

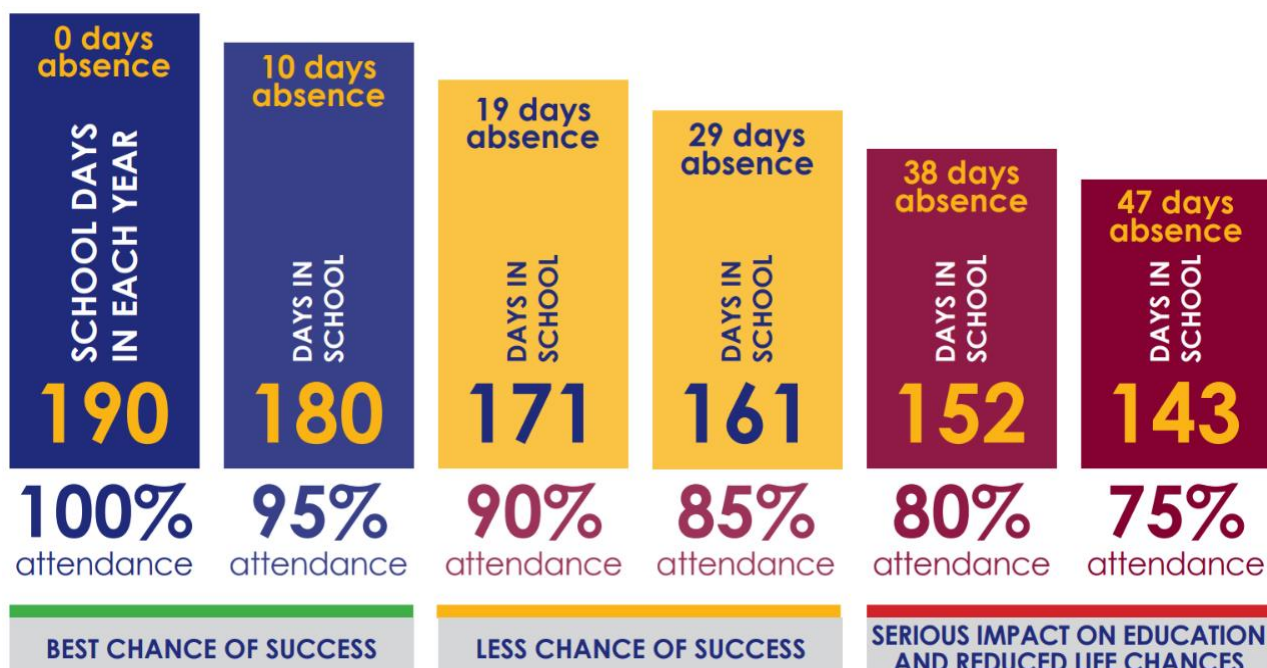
School Commitment

All children who are between 5 and 16 years old are entitled to a full-time education. At Highfields Primary Academy we are committed to the improvement and sustainability of excellent attendance, and therefore are proactive in tackling poor attendance. Our aim is to achieve and maintain a whole school target of at least 97% and to have minimal levels of persistent absence. The academy works in close partnership with parents/carers and extended services to improve attendance and therefore raising achievement for all our children.

Aims and Objectives

- To achieve and maintain a target of 97% for whole school attendance.
- To continue to reduce persistent absence and remain at/under national levels.
- To ensure excellence and enjoyment for every child by providing a safe environment and a relevant curriculum that meets the needs and interests of all our pupils.
- To offer a range of extra-curricular activities that children really want to attend.
- To tackle poor attendance rigorously with a consistent and transparent approach so being firm and fair.
- To support families where attendance is poor by removing any barriers that may attribute to poor attendance.
- To raise aspirations and expectations for our children and their families so changing cultural attitudes in the long term.
- To stop all absence in term time for the purposes of holidays including visiting relatives for whatever reason.
- To safeguard all our children where there are safety concerns such as children missing in education by working positively with external agencies.

Importance of Good Attendance



Partnership with Parents/Carers

As an academy, pupil attendance is a high priority for us. As a result of this, we have an Attendance Officer (Mrs Philbey) who focuses on maintaining excellent attendance across the academy, alongside the Head of Academy (Mr Williams).

The academy works hard to provide an enjoyable learning experience including extra-curricular activities which children enjoy. Despite this, children's attendance is usually dictated by their parents/carers. Therefore, our work with parents/carers is crucial in achieving outstanding attendance for all pupils. The academy sends out regular information and newsletters about attendance. Where there are concerns about a child's attendance, parents/carers are involved from the very beginning in working to improve the situation. The academy uses positive attendance strategies that are constantly reviewed.

Rewards

There are a range of rewards in place to promote excellent attendance:

- Every week, the class with the best attendance is awarded the Attendance Trophy in Celebration Assembly and a whole class reward is given to the class.
- The progress of each class's attendance is displayed in the academy and parents/carers are informed of their child's class attendance in our weekly newsletter.
- Half termly certificates are awarded to children with 100% attendance across the half term.
- Those children who manage to achieve 100% attendance for the school year will each receive a celebratory reward.

