

# Halfway Nursery Infant School



## Attendance policy and procedures

Date written	July 2024
Date to be reviewed	July 2025

## HALFWAY NURSERY INFANT SCHOOL ATTENDANCE AND PUNCTUALITY POLICY

This policy has been developed in conjunction with DfE and LA Guidance, implementing the principles and statutory framework of the Working Together to Improve School Attendance Guidance taking effect from August 2024. Follow this [link](#) for the full DfE strategy.

(Reference to Parent/Carer throughout this document also includes any person who has parental responsibility or who cares for children.)

Good attendance and punctuality are vital if pupils are to achieve their maximum potential. Halfway Nursery Infant School is committed to working with parents/carers and pupils to ensure that each pupil benefits from the academic, personal and social opportunities available to them during their years with us. Children who miss out on education are at an immediate disadvantage relative to their peers, and at a great cost to themselves and the community as a whole.

By working together with families, we can keep attendance at school at the highest possible rate for all pupils. This will ensure that children get the absolute most from their education at school. The young child, however, is dependent upon the adults in his/her life to get them to school regularly and on time. We aim to work with parent/carers to start to develop 'self' responsibility in the children. The school operates within a framework of local schools, including the linked secondary school. We are, therefore, committed to a Family of Schools approach to attendance and a partnership relationship with parent/carers.

### **Aims**

- To encourage all pupils to achieve their maximum potential.
- To raise awareness of the importance of attendance and its impact on progress and attainment.
- To recognise pupils who achieve more than 97% attendance during the school year.
- To give additional and special recognition to pupils who achieve 100% attendance.
- To encourage parents/carers to play a vital role in supporting the school and encouraging their child to reach good attendance levels.
- To monitor and track pupils' attendance and punctuality through effective systems.
- To utilise this information to support the school and parents to improve attendance.
- To address poor attendance through clear, consistent and effective procedures.

**School Attendance Target - 95%**

### **The Law relating to attendance (Section 444 of the Education Act 1996)**

- The law entitles every child of compulsory school age to an efficient, full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude, and any special educational need they may have. It is the legal responsibility of every parent to make sure their child receives that education either by attendance at a school or by education otherwise than at a school.
- Where parents decide to have their child registered at school, they have an additional legal duty to ensure their child attends that school regularly. This means their child must attend every day that the school is open, except in a small number of allowable circumstances such as being too ill to attend or being given permission for an absence in advance from the school.
- The Sheffield Children and Young People & Families (CYPF) must provide a school place to parents who wish their child to be educated at school.
- The school must complete attendance registers at the beginning of the morning and afternoon sessions.
- The Local Authority has a duty to ensure that parents fulfil their legal responsibilities.
- Failure by parents to ensure the regular attendance at school of a registered pupil is an offence punishable by law.

### **Setting a culture of high attendance**

At Halfway Nursery Infant School, we are committed to working supportively and collaboratively to enable all children to regularly attend school. We recognise that often there are barriers and challenges to attending regularly, and as a school, we encourage a partnership with families to overcome these difficulties and find solutions. We work hard to create a school where children want to be, but appreciate that some children find the school day and environment difficult. In those circumstances, strong relationships between families and school staff are essential in supporting pupils to make the most of their school years. It is our duty to expect regular attendance, and challenge where attendance is falling, or consistently low, and this is for the best interest of the child. Monitoring, communication, transparency and collaboration are essential aspects of maintaining attendance expectations, and success at school.

Working with families to support and achieve regular attendance:

### **Expectations**

#### **What parents/carers and pupils can expect of the school:**

Good attendance is rooted in strong relationships between families and the school. Parents can expect a supportive process, and every effort to ensure pupils enjoy their time in school.

- Build strong relationships and work jointly with families, listening to and understanding barriers to attendance and working in partnership with families to remove them.
- Develop and maintain a whole school culture that promotes the benefits of high attendance.
- Regularly monitor and analyse attendance and absence data to identify pupils or cohorts that require support with their attendance and put effective strategies in place.
- Share information and work collaboratively with other schools in the area, local authorities, and other partners where a pupil's absence is at risk of becoming persistent or severe.
- Be particularly mindful of pupils absent from school due to mental or physical ill health or their special educational needs and/or disabilities, and provide them with additional support.
- Provide a broad and balanced education that is dependent on regular attendance at school.
- Encourage and celebrate good attendance and punctuality.
- Make accurate recordings of attendances and punctuality and ensure that any barriers to attendance is dealt with efficiently.
- Attendance information is included during parent consultation meetings and end of year reports.
- Make first day contact with parents/carers when a pupil fails to attend school and hasn't given a valid reason for absence.
- Inform parents/carers if a pupil's attendance and/ or punctuality has fallen below the expected school target of 96% and/or at risk of falling into PA (Persistent Absence). Notification to parents/carers of attendance and punctuality will operate through a system of telephone calls, letters and reports home.
- Collaborate with parents to create action plans and implement solutions.
- The school works within the National framework: Working Together to Improve School Attendance

