

Hillside Junior School



Attendance & Punctuality Policy 2024-5

RESPONSIBILITY: Headteacher

Governor: Joy Mason

Last reviewed on:	September 2024
Next review due by:	September 2025

Introduction

The Governors and staff at Hillside Junior School are united in their belief that regular school attendance is the key to enabling children to maximise the educational opportunities available to them. Helping them to become emotionally resilient, confident and competent adults who are able to realise their full potential and make a positive contribution to their community.

Hillside Junior School values all children. As set out in this policy we will work with families to identify the barriers to achieving and maintaining excellent attendance and offer the right service at the right time to try to resolve any difficulties.

The Senior Attendance Champions (Andrew Davies HT and Rachel Mason AHT) and Attendance Officer will monitor attendance and use attendance data to identify any patterns of concern, whilst also celebrating success! Attendance concerns will be raised with parents. If reasons are not known by the school, e.g. a long period of illness, this information may be shared with the Local Authority following concerns. Where we have concerns, or lack of engagement from families to improve attendance, we will follow the schools escalated approach to improving attendance. The schools escalated approach is child-centred and prioritises support and developing strong working relationships with families. We will use the early help process to provide support prior to escalation and consider how we can work with families to enable your child to access their right to education.

Our aim is to always to work in partnership with parents and any referral for consideration of a penalty notice is deemed to be a last resort at Hillside Junior. Attendance figures for each child will be reported to parents as part of the annual report, we will also share a child's attendance profile if we have concerns regarding a child's attendance. Throughout the school year the school will report on the overall attendance figures for children groups. This will be closely monitored for support and reported to the Governing Body.

To support good attendance, and safeguarding we:

- Ensure the school is welcoming and every child feels a sense of belonging and connectedness.
- Ensure the school site is open at the stated times.
- Ensure the regular, efficient, and accurate recording of attendance is complete by every class teacher each day. This further supports our approach to safeguarding within the school.
- Take safeguarding seriously and we will always contact you on the first day that your child is absent from school, this includes before and after-school clubs. If your child arrives late after the close of registration, we will record their arrival at reception and transition the child to class.
- Consider any requests for leave in term time individually.
- Inform the Local Authority of children whose parents have notified the school in writing and have opted for Elective Home Education.
- Work closely with LBH Participation Team.
- Notify the Local Authority of Children Missing in Education – aligned to the DfE 2022 Attendance paper.

A whole school approach to supporting attendance at Hillside Junior School

Securing good attendance at Hillside Junior School cannot be achieved in isolation, and effective practices for improvement will involve working closely with other Leaders within the school. The Senior Attendance Champions will facilitate a whole school approach.

Objectives

- create an ethos and maintain a whole school culture in which good attendance is recognised as the norm and every child aims for excellent attendance.
- make attendance and punctuality a priority.
- set focused targets to improve individual attendance and whole school attendance levels.
- record and monitor attendance and absenteeism and apply appropriate strategies to minimise absenteeism.
- develop a systematic approach to gathering and analysing relevant attendance data.
- provide support, advice and guidance to; parents, children and develop mutual cooperation between home and the school in encouraging good attendance and in addressing identified attendance issues.
- Demonstrate, using rewards, that the school recognises good attendance and punctuality are achievements in themselves.

Hillside Junior School will always work in partnership with our parents

Hillside Junior School recognises that poor attendance is often an indication of difficulties in a child's life and their lived experience. This may be related to problems at home or in school. Parents should inform the school of any difficulties or changes in circumstances that may affect their child's attendance and or behaviour in school, for example, bereavement, divorce/separation, incidents of domestic abuse. This will help the school to identify any additional early help that may be required. Safeguarding is a priority, concerns for any child at any time will be reported to the Designated Senior Lead for Child Protection. We will always follow Keeping Children Safe in Education 2024 and our Child Protection Policy.

Some children are more likely to require additional support to attain good attendance, for example, children who are vulnerable, have a medical need or EHCP plan will be monitored and supported in school. At Hillside Junior School we will proactively identify and follow up on a child's non-attendance and gather information about the child. This will result in taking early action to prevent non-attendance developing and monitoring the impact of targeted support.

The Attendance Officer/Senior Attendance Champions will initially:

- Check records, including any from other schools which the child has attended previously.
- Discuss with staff how the child is coping with the curriculum
- Speak to the Inclusion Manager to establish whether the child is on the Special Educational needs register.
- Consider the voice of the child and understand any difficulties, e.g. curriculum or bullying and their views on the issue could be addressed.

