

Attendance & Truancy

Date	Review Date	Coordinator	Nominated Governor
September 2018	September 2019	K Watson	Dr H Rahanu

Introduction

This is a successful school and your child plays their part in making it so. We aim for an environment which enables and encourages all members of the community to reach out for excellence. For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and your child should be at school, on time, every day that the school is open unless the reason for absence is unavoidable.

It is very important therefore that you make sure that your child attends regularly and this Policy sets out how together we will achieve this.

Why regular attendance is so important

Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any pupil's absence disrupts teaching routines so may affect the learning of others in the same class.

Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is your legal responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

Promoting regular attendance

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility - parents, pupils and all members of school staff.

To help us all to focus on this we will:

- Give you details on attendance in our regular newsletter;
- Report to you on how your child is performing in school, what their attendance and punctuality rate is and how this relates to their attainments;
- Celebrate good attendance by displaying individual and class achievements;
- Reward good or improving attendance through class competitions, certificates and outings/events.
- Run promotional events when parents, pupils and staff can work together on raising attendance levels across the school.

Understanding types of absence

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by the parents), as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required, preferably in writing.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason like illness, medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable cause.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been given. This type of absence can lead to the Local Authority (Participation Team) using sanctions and/or legal proceedings. This includes:

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily
- Truancy before or during the school day
- Absences which have never been properly explained
- Children who arrive at school too late to get a mark
- Shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- Day trips and holidays in term time which have not been agreed
- Excessive illness without medical evidence

Whilst any child may be off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents and the child. If your child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and usually make things worse.

You can support your child by:

Ensuring regular and early bed times

Helping with homework

Having uniform and equipment prepared the night before

Providing a healthy breakfast

Reporting any academic or social concerns promptly

Retaining open & honest communication with your child's school

Being positive about school (even if your own experience was less than positive)

Encouraging your child to invite friends home for play dates

Persistent Absence (PA)

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we need parent's fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

We monitor all absence thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority and you will be informed of this immediately.

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PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully through our pastoral system and we also combine this with academic mentoring where absence affects attainment.

All our PA pupils and their parents are subject to an Action Plan and the plan may include: allocation of additional support through a Mentor or an LSA, use of circle time, individual incentive programmes and participation in group activities around raising attendance. All PA cases are also automatically made known to the Participation Officer.

Absence Procedures

If your child is absent you must:

- Contact us as soon as possible on the first day of absence;
- Send a note in on the first day they return with an explanation of the absence – you must do this even if you have already telephoned us;
- Or, you can visit the school office who will arrange for a member of staff to speak with you.

If your child is absent we will:

- Telephone or text you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you;
- Invite you in to discuss the situation with our Head Teacher and/or Attendance Officer;
- Refer the matter to the Pupil Attendance & Participation Officer if attendance moves below 90%.

Telephone numbers

There are times when we need to contact parents about lots of things, including absence, so we need to have your contact numbers at all times. So help us to help you and your child by making sure we always have an up to date number – if we don't then something important may be missed. There will be regular checks on telephone numbers throughout the year.

The Participation Officer

Parents are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any problems together. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, the school may refer the child to the Participation Officer from the Local Authority. He/she will also try to resolve the situation by agreement but, if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed and unauthorised absences persist, these Officers can use sanctions such as Penalty Notices (currently £60 rising to £120 if unpaid after 21 days. If unpaid after 28 days a summons to Court will be issued for each unpaid Penalty Notice) or prosecutions in the Magistrates Court. The legislation is the Education Act 1996 sec. 444(1) and 444(1A). Parents that have previously been issued

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with Penalty Notices for their children's unauthorised absences, in the event of further unauthorised absences may be summonsed to Court.

"If any child of compulsory school age who is a registered pupil at a school fails to attend regularly at the school, his/her parent is guilty of an offence."

