



Attendance and Absence Policy

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Date Approved by Governing Body: February 2024

Date to be reviewed: February 2025



1. Aim

The aim of Little Hill Primary School's attendance policy is to enable the school to provide a consistent practice that encourages and facilitates the regular attendance of all pupils. Regular attendance at school is key to steady pupil progress and enjoyment of learning, and for this reason the school is dedicated to ensuring its attendance policy is adhered to as much as is possible.

Little Hill Primary School takes a whole-school approach to maintaining excellent attendance and it is the joint responsibility of parents, pupils and all staff members to ensure that children are attending school as they should be. We endeavour to work with families to make sure that any problems or circumstances which may lead or be leading to poor attendance are given the right attention and appropriate support.

This document is supported by our policies on **safeguarding, anti-bullying, behaviour and equality**.

2. Legal framework

The Education Act 1996 states that:

The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him to receive efficient full-time education suitable —

- (a) to his age, ability and aptitude, and
- (b) to any special educational needs he may have,

either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

A person begins to be of compulsory school age —

- (a) when he attains the age of five, if he attains that age on a prescribed day, and
- (b) otherwise at the beginning of the prescribed day next following his attaining that age.

Prescribed days are 31 August, 31 December and 31 March

A person ceases to be of compulsory school age at the end of the day which is the school leaving date for any calendar year (the last Friday in June) —

- (a) if he attains the age of 16 after that day but before the beginning of the school year next following,
- (b) if he attains that age on that day, or
- (c) (unless paragraph (a) applies) if that day is the school leaving date next following his attaining that age.

Little Hill Primary School is dedicated to complying with attendance laws set out by the legal framework and the Department for Education's guidance on improving attendance (*Working together to improve school attendance, published May 2022*) and has set out this document accordingly.

3. Roles and responsibilities

Governing body

As part of our whole-school approach to maintaining high attendance, the governing body will:

- ensure that the importance of attendance is made clear by promoting the relevant school policies and guidance directed at parents and staff
- annually review the school's attendance rules and ensure that all provisions are in place to allow school staff, parents and children to implement the rules effectively
- nominate or identify a member of the governing body who will take the lead role in monitoring attendance and coordinating provision and policies for attendance
- ensure that all legislation regarding attendance is complied with and that up-to-date guidelines are communicated to parents, children and staff
- take time at governors' meetings to regularly review and discuss attendance issues that have arisen in order to stay on top of expected attendance targets for the year
- ensure that the school is implementing effective means of recording attendance and organising that data, including for children who are educated off-site
- ensure that they are clear on how to analyse attendance data and how to communicate the findings effectively to parents and staff
- ensure that senior leaders make the necessary referrals to the local authority and other relevant agencies in individual cases of non-attendance
- use any data gathered to devise solutions to problems, make the proper adjustments to attendance coordination and target set for the future
- provide information requested by the Secretary of State, including the termly absence data the department collects.

School leadership team

As part of our whole-school approach to maintaining high attendance, the school leadership team will:

- be active in their approach to promoting good attendance to pupils and their parents, which includes forming positive relationships with families
- ensure that the school's teaching and learning experiences encourage regular attendance and that pupils are taught the value of high attendance for their own progression and achievement
- coordinate with the governing body to monitor the implementation of the attendance policy and its effectiveness, with an annual full review
- ensure that all staff are up to date with the school's attendance process, legislation and government guidance, and that staff are fully trained to recognise and deal with attendance issues
- ensure that legislation and government guidance on attendance is complied with and that they (the leadership team) are up to date with any legislative changes and how to implement them
- nominate or appoint a designated senior leader to take the responsibility of overseeing, monitoring and improving attendance provision and that this person has sufficient time and resources to give to this job
- report to the governing body each term and the lead governor for attendance, on attendance records, data and provision
- ensure that systems to record and report attendance data are in place and working effectively
- develop and engage with multi-agency relationships to help with poor attendance and support families who are having difficulties getting their child to attend
- have in place appropriate safeguarding responses for pupils who are at risk of missing education, having regard to the statutory guidance Keeping Children Safe in Education
- document any specific interventions or steps taken to work with families to improve their child's attendance in case of future legal proceedings
- notify the LA and provide all necessary information when a pupil's name is to be removed from the admission register or when a child's name is added to the admission register other than at the usual point of transition.

