

Hunsdon JMI School

ATTENDANCE POLICY

A safeguarding policy

Approved February 2022
Review February 2024

Aims

Hunsdon JMI School aims to maximise attendance rates (above 96% for every pupil) in order to ensure that all students are able to take the fullest advantage of the learning experiences available to them and make good academic progress.

Statutory Framework

Under Section 199 of the 1993 Education Act, a pupil is required to attend regularly at the school where he/she is a registered pupil.

The Department for Education therefore expects all schools to reduce pupil absence, particularly unauthorised and persistent absence. Absence will be monitored closely via the pupil level school census which is submitted every year.

The school is obliged by law to differentiate between authorised and unauthorised absence. Only if the school is satisfied as to the validity of the explanation offered by the letter/message will the absence be authorised. (see below).

A child may be considered at risk of harm if they do not attend school regularly. Poor attendance may be viewed as a safeguarding matter (see Child Protection policy).

Responsibilities

Maintaining good punctual attendance at Hunsdon JMI School is the responsibility of everyone in the school community – pupils, parents and staff. The Governors take a particularly strong view about poor attendance and lateness.

Parents:

- are legally responsible for ensuring their child's regular and punctual attendance;
- are expected to ensure that their child attends school regularly, punctually, properly dressed and equipped and in a fit condition to learn
- will inform school on the first day of absence, of the reason for their child's absence from school by 8.55am (absence line 01279 842644 option 1; admin@hunsdon.herts.sch.uk)
- will avoid arranging family holidays during term time, including those that are arranged, even as a surprise, by relatives or friends.
- will maintain regular communication with school staff where necessary
- will ensure that school are informed of any changes of contact details

School:

- will provide a safe learning environment
- will ensure that records of attendance are maintained according to Government legislation and guidance on a daily basis
- will encourage good attendance and will investigate all unexplained and unjustified absence
- staff will set a good example in matters of attendance and punctuality will follow up all instances of poor attendance and punctuality

- will keep parents informed of their child's attendance/punctuality record
- will work closely with parents should attendance or punctuality give cause for concern

Entering the classroom and Registration

We start the school day at 9.00am with the children entering the school via the playground.

Lateness

Pupils who are late must enter the school through the main school entrance. Admin staff will register the child and ensure they are assigned the appropriate lunch. It will be the adult's responsibility to explain the reasons for the child not arriving on time, e.g., the car broke down. They will receive a Late mark in the register. If a pupil arrives later than **9.30am** it will be considered an unauthorised absence unless there are reasonable circumstances.

Repeated absence at the beginning of a school session can amount to failure to attend regularly for the purpose of section 199 of the 1993 Education Act.

Following up Lateness

- Admin staff will have responsibility for collating lists of pupils arriving late
- Lateness is monitored daily and reviewed regularly
- If a child has regular lateness (e.g. more than 3 late arrivals in a week or several days on consecutive weeks) parents will be contacted via a phone call, email or letter.
- If punctuality does not improve, a meeting with a member of the Head Teacher will be arranged to explore how the parents will improve the situation.
- On the rare occasion that punctuality still does not improve, parents will be invited to a meeting with the attendance panel.
- If after extensive support from the school the parents do not ensure that punctuality is at an acceptable standard, a referral will be made to the local authority attendance officer.

Authorised/Unauthorised Absence

Parents must provide an explanation for **all** absences from school. A member of the senior leadership team will decide whether to accept the reason given and to authorise the absence.

If a child needs to be absent from school parents/carers will need to complete a *Leave of Absence Application* form (See Appendix 1). If a request has been declined it is expected that the child should be in school. Unauthorised absences could lead to a penalty notice.

Examples of **authorised** absences:

- The pupil is absent with leave as agreed by the Senior Leadership team
- The pupil was ill and the Head teacher is satisfied with the reasons for absence and the school have not asked for proof of absence to be provided
- There is a family bereavement.

