



Hillocks Primary and Nursery School

Policy for Attendance

September 2019

POLICY FOR ATTENDANCE

Aims:

- Ensure pupils attend 'every day possible' so that they access full learning opportunities. The expectation is that children should maintain an attendance of at least 97%.
- Ensure compliance with the parental duty stated under Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 for making sure their child of compulsory school age receives full time education.

Poor attendance has been shown to impact on learning and attainment not just in the current school but throughout a child's education leading to limited life choices. For our pupils to fulfil their potential we have a duty to encourage, support and enforce good attendance. Whilst we recognise the difficulties and challenges for some families in taking holidays, there is a duty on parents and schools to ensure pupils access their full entitlement.

In line with Local Authority guidance, Governors at Hillocks Primary School recognise the necessity of issuing penalty notices where attendance, particularly where absence is unauthorised, fails to meet those standards expected by the school (i.e. attendance should not fall below 90% in any 6-week period).

The school year is structured with sufficient holiday breaks across the year to enable families to arrange holidays outside of term time.

The legal requirement is that parents ensure children attend the school regularly. As such, taking holiday in term time which reduces attendance to below 90% in a 6-week period is deemed by governors not to meet this requirement due to the impact on learning.

Pupils are expected to attend the school for the entire duration of the academic year, unless there is an exceptional reason for absence. There are two main categories of absences:

- Authorised Absence: Is when the school has accepted the explanation offered as satisfactory justification for the absence, or given approval in advance for such an absence.
- Unauthorised Absence: Is when the school has not received a reason for absence or has not approved a child's absence from the school after a parent's request.

The staff and governors believe that:

- An effective attendance policy needs to be supported by parents in partnership with the school.
- Pupils who are working in a stimulating environment with exciting lessons will want to attend the school.
- Pupils need to attend the school regularly, if they are to take full advantage of the educational opportunities and make good progress.
- Establishing good patterns of attendance at an early age, will support positive attendance throughout the school. We therefore expect the same commitment from our parents of children in the Foundation Stage.
- Special consideration and support needs to be given to pupils where medical needs may impact on attendance. We recognise that certain medical conditions and illnesses can impact on attendance and parents should not feel the need to obtain medical proof unless this is part of an ongoing concern and has been requested by the school.
- Poor attendance significantly impacts on learning and progress and therefore there needs to be a rigorous and consistent approach where parents go against the school guidance and expectations.
- Poor attendance and punctuality can be an indication of safeguarding and welfare issues and therefore may need investigation.
- It is important to investigate where poor attendance / punctuality may be due to other issues such as bullying or anxiety.
- The Head Teacher retains the right to authorise holidays where there are extenuating or exceptional circumstances and the Head Teacher may bring particular cases to the governing body for a joint decision.

- Where there are concerns about attendance this needs to be addressed speedily and rigorously to ensure impact on learning is minimalised.

Concerns in attendance can be defined where:

- Parents take children out of school in term time.
- Parents take children out of school at the start of a term / year or prior to or during KS1/KS2 test periods.
- Pupils are absent on individual days whether explained or unexplained.
- There is unexplained absence.
- Patterns of absence (e.g regular Mondays /Fridays).
- Medical needs or extenuating circumstances impact on attendance.

Holidays in term time:

In line with government legislation, school Head Teachers are unable to authorise leave for holidays during term time unless there are **exceptional circumstances** which may be:

- Funeral.
- Wedding (day of the wedding only) of an immediate relative.
- Holidays which have to be taken in term time due to the circumstances of the child / family (e.g medical needs).

N.B This does not include parental job leave / flight availability / cost of holiday.

Parents will be informed within 7 school days as to whether the request has been authorised or unauthorised.

There are approximately 190 school days (380 sessions) a year which pupils are expected to attend. There are also approximately 71 days (142 sessions) of school holidays. This is over 13 school weeks. Please ensure that your holidays are taken during this period.

Percentage Attendance

99% - 100% Excellent

96% - 98.9% Good

95% - 95.9% Satisfactory

93% - 94.9% Requires Improvement (equates to more than 1 day of absence every 4 weeks)

90% - 92.9% At risk of Persistent Absence

Below 90% Persistent Absentee (equates to more than 1 day off every 2 weeks)

Persistent Absence Thresholds

Absence includes holidays, illness, medical appointments and lateness (after registers close at 9.20am).