Authorised Absence

An authorised absence is classified as authorised when a child is absent from school for a legitimate reason and the academy has received notification from a parent/carer. An authorised absence may be given for:

- Illness
- Urgent or consultant medical or dental appointments (proof of the appointment must be provided. Routine appointments should be arranged outside of school hours)
- Religious observance
- Bereavement of close relatives
- Approved leave in term time where there are exceptional circumstances, as agreed in advance with the Head of Academy

Only the academy can make an absence authorised. Parents/carers 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 will be unauthorised if a child is away from school without good reason, even with the support of a parent. Examples where an unauthorised absence would be given include:

- Holidays in term time
- Absence in term time where permission has not been given by the school; this means that parents/carers do not have the right to take their child out of school during term time
- Unexplained absence, such as any absence that the school has not been informed of
- Non-urgent medical appointments
- Taking the rest of the day off before or after a medical appointment
- Staying at home to care for younger children or sick relatives
- Birthdays, weddings or anniversaries

- Parent/carer medical appointments
- Transport issues

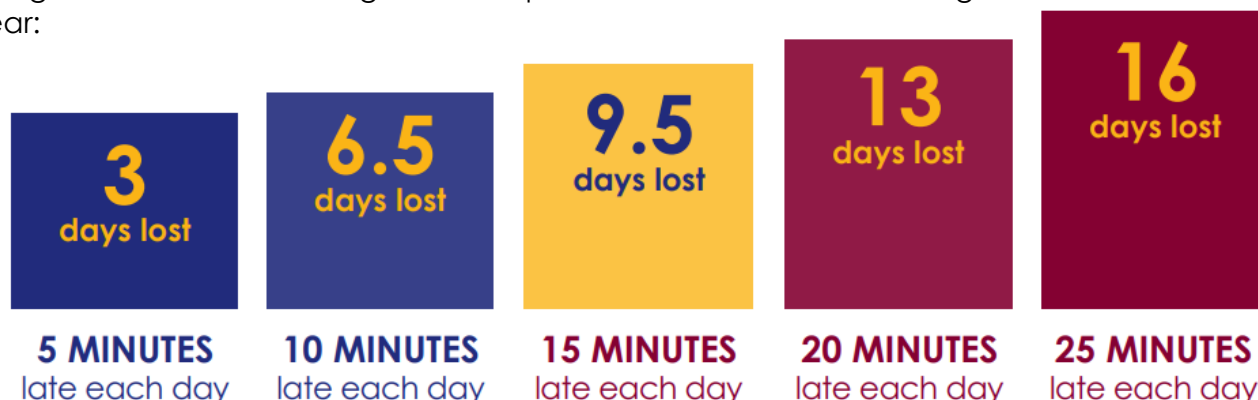
Please note that if children have a pattern of short illnesses, it is our responsibility to list the illness as unauthorised, as unless children are seriously unwell, they should be in school. Frequent, short-term illnesses can lead to significant periods of absence and this has a serious impact on children's well-being, attainment and life chances.

If your child fails to attend school regularly you may be guilty of a criminal offence and could be prosecuted under the Education Act 1996 Section 444 (1) or 444 (1a). Education Penalty Notices have been introduced under the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 as an additional sanction to address the problem of poor school attendance. Please see section 'Holidays and Fixed Penalty Notices' for further information.

Punctuality

The academy opens its gates at 8:30 am and they are closed at 8:40 am. Once the gates are closed, children must enter the academy through the main office. Registration begins at 8:30 am and ends at 8:40 am. If a child arrives after this time, they will be marked as Late (L) in the register. If children arrive after 9:30 am, they will be recorded as an unauthorised (U) which affects your child's attendance.

Being late to school has a significant impact on the amount of learning time lost over a school year:



Persistent Absence

Children who attend school for less than 90% of the time is regarded as a Persistent Absentee. Where a child becomes persistently absent (90% or below) then we will issue proceedings to support an improvement in attendance. This can include meetings and supportive strategies such as children attending Breakfast Club, or we can issue warning letters and fines.

If we feel that a child is at risk of becoming persistently absent, then the academy will implement supportive strategies such as meetings to support families, so they do not become persistently absent. We will implement these strategies when a child falls below 95% attendance.

First Day Absence & Home visits

Parents/carers are asked to ring school by 8.15 am if their child is not in school that day. If a phone call has not been received by 9.15 am, the Attendance Officer will ring home and all available contacts. If they are unable to speak to a parent/carer or contact or get a satisfactory reason for the absence, they will make an unannounced home visit without delay to ensure the child is safe.

Home visits will also be made where there are general safeguarding concerns, queries about a persistently absent child or just to confirm that a child is too unwell to attend. The Police and/or Children's Social Care will be contacted to carry out a Welfare Visit if school have a

safeguarding concern. The academy has the right to unauthorise an absence if the reason given is not valid.

