Horndean Infant School

'Learning and Caring Together'

2023-2024

Attendance Strategy

Contents

Leadership and Management

Our Vision for attendance is:

'Listen, understand, empathise and support – but do not tolerate'

At Horndean Infant School, we believe that every child gets one chance to get the best education. If they are not in school, they are not learning. Every day counts.

Our targets for attendance are:

- Overall attendance to remain above National and Local Authority average and meet or exceed 97%
- To reduce persistent absentee numbers by half from last year's figure (26%) to 13%
- To ensure attendance of Pupil Premium remains above National and Local Authority average and meet or exceed 95%
- To ensure attendance of children with SEN remains above National and Local Authority average and meet or exceed 95%
- To ensure attendance of disadvantaged children is above National and Local Authority average and meet or exceed 95%
- To reduce % of disadvantaged children as persistent absentees from last year's figure to 15%

How will we communicate our vision and targets to staff, pupils, families and other stakeholders?

It is important to ensure all parents understand their responsibility in ensuring their child attends school. Leaders will challenge parents who do not make sure their child attends regularly but also offer support where needed. Expectations are shared with parents as soon as soon as their child joins Year F. Right from the start, parents are guided on how best to establish good routines.

At Horndean, promoting the importance of good attendance is everyone's business. We ensure our vision is communicated regularly through:
- Monthly newsletters – celebration of attendance, reminders of key dates, Attendance tables and weekly winners were also included in the school newsletter.
- School website – attendance policies
- Open days and school events – discussion on importance of attendance, impact of learning and expectations regarding authorised absence
- School Instagram account – celebration (class trophy)
- Assemblies – incentives and celebration (attendance donkeys)

We recognise that absence from school can pose a safeguarding risk for our pupils. We expect good attendance and punctuality from our children. We use the following strategies to ensure that pupils understand this expectation:

Attendance rewards are part of many schools' strategies for communicating the importance of good attendance to pupils.

- Assemblies – We celebrate excellent attendance during whole school assemblies. Every week, the class with the highest attendance receives the 'Attendance trophy'. The attendance display in the school hall will show the winning class for the week.
- Annie and Alfie the 'attendance donkeys' – As a school we have adopted two donkeys from a local sanctuary as attendance 'mascots'. The donkeys give children regular reminders and updates in assemblies about the positive impact of good attendance and punctuality. At the end of each term, children with 98% or above attendance enter a draw to visit Alfie and Annie at the Hayling Island sanctuary.
- Some children receive pastoral support to help with barriers such as attachment and anxiety that may result in poor attendance.

Absence from school affects pupils' attainment, wellbeing and wider outcomes.
It is a known fact that the performance of students with poor levels of attendance will be adversely affected by not being in education and they will fall behind their peers in terms of progress and sometimes their social development too. We work hard to challenge misconceptions about what 'good' attendance looks like and ensure parents and children understand what attendance percentages really mean in terms of missed learning (number of days).
We communicate this to our school community via:

- 'Guide to Attendance' leaflet
- Monthly newsletters – celebration of attendance, reminders of key dates
- School website – attendance policies
- Open days and school events – discussion on importance of attendance, impact of learning and expectations regarding authorised absence
- School Instagram account – celebration (class trophy)
- Assemblies – incentives and celebration (attendance donkeys)

We empower staff to take responsibility for attendance by:

- Offering relevant training during staff meetings and safeguarding updates to help staff to promote good attendance
- Sharing relevant data during pupil progress meetings so that they know which groups are most at risk of poor attendance
- Encouraging class teachers to talk to their pupils about attendance
- Providing teachers with the opportunity to discuss attendance with parents informally during morning 'drop-off'
- Giving staff the necessary attendance vocabulary and encouraging soundbites, like "zero tolerance of low attendance" and "every school day is a great day"
- Making sure staff members model personal punctuality themselves
- Ensure that all pupils are registered accurately
- Promote & reward good attendance at all appropriate opportunities.
- Liaise with the Attendance Leader on matters of attendance and punctuality and
- Communicate any concerns or underlying problems that may account for a child's absence.