**What the school expects of our pupils:**

- To attend regularly and on time, ready to learn.
- To be prepared for the day with any appropriate equipment e.g. PE kit, school uniform and appropriate clothing for visits etc.
- To report to the school office, should they arrive after the official registration time.
- To tell a member of staff if there is any problem which may prevent them from attending school.
- To work towards a target of at least 95% attendance.

**What the school expects of parents/carers:**

- It is vitally important that parents are actively involved in promoting good attendance and fulfil their legal parental responsibility by ensuring their children attend school regularly.
- To report any absences to the school office by 9:30am each day via the telephone or. Telephone number 0114 2482360. *It is a legal requirement of parents to inform school of a child's absence on the first day and thereafter should the absence continue.*
- Provide medical evidence (appointments cards / letters etc) in order for the school to authorise absences.
- Ensure your child arrives on time and is well prepared for the school day.
- Parents are encouraged to make contact with school to discuss any issues that are or could be impacting on their child's attendance.
- Contact the school in confidence whenever any problem occurs that may keep your child away from school.
- Where appointments are booked for after 11am, pupils must attend school first.
- Provide medical/ circumstantial evidence for absences of more than 4 days and where an illness falls on either side of an unauthorised holiday taken.
- If a pupil leaves the school premises with a parent/ carer for any reason during the school day, staff will ensure that this is recorded, (together with signing back in if they return) to comply with Health & Safety Regulations.
- Take holidays during the school holiday period and not during term time. Holidays taken during school time will not be authorised and will trigger an action via the Local Authority under the guidelines below (Term Time Leave).
- Illness absence, falling alongside a holiday, may not be automatically authorised. In line with the Sheffield City Council policy for "Exceptional Leave during Term Time", if parents choose to take their child on holiday in term time, a fixed penalty will be issued (see below)
- To understand that the Headteacher does not have the option to authorise term time holidays unless exceptional circumstance can be applied.

### **Irregular attendance**

When a pupil's attendance falls to 90% or below this is considered Persistently Absent, and the family will be notified of this via letter.

At this stage, the school will seek to work with the family to consider and agree appropriate action and offer support, which may be via external services.

This process will follow a plan, do, review cycle, with monitoring and feedback opportunities built within. During these meetings, Education, Health and Care will be discussed and for challenging circumstances, an attendance contract may be drawn up to formalise the actions.

Attendance response flow chart:



### **Expect**

Aspire to high standards of attendance from all pupils and parents and build a culture where all can, and want to, be in school and ready to learn by prioritising attendance improvement across the school

### **Monitor**

Rigorously use attendance data to identify patterns of poor attendance (at individual and cohort level) as soon as possible so all parties can work together to resolve them before they become entrenched.

### **Listen and understand**

When a pattern is spotted, discuss with pupils and parents to listen to and understand barriers to attendance and agree how all partners can work together to resolve them.

### **Facilitate support**

Remove barriers in school and help pupils and parents to access the support they need to overcome the barriers outside of school. This might include an early help or whole family plan where absence is a symptom of wider issues.

### **Formalise support**

Where absence persists and voluntary support is not working or not being engaged with, partners should work together to explain the consequences clearly and ensure support is also in place to enable families to respond. Depending on the circumstances this may include formalising support through an attendance contract or education supervision order.

### **Enforce**

Where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or not being engaged with, enforce attendance through statutory intervention: a penalty notice in line with the National Framework or prosecution to protect the pupil's right to an education.

All support facilitated by school is voluntary, and forms part of the relationship between school and families and considered on a case by case basis. During the 'Facilitate Support' stage, discussions between school and home will serve to agree short term adjustments, support, attendance contracts or early help access to enable families to access school as much as possible. Families are expected to engage with school and the offer of support for the best interest of the child. Failure to engage may result in a safeguarding concern raised (see below), or an escalation within the process.

Where attendance does not improve, consultation with the attendance team may be appropriate to widen the scope of support.

In extreme cases, failing to improve attendance through not engaging with school or services, may result in prosecution via the Local Authority .

## **Term-time Leave**

All requests (one form per child, per request) for term time leave must be made to the Headteacher / Head of School on the *Leave of Absence in Term Time Request Form*, available from the school office, 20 days in advance of the leave of absence. A return date must be provided and a prompt return is essential.

