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**Harding Memorial Primary School**

**Pupil School Attendance Policy**

**Introduction**

Regular and punctual school attendance is important. Pupils need to attend school regularly if they are to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them by law. Harding Memorial Primary School fully recognises its responsibilities to ensure pupils are in school and on time, therefore having access to learning for the maximum number of days and hours.

Our policy applies to all children registered at this school and this policy will be made available to all Parents/Guardians of pupils who are registered at our school on our school website.

Although Parents/Guardians have the legal responsibility for ensuring their child’s good attendance, the School Principal and Governors at our school work together with other professionals and agencies to ensure that all pupils are encouraged and supported to develop good attendance habits. Procedures in this policy are followed to ensure this happens.

Children who are persistently late or absent soon fall behind with their learning. Children who are absent from school frequently develop large gaps in their learning which will impact on their progress and their ability to meet age related learning expectations. A child whose attendance drops to 90% each year will, over their time at primary school, have missed two whole terms of learning.

**Aims and Objectives**

This attendance policy ensures that all Harding Memorial Primary School Staff and Governors are fully aware of and clear about the actions necessary to promote good attendance. Through this Attendance Policy we aim to:

* Improve pupils’ achievement by ensuring high levels of attendance and punctuality.
* Achieve a minimum of 95% attendance for all children, apart from those with chronic health issues.
* Create an ethos in which good attendance and punctuality are recognised as the norm and seen to be valued by the school.
* Raise awareness of parents, carers and pupils of the importance of uninterrupted attendance and punctuality at every stage of a child’s education.
* Work in partnership with Pupils, Parents, Staff and the Education Welfare Service so that all pupils realise their potential, unhindered by unnecessary absence.
* Promote a positive and welcoming atmosphere in which pupils feel safe, secure, and valued, and encourage in pupils a sense of their own responsibility.
* Establish a pattern of monitoring attendance and ensure consistency in recognising achievement and dealing with difficulties.
* Recognise the key role of all staff, but especially class teachers, in promoting good attendance.

**In Harding Memorial Primary School we will attempt to maintain and promote good attendance and punctuality by:**

* Raising awareness of attendance and punctuality issues among all staff, parents and pupils.
* Ensuring that parents have an understanding of the responsibility placed on them for making sure their child attends regularly and punctually.
* Equipping children with the life skills needed to take responsibility for good school attendance and punctuality appropriate to the child’s age and development.
* Maintaining effective means of communication with parents, pupils, staff and governors on school attendance matters (School Attendance Booklet & Individual Parental Letters)
* Developing and implementing procedures for identifying, reporting and reviewing cases of poor attendance and persistent lateness.
* Supporting pupils who have been experiencing any difficulties at home or at school which are preventing good attendance.
* Developing and implementing procedures to follow up non-attendance at school.

**In Harding Memorial Primary School we will undertake to follow the following procedures to support good attendance:**

* To maintain appropriate registration processes.
* To maintain appropriate attendance data.
* To communicate clearly the attendance procedures and expectations to all staff, governors, parents and pupils.
* To have consistent and systematic daily records which give detail of any absence and lateness.
* To follow up absences and persistent lateness if parents/carers have not communicated with the school.
* To work with parents to improve individual pupils attendance and punctuality
* To refer to the Educational Welfare Service any child whose attendance causes concern and where parents/carers have not responded to school initiatives to improve.
* To report attendance statistics to DE where requested.
* All staff should be aware that they must raise any attendance or punctuality concerns to the Principal who has ultimate responsibility for monitoring attendance.
* To strongly discourage unnecessary absence through holidays taken during term time
* **Family holidays cannot be deemed to be an agreed, authorised absence except in very exceptional circumstances: (DE Circular 2006/14)**
* **“A family holiday is judged to be important to the wellbeing and cohesion of the family, following serious or terminal illness, bereavement or other traumatic events.”**

**Responsibilities**

All members of school staff have a responsibility for identifying trends in attendance and punctuality. The following includes a more specific list of the kinds of responsibilities which individuals might have.