We recognise that attendance is an important area of school improvement. We demonstrate our commitment to this by making sure it is resourced appropriately, to create, build and maintain systems to promote good attendance. We do this by:

- Ensuring excellent attendance is built into the vision and values of the school
- Devising an annual action plan to address strengths and areas for improvement
- Targeting part of the pupil premium funding to support the resourcing of incentives (class trophy/prizes)
- Clearly allocating attendance responsibilities among staff (Senior Admin Officer, Admin team, SLT)
- Providing cover and sufficient time for staff to rigorously track attendance and analyse it by pupil groups.
- Providing cover for staff to lead meetings or parenting classes

Our designated attendance champion on the senior leadership team is:
Ben Frank (Headteacher)

Their responsibilities include:

The Headteacher and Office Staff oversee, direct and co-ordinate the school's work in promoting regular and improved attendance and will ensure the Attendance Policy is consistently applied throughout the school. They also ensure that attendance is both recorded accurately and analysed. They ensure that attendance issues are identified at an early stage and that support is put in place to deal with any difficulties.

- Developing and monitoring the school's attendance policy alongside designated governors.
- Tracking and monitoring attendance with the close support of the School Senior Admin Officer
- Support and/or manage other staff with specific responsibilities for attendance
- Devise, implement and monitor any interventions or escalation procedures

We ensure that our staff are trained to use our attendance systems effectively and promote good attendance in school. Examples of the training offered to our staff include:

The National College webinars:

- DfE Guidance on Working Together to Improve School Attendance 2022/23
- Developing a Pupil-Focused Approach to Attendance and Persistent Absence
- Ofsted's Research on Good Attendance and Persistent Absence

Regular weekly updates alongside safeguarding bulletins during staff meetings.

We ensure that our governors have an accurate view of attendance at our school so that they can offer effective support and challenge. We keep governors informed by:

- Termly attendance data analysis shared in Headteacher's reports
- Governors supporting the scrutiny of attendance data and practices through link governor visits

Relationships and Communication

As a school, we understand that developing a welcoming and positive culture is important in building trust and engagement and therefore promoting good attendance. We do this by:

- Staff 'meet and greet' with parents at the beginning and end of the school day
- Offering a wide range of extracurricular activities so that pupils can build better relationships with staff
- Creating an exciting and enriching curriculum that helps pupils feel that their learning is worthwhile. We highlight to pupils what is coming up next in their learning journey, so they do not want to miss any learning.
- Having the headteacher and senior leaders greet pupils on the playground or at the front of the school each morning, to give pupils a warm welcome.
- Ensuring that strong pastoral systems are in place so that pupils and families are supported when needed
- Organising a range of social events for parents to build a sense of community
- Ensuring that staff phone families with positive news, rather than only contacting them when there is a problem.

We strive to communicate effectively with staff, pupils and families so that they understand what to expect and what is expected of them. Our strategies for doing this include:

- Written communications, such as letters home, newsletters and information leaflets
- Online communications, such as the school website, emails and the use of social media
- Telephone contact, including welfare calls and texts to parents, particularly persistent absentees
- Face-to-face interactions, such as parents' evenings, information sessions and parenting workshops.

We understand that some families will face barriers with communication. We take the following measures to ensure that our communication with parents is inclusive:

- Prioritise face-to-face meetings as soon as possible with headteacher or senior leader.
- Using a wide range of methods to inform parents (not written communications alone), SLT on school gate/open door policy
- Using interpreters for families of children with EAL
- Ensuring that powerpoints for open evenings and information-sharing sessions are accessible through the school website
- Offering the option of attending meetings virtually (for example, to support those with work commitments or mobility issues).

When required, we work with partners to promote good attendance. Examples include:

- Social workers
- Family Support workers
- Primary Behaviour Support
- Educational Psychologists

- Local Authority representatives

We strive to model respectful relationships and appropriate communication for staff and pupils. This will help relationships between pupils and staff to reflect a positive and respectful culture.

All staff members should:
- Treat pupils with dignity, build relationships rooted in mutual respect and observe proper boundaries
- Take into consideration the vulnerability of some pupils and the ways in which this might contribute to absence, handling confidential information sensitively
- Understand the importance of school as a place of safety where pupils can enjoy trusted relationships with staff and pupils, particularly for children with a social worker and those who have experienced adversity
- Communicate effectively with families regarding pupils' attendance and wellbeing.

Parents and carers are expected to:

- Treat staff with respect;
- Actively support the work of the school;
- Ask staff for support when this is needed;
- Let us know as soon as possible when there are issues which may affect absence.