- The pupil is attending an approved off-site activity or is receiving special off-site tuition.
- The pupil is participating in an approved public performance or sporting activity.
- The pupil has a music/dance exam.
- Unavoidable hospital/orthodontic appointments when a copy of the appointment is provided in advance.
- Days of religious observance

Absence will be **unauthorised** if:

- No explanation is forthcoming
- The school was not provided with suitable notice
- The school is dissatisfied with the explanation
- The pupil is absent for reasons that are not considered exceptional
- Due to persistent absence, the Attendance Officer has instructed the school not to authorise any more absence

Procedures for following up absence

- Hunsdon JMI School follows up all absences. Pupils absent from school are reviewed by the senior leadership team daily.
- Parents are expected to inform the school of an absence on the day by 8:55am.
- If a pupil is absent and the school has not been notified, the office will contact the parents.
- If the school has been unable to contact a parent/carer a letter providing the parent/carer with an opportunity to explain the absence will be sent home on the day of the pupil's return. This letter must be returned to school immediately otherwise the child's absence will be unauthorised. **Parents/carers must be contactable at all times in case of emergencies.**
- The parents of any pupils whose attendance is below 96% will receive a letter from the school informing them that their child's attendance is below the school and national expectation.
- If the attendance does not improve, the children and their parents will be invited to attend a meeting at school to explore how the parents plan to improve the situation.
- If the pupil's attendance does not improve, the parents may be informed that all future absence will require medical evidence if it is to be authorised.
- On the rare occasion that attendance still does not improve, parents will be invited to a meeting with the attendance officer.
- If after extensive support from the school the parents do not ensure that punctuality is at an acceptable standard, a referral will be made to the local authority attendance officer.
- Parents will be issued a fine warning should their child accumulate unauthorised attendance (Appendix A) (see Fines section)

Holidays

The Department for Education directs that holidays during term time will not be authorised unless the circumstances are considered exceptional. For example, parents who work in the armed services. Retrospective holiday requests will not be authorised. Parents who take their children out of school for an unauthorised holiday may be issued a penalty notice.

Leaving and returning to School during School Day

Parents are requested not to collect their child prior to the end of the school day unless there are exceptional circumstances. Parents/carers must notify the school of any expected absence as soon as possible. This should be done through a leave of absence application. If the absence is for a specialist medical appointment, a medical appointment card should be included to support authorisation. Please make routine medical and dental appointments outside of school hours. Children must be signed in or out of the school via the main reception.

Working with the Attendance Improvement Officer (AIO)

Hunsdon JMI School works in partnership with the allocated AIO to improve attendance for individual pupils and the whole school. The AIO meets regularly with the school. Hunsdon JMI School works with individual pupils and their parents to improve poor attendance. When attendance does not improve sufficiently, and after discussion with the AIO the school will make a referral to Children, Schools and Families for the AIO to work with the family on a formal basis.

Strategies for promoting Attendance

- The school's ethos and culture center on the children and learning. Children are made to feel welcome and valued. A sense of belonging is explicitly developed as a whole school and individual classes.
- Have a designated attendance lead in the senior leadership team with clearly assigned responsibilities, to work alongside the attendance officer to implement the attendance policy; monitor and analyse data and work with families
- An engaging and relevant curriculum is designed to ensure that learning tasks are matched to pupils' needs and that children enjoy their learning so they look forward to coming to school.
- The children are taught how to be effective learners who understand the importance of attending regularly and being ready to learn.
- The Head Teacher and the attendance lead/officer meet regularly with parents to try to work together to improve attendance and punctuality
- Attendance is monitored daily and analysed at least monthly in order to help identify patterns, set targets, correlate attendance with achievement and support and inform policy and practice.
- Parents are regularly reminded (website, social media, assemblies, parents' evenings, etc) of the importance of good attendance.
- Pupils who are absent through sickness for any extended period of time will (when appropriate) have work sent home to them and will be re-integrated back into school upon their return.

- The Head teacher reports to the school's governing body on attendance matters termly.

Registers

Registration is conducted by the class practitioner every morning and afternoon. This is recorded electronically and is part of the school's information system: SIMS. This is monitored every day and is updated as appropriate. It therefore is always current and can be used to provide reports to external partners monitoring attendance.

Registers are legal documents – should the parents of a persistent non-attender be prosecuted by the LEA under Section 199 of the 1993 Education Act, then the register would be used in the court action.

It is imperative that children are constantly reminded that the school takes attendance very seriously.

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EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCE REQUEST

Parents have the legal responsibility to ensure that their child attends school and children should not be absent from school to go on a family holiday. Parents do not have the right to take their child out of school for such a holiday. Any leave in term time can only be given in exceptional circumstances. You are strongly advised not to book a holiday before discussing your exceptional circumstance with the Headteacher. If your child is absent from school because of a holiday which has not been agreed, this will be classified as an unauthorised absence.

I request permission for my child.....

To be absent from school from.....to.....

Number of days absent from school.....

Destination:

Purpose of request; the exceptional circumstance:

Parent's signature.....Date.....

Please give reasons for absence here...