



# Reach for the stars.

## HILL VIEW PRIMARY SCHOOL

### ATTENDANCE POLICY

The governing body's key roles are:

- To provide a strategic view
- To support and challenge
- To ensure accountability

#### 1. PRINCIPLES

Regular and punctual school attendance is important. Pupils need to attend school regularly if they are to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them by law. Hill View Primary School fully recognises its responsibilities to ensure pupils are in school and on time, therefore having access to learning for the maximum number of days and hours.

This policy has been written to adhere to the relevant Children Acts, Education Acts, Regulations and Guidance from the Department for Education in addition to guidance from the Local Authority.

Although parents/carers have the legal responsibility for ensuring their child's good attendance, the Headteacher and Governors work together with other professionals and agencies to ensure that all pupils are encouraged and supported to develop good attendance habits. Procedures in this policy are followed to ensure this happens.

Research has shown that children who are persistently late or absent soon fall behind with their learning. Children who are absent from school frequently develop large gaps in their learning which will impact on their progress and their ability to meet age related learning expectations. A child, whose attendance drops to 90% each year, will over their time at primary school, have missed two whole terms of learning.

The principle of a graduated response underpins this policy. Expectations for attendance are clear and where thresholds are crossed the school will endeavour to take every opportunity to work with and support parents/ carers to improve pupil attendance.

#### 2. AIMS

- Improve pupils' achievement by ensuring high levels of attendance and punctuality.
- Achieve a minimum of 96% attendance for all children, apart from those with chronic health issues.
- Create an ethos in which good attendance and punctuality are recognised as the norm and seen to be valued by the school.
- Raise awareness of parents, carers and pupils of the importance of uninterrupted attendance and punctuality at every stage of a child's education.
- Ensure that our policy applies to Reception aged children in order to promote good habits at an early age.
- Work in partnership with pupils, parents, staff and the Education Social Worker so that all pupils realise their potential, unhindered by unnecessary absence.
- Promote a positive and welcoming atmosphere in which pupils feel safe, secure, and valued, and encourage in pupils a sense of their own responsibility.
- Establish a pattern of monitoring attendance and ensure consistency in recognising educational achievement and dealing with difficulties.
- Recognise the key role of all staff, but especially class teachers, in promoting good attendance.
- To safeguard children by ensuring they attend school regularly.

### 3. We maintain and promote good attendance and punctuality through:

- Raising awareness of attendance and punctuality issues among all staff, parents and pupils.
- Ensuring that parents have an understanding of the responsibility placed on them for making sure their child attends regularly and punctually.
- Equipping children with the life skills needed to take responsibility for good school attendance and punctuality appropriate to the child's age and development.
- Maintaining effective means of communication with parents, pupils, staff and governors on school attendance matters.
- Developing and implementing procedures for identifying, reporting and reviewing cases of poor attendance and persistent lateness.
- Supporting pupils who have been experiencing any difficulties at home or at school which are preventing good attendance
- Developing and implementing procedures to follow up non-attendance at school.

## 4. Definitions

### 4.1. Authorised absence

An absence is classified as authorised when a child has been away from school for a legitimate reason and the school has received notification from a parent or carer. For example, if a child has been unwell and the parent telephones the school to explain the absence.

Only the school can make an absence authorised. Parents do not have this authority. Consequently, not all absences supported by parents will be classified as authorised.

### 4.2. Unauthorised absence

An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of the school.

Therefore, the absence is unauthorised if a child is away from school without good reason, even with the support of a parent. This includes, where parents have been asked to provide evidence of the absence but have failed to do so or the evidence does not meet the criteria for the absence to be authorised by the school.

## 5. Procedures<sup>1</sup>

Our school will undertake the following procedures to support good attendance:

- Maintain appropriate registration processes.
- Maintain appropriate attendance data.
- Have consistent and systematic daily records, which give detail of any absence and lateness.
- Follow up absences and persistent lateness if parents/carers have not communicated with the school.
- Inform parents/carers what constitutes authorised and unauthorised absence.
- Strongly discourage unnecessary absence taken during term time, through application forms, letters, fines and legal procedures.
- Work with parents to improve individual pupil's attendance and punctuality
- Seek advice or request enforcement from the LA.
- Report attendance statistics to Governors, Bournemouth LA and the DfE where requested.
- All staff are aware that they must raise any attendance or punctuality concerns to the member of the School Leadership Team with responsibility for monitoring attendance.

