

Heart of the Forest Community Special School

Attendance Policy

Heart of the Forest Community Special School is committed to working in partnership with parents and carers, governors and the Local Authority to ensure that we provide a supportive learning community that enables all its pupils to thrive.

It is recognised that the rate of pupil progress is improved with regular attendance at school. Therefore we will do all we can to encourage parents and carers to ensure that the children in their care achieve maximum possible attendance and that any difficulties that prevent full attendance are identified.

We recognise that a number of our pupils have complex health needs that impacts on their school attendance and we strive to provide support for parents and carers during difficult medical situations and to work together with them and the medical professionals to secure their child's re-integration into the school environment once they are well enough to do so.

Expectations:

We expect that pupils will:

- Attend school regularly
- Attend school punctually
- Attend school appropriately prepared for the day

We expect that all parents and carers who have day-to-day responsibility for the children and young people will:

- Ensure regular school attendance and be aware of their legal requirements
- Ensure that their child/children arrive at school punctually and are prepared for the day
- Ensure that they contact the school whenever their child/children are unable to attend school
- Contact the school in the morning of the first day of absence (preferably by 9am) and provide regular updates if the absence is long term.
- Contact the school promptly with any worries or concerns that may lead to the child not attending school

We expect that school staff will:

- Keep daily, accurate records of attendance via the Admissions and Attendance registers

- Contact parents or carers as soon as possible when a pupil does not arrive at school and no message has been received to explain that absence
- Follow up all unexplained absences
- Encourage good attendance
- Provide a welcoming atmosphere for all pupils
- Provide a sympathetic response to any concerns raised
- Make contact with parents and carers of pupils who are not attending regularly
- Arrange for a meeting to discuss with parents and carers any irregular or unjustified patterns of attendance
- Offer support and work with other agencies to help to find solutions to any concerns or worries

We expect that Governors will:

- Monitor and review this policy regularly.
- Set whole school attendance targets that are challenging, and realistic
- Monitor the targets and question attendance that is under 85%

The school day and the school year

The Local Authority set the term dates for the school year. There may be some variance with other local schools as a result of the setting of Inset Days.

It is expected that pupils will arrive at school by 9am. The majority of pupils arrive on school transport and have no control over their arrival time. For parents and carers who bring their child to school they need to ensure that they have arrived by this time. There are two drop off points at the beginning and end of the day and there is usually a member of the Senior Leadership Team available to address any concerns. If the pupil arrives late then they will need to be taken to reception. School finishes at 3pm and pupils are escorted to one of the drop off points by their class team.

There are two sessions within the school day - 9am-12pm and 1pm-3pm. The school register is marked at the beginning of each session by the administration team. If a child is late for a session for an authorised reason they will be marked as late in the register. In the highly unusual circumstances of a pupil arriving late for a session with no reason given, the register will be marked late unauthorised.

The Admissions and Attendance Registers

It is required by law that the school have an admission and an attendance register. The Admissions register is held electronically and shows the admission date of every child in the school. Every entry must be preserved for a period of three years. With regard to the Attendance register, it must be filled in with the appropriate code at the

beginning of the morning and afternoon sessions. Entries in this register must be preserved for three years as well.

Amendments to the admissions and attendance registers

Every amendment to the registers must include:

- The original entry
- The amended entry
- The reason for the amendment
- The name and position of the person who made the amendment

The Local Authority should be notified in advance of any deletion from the register.

Holidays in term time

New legislation from September 2013 states that schools can no longer authorise any leave of absence unless there are exceptional circumstances. At Heart of the Forest Community Special School we recognise that exceptional circumstances can arise as a result of the need to take into account the degree and nature of the child's learning difficulties and requests will be treated sympathetically. However no parent or carer can demand leave of absence for their child/children as a right. The head teacher will consider the circumstances for the holiday and the pupil's attendance. Parents and carers need to request the holiday in writing to the head teacher no later than two weeks before the absence.

Children at risk of missing education

Local authorities have a duty of care to identify children who are not registered at a school or are receiving education otherwise than school.

Heart of the Forest Community Special School has a legal duty to inform the Local Authority of any pupil going to be deleted from the school Admissions Register where they:

- Have been taken out of the school by parents . If parents want to educate their child outside the school system (e.g. home education) it is required by the Local Authority that this request is made via the Annual Review process. The request will be considered at the Local Authority SEN panel on presentation of relevant evidence to support the request. The Local Authority has advisors to help parents and carers understand the process and the pupil will remain on the roll of Heart of the Forest Community Special School until a decision is made.
- Have ceased to attend school as a result of a move to a different area

- Have a medical condition certified by their doctor that the pupil is unlikely to be in a fit state of health to attend school
- Are in custody for a period of more than four months due to a final court order and the school does not believe that they will return in that period
- Have been permanently excluded

Unauthorised absence

The following processes are in place in the circumstance of an unexplained absence:

- On the first day of absence, if no note or telephone call is received from the parent or carer, the administration team will endeavour to make contact with the parents or carers to ask why their child is not in school. They will telephone all contacts and will use the school texting service. The head teacher will be informed and the transport service (if applicable) will be asked if they know of a reason for the absence.
- If still absent on the second day, an attempt to make contact will be made again via the telephone and text messaging service. If no contact is made a letter will be sent to parents and carers asking that they contact the school to explain their child's absence.
- If we are seriously worried about the child's safety it is possible that we would contact Social Services or the police to inform them of the child's unexplained absence from school.
- We must inform the Local Authority if a pupil has had a period of 10 or more days unauthorised absence or if the pupil fails to attend regularly.

The role of the Education, Entitlement and Inclusion Team.

This team are based at Shire Hall. Referrals for non-attendance and penalty notices will be made by the school to this team.

The team carries out the LA's statutory duties relating to attendance, exclusion, child employment and children in entertainment, children missing education and children unable to attend school because of their medical needs.

In addition the EE&I team:

- facilitates school to school support to improve attendance and reduce exclusion
- supports schools using Managed Moves for pupils at risk of permanent exclusion
- supports parents to ensure children have their entitlement to an efficient and suitable education - including elective home education.
- identifies and shares good practice in schools and signposts where support is available

The team also supports and challenge schools by:

- monitoring exclusion and attendance data
- providing advice, frameworks, protocols, training, guidance
- working alongside schools where there are complex issues

The strategic lead for the Forest and Tewkesbury area is Teresa Mcilroy. She can be contacted as follows:

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tel 01452 425758

Additional note regarding changing schools

It is important that if families decide to send their child/children to a different school that they inform the head teacher as soon as possible. A pupil will not be removed from our school roll until the following information has been received and verified:

- The date the pupil will be leaving this school and starting the next
- The address of the new school
- The new home address

The pupil's records will be sent to the new school as soon as possible. In the event that we do not receive the above information the family will be referred to the Education, Entitlement and Inclusion Team.

Monitoring and Reviewing the policy

This Policy undergoes a detailed review by staff and governors as appropriate. Attendance is discussed as a standing item at the Personnel and Community Committee and reported to the Full Governing Body as required. Governors set annual attendance targets based on the previous year's data and these are monitored via the same committee.

Ratified on.....

Chair of the Governing Body.....