We communicate this expectation by:

- Using home-school agreements;
- Making it easy to contact school when there is an issue;
- Promoting our SENCo as a designated contact for families that need extra support.

Systems and Data

We use clear and consistently applied systems and processes to improve, reward and incentivise attendance and to address absences. Our systems include:

The Home/School agreement contains details of how we work with parents and our expectations of what parents will need to do to ensure their child achieves good attendance.
To help us all to focus on this we:

- Report to parents about how their child is performing in school, what their attendance and punctuality rate is and how this relates to their attainment
- Celebrate good attendance by displaying individual and class achievements
- Reward good or improving attendance through class competitions

Parents are expected to:

- Inform the school on the first day of absence
- Discuss with the school any planned absences well in advance
- Support the school with their child in aiming for 100% attendance each year
- Make sure that any absence is clearly accounted for by phone or parentmail on the first and subsequent days of absence
- Avoid taking their child out of school for non-urgent medical or dental appointments
- Only request for leave of absence if it is for an exceptional circumstance

Legally the register must be marked twice daily. This is once at the start of the school day 8.50am and again for the afternoon session at 1pm.

Lateness and Punctuality

- The school day begins at 8.50am and all pupils are expected to be in school at the time. Morning registration is at 8.50am and it closes at 9.15am
- All lateness is recorded daily. Any child arriving after 8.50am is to be signed in at the school office by the adult bringing them to school. This information will be required by the courts, should a prosecution for non-attendance or lateness be necessary
- If a pupil is late due to a medical appointment, they receive an authorised absence coded 'M'. Where possible parents are advised that doctors and dentists appointments should be made outside of school hours or during school holidays.
- On-going and repeated lateness is considered as unauthorised absence and will be subject to legal action
- Parents, guardians or carers of pupils who have patterns of lateness will be contacted by the school Admin team to discuss the importance of good time keeping and how this might be achieved
- If lateness persists, parents, guardians or carers will be invited to attend a meeting at the school with the Headteacher or a member of Senior Leadership Team to discuss the problem and support offered.
- If support is not appropriate or is declined and a child has 10 or more sessions of unauthorised absence due to lateness recorded in any 10 week period the school or the Hampshire County Council will be required to issue parents with a penalty notice in accordance with Hampshire's Code of Conduct for issuing penalty notices for non-attendance.

First Day Absence

A child not attending school is considered a safeguarding matter. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required.
If a child is absent their parent **must** contact us as soon as possible on the first day of absence.

If a child is absent, we will telephone parents on the first day of absence if we have not heard from them; This is because we have a duty to ensure your child's safety as well as their regular school attendance.

Third Day Absence

If a child does not attend school and contact has not been established with any of the named parent/carers after three days of absence the school is required to start a child missing in education procedures as set down by Hampshire County Council Guidance. We will make all reasonable enquires to establish contact with parents and the child including making enquires to known friends and wider family or a visit to the home.

Ten Day's Absence

We have a legal duty to report the absence of any pupils who are absent without an explanation for 10 consecutive days. If the child has not attended school and contact has not been established with the named parent/carer then the Local Authority is notified that the child is 'at risk of missing'.
Children's Services Staff will visit the last known address and alert key services to locate the child.

Persistent Absence

If a child misses 10% (3 weeks / sessions) or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason they are defined as persistent absentees. Where this absence is authorised the school will:

Stage 1 – Letter home notifying parent/carer that their child's attendance has dropped below 90% and is a concern.
Stage 2 – Formal letter from school expressing our continued concern that a student's attendance has not improved.
Stage 3 – Formal letter requiring that parent/carer provides medical evidence to support absence related to illness and advising that absences will be unauthorised unless evidence is provided.
Stage 4 - Parent/carer invited for a formal meeting at the school. Attendance contract signed – Penalty Warning given verbally**.**
Stage 5 – Formal letter sent if parent/carer fails to attend a formal meeting on two consecutive occasions. Letter advises that a FPN or Legal Team referral will be made if attendance does not improve.
Stage 6 – Formal letter to parent/carer advising that a referral has been made to the Attendance Legal Panel or Fixed Penalty Notice given.

Absence for whatever reason disadvantages a child by creating gaps in his or her learning. Research shows these gaps affect attainment when attendance falls below 95%. As such, we monitor all absence thoroughly and all attendance data is shared with the Local Authority and the Department for Education.
If a child has had absence and their attendance level is falling towards 90% we will contact their parent/carer.

