



Bury St Edmunds Academy Trust Horringer Court Middle School

Attendance Policy

Introduction

At Horringer Court Middle School we recognise that good attendance is central to raising standards and pupil attainment and therefore seek to ensure that all of its pupils receive a full-time education which maximises opportunities for learning to enable each pupil to realise his/her true potential.

Regular attendance at school is essential to ensure uninterrupted progress and to enable children to extend their potential. The school seeks to work actively with parents/carers to support them in meeting their attendance obligations and responsibilities and ensure good attendance is maintained. Attendance for all children is regularly monitored to ensure that any problems, which may impede full attendance, are acted on as quickly as possible. The school will challenge the attitude of those pupils and parents/carers who give low priority to attendance and punctuality. (The term 'parent' will also refer to 'carers' throughout the policy from now on.)

Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. A pupil's late arrival disrupts teaching routines and so may affect the learning of others in the same class. Therefore we expect that all pupils will:

- Attend school regularly.
- Arrive on time and be appropriately prepared for the day.

WHOLE SCHOOL POLICY FOR SCHOOL ATTENDANCE – AIMS

- To improve the overall attendance of pupils at school.
- To make attendance and punctuality a priority for all those associated with the school including pupils, parents, teachers and governors.
- To provide support, advice and guidance about attendance and punctuality to parents and pupils.
- To develop a systematic approach to gathering and analysing attendance related data.
- To further develop positive and consistent communication about attendance and punctuality between home and school.
- To promote effective partnerships with other services and agencies, including the EWO.
- To recognise the needs of the individual pupil when planning reintegration following significant periods of absence.

- To deal with extenuating circumstances appropriately showing sensitivity and understanding.

Parental Responsibility

Ensuring a child's regular attendance at school is a parental responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution. The school expects that parents will:

- Inform a member of staff of any matters that may affect their child's attendance, on the first day of absence by 9:00 a.m.
- Endeavour to keep health appointments to a minimum of time within school hours.
- To holiday outside of school terms.
- Seek permission from the school for any leave of absence.

Promoting Regular Attendance

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility - parents, pupils and all members of school staff. We encourage attendance by:

- Consistent, clear communication with parents and pupils about the importance of regular, prompt, attendance.
- Discussing attendance with parents at consultation evenings, with the current percentage attendance being reported.
- Reporting to parents on their child's attendance within the annual school report.
- Celebrating individual attendance each term – awards for 100% attendance to individual pupils and a certificate to each House for the class which has the highest attendance figure every term.

School Responsibility

The Headteacher initially holds responsibility for attendance matters, supported by the Heads of House, Class Tutors and Administration Officer. Attendance is recorded and data stored and analysed using the SIMS Attendance module. It is a statutory duty for class tutors to call and maintain accurate registers; these are legal documents. Class tutors are legally responsible for marking their register twice per day.

Non-attendance is an important issue that is treated seriously. Consideration is given to all factors affecting attendance before deciding what intervention strategies to apply. In every case, early intervention is essential to prevent the problem from worsening. Where a pattern of non-attendance is emerging the parent/carer is invited to visit school to work with school staff to help resolve the difficulties. Where there is no response to school intervention and where the absence or pattern of absence has persisted without explanation the school will refer to the Education Welfare Service. The EWO liaises with the school regarding absences following contact with the parents.

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. 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 causes. 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 sanctions and/or legal proceedings. This includes:

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily
- Absences which have never been properly explained
- Children who arrive at school too late to get a mark
- Shopping, looking after other children, birthdays or other family celebrations.
- Day trips and holidays in term time.

Absence Procedures

When a child is unwell, parents should contact the school before 9.00am on the first day of absence informing the school of the reason for absence. Calls from parents regarding absence are logged. After this time registers are updated accordingly.

If your child is absent:

- Contact us as soon as possible on the first day of absence before 9.00am. The school has an answer phone available to leave a message if nobody is available to take the call
- Or call into school and report to reception.

If your child is absent we will:

- Make contact, if we have not heard from you, to ascertain the reason for absence;
- Invite you in to discuss the situation if absences persist;
- Refer the matter to the Education Welfare Officer if attendance does not improve

If a child is persistently absent due to medical reasons and their attendance falls below 95%, the school may ask to see evidence of the child's attendance at the doctors in order to authorise the absence. Medical evidence will also be requested before authorisation of absence of more than three days due to illness or medical appointments.