Alternatively, parents or children may wish to contact the Participation Team themselves to ask for help or information. They are independent of the school and will give impartial advice. Their telephone number is 01895 250858 or participationteam@hillington.gov.uk

Lateness

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If your child misses the start of the day they can miss work and do not spend time with their class teacher getting vital information and news for the day. Late arriving pupils also disrupt lessons, can be embarrassing for the child and can also encourage absence.

How we manage lateness:

The school day starts at **8.55am** and we expect your child to be in class at that time.

Registers are returned to the office by **9.05am**. Children who arrive between 9.05am and 9.30am will be given a late mark and recorded as an **authorised absence**.

At **9.30am** the registers will be closed. In accordance with the Regulations, if your child arrives after that time they will receive a mark that shows them to be on site, but this will not count as a present mark and it will mean they have an **unauthorised absence**. This may mean that you could face the possibility of a Penalty Notice if the problem persists.

If your child has a persistent late record you will be asked to meet with the Head Teacher and/or Attendance Officer to resolve the problem, but you can approach us at any time if you are having problems getting your child to school on time.

Exceptional Leave

Taking holidays in term time will affect your child's schooling as much as any other absence and we expect parents to help us by not taking children away in school time. Remember that any savings you think you may make by taking a holiday in school time are offset by the cost to your child's education.

There is no automatic entitlement in law to time off in school time to go on holiday.

1. It is widely known that the link between a student's attendance and attainment is irrefutable.
2. Early poor attendance habits follow through into secondary school and employment.
3. Graduates earn, on average, double that of young people that leave school with no qualifications.
4. All Hillington schools are encouraged to adopt a policy of not authorising Exceptional Leave.

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5. The Head Teacher will meet personally with every family applying for Exceptional Leave to stress the importance of good school attendance habits and links between attendance & attainment.
6. Exceptional Leave will always be refused in Years 2, 6, 9 and 11.
7. Exceptional leave will always be refused when a student's attendance is less than 95%.
8. Exceptional leave should always be refused when school is aware of any truancy.
9. Exceptional leave should always be refused when requests are regular (annual) or when patterns become identifiable.
10. Reasons for Exceptional Leave should be logged on the student's record and shared as part of the transfer/transition process.

The Participation Team can issue Penalty Notices for any unauthorised absence. 'Exceptional Leave' Penalty Notices can be issued to each parent/carer concerned. Please note that it will be per parent per child. Payment within 21 days of receipt of notice is £60 and £120 if paid after this period but within 28 days. If the Penalty Notice remains unpaid you will each receive a summons to Uxbridge Magistrates Court. If unauthorised leave is repeated the Participation Team may summons each parent to Court without a Penalty Notice being issued.

School targets, projects and special initiatives

The school has targets to improve attendance and your child has an important part to play in meeting these targets.

The minimum level of attendance for this school is 95% attendance and we will keep you updated regularly about progress to this level and how your child's attendance compares.

Our target is to achieve better than this however because we know that good attendance is the key to successful schooling and we believe our pupils can be amongst the best in Hillingdon.

Through the school year we monitor absences and punctuality to show us where improvements need to be made. Information on any projects or initiatives that will focus on these areas will be provided in our newsletter and we ask for your full support.

Responsibility for attendance matters

Mrs Kiran Thapar - Head Teacher
Mrs Karen Watson - Attendance Officer

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Summary

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures & its attendance policy to parents and to promote attendance. School attendance data must be available to the Local Authority & the Department for Education. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend.

All school staff are committed to working with parents and pupils as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible. Regular attendance supports optimising your child's attainment. It is also a fundamental part of the Every Child Matters intentions to:

Being Healthy

Being Safe

Enjoying & Achieving

Making a positive contribution

Achieving economic well-being

Date of Policy / Review

Headteacher:	Mrs K Thapar	Date:	September 2018
Chair of Governing Body:	Dr H Rahanu	Date:	September 2018

This policy is reviewed annually and will be reviewed next in September 2019.