**The Class Teacher**

P1 – P7 Class Teachers are responsible for:

* Keeping an overview of class and individual attendance looking particularly for either poor overall attendance, anomalies in patterns of attendance and/ or unusual explanations for attendance offered by children and their parents/ carers
* Informing the School Principal where there are concerns and acting upon them
* Providing background information to support referrals
* Monitoring follow-up once actions have been taken to correct attendance concerns
* Emphasising with their class the importance of good attendance and promptness
* Following up absences with immediate requests for explanation which should be noted inside the register
* Discussing attendance issues at Parent Teacher Consultation Meetings where necessary

**The School Principal**

The School Principal is responsible for:

* Overall monitoring of school attendance
* Trends in authorised and unauthorised absence
* Contacting families where concerns are raised about absence including arranging meetings to discuss attendance issues
* Monitoring individual attendance where concerns have been raised
* Making referrals to the EWO service
* Providing reports and background information to inform discussion with the school’s EWO
* Liaising with other professionals to determine potential sources of difficulties and reasons for absence.

**The School Secretary**

The School Secretary is responsible for:

* Collating and recording registration and attendance information.
* Taking and recording telephone or e mail messages from parents regarding absence
* Making available to the School Principal an overview of class and individual attendance
* Sending out standard school letters regarding attendance of less than 85%

**Parent/Guardians**

Parents/Guardians are responsible for:

* Ensuring that their child attends school regularly and punctually unless prevented from doing so by illness or attendance at a medical appointment.
* Informing the school in advance of any medical appointments in school time.
* Talking to the school as soon as possible about any child’s reluctance to come to school so that problems can be quickly identified and dealt with.

**School Registration**

The pupils will enter School at 8.55 am. Registration will take place at 9.00am and close at 9.10am. This time is sufficient for all P1 – P7 pupils to come into their classrooms.

Each class teacher has the responsibility for keeping an accurate record of attendance. These registers are then returned to the school office.

**Lateness**

Once the doors are closed at 8.55am the only way to get into school is via the school office and the School Front Door. Any pupil who comes into school this way from 9.10am will be marked as “late” in the attendance record. Records are kept of those pupils who are late, this is documented on the electronic register for each pupil. Pupils who have attended a dentist or doctor’s appointment and subsequently come to school later than 9.10am will not be recorded as “late”.

Children who are persistently late miss a significant amount of learning, often the most important aspect, as the beginning of the day is where the teacher explains the learning and what each child is expected to achieve. Where there have been persistent incidents of lateness parents/guardians will receive a letter by post from the school advising them of the concerns and the school will provide opportunities for parents/guardians to seek support and advice to address these issues.

**Absences**

Parents/Guardians are encouraged to contact the school on the first day of their child’s absence. On occasions when School has not received any reasons for a child’s absence, the Principal may decide to make personal contact with the Parent/Guardian to seek clarification about this issue.

**Illness**

When children have an illness that means they will be away from school long term, the school will do all it can to send suitable educational material home, so that they can keep up with their school work. Where over the course of an academic year, a child has repeated periods of illness, the Principal will make personal contact with the Parent/Guardian to discuss any on going health related issue that may be having a negative impact on the regular school attendance of a child.

**Addressing Attendance Concerns**

Harding Memorial Primary School expects pupil attendance of at least 95%. It is important for children to establish good attendance habits early on in their primary school career. It is the responsibility of the School Principal and Governors to support good attendance and to identify and address attendance concerns promptly. In primary school we rely upon parents to ensure that their child/children attend school regularly and punctually. Initially concerns about attendance are raised with parents via letters which are sent home. There will be opportunities for the Parent/Guardian to discuss reasons for absence with the School Principal and support will be provided by the school with the aim to improve attendance. Where a child’s attendance record does not improve over a period of time then the school has a responsibility to make a formal referral to the Educational Welfare Service. The Education Wefare Officer normally makes regular contact with school to check and monitor attendance. The EWO carries out regular register checks to identify children with low attendance (usually below 85%)