greater clarity around fining parents, register closure extension of time and allowing 3 days authorised leave for attending a family event.
3	August 2024	CB	Changes to penalty notice section to reflect new statutory procedures from DfE – Governors heard the proposed changes in June FGB meeting – they will see the policy with the changes in September 2024. Policy changed to reflect statutory duty for schools to publish amended attendance policy by 19 th August 2024.
4	August 2025	CB	Clarified the DfE definition of persistent absenteeism on p2. Added wording about positive support when attendance is a cause for concern on p6.
5	Sept 2026	CB	Updated policy to reflect latest DfE attendance guidance. Added references to severe absence, attendance barriers, SEND/mental health support and governor oversight. Clarified use of medical evidence and replaced draft wording in attendance concern procedures.