A persistent absentee has an attendance of 90% or below.

90% attendance is equivalent to 19 days absence in a year. These pupils are missing 4 weeks of schooling a year, it will be very difficult for them to keep up and achieve their best potential.

Pupils with 80% attendance are missing a day of school every week. It will be almost impossible to keep up with work.

Penalty Notices

The Government have set the **persistent absence** threshold to 10% from September 2015, therefore, where the **attendance of a pupil falls below 90% this can lead to a penalty notice** being issued where there are concerns about unauthorised absence or, in cases of illness, the legitimacy of the absence and, following support from the school, attendance does not improve.

N.B Pupils with individual needs will be given particular consideration and support offered to minimize impact of poor attendance.

In line with guidance provided by Nottinghamshire, the Governing Body at Hillocks Primary School have decided that a referral for a penalty notice could be made in the following circumstances:

- More than 3 days unauthorised absence over a 6-week period.
- More than 3 days unauthorised absence where this is for the purpose of a holiday in a term time.
- Where a pupil is persistently late for 6 separate instances over a period of six school weeks and where these are signified as a 'U' in the attendance register.

Penalty notice fine if paid within 21 days is £60 per parent. If paid within 28 days is £120 per parent.

Where a fine remains unpaid the matter may be enforced at the Magistrates Court. The maximum fine for this offence is £1000 per parent, per child. The local Authority will not issue more than two penalty notices per calendar year to any person taking more than two periods of unauthorised absence. Where further absences occur or where the local authority deem it appropriate, enforcement will be dealt with directly by the court.

Home visits

- It is the policy of Hillocks Primary School that staff only make home visits as a short-term intervention, not a long-term solution to a parent's inability to get their children to school. Home visits must never be undertaken alone.
- When attendance is a concern and parents do not attend meetings arranged by the school then referrals will be made to Early Help requesting support for the family without parental consent.

Sickness

- Please notify the school office by 9.20am on the first day of absence. Failure to notify the school office either by phone or text on the first day of absence will lead to the absence being marked as unauthorised.
- We reserve the right to request a Doctors /Consultants letter regarding recurring and frequent illness.
- Please be aware that when a parent telephones the school with information that their child is unable to attend due to illness, or other circumstances or leaves a message on the absence line answer machine, this may not be automatically authorised, particularly if the child then gives us a contradicting reason for their absence. The child's current and previous school attendance will be taken into consideration and as a result the absence may not be authorised.
- Keeping a child off school with minor ailments such as a headache or slight cold is not acceptable and may be unauthorised. Repeated absences will require us to request that you obtain medical evidence from your Doctor. This may be in the form of a date stamped compliment slip confirming your visit, or prescription or medicine bottle. Any of the above is to be shown to a member of staff in the school office. (Please note: that the school is not asking any parent to incur a charge for such information and will not be liable for the cost).
- The school may decide to send a letter requesting medical evidence when there has been no reason given and / or the absence has been for 3 days or longer.
- Persistent absence due to illness may result in a referral to the school nurse.

Lateness

Punctuality is an important life skill. It is also polite.

- Children must be in class by 8.50am. Children must be in the playground 'Before' 8.50am, in order to go into class when the doors open at 8.40am/8.50am, to allow the prompt taking of registers shortly after. Children will be marked 'L' late on the registers if they arrive at school after this time. After the bell has gone the gates are closed and children have to enter through the main entrance.
- Lateness is monitored daily and the attendance lead will follow this up.
- If arrival at the school is after registers have closed at 9.20am, the pupil will receive a 'U' on the register. A 'U' mark equates to an unauthorised absence, although we are aware that the pupil is on the school premises in accordance with health and safety.
- More than 6 unauthorised 'lates' with a 'U' code in a 6-week period could result in a penalty fine.
- If a pupil is late due to a medical appointment, they will receive an authorised absence code 'M' if we have seen proof of the appointment in the form of either a letter, an appointment card or text message. Please be advised that where possible doctors and dentist appointments are to be made outside of school hours or during school holidays.