Children whose attendance falls below 90% are Persistently Absent from school, where a child falls under 50% attendance the child will be classified as a Severely Absent child. Ultimately this will indicate that all intervention, and support, offered by Hillside Junior School has not made the expected impact to improve overall attendance. Where attendance remains a concern and all other interventions and support have not made a significant impact, we will escalate with external partners.

Hillside Junior School Day Contact

At Hillside Junior School we expect our parents to make contact at the earliest opportunity on the day of any absence. We will always contact you by email or by calling you. Where we have on-going concerns regarding your child's attendance, we will visit your home address and write to you. We may even invite you to meet with a member of staff to discuss any on-going concerns regarding attendance. It is important that you talk to us; you are legally responsible under Education Act 1996 for ensuring that your child is in school every day and on time. If we cannot contact you, we will continue to make announced and unannounced home visits, regarding any concerns we may have surrounding attendance at Hillside Junior School.

Absence Procedures:

If your child is absent you must:

- Contact the school by 9.15am on the first day of absence;
- Or, you can call into school and report the absence to reception.

If your child is absent we will:

- Telephone you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you
- Invite you in to discuss the situation with our Attendance Officer and/or Headteacher if absences persist
- Parents will be issued with one written reminder requesting a reason for any unexplained absences. Failure to supply a reason for their child's absence(s) within 7 days will lead to the absence(s) being unauthorised.

Punctuality

Doors open for children at 08:35am, the class register will close at 08:40 am. Children arriving after the close of registration will be recorded as late. Late marks will not be authorised and will count as an absence for the school AM session. Punctuality is recorded and this will be added to your child's record of attendance, a letter will be sent to parents every half term regarding attendance concerns of a child. If a child arrives at school from 09:00 am they will be U coded.

The absence will only be authorised if a satisfactory explanation for the late arrival can be provided, for example, attendance at a medical appointment.

The absence will be recorded as unauthorised if a child has arrived late without justifiable cause, for example they woke up late or were waiting for their uniform to dry.

Using attendance data

Children's attendance will be monitored and shared with other agencies and the DfE.

Weekly attendance meetings will be held between the Senior Attendance Champions and the Attendance Officer. Meetings will focus on agreed actions for those children of concern. The purpose of each meeting will be to understand the progress the school is making when supporting identified individuals or groups of children.

Attendance data will be used to identify emerging patterns and trends to inform whole school strategies to improve attendance and attainment. It is the responsibility of school Governors to challenge and support the school regarding overall attendance, regular reports will be presented to this body. The governors will therefore examine closely the information provided for them and seek to ensure that our attendance figures are as high as can be.

Intervention

A range of interventions both informal and formal will be utilised to support children with low attendance. Forging a strong partnership with the parents is crucial if early interventions are to be successful.

When a pattern is spotted, we will discuss with pupils and parents to listen to and understand barriers to attendance and agree how all partners can work together to resolve them. We will aim to remove barriers in school and help pupils and parents to access the support they need to overcome the barriers outside of school. This might include an early help or whole family plan where absence is a symptom of wider issues. Where absence persists and voluntary support is not working or not being engaged with, partners should work together to explain the consequences clearly and ensure support is also in place to enable families to respond. Depending on the circumstances this may include formalising support through an attendance contract or education supervision order.

Parents are responsible for securing full-time education

Parents are responsible for ensuring their children receive a full-time education. Each situation will be dealt with on an individual basis, fairly and equitably always remembering the welfare and safety of the child is the paramount concern.

The term 'parent' includes those who are not a natural parent but have parental responsibility for the child as defined by the Children's Act 1989 or have care of the child as defined by the Education Act 1996.

- Absence can only be authorised by the school; parents do not have this authority. All absences will be treated as unauthorised unless satisfactory evidence for the child's absence has been received. In the first instance contact from the parent will be accepted as evidence. However, if a child's attendance continues to cause concern, parents may be asked to provide medical evidence where absences occur repeatedly due to reported illness. This will usually be in the form of an appointment card, prescriptions etc. Absence may be coded as unauthorised without evidence.
- Parents should wherever possible make all medical and dental appointments outside of the school day. Where this is not possible, children should attend school for part of the day. Appointment cards should always be provided as evidence of medical/dental appointments.
- Unless parents have provided a satisfactory explanation and it has been accepted by the school absence will not be authorised.

Please view the list of responsibilities and expectations regarding parents.

Examples of unsatisfactory explanations include:

- A child's/family member's birthday.

- Shopping for uniform.
- Having their hair cut.
- Closure of a sibling's school for INSET or other purposes.
- "Couldn't get up".
- Illness where the child is considered well enough to attend school without medical authority and in the absence of a communicable disease.
- Leave during term time taken without authorisation of the school
- Head lice – let the school know and letters will then be sent to all parents in a confidential manner.

