John Hellins Primary School

Attendance Policy

Policy Updated:	October 2026
Approved by Head:	October 2026
Approved by Governors:	October 2026
Review date	October 2028

1. Introduction

At John Hellins, we value excellent school attendance and recognise the essential part it plays in ensuring our children achieve to their best ability in all areas of school life. We are proud of our attendance record and constantly monitor individual attendance to ensure that our children are accessing all available aspects of their education. School staff work closely with families to ensure attendance in school is at the highest possible level.

The school's Senior Attendance Champions are Cathryn Akrill and Gill Wilcox who can be contacted by phone on 01908 542405 or email cakrill@johnhellins.co.uk or gwilcox@johnhellins.co.uk.

2. Aims

- As a school, we aim to maintain an attendance rate of a minimum of 96%.
- We promote parents' and pupils' awareness of the importance of regular attendance and ensure that children and parents feel positive about school.
- We support parents and pupils to ensure that any poor attendance at school improves
- We will remind families, as obliged, that there is a legal requirement for children to attend school regularly.

School staff are kept well informed on the school's aims and the importance of good attendance, the requirements around keeping registers and the school process for managing attendance.

3. Principles

Good attendance is important because:

- Statistics show a direct link between under-achievement and poor attendance
- Regular attenders make better progress, both socially and academically
- Regular attenders find school routines and school work easier to cope with
- Regular attenders find learning more satisfying
- Regular attenders have an easier transfer to secondary school

There are two main areas that will cover why a child is not legitimately attending school (excluding sickness):

1. 'Term time absence' – this may be an unauthorised holiday or other unexplained absence taking place in term time.
2. 'Irregular attendance' – this is generally a longer series of short absences where there has been an unsatisfactory explanation for the absence or no reason provided.

Good attendance is promoted through our school newsletter, as is the impact of irregular attendance and term time absence on academic and social achievement. Annual attendance is also reported to parents in annual school reports with a breakdown of the amount of any time missed.

Our attendance policy is closely linked with our approach to wellbeing and pupil and family support. We strongly believe in the 'support first' approach. Individual pupil and family contexts and circumstances will be considered before any interventions are put in place. Where appropriate, targeted communication and/or support around the importance of good attendance may be provided in discussion with parents and/or pupils through the school wellbeing team, as an alternative or precursor to the three staged process described in Appendix 1.

The three stage process outlined in Appendix 1 promotes good attendance and communicates the impact of irregular attendance. Staged opportunities for parents to engage with school support or improve their child's attendance are provided before a Local Authority Notice to Improve or a referral that may result in a penalty notice may be issued. This process is not applicable to 'term time absence' where an immediate referral that may result in a penalty notice may be appropriate.

4. Term Time Absence

School attendance regulations changed from 1st September 2013 under the Education Regulations 2013. As a result of the 2013 legislation, head teachers are not able to allow any holidays during term time. Any holiday taken will be treated as unauthorised 'term time absence' regardless of the reasons for it. '&Term time absence' may incur a penalty notice as described in Section 7 where the national threshold is exceeded.

Parents requesting term time holiday will receive the letter in Appendix D informing them of this process.

5. Requests for Absence

All requests for absence must be made in writing to the head teacher who will review each request to see if it meets the criteria for authorisation (see below).

Authorised Absence

The 2013 regulations allow head teachers to authorise absence in exceptional circumstances. Examples include:

- Illness (48 hours minimum for a sickness or stomach bug)
- Emergency medical or dental appointment
- Hospital scheduled appointments/treatment

- Days for specific religious observance
- Family or close friend bereavement
- Family crisis
- Other compassionate grounds
- Family wedding/civil partnership taking part on a school day – this does not include travelling to the wedding unless it is abroad
- Offsite examinations, sports or performances
- Visit to a new school

The Head Teacher will not authorise term time holidays for recreational purposes.

6. Irregular Attendance

Where attendance drops below 90%, or a child is absent for ten session or five days within a ten week period, authorised or unauthorised, the three staged process described in Appendix 1 will be followed where appropriate. Absence at this level impacts progress both academically and socially and this process enables us to support families in minimising this impact and ensure that school attendance is valued (see Section 11 Data Analysis and Intervention). A penalty notice may be incurred as described in Section 7.

7. Penalty Notices

A new National Framework for Penalty Notices came into effect from the 19th of August 2024. The aim is to improve consistency in the use of penalty notices across England. The national framework includes:

- A single consistent national threshold for when a penalty notice must be considered of 10 sessions (usually equivalent to 5 school days) for any unauthorised absence within a rolling 10 school week period. The 10 week period may span different terms or school years. For example, 2 sessions of unauthorised absence in the summer term and a further 8 within the autumn term.
- An increase to the rate of a penalty notice from £120 to £160 if paid within 28 days and £60 to £80 if paid within 21 days. If a second penalty notice is issued to the same parent for the same child within a rolling 3 year period, the notice will be charged at the higher rate of £160 with no option for this second offence to be discharged at the lower rate of £80.
- A national limit of 2 penalty notices that can be issued to a parent for the same child within a rolling 3 year period, so at the 3rd (or subsequent) offence(s) another tool must be considered (such as prosecution or another attendance legal interventions).