- Support pupils who are returning to education following long term absence

Teachers and support staff

As part of our whole-school approach to maintaining high attendance, the school's teachers and support staff will:

- be active in their approach to promoting good attendance to pupils and their parents, which includes forming positive relationships with families
- ensure that the school's teaching and learning experiences encourage regular attendance and that pupils are taught the value of high attendance for their own personal progression and achievement
- ensure that they are fully aware and up to date with the school's attendance process, legislation and government guidance, and that they will speak to another member of staff or seek support if they are unsure how to deal with an attendance issue
- ensure that they are following the correct systems for recording attendance and that attendance is taken daily
- contribute to strategy meetings and interventions where they are needed
- work with external agencies to support pupils and their families who are struggling with regular attendance.
- Track the wellbeing of all pupils (including those that have been absent).

Parents and carers

As part of our whole-school approach to maintaining high attendance, we request that parents:

- engage with their children's education – support their learning and take an interest in what they have been doing at school
- promote the value of good education and the importance of regular school attendance at home
- encourage and support their children's aspirations
- ensure that their children arrive at school on time, appropriately dressed and with the necessary equipment
- follow the set school procedure for reporting the absence of their child from school (**see section 4**), and include an expected date for return
- do everything they can to prevent unnecessary school absences, such as making medical and dental appointments outside school hours
- use the school as a support when they or their child are having difficulties, and work to form a positive relationship with the school so that there is easy communication when a problem arises
- keep the school informed of any circumstances which may affect their child's attendance
- enforce a regular routine at home in terms of homework, bedtime, etc. so that the child is used to consistency and the school day becomes part of that routine. It is vital that the child receives the same message at home as they do at school about the importance of attendance
- do not take their children out of school for holidays during term time. If parents would like to make a special request for this, they may do so to the headteacher (**see section 4.5**)
- inform the school in advance of any proposed change of address for their child(ren) along with the name of the parent with whom the child shall live.

Pupils

As part of our whole-school approach to maintaining high attendance, we request that pupils:

- be aware of the school's attendance rules, and when and what they are required to attend. This will be communicated to them through the school staff, parents and the school timetable
- know that they can speak to members of staff if they are experiencing difficulties at school or at home which may impact on their attendance
- attend all lessons ready to learn, with the appropriate learning tools requested and on time for the class.
- follow the correct set school procedure if they arrive late (**see section 4.8**). This will help the school to monitor attendance and keep accurate records for the child's individual attendance, and is also vital for health and safety in the event of a school evacuation

4. Categories of absence and procedure for reporting absences

Absences will be treated as unauthorised unless a satisfactory explanation for the pupil's absence is given to the school. Parents cannot authorise absences.

Office staff should make it clear on the school register when taking attendance whether a child's absence is authorised or unauthorised. Where staff have concerns regarding absences, they should follow the school's safeguarding procedures.

When a child is to be absent from school without prior permission, parents should inform the school by telephone on the first day of absence and let them know what date they expect the child to return. Alternative arrangements will be made individually with non-English speaking parents or carers.

4.1 Illness

Most cases of absence due to illness are short term, but parents will need to make a phone call to alert the school for each day of absence.

For prolonged absence due to illness, parents will be asked to provide the school with medical evidence such as a note from the child's doctor, an appointment card or a prescription paper. If these are not provided on request, it may result in the absence continuing to be classed as unauthorised.

4.2 Medical or dental appointments

Parents should make every effort to ensure these appointments are made outside school hours. Where it cannot be avoided, children should attend school for as much of that day as possible.

4.3 Authorised absences

There may be some exceptional instances where the school will authorise absence such as for a family bereavement. Absence will only be authorised where the school has given approval in advance.

Unauthorised absences

An absence will not be authorised where the school is not satisfied with the reasons given for the absence, for example, a holiday.

Where parents/carers have failed to ensure that their child of compulsory school age is regularly attending school, we may consider issuing a penalty notice. A penalty notice is a fine (£60 if paid within 21 days, £120 if paid within 28 days) imposed on parents.