If a child is absent for more than two days, we will conduct a home visit on the third day to offer support to the family. We would seek support from other agencies, where we were still unable to make contact with families or we were unable to see the child. Where we have immediate concerns, we may conduct a home visit on the first day of absence and we may involve other services at an earlier stage.

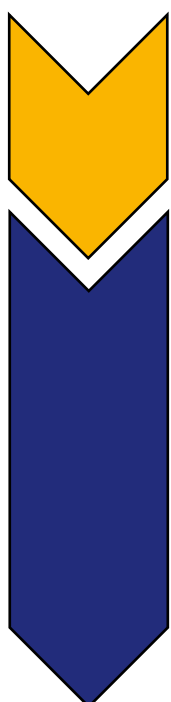
Holidays and Fixed Penalty Notices

The Government has implemented legislation stating that no requests for holidays can be authorised except in exceptional circumstances. Please note that the definition of 'exceptional' means 'very unusual'. Therefore, a second request for absence based on 'exceptional circumstances' is extremely unlikely to be regarded as such and therefore will not be authorised

When a parent /carer feels that they have exceptional circumstances and wishes to apply to take their child out of school during term time they must complete a leave of absence form and submit it to the school at least 4 weeks before the proposed start of the holiday and before booking the holiday.

If you take your child on holiday during term time, without the authorisation of the Head of Academy, the Local Authority will issue a Fixed Penalty Notice. Following changes introduced from 19th August 2024, an Education Penalty Notice referral must be made to the Local Authority for 10 sessions of unauthorised absence within a period of 10 weeks. If an Education Penalty Notice is issued, the penalty for a first offence is £160 per parent, per child reducing to £80 per parent, per child if paid within 28 days. For a second offence (within 3 years) the penalty raises to £160 per parent, per child if paid within 28 days. For a third and any further offences (within 3 years) a penalty notice will not be issued, the case will be presented straight to Magistrates Court. Magistrate's fines can be up to £2500 per child, per parent. Cases found guilty in Magistrates Court can show on parent's future DBS certificates, due to failure to safeguard a child's education.

Process for requesting a holiday



If a parent wishes to make a holiday request, they must complete the 'Leave of Absence' Request Form which can be request from the Attendance Officer, Main Office or from the Academy Website **prior to the holiday being booked.**

Once the Request Form has been handed to the Attendance Officer or Head of Academy, they will then speak with the parent/carers about the request. They will explain clearly that the absence is unauthorised and that they are in danger of losing their child/children's place at the academy or being issued with a Fixed Penalty Notice. If the holiday extends over twenty school days, a child will be taken off roll. A CME Referral, (Child Missing Education) will be made, if appropriate, to the Local Authority.

Parents/carers will receive written confirmation that the holiday is unauthorised prior to the absence.



Once the child has return to the academy, a letter will be sent to their parents/carers explaining the next steps of the fining process. The Head of Academy and Attendance officer will also meet with parents/carers to discuss with them how the absence has affected their child's attendance percentage and learning. Class teachers may also be present for this meeting.

Children Missing from Education

The academy follows guidance from the DfE regarding Children Missing Education. Where children on roll do not attend the academy, and the school has made enquiries through phone calls and home visits, we will refer the case to the CME Team. The CME team will advise school when it is safe to take a child off roll.

Partnership with Others

In order to safeguard all pupils and their families, the school will be proactive in liaising openly and professionally with all external agencies with the aim of protecting a child and their family and improving attendance outcomes. These agencies include Admission Team, Education Social Work Service, Children's Social Care, Police Service, Special Educational Needs team and the School Nursing Team.

Children not Collected

The following procedure is followed when children are not collected by an appropriate adult at the end of the school day or extra-curricular activity.

- If not collected at 3.00 pm, children are kept safe with the Head of Academy or member of the Safeguarding Team. Parents/carers will be contacted to collect them as soon as possible. Other emergency contact numbers will be rung if parents/carers cannot be reached until an appropriate adult can collect them.
- If no contact is made, two members of staff will escort the child home, leave them with their parents or another appropriate adult and ask for up to date contact numbers.
- If there is no suitable adult at home, the staff will return to school with the child and Children's Social Care/Police will be contacted so that appropriate actions can be taken.
- The same procedures will be followed if a child is not collected after a school visit or extra-curricular activity.
- Children who have permission who go home alone at the end of the school day must have written consent from a parent/carer (please see . It is the responsibility of the parent/carer to update this permission if they wish to do so by contacting the Main Office.

Children Leaving School Premises without Permission

Every effort is made to ensure that the school site is as safe and secure as possible, and children are supervised appropriately at all times. In the event that a child is reported missing, the following procedures will be followed.

- A thorough search of the school site and immediate locality is made by all available staff.
- Admin staff will ring the child's contact numbers so they are fully informed and also to check whether or not the child is at home.
- If the child has not been located after these actions the police will be notified.