**Only in exceptional circumstances will request of leave in term time be authorised.**

*An example of exceptional circumstances may be: religious observance; approved sporting activity or bereavement where the family must travel together, abroad, to a funeral. If the visit abroad is for the wedding of a close family member, the day of the wedding will be authorised but surrounding days will not.*

- Religious observance
- Approved sporting representation
- Bereavement or travel for severely ill relatives in exceptional circumstances.
- Exceptional circumstances, such as housing crisis

Legally there is no entitlement for parents to take their child on holiday during term time and unauthorised absence may result in prosecution. If the request for exceptional leave/ term time absence is not authorised by the school, and a fixed penalty fine is issued, any further correspondence must be made through the Local Authority as per the letter received. Please note, financial considerations or parental leave opportunities are not considered exceptional circumstances under the national guidelines.

If queries are raised about holidays, parents/carers may be asked to provide evidence of the days taken e.g. flight tickets or accommodation receipts.

If the school has reason to believe a term time leave has been taken without request, it is the parents' responsibility to prove otherwise (e.g. doctor's appointment card, proof of medication etc).

### **Penalty Notice and Fining**

The Local Authority have the right to enforce penalties for term time leave and irregular attendance in response to data collected by school. Please be aware that absence fines **do not** come back into school; the Local Authority reinvests this money into education across the city.

From August 2024, fines will be issued in the following way:

#### **5 consecutive days of term time leave**

Penalty Notice Fines will be issued for Term Time Leave of 5 or more consecutive days. Inset training days are school days and can be included in the 5 or more consecutive days where there was intent to be absent for term time leave.

10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a 10-week period Penalty Notice Fines will be considered when there have been 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a 10 week period.

### **Per Parent, Per Child**

Penalty Notice Fines will now be issued to each parent, for each child that was absent. For example: 3 siblings absent for term time leave, would result in each parent receiving 3 separate fines.

### **First Offence**

The first time a Penalty Notice is issued for Term Time Leave or Irregular Attendance the amount will be:

£160 per parent, per child paid within 28 days.

Reduced to £80 per parent, per child if paid within 21 days.

### **Second Offence (within 3 years)**

The second time a Penalty Notice is issued for Term Time Leave or Irregular Attendance the amount will be:

£160 per parent, per child paid within 28 days.

### **Third Offence and Any Further Offences (within 3 years)**

The third time an offence is committed for Term Time Leave or Irregular Attendance a Penalty Notice will not be issued, and the case will be presented straight to the Magistrates' Court. Magistrates' fines can be up to £2500 per parent, per child. Cases found guilty in Magistrates' Court can show on the parent's future DBS certificate, due to 'failure to safeguard a child's education'.

*Please note that term-time leave fining and irregular attendance fining only comes into force the term after the child reaches statutory school age (5 years).*

### **Exclusion**

It is the parents' responsibility to ensure that during the first five days of a period of pupil exclusion (whether fixed-term or permanent), they make sure that the excluded child, who is of compulsory school age, is not present in a public place during school hours, unless there is a reasonable justification.

### **Understanding Different Types of Absence**

Only school can authorise absence as 'authorised' or 'unauthorised', not parents. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required to ensure a pupil's attendance is correctly categorised.



**Authorised absences** are mornings or afternoons away from school for an unavoidable reason, for example: illness and/or medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in the school day, emergencies or other unavoidable reasons.

If your child has a medical appointment within the school day, medical evidence is needed e.g. appointment letter/ card or confirmation appointment on parent's mobile phone. Within the electronic system, authorised absences cannot be recorded as so without evidence. This evidence must be provided within 5 school days. After this time, the registers cannot reflect authorised absence, and unauthorised coding will remain.

**Unauthorised absences** are those which the school does not consider to be reasonable and for which no "leave" has been given. This type of absence can lead to a fixed penalty notice and/or prosecution. This includes:

- Parents keeping children away from school unnecessarily.
- Truancy during the school day.
- Absence that has never been properly explained / evidenced.
- Shopping, looking after other children or birthdays.
- Day trips and holidays in term time.
- Family illness, such as a sibling illness. In these circumstances, the sibling who does not present with illness is expected to attend school.
- Parents choosing to keep children at home, whilst the cohort attends a trip. If school has been informed that a parent wishes a child not to take part in a trip or visit, alternative arrangements will be made by school. The child is expected to attend.

The fact that a parent has sent a note or other notification (telephone call or email) in relation to a child's absence does not mean that the absence is automatically coded as authorised.