Promoting good attendance

We celebrate good attendance throughout Hillocks, for example:

- Classes with the best weekly attendance will be awarded certificates and treats at attendance assembly.
- Classes will be awarded a monetary value (£4 for 100% attendance, £3 for 99% attendance, £2 for 98% attendance and £1 for 97% attendance) to accumulate and spend on a class treat.
- Each child will receive a raffle ticket for every whole week completed without absence that will be entered into a draw for a prize. The draw will take place every fortnight. This ensures that pupils with medical conditions which do not allow for better attendance to be achieved, still get rewarded for good attendance.
- Termly and yearly certificates and prizes for 100% attendance.
- Half termly stickers for children achieving attendance that is 97% and above. Research suggests that schools only incentivising 100% attendance have witnessed a reduction in their overall attendance. Therefore, we have created an incentive for good attendance but will always strive for 100% attendance.
- Weekly attendance and punctuality percentages are displayed outside every class room.
- Weekly attendance Super Hero's privileges.

Roles and responsibilities

Governors' Role

Under current government legislation, all absence figures, together with the reasons for absence have to be reported to the Schools Governing Body, Local Authority (LA), and the Department of Education (DfE).

It is the Governors legal responsibility to monitor and evaluate the attendance in their schools.

The schools attendance figures are presented to the Governing Body on a termly basis.

- Agreeing a school policy which enables the school to secure attendance which is at least in line with Government and Local expectations.
- To promote the importance of good attendance throughout the school and local community.
- As Parent Governors, to uphold the agreed Attendance Policy.
- To support the school Head Teacher, where applicable, to make joint decisions.

School Head Teacher Role

- Ensuring parents and carers are informed about the school attendance policy.
- Developing strategies to improve attendance.
- Outlining the importance of maximum attendance to parents at every opportunity: new parents' meetings, open evenings, newsletter.
- Outlining to parents the procedure and importance for notifying the school about pupils' absences.
- Ensuring letters are sent out when attendance becomes a concern.
- Investigating absence related to safeguarding or wellbeing concern.

- Liaising with staff to work with families to improve pupil attendance.
- Enforcing attendance procedures rigorously, including requesting penalty notices to be issued where appropriate.
- Analysing attendance for vulnerable groups with the attendance lead.

Attendance Lead's Role

- To work with the Head Teacher, Governing body, and staff to develop strategies to improve attendance.
- To refer to the Head Teacher, Class Teacher, SENCo where absence may be due to medical needs or welfare issues.
- To deal with requests for leave in term time, within 7 school days.
- To send letters to parents.
- To monitor attendance daily for all pupils and record details.
- To inform a member of the safeguarding team where a pupil is consistently absent.

Class Teacher's Role

- To administer registration efficiently, accurately and promptly.
- To make it clear to their pupils that they value maximum attendance.
- To encourage punctual arrival at the school.
- To be alert to emerging patterns of unauthorised absence and speak to parents where there are any concerns.
- Investigate where absence may be due to issues affecting pupil welfare, bullying / anxiety/ home circumstances and put support in place.
- Refer to SENCo or Head Teacher any concerns.
- To inform the Head Teacher immediately if a child on a protection plan is absent or if there are any concerns what so ever about a child.
- To discuss attendance with parents at parents evening.

Parent's Role

Under Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 the parents and carers are responsible for making sure that their child receives efficient full-time education, suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and any special needs they may have, either by regular attendance at Hillocks Primary School or otherwise. Parents, guardians and carers must ensure that they are fully aware of the school's attendance policy as any absence will have a huge impact on their child's learning. Regular school attendance is essential and parents, guardians and carers, together with school staff all have a part to play in ensuring full potential is achieved.

Parents must ensure that their child is:

- In school 'before' 8.50am daily.
- Inform the school office of any absence before 9.20am and keep us updated with regards to any prolonged absence. If we are not informed of a reason for absence this will be considered as unauthorised.
- Inform us of leave as far in advance as possible.
- Make applications for leave in writing on the schools 'Leave of Absence Form', giving the reason for the request.
- Work with the school, The Family Service and the Education Enforcement Officer to improve lateness and attendance.
- Avoid medical and dental appointments during the school day. Medical appointments don't normally need a full day so children should only be absent for the length of the appointment. They should attend school before the appointment and return to school immediately after the appointment.
- Not take holidays in school term time

Pupil's Role

- To arrive at school 'before' 8.50am
- To report to the member of staff at the main entrance / office if late, after 8.50am

- To attend Hillocks Primary School on every possible day.

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