

ATTENDANCE POLICY SUMMARY LETTER TO PARENTS SEPTEMBER 2025

Dear parents/carers,

At Hexham First School, we firmly believe that regular school attendance is essential for the educational progress and overall wellbeing of our pupils. We hope this letter helps you keep in mind the key aspects of our attendance policy.

Why regular attendance matters

Consistent school attendance allows your child to:

- Fully engage in learning and make academic progress
- Develop critical social skills by interacting with their friends and teachers
- Grow in confidence in a supportive and nurturing school environment
- Build a sense of routine and responsibility, essential for future success

Attendance support

We understand that some pupils may face challenges that impact their attendance. As a school, we are here to provide support and guidance to pupils and families in such situations. If you encounter any difficulties related to attendance, please do reach out to Mrs Overton, Headteacher, by email at admin@hexhamfirst.co.uk or by telephoning the school office.

Acceptable reasons for absence

We recognise that there are circumstances where a pupil's absence cannot be avoided.

Acceptable reasons include:

- Illness: when your child is unwell, either physically or mentally, and unable to attend school
- Medical appointments: if your child has a medical appointment that cannot be scheduled outside school hours, please notify us in advance and provide relevant documentation (e.g., appointment card, email, or text message screenshot)
- Religious observance: we respect the diverse cultural and religious backgrounds of our pupils. If your child needs to be absent for religious observance, please submit a request and the Headteacher will review it
- Exceptional circumstances: in exceptional situations, such as family emergencies or unforeseen events, please contact the school immediately to discuss the absence

How to report unplanned absences

In the event of an unplanned absence, we ask that you:

1. Contact the school on the day of the absence by calling the school office on 01434 603467, emailing admin@hexhamfirst.co.uk, or messaging Mrs Burke on Dojo before 9am to inform us of your child's absence.
2. Provide a brief reason for the absence, such as illness or family emergency, to help us maintain accurate records.

Term-time holidays

Term-time holidays are generally not permitted during the school year, as they disrupt learning and cause missed opportunities in the classroom. However, we recognise there may be exceptional circumstances requiring a term-time holiday, such as one-off events beyond the family's control (e.g., family bereavement/funerals, family weddings, serious illness of the child or a significant family member).

In such rare cases, please submit a formal request to the Headteacher well in advance using the school's absence request form, available from the school office.

The Headteacher will carefully consider each request and, if deemed appropriate and in the best interest of the child, may grant permission for the term-time holiday. Such instances will only be considered on a discretionary basis, with the pupil's educational welfare as the utmost priority. We appreciate your cooperation and understanding regarding our approach to term-time holidays.

Sanctions for unauthorised absence

In line with the Hexham Partnership, Hexham First School may issue a fine (known as a fixed-penalty notice) for unauthorised absence. If issued, this must be paid directly to the local authority - **£80 within 21 days, or £160 within 28 days**. The decision to issue a fine considers whether the national threshold has been met, namely, 10 sessions of unauthorised absence within a rolling period of 10 school weeks as well as other factors. Before a fine is issued, you will receive a notice to improve to give you a chance to engage with support.

Promoting good attendance

We value and recognise good attendance at Hexham First School by ensuring our curriculum is relevant and engaging for our pupils and that every child is supported to access it fully. We support all pupils to participate in our extended (before and after school) activities, in line with our inclusive ethos. Good attendance is celebrated through our weekly celebration assembly.

We strive to continually improve attendance by building strong relationships with families and carefully monitoring patterns of non-attendance to offer timely support to those who need it.

Please get in touch with any further questions, we will be happy to discuss them with you. Thank you for your cooperation in ensuring your child receives the best possible educational experience.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs Overton