Whilst most pupils will be away from school because of illness, some individuals can be reluctant to attend. Any such problems with regular attendance are best resolved between the school, the child and the family. If a parent thinks their child is reluctant to attend school, then we encourage the family to work with all involved to understand the root problem. When necessary we engage the support of other agencies such as the Local Authority. The school will always be keen to offer advice of potential solutions sensitively, in order to support these circumstances. We ask parents to contact school to arrange a discussion and agree next steps.

### **Other Circumstances**

#### **Education off site**

As well as leaves of absence, schools can approve absences from school for certain education activity, or to be educated off site.

As these circumstances are part of a wider curriculum, then are not considered unauthorised absences within children's records, but will be recorded using a separate code. Examples are, but limited to:

- Off-site approved educational activity, including Alternative Provision
- Attend another school where there is dual registration
- Attend another school as part of a transition process
- Attend local authority approved transition
- Participate in approved sporting activity
- Educational visit or trip

### **Persistent Absenteeism (PA) less than 90% attendance**

A pupil is classified as a 'persistent absentee' if they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason. This includes authorised absences, term time leave, and unauthorised occasions. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's education prospects and we need parent/carers fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

The school and Local Authority will 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. Illness will not be authorised without medical/ circumstantial evidence for pupils classified as persistently absent.

### **ATTENDANCE PROCEDURES**

**The school will monitor and record attendance using the following registration system:**

- Foundation Stage 2 and Key Stage 1 registration begins at 8:40am each morning and at 1pm in the afternoon.
- Registers will close no later than 30 minutes after opening (9:10am and 1:30pm).
- Staff will welcome children into school from 8:40am. All children must be at school to start the day at this time. School gates will be closed at 8:50am.
- Any child arriving after 8:50am must report to the school office, providing a reason for their late arrival. They will be marked as being late (L). The morning register closes at 9:10am. If a child arrives after this time it will be recorded as an unauthorised absence (U), unless proof of a medical appointment is presented to the school office. This proof must be shared with the office within 5 school days for the code to be adjusted.

Please contact the school as soon as possible on the first day (and thereafter) of absence before 9:15am on 0114 2482360. A voicemail service is available to leave a message for our office team. We will call you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you and could invite you in to discuss the situation.

### The school will respond to lateness (punctuality) in the following ways:

- Pupils arriving after morning or afternoon registration will report to the school office, where a late record will be completed (time and reason for the lateness. If a parent/carer is not present a phone call will be made re: the lateness).
- Persistent lateness will be discussed with parents/carers during parent consultation meetings and also with the school attendance team should this be necessary.
- Referrals may be made to external agencies within the Local Authority to assist and support pupils and their families in arriving at school on time.
- Punctuality fining

### Responding to Absence Data

Attendance data is collected electronically by school, and securely shared with the local authority and DfE. Attendance data is analysed for patterns and trends by the attendance team in school, and trends are responded to. Individual pupil data is collected and available to school leaders, and this data is also available to parents regularly throughout the year, and always upon request of a parent.

- Attendance will be monitored to achieve the school target of 95%.
- **Attendance below 95%** will be closely monitored by school. If attendance continues to fall, parents may be asked to provide medical evidence to support unexplained absences.
- **Attendance falling below 90%** will result in a written notification to parents to bring this to their attention and offer support if it is felt necessary. (See the school's response to poor attendance stated in the section below.)
- **Attendance below 90% and not improving** will be closely monitored by school and the Local Authority. Parents may be invited to a professionals meeting to discuss the reasons for continued absence. The aim of this will be to identify any issues and provide support to ensure the child's attendance improves.
- **Attendance below 90% for long periods** may be subject to prosecution.

Pupil data is used to both monitor and respond to individual cases, as well as making strategic decisions for groups, such as SEND and Pupil Premium cohorts.

In order to collect accurate data parents are required to contact the school on the first day of their child's absence, either by telephone or email, stating the reason for absence and the expected date of return. If an absence continues, parents are requested to contact the school office again on the second day and thereafter.

As a safeguarding precaution, telephone contact is made with parents/carers of any pupil who is absent where school has not been provided with a reason for absence. This is made on the morning of the absence by 9:30am.

Absence will only be authorised when a satisfactory reason has been provided by the parent or carer. In cases where parents have been asked to provide medical evidence

for absence, this should be taken to the office in order for the absence to be authorised.

Home contact will be made by the school if several day's absences remain unauthorised. If this is unsuccessful then the case may be referred to the Local Authority, where 'Child Missing from Education' procedures may commence.

