

ATTENDANCE POLICY



Introduction and Legal context

Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 states that 'the parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him / her to receive efficient full time education suitable:

- a. to age, ability and aptitude and
- b. to any special educational needs he/ she may have

Either by regular attendance at school or otherwise'

The Law relating to safeguarding

Section 175 of the Education Act 2002 places a duty on local authorities and governing bodies to have regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State with regard to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and students under the age of 18.

This is a successful school and your child plays their part in making it so. We aim for an environment which enables and encourages all members of the community to reach out for excellence. For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and your child should be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

It is very important therefore that you make sure that your child attends regularly and this Policy sets out how together we will achieve this.

Scope

This policy applies to all students and their parents and relates to all matters to do with school attendance. It covers the work of the school and defines the responsibilities of all those working in school to promote good **attendance**. **It should be read in conjunction with the school's safeguarding policy.**

Aims

This policy aims to answer the question: why regular attendance is so important? It also aims to provide guidance to parents, staff and Governors about what they need to do to promote good attendance.

Learning: **Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any pupil's absence disrupts teaching routines so may affect the learning of others in the same class.**

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Responsibilities

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance and promoting regular attendance is **everybody's** responsibility - parents, pupils and all members of school staff.

To help us all to focus on this the school will:

- Give parents details on attendance in our regular Home – School Bulletin.
- Not authorise term time holidays unless in exceptional circumstances (see further guidance later on).
- **Inform parents when a child is absent and the absence hasn't been explained or when there is an attendance concern** (see the flow chart on page 4).
- Report to parents at least half-termly on how your child is performing in school, what their attendance and punctuality rate is and how this relates to their attainments.
- Celebrate good attendance by displaying individual and class achievements.
- Reward good or improving attendance through class competitions, certificates and events.
- Run promotional events when parents, pupils and staff can work together on.
- Raising attendance levels across the school.

Ensuring a child's regular attendance at school is the parent's legal responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution. More details on the steps that are to be taken are described below.

Safeguarding: Your child may be at risk of harm if they do not attend school regularly. Safeguarding **the interests of each child is everyone's responsibility and within the context of this school, promoting the welfare and life opportunities for your child encompasses:-**

Attendance
Behaviour Management
Health and Safety
Access to the Curriculum
Anti- bullying

Failing to attend this school on a regular basis will be considered as a safeguarding matter.

Absence Procedures

If your child is absent you must:

- Contact us as soon as possible on the first day of absence;

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- Provide medical evidence for illness-related absences.
- Or, you can call into school and report to reception, who will arrange for a member of staff to speak with you.

Medical appointments

All medical appointments should be arranged for outside school time, whenever possible.

In the event that appointments do fall within school time evidence will need to be provided, for example appointment cards or letters.

Students will not be signed out of the school building if evidence is not provided, and you may receive a phone call to collect your child if you have not informed us of appointments in writing. This is a safeguarding issue if students are leaving the building without an evidenced reason.

Students are expected to be in school before and after their appointment, failure to do so will result in an unauthorised absence for the session missed.

A whole day absence will not be authorised for appointments attended either in the morning or in the afternoon.

Telephone numbers

There are times when we need to contact parents about lots of things, including absence, so we need to have your contact numbers at all times. So help us to help you and your child by making sure we always have an up to date number – **if we don't then something important may be missed. There will be** regular checks on telephone numbers throughout the year.