Transition following long term absence or illness

Absence can significantly interrupt the continuity of children's learning.

During any long-term absence, Hillside Junior School will:

- Maintain contact with the child.
- Carefully plan the transition back to school, ensuring your child feels welcome and gains a sense of belonging.
- Ensure the child once again feels safe in school and if they experience any concerns, they will have an appointed member of staff to work with.
- The Class Teacher and Teaching Assistant will support a child when returning to class and help them with any work they may have missed.

Leave during Term Time

From 1st September 2013, the Government amended the England (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006. Head teachers may only grant leave in 'exceptional circumstances' only.

Parents wishing to apply for leave during term time must send a written request for the attention of the Headteacher before making any arrangements. Retrospective requests will not be considered and therefore will result in the absence being categorised as unauthorised. Each leave during term time request will be considered on an individual basis.

If a child fails to return and contact with the parent has not been made or received, school may take the child off the school's roll in compliance with the Education (Pupil registration, England) Regulations 2006. This means that the child may lose their school place.

If the permission to take leave is not granted and the child is still absent from school, the absence will be **unauthorised**. In such cases the school may consider legal action.

Only in **exceptional circumstances** will absence be agreed. In such cases, consideration will be given to the cultural needs and the family circumstances, such as minority ethnic children returning to their country of origin. In these cases, granting leave for longer periods than normal may be considered justified. In all cases though, parents will be required to justify why the leave needs to be taken during term time.

Persistent Absence

At Hillside Junior School we aim to communicate the importance of attendance with parents and children. We have a particular focus on reducing Persistent Absenteeism at the school. The Persistent Absence threshold for children is currently 10% and Ofsted will use this threshold in its inspection of schools.

The threshold means that any child will be classed as Persistently Absent when they have missed 38 or more sessions. This equates to 19, or more, missed days during the academic year - which is as little as 6 days over each of the three Terms. This also equates to the equivalent of 1 day of absence, or more, a fortnight across a full school year

We will use a 19-day tracking system to make you aware of the number of days your child has missed in education. This will allow us to work together to reduce the number of days and attempt to prevent your child from reaching this number.

Once a child has reached 38 sessions, or 19 days absence, they will be classified as Persistently Absent from school and we will report this to the Local Authority and follow external legal proceedings.

Statutory Duty

Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 states that the parent of every child of compulsory school age receive efficient full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude and ability and any special educational needs they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

A child is of compulsory school age at the beginning of the term following their 5th birthday.

Under the Education Act 1996, the Local Authority has a statutory responsibility to ensure that parents secure education for children of compulsory school age and where necessary, use legal enforcement.

In accordance with the regulations regarding pupils' attendance at school, Hillside Junior School keeps an attendance register on which at the beginning of each morning and afternoon session children are marked present or absent. The marks are electronically processed and stored on the school's central administrative system. This information is shared with the Department for Education.

Legal Sanctions

The school will make every attempt to contact the parent or carer by telephone and in writing. In the first instance we would invite them to discuss attendance unless the absence relates to leave in term time without permission. Where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or not being engaged with, attendance may be enforced where necessary through statutory intervention or prosecution to protect the pupil's right to an education. A referral may be made to the LA under the following circumstances based on the national framework for penalty notices:

- A single consistent national threshold for when a penalty notice must be considered of ten sessions (usually equivalent to five school days) of unauthorised absence within a rolling ten school week period. This may span different terms or school years This will include unauthorised absence for lateness Code U.
- A term time holiday taken without permission would count towards the ten sessions.
- A national limit of two penalty notices that can be issued to a parent for the same child within a rolling 3-year period. At the third (or subsequent) offence(s) other legal prosecution will be considered.

Penalty notices are issued to each parent or carer for each of their children for example two parents with three children would receive a total of six penalty notices, one parent with two children will receive a total of two penalty notices.

From September 2024 each penalty notice is £80 if paid in the first 21 days, from days 22 to 28 the fine doubles to £160 for each penalty notice.

For the second offence issued to the same parent for the same child within a rolling 3-year period will be charged at a higher rate of £160 for days 1 – 28, with no option for this second offence to be discharged at the lower rate of £80.

The Attendance Support Team has asked us to point out that it is not possible to pay these fines by instalments or lower the cost when they have increased, or to simply fine one parent.

Payment can be made online and instructions on how to pay are included on the penalty notice letter.

If a penalty notice is not paid or the Attendance Support Team assesses that that the level of absence warrants court action, the local authority will arrange for a court hearing.

There are a range of sentencing options available to the magistrate including the maximum penalty of a fine of up to £2500 per parent for each offence as well as the possibility of up to three months in prison.