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<sup>1</sup> This policy has been updated with reference to the Fast Track to Attendance guidelines that BCP signposted the school to: [https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/downloads/download/1839/school\\_attendance\\_and\\_absence\\_-\\_fast\\_track\\_information\\_for\\_schools](https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/downloads/download/1839/school_attendance_and_absence_-_fast_track_information_for_schools)

## 6. Responsibilities

All members of school staff have a responsibility for identifying trends in attendance and punctuality.

The following includes a more specific list of the kinds of responsibilities, which individuals might have.

### 6.1. **Class teacher:** Class teachers are responsible for:

- Keeping an overview of class and individual attendance looking particularly for either poor overall attendance, anomalies in patterns of attendance and/ or unusual explanations for attendance offered by children and their parents/ carers
- Informing the School Leadership Team where there are concerns and acting upon them
- Emphasising with their class the importance of good attendance and promptness
- Following up absences with immediate requests for explanation which should be noted inside the register
- Discussing attendance issues at consultation evenings where necessary

### 6.2. **Head teacher:** The Head teacher, working with members of the school leadership team is responsible for:

- Overall monitoring of school attendance
- Authorising any absence due to exceptional circumstances.
- Monitoring trends in authorised and unauthorised absence.
- Contacting families where concerns are raised about absence including arranging meetings to discuss attendance issues.
- Monitoring individual attendance where concerns have been raised.
- Deciding when referrals to the Educational Social Worker need to be made.
- Liaising with other professionals to determine potential sources of difficulties and reasons for absence.
- The Headteacher will be supported by the Deputy Head teacher.

### 6.3. **Deputy Head teacher**

The Deputy Head teacher has the delegated responsibility for the day-to-day management of attendance. This includes:

- monitoring attendance,
- Liaising with appropriate professionals and agencies including the Educational Social Worker or appropriate external professional, school staff and parents.
- Meeting and supporting families and individual children to ensure good attendance in line with this policy.

### 6.4. **Administration staff**

Staff in the School Office are responsible for:

- Collating and recording registration and attendance information.
- Taking and recording messages from parents regarding absence.
- Contacting parents of absent children where no contact has been made.
- Recording details of children who arrive late or go home.
- Keeping an overview of class and individual attendance looking particularly for either poor overall attendance, anomalies in patterns of attendance and/ or unusual explanations for attendance offered by children and their parents/ carers and reporting concerns to the Deputy Head teacher and Head teacher.
- Creating and sending standard letters regarding attendance.
- Providing reports and background information to inform discussion with external agencies, including the school's Educational Social Worker.
- Making referrals to the Educational Social Worker.

## 6.5. Parents

Parents/Carers are responsible for:

- Ensuring that their child attends school regularly and punctually unless prevented from doing so by illness or attendance at a medical appointment.
- Contacting the school office on the first morning of absence.
- Informing the school in advance of any medical appointments in school time. For the absence to be recorded as a medical absence we do require evidence from the doctor or dentist. (Appointment card/letter)
- Making requests for authorised absence in term time, only if necessary and for exceptional circumstances, as these are not automatically authorised.
- Talking to the school as soon as possible about any child's reluctance to come to school so that problems can be quickly identified and dealt with.

## 7. Registration

7.1.1. All the school gates open from 8.30 am until 8.50 am. The classroom doors open at 8.40 am this is sufficient for all pupils to come into their classroom and settle for registration and the start of the school day, which begins at 8.50am. <sup>2</sup>

7.1.2. Each class teacher has the responsibility for keeping an accurate record of attendance. Any pupil, who is absent, must be recorded at the beginning of the morning and afternoon session. The class teacher must complete the attendance register by 9.00 am and for the afternoon session by 13.10 (Attendance code / for absent pupils and \ for pupils who are present). These registers are then sent electronically to the school office. Attendance registers MUST NOT be reopened once closed.

7.1.3. All attendance records are documented using Arbor software. Attendance registers are legal documents and are kept secure.

### 7.2. Lateness

7.2.1. Once the gates are closed, the only way to enter the school is via the school office. Any pupil who comes into school this way will be marked as late in the attendance record. Records are kept showing pupils who are late; this is documented on the electronic register for each pupil (Attendance code L). Any child who arrives for school later than 9.15 will be marked as having an unauthorised absence for the morning. (Attendance code U).

7.2.2. Children who have attended a dentist or doctor's appointment and subsequently come to school later than 9.15am will have the absence recorded as a medical absence (Attendance code M).

7.2.3. Children who are persistently late miss a significant amount of learning, often the most important aspect, as the beginning of the day is where the teacher explains the learning and what each child is expected to achieve.

7.2.4. Action will be taken for any child who has 5 late marks over a half term (coded L).

7.2.5. Where there have been persistent incidents of lateness parents/carers will receive a letter advising them of the concerns and the school will provide opportunities for parents/carers to seek support and advice to address these issues.