Portsmouth School Attendance Team

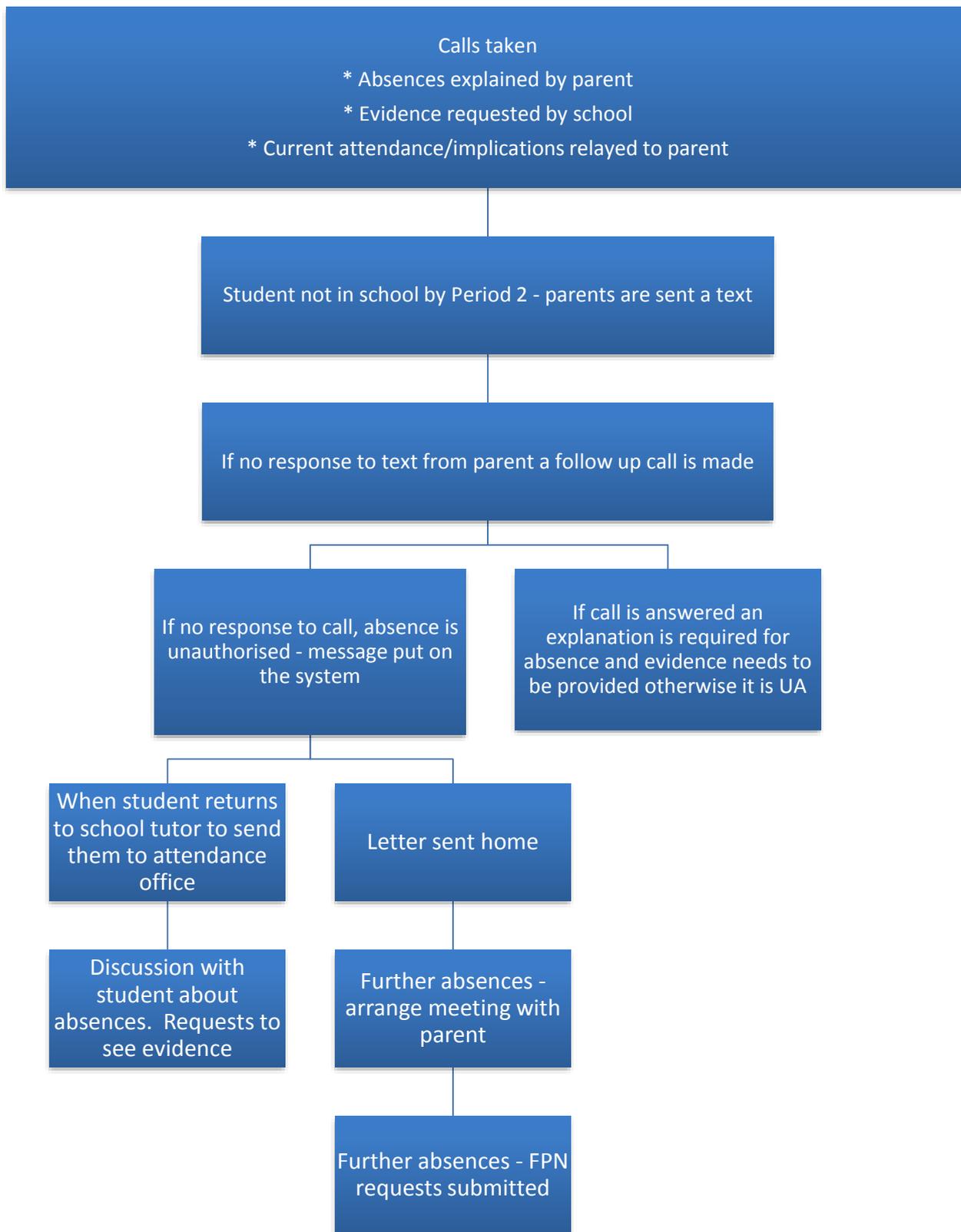
Parents are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any problems together. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, the school may refer the child to the Portsmouth School Attendance Team. They will also try to resolve the situation by agreement but, **if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed and** unauthorised absences persist, these Officers can use sanctions such as Penalty Notices or prosecutions in the Magistrates Court. Full details of the options open to enforce attendance at school are available from the school.

Alternatively, parents may wish to contact the SAT themselves to ask for help or information. They are independent of the school and will give impartial advice. Their telephone number is available from the school office.

Absence referrals

The school will refer every student with 5 days/10 sessions absence in any term to Portsmouth School Attendance Team and legal proceedings may be pursued.