Prosecution

Where intervention through the school's process fails to bring about an improvement in attendance, the local authority will be notified and legal proceedings in the Magistrates Court may be taken. The school will provide the Local Authority with evidence required for a prosecution under section 444/4441 (a) of the Education Act 1996 and will appear as a prosecution witness if required by the court. This is to ensure that parents realise their own responsibilities in ensuring their child's attendance at school.

Section 4441(a) of the Education Act 1996 states that if a parent fails to ensure the regular school attendance of their child if he/she is a registered pupil at a school and is of compulsory school age, then they are guilty of an offence.

Schools, trusts and local authorities are expected to work together and make use of the full range of legal interventions rather than relying solely on fixed penalty notices or prosecution. It is for individual schools and local authorities to decide whether to use them in an individual case after considering the individual circumstances of a family. These are:

- Parenting contracts
- Education supervision orders
- Attendance prosecution
- Parenting orders
- Fixed penalty notices

Children at risk of Missing in Education (CME)

Children Missing Education (CME) are a vulnerable group of children. All agencies who work with children have a duty to support the Local Authority in ensuring all children are safe and looked after appropriately.

CME includes those children who are **missing** (family whereabouts unknown), and are children who are registered on a school roll / alternative provision. This might be a child who is not at their last known address **and either**

- has not taken up an allocated school place as expected, or
- has 10 or more days of continuous absence from school without explanation, or
- left school suddenly and the destination is unknown
 - It is our responsibility as a school to work with the LA Education and Inclusion team, by making referrals.

Celebrating Success

At Hillside Junior School we feel it is important to reward children who have achieved good or improved attendance. We notify parents of our whole school attendance percentage in our newsletter and advise you when we have school attendance campaign weeks. Each week the class with the highest attendance receive additional break time. Any class that has 100% weekly attendance will receive a non-uniform day.

Hillside Junior School will always challenge falling attendance and reward improvements. We are committed to the future of all children that attend Hillside Junior School, and by working in partnership with the school community we believe that together we can achieve more!

We can only achieve this by working in partnership with you, if you have any concerns or anything that prevents your child from attending Hillside Junior School please contact Mr Davies.

Other Policies supporting attendance.

Behaviour Policy

Teaching and Learning Policy.

SEND Offer

Pupil Premium Statement.

Safeguarding offer.

Roles and Responsibilities

Hillside Junior School expectations – Parents:

- i Parents are legally responsible for ensuring their children attend school regularly and may risk prosecution if they fail in this responsibility.
- ii Parents should ensure that their children arrive at school on time, with the correct equipment and in full school uniform.
- iii Parents should support the school by avoiding, if possible, non-emergency medical/dental appointments for their child during schooltime.
- iv Parents should be aware that they do not have the automatic right to take their child out of the school for a holiday during term time.
- v It is the parents' responsibility to inform the school of the reason for a child's absence on the first day of absence and in line with the school's procedures for informing of absence.
- vi All unexplained attendances will be monitored and parents will be kept informed about any attendance concerns relating to their own child. Parents are expected to attend meetings when requested and support the school in responding to ongoing attendance concerns.

Hillside Junior School expectations – Children:

- i. All children should aim to have an excellent attendance and punctuality record for which there will be appropriate rewards.
- ii. All children are expected to be on the school site on time and ready to learn. Children are expected to be punctual to all lessons and registration.
- iii. Children who arrive at school late must follow the correct procedures for recording their lateness and entering their lesson.
- iv. Children who need to leave school for a medical appointment must follow the correct procedures for recording that they have permission to leave and have left the building.
- v. Children must not leave the school without permission, 'truant'; this will be seen by the school as a safeguarding concern as well as a Health and Safety concern.

Hillside Junior School expectations - Class Teacher

The Class Teacher are the key staff members in promoting regular punctual attendance. The Class Teacher will:

- i. provide a good example by always being punctual to registration and meeting children at the door – providing a welcoming environment;
- ii. keep an accurate and up-to-date register of attendance;
- iii. follow the Attendance Policy procedures when dealing with absences and punctuality;
- iv. maintain swift action and effective communication with the SLT and/or School Senior Attendance Champions on all attendance matters concerning the tutor or class group;
- v. ensure that children and young people are aware of the importance of the school attendance target and their own individual attendance targets - where appropriate assist them in monitoring their own attendance rates;
- vi. ensure children receive rewards in relation to attendance and punctuality success – aligned to the Attendance Policy;
- vii. build a welcoming atmosphere in the classroom and provide support as necessary when children return after an absence.