7.2.6. Further action will be taken for any child whose persistent lateness causes concern and may include referral and involvement of external agencies, such as for any child whose persistent lateness causes concern.

7.2.7. We also write to parents who regularly collect their children late at the end of the day.

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<sup>2</sup> These timings may be changed due to the Pandemic (see Covid 19 Annex)

## 8. Absences

All absences are recorded as either authorised or unauthorised absences on the computer. It is important that the school receive accurate information from parents with reasons for the child's absence. This information is used to determine whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised.

### 8.1. First day Contact

Where a child is absent from school and we have not received any verbal or written communication from the parent, then we initiate a first day contact process, this is part of our Safeguarding responsibility. Office staff check all of the registers from 9.00am to 9.30am on a daily basis, to identify those pupils who are absent. There are occasions when we are unaware why the child is absent, and we will contact the parent to check the reasons for the child's absence.

- 8.1.1. Parent/carer are expected to contact the school by telephone before 9.15 a.m. on day 1 of a child's absence to provide a reason, messages can be left on the school answer machine.
- 8.1.2. The school will contact the parent/carer via text after 9.15 a.m. on day 1 if a pupil is absent without reason.

### 8.2. Second day Contact

The school will contact the parent/carer by text, on day 2 to ascertain the reason for non-attendance; should there still be no response.

### 8.3. From day 3 and Child Missing in Education (CMIE)

- 8.3.1. Telephone contact is attempted on day 3; if this proves unsuccessful, SLT will be notified, an email will be sent, and other contacts called in line with the Child Missing in Education protocols. This may include the LA, social care and the police as necessary... This will then become a Safeguarding matter and the appropriate authorities will be notified as per policy.
  - 8.3.2. A letter is issued requesting notification of the reason for the absence. If this letter is not completed and returned by the specified date, then the absence will be recorded as an unauthorised absence (Attendance Code O)
- 8.4. Absences where a reason has been unable to be ascertained or where the reason given is unsatisfactory will be marked as unauthorised.

## 9. Parental Request for Absence from School

- 9.1. Parents must understand that there is a legal obligation upon them and the school to ensure that their child is in school. There is a form available from the school office and at the end of this document to notify the school of a request for absence. In line with the school's legal responsibility, requests will be declined and recorded as unauthorised unless they are medical or exceptional.  
Note- Where a child's attendance is below 90% evidence of medical appointments, other appropriate appointments, prescriptions given etc. may be requested for the absence to be logged as authorised.
- 9.2. Parental requests for absence in term will only be authorised by the Headteacher if they are satisfied that **exceptional** circumstances exist. Examples of circumstances that are not exceptional may include:
  - Cheap holidays/flights or holidays/flights that have already been paid for
  - Relatives visiting or visiting relatives
  - Absence that coincides with important school events such as the start of term, assessments.
- 9.3. Should a parent wish to submit a request for absence they should write a brief letter to the Head teacher stating their reasons for the request. This will be carefully considered, and a

decision will be made as to whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised. The request will be responded to in writing using the appropriate letter.

## 10. Monitoring Attendance

As described in Section 8 above the school will make reasonable efforts to contact parents where a child is not at school.

The school undertakes regular monitoring of attendance on a 3-weekly cycle. Absences are analysed by Authorised and Unauthorised coding and with reference to the thresholds in Section 11 below. There will be a meeting between the HT/ DHT and the Office Team member responsible for managing attendance. This meeting will consider other factors, including reasons given, and any other factors that are appropriate.

There will be a discussion with reference to the actions described in Section 11: Addressing Attendance concerns and decisions will be made that may include the issuing of letters, telephone contact, arranging a meeting to discuss attendance, contacting and involving external professionals, the issuing of fines, invitation to an attendance panel or some or all the above. The school completes DfE attendance returns and reports to the Governing Body regularly.

We aim to provide support, advice and guidance to parents on getting their children to school and work in partnership with other agencies.

## 11. Addressing Attendance Concerns

Where there are concerns about attendance the following thresholds and procedures will be followed:

### 11.1. Threshold 1: Alert Letter

**Where attendance is 96%<sup>3</sup> or less we will:**

- Issue **Letter 1- Alert Letter** to parents to alert them that their child's attendance is at or below 95%.  
Signposting to [#you've been missed resources & videos.](#)
- Monitor the attendance to check that it improves.