Children at this school are dependent on their parents/carers, who are responsible for their level of attendance and punctuality. It is vital that children enjoy coming to school, and whilst being encouraged to attend well and on time, will not carry blame and be made to feel unhappy if their parents are not supportive or effective in these areas.

A Welcome Back

It is important that on return from an unavoidable absence all pupils are made to feel welcome. This should include ensuring that the pupil is helped to catch up on missed work and brought up to date on any information that has been passed to the other pupils.

We ensure that these systems are inclusive and appropriate for all pupils by:

We understand that some pupils face greater barriers to attendance than their peers. These can include pupils who suffer from long term medical conditions or who have special educational needs and disabilities. Their right to an education is the same as any other pupil and therefore the attendance ambition for these pupils should be the same as they are for any other pupil. That said, in working with their parents to improve attendance, we are mindful of the barriers these pupils face and put additional support in place where necessary to help them access their full-time education. This includes:
- Having sensitive conversations and developing good support for pupils with physical or mental health conditions. For example, making reasonable adjustments where a pupil has a disability or putting in place an individual healthcare plan where needed. Considering whether additional support from external partners (including the local authority or health services) would be appropriate, making referrals in a timely manner and working together with those services to deliver any subsequent support.
- Working with parents to develop specific support approaches for attendance for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities, including where applicable ensuring the provision outlined in the pupil's education, health and care plan is accessed

We use robust school systems to provide useful data at cohort, group and individual levels to give an accurate view of attendance, reasons for absence and patterns amongst groups. These groups include:

- Children who have a social worker, including looked-after children;
- Children who are in receipt of Pupil Premium
- Children who speak English as an Additional Language (EAL);
- Children who have Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND).

We analyse attendance data regularly to identify issues and facilitate early intervention. This includes raising concerns with partner agencies that work with families.

- We liaise with social workers assigned to specific families regularly to provide updates regarding significant information including attendance data.

Every member of staff in our school has a role in promoting good attendance. We help staff to know and understand this responsibility by:

- making specific reference to attendance data and trends during staff meetings
- talking about attendance during line management meetings;
- logging incidents and alerting members of staff regarding significant concerns regarding attendance including lateness

Attendance leaders provide the following information to staff to enable them to track the attendance of pupils and to implement appropriate support:

- All staff have access to Arbor, which enables them to print attendance reports for specific children to help monitor trends.
- Half-termly – Admin staff inform class teachers of lowest attenders within the class to ensure teachers can regularly communicate with parents and give praise/take immediate action, where necessary.

The escalation procedures to address absence are:

- understood by pupils, parents and carers;
- implemented consistently;
- reviewed regularly.

We ensure this by:

- providing information about escalation procedures and attendance interventions on the school website, information leaflets and open evenings.
- explaining the systems in place during targeted attendance meetings with families;
- providing training and support for staff who are directly responsible for improving attendance;
- ensuring that a member of the senior leadership team has responsibility for reviewing escalation procedures regularly.

Intervention

We will use the following data to identify where attendance interventions need to be targeted:

- regular monitoring;
- analysis of data from school registers (including analysis of absence codes);
- analysis of punctuality data;
- analysis of trends in attendance (on an individual, group and whole-school level);
- analysis of information recorded on the school safeguarding systems;
- records of interventions offered to individuals and groups and their outcomes;
- information provided by pastoral and other staff.

We will monitor and analyse this data regularly to ensure that interventions are delivered quickly to address absence.

We use specialist staff to support pupils and their families to identify and overcome barriers to attendance. Specific roles and responsibilities include:

- Admin team – to challenge parents, record keep and provide timely data to Senior Leaders.
- ELSA, TALA – to provide children with opportunities to talk about barriers find solutions and implement strategies.
- Teaching staff – to monitor and raise concerns, to support/challenge parents.
- Senior Leadership Team – Monitor and analyse attendance data. Meet with parents and implement legal proceedings if necessary. Liaise with outside agencies.

We will follow local authority codes of conduct, policies and procedures and make referrals for statutory intervention when school-based interventions have not resulted in improved attendance and relevant triggers/thresholds are met. The person responsible for this is:

Sue Pilkington – Senior Admin Officer
Ben Frank - Headteacher

This strategy will be reviewed annually

By: Ben Frank - Headteacher

Date of last review: 10/1/24