If you take your child out of school for an accumulative total of 5 days or more (10 sessions) (90%) over a period of 10 weeks, the school will deem this as irregular attendance and will consider a referral to the Local Authority for consideration of legal action.

This could include:

- a Penalty Notice payable up to £160 fine
- prosecution under s444 (1) Education Act 1996, where if convicted you may be fined up to £1,000

prosecution under s444 (1) (a) Education Act 1996 where if convicted you may be fined up to £2,500 and/or 3 months' imprisonment

8. Procedure for Notifying Absence

As a parent you need to:

- Ring or email daily to report any absence with the reason and to say when your child is expected to return
- Aim to arrange dental and doctors' appointments out of school hours or during school breaks
- Keep us updated daily by telephone, letter or email if your child has an extended period of absence due to illness

Absences should be communicated to the school office by phone on 01908 542405 or email office@johnhellins.co.uk. Failure to communicate as required could result in a child's absence being marked as unauthorised. The school will determine if this is the case. Unexplained absences will be followed up by phone calls and home visits and the involvement of outside agencies where required.

For more detailed support on attendance, parents may contact Gill Wilcox (Pupil and Family Wellbeing Leader) or Jodie Matthews (head teacher).

Where a child is absent from school and the absence is not communicated or explained by parents, school will initially contact parents (and all provided contacts) by phone and, where contact cannot be made by 10am, a home visit by two members of staff may be undertaken and/or a welfare check may be requested from the police.

9. Punctuality

Morning registration is prompt at 9am. We have a 15 minute dropping off period from 8:40 - 8:55am. The doors open at 8.40 am. It is important to be on time as the first few minutes of the school day are often used to register the children for attendance, prepare them for the day, and undertake interventions or reading. If your child misses this short but vital session, their work for the whole day may be affected. Late arrivals are disruptive to the whole class and often embarrassing for your child. Arrival after the close of registration at 9am will be marked as late and we will let you know if we have concerns about your child's punctuality.

The school day finishes at 3.15pm. The gates open at 3.05pm and close at 3.20pm.

Leavers

If your child is leaving other than at the end of Year 6 to go to secondary school, parents are asked to:

- Give the school full information about their plans including date of move, new address or at least the town you will be moving to, new school and start date when known, and reasons for moving.
- Confirm the school has your current mobile phone number
- Take our school's details so the new school can easily contact us and records be transferred
- Let us know when you move

10. Children Missing Education

When pupils leave and you have not given the above information, and the school cannot contact you, then your child is considered to be a Child Missing Education. This means that the Local Authority has a legal duty to carry out investigations, which will include liaising with Social Services, the police and other agencies, to try to track and locate your child. By giving us the above information, unnecessary investigations can be avoided.

11. Data Analysis and Intervention

To continue to improve attendance and reduce persistent absence, attendance data is regularly reported and analysed. This enables us to manage attendance issues effectively and within an appropriate time frame. Data is reviewed and analysed on an individual basis, and also across groups and cohorts (including year/class, pupil premium, SEN and EAL). This enables us to identify areas or trends where targeted support from the wellbeing and/or SEN team is appropriate and where other factors may have affected attendance across groups, removing any barriers to good attendance.
Attendance data is reviewed by the Head teacher, SENCO, Business Manager and Wellbeing Leader at the end of every half term. Data is collated and analysed and appropriate action is agreed at half termly review meetings.
The three stage process detailed in Appendix One is followed, in conjunction with the provision of pupil and family support where appropriate (including meetings and phone support). Triggering of the process is managed sensitively and considerately and we ensure that appropriate interventions and support are provided. These may, on occasion, be an alternative to the 'Three Stage Process'. Where necessary, attendance contracts may be used and outside agencies may be contacted for support and referrals made to the Local Authority.

Persistently absent pupils will be tracked and monitored carefully, using a RAG recording system.

12. Appendices

Appendix One - Three Stage Process

- Stage 1 - Where any child's attendance falls below 90%, or any child is not at school for ten sessions or five days within a rolling ten week period, a Stage 1 Letter will be sent home by post (see Appendix A).
- Stage 2 - If, during the following half term, attendance has not increased or a child has again been absent for ten sessions or five days within a rolling ten week period, a Stage 2 Letter will be sent home by post. This letter will set a target of 96% attendance for the subsequent half term.
- Stage 3 - If during the half term following the Stage 2 Letter, attendance has not increased to the target set, or a child has again been absent for ten sessions or five days within a rolling ten week period, a Stage 3 Letter will be sent home by post – which will include a date for the parents to attend a meeting with school to discuss the attendance and may also trigger a referral to the Local Authority.

Note – where the target of 96% is met or exceeded, a positive acknowledgement email will be sent to parent email addresses.