Hillside Junior School expectations - Pastoral team (Senior Attendance Champions and Attendance Officer).

The Pastoral team take responsibility for monitoring the attendance of children and regularly promote the importance of attendance and punctuality. They will:

- i. ensure that their team is aware of their responsibilities with respect to promoting attendance and punctuality and adherence to the attendance policy and procedures;
- ii. ensure that rewards and sanctions for attendance and punctuality follow agreed procedures and align to the school Behaviour and Attendance Policy;
- iii. monitor and track the attendance of vulnerable groups;
- iv. monitor the attendance of individual tutor groups and class groups, following up with irregular patterns of absenteeism that are not being effectively addressed;
- v. liaise effectively with the Senior Attendance Champion and work together on ensuring that appropriate action is taken in the management of absenteeism and poor punctuality;
- vi. have attendance as a regular item during pastoral meetings;
- vii. ensure contact is made with parents of poor attendees – always placing support before sanction.

Hillside Junior School expectations - Attendance Officer

The Attendance Officer is responsible for regularly checking attendance data and ensuring data is accurate and up to date. The Attendance Officer will:

- i. ensure that data is input daily into the attendance management system;
- ii. ensure that parents of absent children are contacted where notification of absence has not been received;
- iii. respond to any parent seeking support on attendance concerns;
- iv. provide regular attendance and punctuality data for relevant staff and external agencies in line with the agreed procedures and timescales;
- v. be responsible for disseminating important attendance information including informing the Senior Attendance Champions of which children are of concern; in-line with the agreed procedures and timescales;
- vi. be responsible for keeping a record of the interventions in place to encourage attendance and for generating all documentation including letters to parents;
- vii. be responsible for liaising closely with the Local Authority's Attendance Team to ensure appropriate levels of intervention take place; referrals are made, and attendance meetings are set up;
- viii. be responsible for managing and maintaining attendance records and systems.

Hillside Junior School expectations – Senior Attendance Champions (Andrew Davies and Rachel Mason)

Attendance Champion: The role of an Attendance Champion in improving children's attendance in schools is critical in ensuring that students attend school regularly and achieve their educational potential. Attendance Champions have a multifaceted role that encompasses various responsibilities and strategies aimed at enhancing attendance rates. Here are some key aspects of their role identify and select the bespoke ones for your school:

- i. **Data Analysis:** Attendance Champions collect and analyse attendance data to identify trends and patterns. They use this information to pinpoint areas of concern, such as high levels of persistent absence, frequent lateness, or particular year groups or demographic groups with attendance challenges.
- ii. **Early Intervention:** Recognising that early intervention is crucial, Attendance Champions identify children at risk of poor attendance. They collaborate with teachers, parents, and support staff to address attendance issues as soon as they arise.
- iii. **Supporting Families:** Attendance Champions work closely with parents and guardians to build positive relationships and engage them in improving their child's attendance. They may conduct home visits, organise meetings, and provide guidance on strategies to promote regular attendance.
- iv. **Mentoring and Coaching:** They help children understand the importance of attending school regularly and provide strategies for overcoming barriers.
- v. **Providing Resources:** Attendance Champions may connect families with resources and services that can help alleviate attendance-related challenges, such as housing support, counselling, or healthcare services.
- vi. **Monitoring and Reporting:** Attendance Champions continuously monitor attendance records and report attendance data to school leadership, governing bodies, and local authorities as required. They ensure that accurate records are maintained.
- vii. **Interventions and Incentives:** Attendance Champions design and implement interventions and incentives to motivate children to attend school. This may include recognition for attendance, recognition programmes, or targeted interventions for specific groups of students.

- viii. **Staff Training:** Attendance Champions provide training to school staff on effective attendance monitoring, reporting, and intervention strategies. They ensure that all staff members understand their roles in promoting attendance.
- ix. **Legal Compliance:** Attendance Champions are knowledgeable about legal requirements related to attendance, including regulations governing authorised and unauthorised absences. They ensure the school complies with these regulations.
- x. **Safeguarding:** Attendance Champions are vigilant for safeguarding concerns related to attendance. They recognise signs of neglect or abuse and report them to designated safeguarding officers or authorities as necessary.
- xi. **Community Engagement:** Attendance Champions may collaborate with community organisations, social services, and local authorities to address attendance issues within the broader community context.
- xii. **Continuous Improvement:** Attendance Champions regularly evaluate the effectiveness of attendance strategies and interventions. They adapt their approaches based on data and feedback to achieve sustained improvements in attendance rates.
- xiii. **Promoting a Positive School Culture:** Attendance Champions contribute to creating a school culture where attendance is valued, and students feel motivated and supported to attend regularly.