When considering whether to issue a penalty notice, we will have regard to:

- the Department for Education's statutory guidance, School Attendance Parental Responsibility Measures.

- section 6 of the Department for Education's non-statutory guidance Working Together to Improve School Attendance
- the local authority's Code of Conduct for issuing penalty notices.

In the event that a penalty notice is issued but is not paid within 28 days, the local authority will decide whether to proceed to prosecution. The local authority also has separate powers to prosecute parents if their child of compulsory school age fails to attend school regularly.

4.4 Exclusion

Exclusion is treated as an authorised absence. The school will arrange for work to be sent home.

4.5 Family holidays and extended leave

Parents should make every effort to ensure that family holidays and extended leave are arranged outside of school term time. Parents may request a leave of absence during term time where there are exceptional circumstances. Requests for leave of this type must be made in writing to the headteacher 2 weeks in advance of the leave being taken. In the case of unforeseen circumstances, such as a family bereavement that requires the child to travel to another country, this will be taken into consideration.

Retrospective applications will not be considered, and this time taken will be processed as unauthorised absence. The headteacher may only grant such requests in exceptional circumstances and the headteacher's decision is final on whether the request is approved, and the length of absence approved.

All requests for authorised absence will be responded to in writing and will outline the details of when the child is expected to return to school. Parents should contact the school immediately if there will be a cause for delay from the stated date of return.

It remains the headteacher's sole decision whether to authorise any request for absence during term time and the headteacher's decision is final

Where permission is granted, the headteacher will confirm the number of days and dates of absence which are authorised.

If permission is not granted, but the child is still absent, the absence is classed as unauthorised and parents may be subject to further action by the school or prosecution by the local authority.

Request for leave will not be granted in the following circumstances: immediately before and during statutory assessment periods or where pupil's absence is already causing concern.

4.6 Religious observance

Little Hill Primary School recognises that there may be times where children of different faiths observe religious festivals that fall outside of school holidays and weekends and will allow authorised absence for these times.

Parents will be aware of these dates and should give the school written notification in advance.

4.7 Late arrival

The attendance register will be taken at the start of the school day and again in the afternoon. In the morning registration takes place at 8.45am. Pupils who arrive after this time will be marked as late.

Pupils who arrive after 8.45am should go straight to the school office to sign in and give a reason for their lateness. Pupils will then be marked as 'late' on the attendance register.

Pupils who arrive after 9.30am, should go straight to the school office to sign in and give a reason for their lateness. Pupils will then be marked as 'unauthorised' on the attendance register.

It is vital that pupils sign in at the office to ensure that appropriate health and safety regulations are followed and that all pupils are accounted for.

Persistent lateness may result in criminal action being taken against the parents.

4.8 Not attending in circumstances relating to coronavirus (COVID-19)

There may be circumstances in which pupils cannot attend school due to coronavirus. The school will adhere to any current guidance issued by the Department for Education relating to the recording of attendance in relation to coronavirus.

If a pupil tests positive for coronavirus, their absence will be recorded as illness.

5. School action: following up absences

Class registers are passed to the school office at the end of the registration period. Where there are unexplained or unauthorised absences, the school will contact the parents/carers and appropriate steps taken if parents are uncontactable. If a pattern of unauthorised absences emerges, we will contact the parent or carer to discuss possible reasons and school support systems that could help.

Parents/carers will be contacted if a pupil gives a reason for an unauthorised absence and there is doubt about the truth of the excuse.

Where pupils have been away for either short or long term, the school will support that child when they re-enter school to help them catch up on any work that they have missed.

Where a child has been continuously absent from school for a period of 20 school days or more and the absence was unauthorised, or where a child has been absent for a period of 10 days following an authorised absence and the further 10 days absence was not authorised and in both cases the school and LA have been unable to establish the whereabouts of the child after jointly making reasonable enquiries, the school may remove the child from the school roll. The school will notify the local authority when such action is taken.

The school may take disciplinary action against any pupils who are discovered to be persistently truanting and parents or carers will be contacted to discuss possible reasons and school support systems that could help. The school may take further action against the parents, including [the issuing of fixed penalty notices and/or] referral to the local authority to begin criminal proceedings against the parents.