Appendix A – Stage 1 Letter

Dear Parents of xxxxxxxx,

Attendance

At John Hellins, we value excellent school attendance and recognise the essential part it plays in ensuring our children achieve to their best ability in all areas of school life. We are proud of our attendance record and constantly monitor individual attendance to ensure that our children are accessing all available aspects of their education.

Working alongside the Local Authority, we are required to identify any child's attendance that falls below 90%, or any child not at school for ten sessions or five days within a rolling ten week period, as this is classed by the Government as 'Irregular Attendance'. In these instances, we are required to support the child and family to ensure that the attendance at school improves. We are also obliged to remind families that there is a legal requirement for children to attend school regularly.

During the xxxxxxx half term, xxxxxx was absent for xxxxxx sessions. Whilst we realise that these absences have been explained, it is important that we highlight the significant potential impact on your child of this - both academically and socially. As such, we would like to offer support to you and your child, to minimise the impact on your child's progress, and to ensure that school attendance is valued and that you and your child feel positive about school.

I would ask that you consider these attendance figures, and if you would like support with any difficulties, or to discuss any issues surrounding attendance, please contact Gill Wilcox (01908 542405 gwilcox@johnhellins.co.uk)

Yours sincerely

Jodie Matthews
Head Teacher

Appendix B – Stage 2 Letter

Dear Parents of xxxxxxxxx,

Attendance

At John Hellins, we value excellent school attendance and recognise the essential part it plays in ensuring our children achieve to their best ability in all areas of school life. We are proud of our attendance record and constantly monitor individual attendance to ensure that our children are accessing all available aspects of their education.

Working alongside the Local Authority, we are required to identify any child's attendance that falls below 90%, or any child not at school for ten sessions or five days within a rolling ten week period, as this is classed by the Government as 'Irregular Attendance'. In these instances, we are required to support the child and family to ensure that the attendance at school improves. We are also obliged to remind families that there is a legal requirement for children to attend school regularly.

We wrote to you in xxxxxxxxxxx. At the time of the letter sent to you, xxxxxxxxx's attendance was xxxxxxxxxxx. This figure was xxxxxxxxx at the end of the xxxxxxx term during which xxxxxx had xxxxxxxxx absent sessions. Whilst we realise that these absences have been explained, it is important that we highlight the significant potential impact on your child of this, both academically and socially. As such, we are setting a target of 96% for xxxxxxxxx's attendance during this half term. We will review this at the end of the half term and may invite you to come in for a meeting to discuss xxxxxxxxx's attendance and how we can support you and xxxxxxxxxx to increase this. As required by law, we may also refer xxxxxx's attendance to the Local Authority.

Yours sincerely

Jodie Matthews
Head Teacher

Appendix C – Stage 3 Letter

Dear Parents of

Attendance

We wrote to you in xxxx this year regarding xxxx's attendance. At the time of the letter sent to you, xxxxx's attendance was xxxx%. We set a target for this past half term for xxxxx to achieve 96% attendance. Xxxxx's attendance has been xxxxx %. As communicated in my previous letter, we would now like to meet with you on xxxx at xxxxxx to discuss xxxx's attendance and how we can support you and xxxx to increase this. Please can you confirm your attendance to me, or the School Office.

As required by law, we will also refer xxx's attendance to the Local Authority.

Yours sincerely

Jodie Matthews
Head Teacher

Appendix D – Unauthorised Absence Letter

Dear Parents of xxxxx

Thank you for your email notifying us that xxx will be absent from school xxxx. As you may be aware Headteachers are no longer allowed to authorise absence during term time. We will therefore record these absences on the register as unauthorised.
Please be aware of the following when taking your child on holiday in term time:
With the introduction of the new National Framework for Penalty Notices issued by DfE, the following changes are in force for School Penalty Notice Fines issued after 19 August 2024:.
There will be a single consistent national threshold for when a penalty notice must be considered by all schools in England of 10 sessions (a school day is 2 sessions - morning and afternoon) of unauthorised absence within a rolling 10 school week period. These sessions do not have to be consecutive and can be made up of a combination of any type of unauthorised absence. The 10-school week period can span different terms or school years.

<u>First Offence</u>
The first time a Penalty Notice is issued for unauthorised absence the amount will be: £80 per parent, per child if paid within 21 days. Increasing to £160 per parent, per child if paid within 28 days. Any non-payment of the Penalty Notice may be referred to the Magistrates Court

<u>Second Offence (within 3 years)</u>
The second time a Penalty Notice is issued for unauthorised absence the amount will be: £160 per parent, per child paid within 28 days. Any non-payment of the Penalty Notice may be referred to the Magistrates Court

<u>Third Offence and Any Further Offences (within 3 years)</u>

The third time an offence is committed a Penalty Notice will not be issued and the case could be presented straight to the Magistrate's Court.
Prosecution under s444 (1) Education Act 1996, where if convicted you may be fined up to £1,000. Prosecution under s444 (1) (a) Education Act 1996 where if convicted you may be fined up to £2,500 and/or 3 months' imprisonment.

Yours sincerely

Jodie Matthews
Head Teacher