



# Hawthorn Community Primary School

## School Attendance A Guide for Parents and Carers

### **Regular school attendance means:**

- Attending school every day and arriving at school on time.

This leaflet is for you as parent/carer and explains your legal duty regarding your child's attendance at school and best practice to help you support your child to develop good habits which will stand them in good stead as they grow up. Regular school attendance is crucial to ensure your child's success. Your child deserves the best education possible.

### **Why is good attendance important?**

- Every lesson really does count for your child. Children can quickly fall behind if even one day is missed.
- Catching up even a little lost time from school can be really difficult, both academically and socially.
- Good attendance is linked to achievement, better relationships with other children and better overall behaviour in school.
- Good attendance is not just about what happens in school – absence when your child is young can limit their future opportunities, and set up bad habits for work and life.
- Statistics show that good attendance helps reduce the risk of your child becoming a victim of crime or abuse.

## How can we help you?

- We work together with the Local Authority to support you if absence falls below a certain level, to ensure your child's attendance at school increases so that you avoid legal implications.
- We record and monitor all absences and lateness and contact you if either of these are causing concern.
- We will call you in the morning if your child is absent and we have not had an explanation, this ensures your children are always safe.
- We ask you to avoid taking your children on holiday during term time as it has serious impact on their education and can result in a fine for you.

## The Legalities of Term Time Absence

- All absences must be recorded.
- All absences are either authorised or unauthorised.

Examples of authorised absence:

1. Genuine illness
2. Days of religious observance specified in advance
3. Exceptional family circumstances eg bereavement
4. Approved sporting activity

Examples of unauthorised absence:

1. Frequent absence due to minor ailments
  2. Shopping during school hours
  3. Looking after siblings of sick parents or carers
  4. Birthdays
  5. Day trips
  6. Holidays
  7. Arriving late for school after the close of register
- Absences for family holidays cannot be authorised. However, if you do decide to take a family holiday during term time please complete a leave of absence form from the office to inform us of the absence.
  - Other unauthorised absences include shopping trips, days off for a birthday treat or visits to friends. All unauthorised absences will remain on the child's absence record. There are sometimes unforeseen circumstances affecting families which necessitate absence from school. Please come and talk to us if you are unsure about whether an absence can be authorised and we will do our best to help.
  - Considering the above facts it is vital that as parents you:
    1. Always notify us in the morning each day of absence by phoning the school.
    2. Ensure punctuality and stress it to your child. School starts each day at 8.50am.

- If we do not hear from you about your child's absence and we are unable to contact you we may perform a home visit.
- Good attendance helps reduce the risk of your child being drawn into anti-social behaviour as they get older.
- Good attendance supports your child to make the most of their achievements.
- If you have trouble getting your child into school, please talk to your child's teacher – they will do their best to help.
- Additional support is available in school, through Miss Amy Brown, our Family Support Worker.

### **How can you help your child?**

- If your child is genuinely poorly or will be coming in late for some reason please contact school on the morning of the absence to let us know what is wrong. We have a 24-hour absence line – 01536 512204 or text 07807 941646, where you can leave your child's name, class, reason for absence and expected day of return.
- Don't keep your child off school for minor ailments – we would rather you brought them in and 'gave school a go'. We will always call you if your child is too unwell to be at school.
- Avoid making routine medical or dental appointments during the school day. Please make them after school or in the holidays wherever possible.
- Ensure your child is fully prepared for school each day – organise your child's school uniform, equipment, homework, kit and packed lunch the night before.
- Ensure your child attends school every day and arrives on time, in order to keep up with school work and the important social relationships they are developing.
- Show your child that you think school is very important and talk to them about how much difference a good education can make to their lives.
- Praise your child's achievements.
- Get them into good habits early on e.g. doing their homework and getting their school kit ready the night before. Recognise that children can get into bad habits from an early age and that these are hard to break later.
- Attend any meetings in school to which you are invited.
- Let the school know as soon as there are any problems or changes.
- Do not keep your child at home if your child is worried or has a problem. The best way to support your child is to ask for a meeting in school to explain any difficulties and to address problems. The more your child is absent from school, the harder it is for them to return.
- If you receive a letter regarding your child's absence, do not ignore it! Failure to engage and cooperate could have serious legal consequences.

## **Absences Including Term Time Holidays**

Changes in guidance issued to schools from the Department of Education meant that from September 1<sup>st</sup> 2013 attendance guidelines tightened up and parents who have failed to ensure their child's regular attendance at school have been referred to the County Council's Education Entitlement Team, who have fined parents £60 per day for non-attendance at school. This has included persistent absence of any kind including time taken off for holidays.

This guidance was tightened up further from 1<sup>st</sup> September 2016 so that any child who takes 5 or more days for unauthorised reasons (including holidays) is now referred on, and you could be fined £60 per day per adult per child for each day that is unauthorised. We understand that it can be difficult for some families to take holidays within school holiday time but we are required by law to follow this guidance. The Government wishes to see all schools and pupils achieve attendance rates that are 95% or higher.

### **How is attendance calculated?**

#### **The school has set procedures that we will follow if we have concerns about your child's absence.**

- Each term attendance figures are monitored for each pupil. If your child's attendance falls below 95% in that term then you will receive a letter outlining that we are concerned about their attendance.
- In an average 13 week term, possible attendance is 130 sessions. 95% means a child will be present for 123.5 or more of these sessions. This means if your child is absent for more than 3 whole days during this period then their attendance will fall below 95%.
- The attendance is a cumulative figure throughout the year so if attendance is particularly low it may take a few terms to pick up to a level that is above 95% again. Therefore you may receive a letter the following term until it does improve to above 95%.
- Over the year to maintain a figure above 95% your child needs to attend 361 or more out of 380 sessions. This means no more than 9 days missed throughout the year.
- If your child's attendance falls below 90% then you will be put on a monitoring schedule with our Family Support Worker. This will involve a Parent Contract meeting and then monitoring for a period of at least 4 weeks where attendance needs to be significantly improved.
- After a period of monitoring if your child's attendance still does not improve then we will refer your case to the Local Authority.
- As a last resort legal procedures may be instigated.