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Lateness

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If your child misses the start of the day they can miss work and do not spend time with their class teacher getting vital information and news for the day. Late arriving pupils also disrupt lessons, this can be embarrassing for the child and can also encourage absence.

How we manage lateness

The school day starts at 8.30 am and we expect your child to be in class at that time.

Registers are marked by 8.40 am.

At 9.00 am the registers will be closed. In accordance with the Regulations, if your child arrives after that time they will receive a mark that shows them to be on site, but this will not count as a present mark and it will mean they have an unauthorised absence. This may mean that you could face the possibility of a Penalty Notice if the problem persists.

If your child has a persistent late record you will be asked to meet with the Attendance Team to resolve the problem, but you can approach us at any time if you are having problems getting your child to school on time.

Detentions

Students must be in their first lesson by 8.30 am, if they are late they will be expected to attend a 10 minute after school sanction.

Holidays in Term Time

Taking holidays in term **time will affect your child's schooling as much as any other absence and we expect parents to help us by not to take children away in school time.**

Remember that any savings you think you may make by taking a holiday in school time are offset by the cost to **your child's education.**

There is no automatic entitlement in law to time off in school time to go on holiday, this will only be authorised under exceptional circumstances.

All applications for leave must be made in advance. In line with recommendations the school will NOT authorise any leave of absence in term time unless:

1. There is an issue arising from bereavement of an immediate member of the family
2. You are a member of the armed forces/police service that is unable to be flexible with holidays
3. Your company has a detailed written and available policy that states that holidays are decided by the company and not the employees.

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The final decision to authorise any absence is made by the Headteacher.

Any period of leave taken without the agreement of the school, or in excess of that agreed, will be classed as unauthorised and may attract sanctions such as a Penalty Notice.

School Targets, Projects and Special Initiatives

The school has targets to improve attendance and your child has an important part to play in meeting these targets.

Targets for the school and for classes are displayed in the school and you should take time to study them.

The minimum level of attendance for this school is 95% attendance and we will keep you updated **regularly about progress to this level and how your child's attendance compares.**

Our target is to achieve better than this however because we know that good attendance is the key to successful schooling and we believe our pupils can be amongst the best in the city.

Through the school year we monitor absences and punctuality to show us where improvements need to be made.

Information on any projects or initiatives that will focus on these areas will be provided in our Home - School bulletin and we ask for your full support.

Those people responsible for attendance matters in this school are:

Mr P Newton, Deputy Head Student Services
Mrs E Morris, Lead Link Attendance
Mrs L House, Education Welfare Officer
Mrs T Thomas, Attendance Officer
Mrs C Scott, Attendance Support Officer

Summary

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents and to promote attendance. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend.

All school staff are committed to working with parents and pupils as the best way to ensure as high a **level of attendance as possible and that every child's welfare and life opportunities are promoted.** It should be noted that this policy follows the city wide agreed procedures.

Monitoring and evaluation

This policy will be monitored by the lead Governors for attendance on behalf of the Governing body. Attendance data will be provided to the full governing body at least termly for scrutiny.

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Understanding types of absence

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by the parents), as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required, preferably in writing.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason like illness, medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable cause.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been given. This type of absence can lead to King Richard School using sanctions and/or legal proceedings. This includes:

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily
- truancy before or during the school day
- absences which have never been properly explained
- children who arrive at school too late to get a mark
- shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- day trips and holidays in term time which have not been agreed.

Whilst any child may be off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents and the child. If your child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and usually make things worse.

Persistent Absenteeism (PA)

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we need parent's fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

We monitor all absence thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority and you will be informed of this immediately.

PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully through our pastoral system and we also combine this with academic mentoring where absence affects attainment.

All our PA pupils and their parents are subject to an Action Plan and the plan may include: allocation of additional support through a, use of mentor time, individual incentive programmes and participation in group activities around raising attendance. All PA cases are also automatically made known to the Portsmouth School Attendance Team.

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