Requests for Leave of Absence during term time

Periods of absence during term time are strongly discouraged due to the inevitable disruption caused to learning. The school's policy is to authorise absence only in exceptional circumstances and only for pupils whose attendance in the previous 12 months is above 94%.

Exceptional circumstances include

- Illness or medical appointments which cannot be made outside school hours
- Religious observance
- Compassionate leave, bereavement
- School visits or exams
- Sporting events which have a significant contribution to the child's life

When an application is made for authorised absence during term time, the Headteacher gives consideration to:

- The nature of the parent's wishes
- The timing of the proposed absence
- The attendance pattern in the present and previous academic years
- The current attendance percentage
- The child's progress

All applications for leave must be made at least 2 weeks in advance. Leave of absence request forms can be obtained from the office or downloaded from the school website. The Headteacher will review applications made and in making a decision the Headteacher will consider the circumstances of each application individually, including any previous pattern of leave in term time. The Headteacher has full authority to grant or deny a request based upon previous attendance and potential impact on the child's attainment

We will not agree leave of absence from school during term time under the following circumstances:

- When a pupil is just starting the school. This is very important as your child needs to settle into their new environment as quickly as possible.
- Immediately before and during statutory assessment periods (SATS) for year 6 pupils.
- When a pupil's attendance record already includes any level of unauthorised absence.
- Where a pupil's attendance rate is already below 95% or will fall to, or below that level, as a result of taking leave of absence.
- When the time off is for a holiday.

As of September 2014 new Government legislation states that permission for holidays during term time can no longer be granted. The only exception to this is for families with parents who serve in the Armed Forces.

Any period of leave taken without the agreement of the school, or in excess of that agreed, will be classed as unauthorised and will be subject to sanctions such as a Penalty Notice Fine. Fixed Penalty Notices are issued per parent per child.

Lateness

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If a child misses the start of the day they can miss work as well as vital information and news for the day. Late arriving pupils also disrupt lessons, can be embarrassing for the child and can also encourage absence. Good time keeping is a vital life skill which will help our children as they progress through their school life and out into the wider world.

The school day starts at **8.30am** and we expect our children to be in their classroom before this time. (The doors to each area will be opened at 8.20am). At **8.35am** the registers will be closed, after this time they will need to register at the office. In accordance with the Regulations, if your child arrives after that time they will receive a mark that shows them to be on site. If your child has a persistent late record you will be asked to meet with a member of staff to resolve the problem, but you can approach us at any time if you are having problems getting your child to school on time.

Fixed Penalty Notices

Missing school seriously affects children's longer-term life opportunities. Statistics show a direct link between attendance and attainment. Penalty Notices come under the Education Act 1996 as amended by Section 23 of the Anti Social Behaviour Act 2003.

Penalty Notices are issued to **each** parent or carer of the pupil; this means both the mother and father, where both parents reside with the child. Depending on the circumstances parents may be summonsed to court and prosecuted under Section 444 of the Education Act 1966 for failing to ensure regular school attendance of their child.

A Penalty Notice can be given when a pupil has missed 20 half day sessions from school within a 10 school week period and these absences are unauthorised OR when a pupil has missed 10 half day sessions from school within a 10 school week period and the absences are unauthorised.



Bury St Edmunds Academy Trust Horringer Court Middle School

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Request for Absence From School

Name of Pupil: Tutor Group:

Period of absence requested (inclusive dates):

Number of school days absent:

Reason for absence:

Please be aware that we are unable to authorise any absence from school except in exceptional circumstances and that you should refer to the school's Attendance Policy which outlines the Implementation of Penalty Notices to tackle non-school attendance.

Please give the names of any siblings who attend another school who will also be affected by this request:

Name: School:

Name: School:

Any absence that has not been authorised by the Headteacher will be marked in the register as 'Unauthorised'.

In cases where natural parents have joint custody, but are no longer living together, both signatures must be provided to show you are in full agreement of this request.

Name: Name:

Signature: Signature:

Relationship to the pupil: Relationship to the pupil:

Horringer Court Middle School Request for Absence from School

Name of Pupil:.....is/is not* authorised to be absent
from school fromto

*Reason request has not been authorised:

Mrs T Johnson: Date:
Headteacher