### **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 school on a regular basis must be considered as a safeguarding concern, this will be reported to Social Care professionals as Educational Neglect.

Prolonged periods of absence and / or no contact during absence periods will trigger the need for a safe and well check from school. This is in the form of a short, non-intrusive visit from staff members to check all is well in the home and offer any support. During these visits, staff require visual confirmation that the child is safe and well, and a short conversation with the child if well enough. Should access be denied at this stage, school is required to notify the safeguarding team and police, who may enforce a check.

### **Part- Time Timetables**

All children are legally entitled to a full-time education, however, in exceptional circumstances, and where it is in the pupil's best interests, there may be a need to reduce the time spent in school. This may be due to medical condition which prevents full-time education, or to support a short-term change in circumstance in order to access as much education as possible.

Part-time timetables should:

- Have the agreement of both the school and the parent the pupil normally lives with.
- Have a clear ambition and be part of the pupil's wider support, health care or reintegration plan.
- Have regular review dates which include the pupil and their parents to ensure it is only in place for the shortest time necessary.

- Have a proposed end date that takes into account the circumstances of the pupil, after which the pupil is expected to attend full-time, either at school or alternative provision. It can, however, be extended as part of the regular review process.
- In some limited cases, a pupil with a long-term health condition may require a part-time timetable for a prolonged period.

### **Elective Home Education**

In exceptional circumstances, parents may choose to remove their child from the school roll and provide education from home, or make other suitable arrangements. This is a parent's right to choose.

Should this right be exercised, the pupil will be removed from roll with immediate effect. This process will be managed by the Local Authority Home Education Team. There is no guarantee that once removed from roll, a place will be available again at school should a decision to return to formal schooling be made.

### **Roles and Responsibilities**

#### **Governors**

- Reports on persistent absences will be monitored by Governors and the Local Authority.
- Have a named governor with responsibility for attendance.

#### **Headteacher**

- Has overall responsibility for attendance within the school
- Has responsibility for reviewing and updating the Attendance Policy in line with local/national changes.
- Provides advice and support to school staff regarding attendance and punctuality issues
- Liaises with the named governor and LA
- Provide reports to governors each term
- Works with colleagues to implement targets, review statistics and amend the policy as necessary
- Works with other schools and agencies to promote attendance and punctuality within the Family of Schools
- Has responsibility for monitoring the progress of children Looked After by the LA
- Has responsibility for investigating and, where necessary, reporting incidents of children who are Missing from Education.
- The School has been given authorisation from the Child Missing in Education (CME) Team to remove a child from role when the child has been continuously absent for a period of not less than 20 school days, absence has been

unauthorised and both the school and local authority have been unable, after reasonable enquiries, to ascertain where the child is.

### **The School Attendance Team**

- Ensure attendance is closely and carefully monitored.
- Receive, update and maintain accurate class registers in line with Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006
- Maintain SIMS attendance database.
- Ensure correct codes are allocated for absences.
- Meet weekly to review attendance for each class and pupil. Agree action for any attendance concerns.
- Where a specific need has been highlighted, ensure medical evidence is requested and followed up.
- Have responsibility for ensuring parents/carers have access to accurate information and appropriate forms.
- Provide relevant information to LA officers making contact with families regarding attendance and punctuality.
- Have responsibility for investigating and, where necessary, reporting incidents of children who are Missing from Education.
- Prepare requests for a penalty notice to be made to the LA.
- Have responsibility for ensuring requests for term time leave are dealt with in a timely and effective manner in line with the school policy on attendance.

Parents are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any problems together. We will always try to resolve the attendance issues by agreement, however if efforts to try to improve the child's attendance fail and unauthorised absences persist, sanctions such as fixed Penalty Notices and/or prosecutions will be pursued.

### **Children Missing from Education**

The school's Attendance Team liaise with the children and Young People's Directorate Children Missing from Education Team. Pupils who cannot be located will be considered missing. The Children Missing from Education Team will be informed and will pursue the matter in accordance with Local Authority procedures.

### **Children Looked After**

The nominated 'Looked After' member of school staff liaises with the Children and Young People's Directorate Children Looked After Team. Looked After Children will be set up as a discrete attendance group on the school motoring system and individual attendance checked each half term.

## **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. School staff are committed to working with parents as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible.

The Headteacher, or staff delegated by them will be responsible for analysis of attendance data and for the administration of procedures deemed necessary following any unusual trends in attendance. If possible data should be used in a positive way to help form class or whole school targets. Wherever possible positive action will be taken by the school to improve a pupil's attendance and investigate and address any underlying cause of problems before considering whether to make a referral to Local Authority.