### 11.2. Threshold 2: The School Attendance Review Meeting (SARM)

**Where attendance is 92% or less we will:**

- Send **Letter 2- Concern Letter** to parents and request that they attend a meeting with a member of the SLT to discuss their child's attendance and strategies for improvement if attendance gets to 90%.
- Ask for evidence of any absence that is for medical related issues such as proof of Doctor appointment, prescription note etc.
- Where attendance is below Threshold 2 or 3, all absence during the agreed time period **may be recorded as unauthorised unless evidence can be provided of, for example, appropriate sickness, medical appointments e.g., prescription scripts or other appropriate reasons.**
- Instigate the Fast Track to Attendance Plan (see below)
- Signpost to [#you've been missed resources & videos.](#)
- Should there be no response to **letter 2** or attendance does not improve further action will be taken including potentially a referral made to the Education & Inclusion Locality Team.
- 11.2.3 Consider issuing penalty notice. (See 11.6)
- 11.2.4 Monitor for improvement.

### 11.3. Threshold 3: Where attendance is 85% or less, we will:

- Record this information as a Safeguarding Vulnerability;
- Where unauthorised absence is a significant component of low attendance it is important that urgent action is taken to improve attendance, this may include the

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<sup>3</sup> Unless there is a valid medical reason, or the absence has been authorised as exceptional.

implementation of a TAF/ Early Help process or, where attendance is significantly low, the involvement of Multiagency Workers such as those from Early Help, Inclusion and Attendance or a referral to Children's Services.

- Continue with the Fast Track to Attendance Plan.
- And/ or considering issuing a penalty notice in line with Local Authority procedures.
- Monitor for improvement.

#### **11.4. School Attendance Review Meetings (SARM) & Fast Track to Attendance**

11.4.1. These will be meetings that may be by telephone or remote video to discuss attendance and agree a plan to improve attendance over a 6- and 12-week timeframe.

In the meeting there will be a discussion about the concerns and barriers to good attendance. The Fast Track to Attendance process may be used as an appropriate route to support and improve attendance.

- This is a 12-week process where clear attendance targets are set at the initial meeting and a Parenting Contract is drawn together which is aimed at; resolving any issues preventing regular attendance and identifying any support required to enable regular attendance. The contract is then signed by all parties.
- A Fast-Track Review Meeting is held in six weeks after the initial meeting to review attendance and the contract, making any amendments required.
- A final meeting is then held six weeks later. If attendance has improved and targets have been met, then a support plan will be drawn up to ensure the improvement is maintained.
- If attendance remains poor, then the matter will need to be discussed with the LA where a decision will be made regarding either issuing a Fixed Penalty Notice or initiating legal proceedings.
- Parents/carers need to be advised that as there is a chance that legal proceedings could be initiated, and that the information set out in the contract and contact with them over the Fast-Track period could be used as evidence in court.

11.4.2. The templates and the forms for this process are included in the appendices 2-6

11.4.3 A Review meeting will be set for 6 weeks' time and a further final review meeting will be held at the end of the 12-week process. Where attendance does not improve then a Penalty Notice, legal proceedings and/ or the involvement of external agencies support an improvement in attendance will be instigated.

11.4.3. Alternatively or alongside this the school may instigate an Early Help/ Team Around the Child (TAC) plan to involve multiagency support to address barriers to improve attendance.

#### **11.5. Attendance Panel**

11.5.1. Attendance Panel meetings will take place on a termly basis. These will be formal meetings at which attendance is reviewed with a panel consisting of the HT/ or DHT and a Governor. The Attendance Panel will also review decisions relating to the issuing of penalty notices for those families that are requested to attend. They may also include formal opportunities to call parents to meet to discuss ongoing attendance concerns with the panel and to take decisions and review decisions about persistent absentees and the issuing of penalty notices and legal proceedings. If a parent is requested to be part of the attendance panel meeting, but they do not attend, a decision about the pathway ahead may be taken in their absence.

#### **11.6. Penalty Notices**

11.6.1. Penalty notices may be issued either as a final resort when supportive measures and/ or a Fast Track to Attendance path has not resulted in improved attendance or as the result of a parent taking unauthorised leave of absence in Term Time including, for example, a family holiday.

- Where a parent has taken the pupil on a leave of absence during term-time without the school's authorisation and there are unauthorised absences of at least 10 sessions (5 school days), or
  - If more than one period of absence is taken during term-time within any 12 month period without the school's authorisation and there are unauthorised absences of at least 10 sessions (5 school days) overall, or
  - Where the school has agreed to a specific number of sessions of leave during term-time due to exceptional circumstances, and any additional sessions of unauthorised leave have been taken outside of the agreed period.
- 11.6.2. When a leave of absence is taken and the school has not authorised the absence, the school may request that the Local Authority issues a Fixed Penalty Notice. Before requesting this, the school will ensure that, as far as possible, the parent was aware that this may occur.
- 11.6.3.** Information about BCP's approach to the issuing of Penalty Notice Code of Conduct for failure to ensure regular attendance at School of a registered pupil can be found here:
- <https://www.bournemouth.gov.uk/childreducation/ChildrensSocialCare/Documents/bcp-penalty-notice-code-of-conduct.pdf>
- 11.6.4. The issuing of a Penalty notice is in two stages:
- 11.6.4.1. The issuing of a Formal Warning Notice
  - 11.6.4.2. The Formal Referral to the LA to proceed to issue a Penalty

## **12. External Multiagency Involvement: Children's Services, Inclusion and Family Services**

Regular meetings are held with the Inclusion and Inclusion Service to discuss attendance concerns and cases, and to explore appropriate paths to ensure improvement in attendance can be taken. Following these meetings further letters, contact or referrals may be made.

We discuss pupils:

- 12.1.1. Whose attendance is 96% or less?
  - 12.1.2. who are absent for more than two weeks without a medical certificate
  - 12.1.3. who fail to attend school regularly
  - 12.1.4. who are constantly late
  - 12.1.5. With ten or more unauthorised absences.
- 12.1.6. Report unauthorised absence to the Education Social Worker who may decide to issue a Penalty Notice, which carries a fine of £60 per parent, per child, which increases to £120 if the fine is not paid promptly within 28 days.

## **13. Celebrating Good Attendance**

As a school we will celebrate good and improved attendance, both on an individual level but also for classes or year groups. To avoid discrimination on the grounds of pupils with genuine medical absence needs or who are absent for religious observance we celebrate and reward attendance of those pupils over 97%+, improved attendance, and those who come into school regularly despite significant challenges (such as those with serious illness). We also celebrate punctuality as a criteria for our attendance reward and display and notifications in the newsletter.

### **Monitoring and Evaluation of policy**

The school monitors and reports attendance by type of pupil group to ensure equality and ensure that attendance does not become a barrier to progress. Steps are then taken, including the provision of additional resources for example, to ensure disadvantaged children are not further negatively impacted through absence from school.

**Responsible:** Head Teacher & Deputy Head teacher      **Changed:** Yes

**Reviewed:** November 2020

**Review:** November 2023

## Absence in Term Time - Information for Parent's



### What is good attendance?

As you know at Hill View Primary we make school attendance a priority so that we can assure that your child is receiving the very best opportunity to achieve their full potential. The school's expectation is for all children to achieve a good attendance level of **96% and above**.

### What does the law say?

The government changed the rules on term-time absence in 2013. Under the new rules, you can only allow your child to miss school if:

- He/she is too ill to go in
- You have advance permission from the school.

### When will absence requests be granted?

- Permission for absence will be only be granted in 'exceptional' circumstances.
- The Headteacher will consider each absence request individually and decide whether to grant the absence.
- The Headteacher will also decide how many days your child can be taken away from school if the absence is granted.

#### Exceptional Circumstances

It is at the school's discretion to decide which circumstances are 'exceptional'.

Examples of circumstances that are not exceptional may include:

- Cheap holidays/flights or holidays/flights that have already been paid for.
- Relatives visiting or visiting relatives.
- Days off for birthdays and shopping trips.
- Absence that coincides with important school events such as the start of term.

### What if I take my child on an unauthorised absence?

If you take your child out of school without authorisation (except where he or she is unwell) and their attendance falls below 96%, the school may report this to Bournemouth Local Authority who may take legal action. This could involve:

- A warning letter.
- A fixed penalty notice of £60 per parent, per child if paid within 21 days, or £120 per parent, per child if paid within 28 days.
- A parenting order, education supervision order or school attendance order where your child repeatedly misses school without a good reason.

### Why is it important?

Missing two weeks of school for a holiday might not seem like very much, but it can have a big effect on your child's education. For example, if your child misses two weeks of school every year, this adds up to more than two terms over the child's whole time in school.

Making sure your child attends school as much as possible means:

- Your child will have the same education and opportunities as everyone else in the class
- You will not need to worry about catching up on work, or that your child might fall behind because of missing an important lesson
- Your child will not miss activities at the start and end of term, which are often fun and a chance to develop and sustain friendships.

Having read these notes, if you still wish to apply for a leave of absence for your child please complete the attached. The form should be returned to the school as far in advance of any requested absence. A letter will be sent to you to confirm if your request has been authorised or unauthorised absence prior to the intended absence period. The original signed and completed forms will be retained with pupil's records.

