

HILLSIDE SPECIAL SCHOOL

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Date reviewed: November 2017

Introduction

Hillside Special School is committed to providing an education of the highest quality for all its pupils and recognises this can only be achieved by supporting and promoting excellent school attendance for all. This is based on the belief that only by attending school regularly and punctually will children and young people be able to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them.

The whole school community has a responsibility for promoting excellent attendance: parents, carers, pupils and all school staff.

School's Roles and Responsibilities

All staff at Hillside Special School have a key role to play in supporting and promoting excellent school attendance and will work to provide an environment in which all pupils are able to learn and feel valued members of the school community. Staff also have a responsibility to set a good example in matters relating to their own attendance and punctuality.

Registration

The school is required to mark the attendance register twice each day: at the start of the day and at the start of the afternoon session. Class teachers are responsible for completing the attendance registers using the prescribed codes (shown below).

REGISTER CODES

CODE	DESCRIPTION	MEANING
/	Present (AM)	Present
\	Present (PM)	Present
B	Educated off site (NOT Dual registration)	Approved Education Activity
C	Other Authorised Circumstances (not covered by another appropriate code/description)	Authorised absence
D	Dual registration (i.e. pupil attending other establishment)	Approved Education Activity
E	Excluded (no alternative provision made)	Authorised absence
I	Illness (NOT medical or dental etc. appointments)	Authorised absence

J	Interview	Approved Education Activity
L	Late (before registers closed)	Present
M	Medical/Dental appointments	Authorised absence
N	No reason yet provided for absence	Unauthorised absence
O	Unauthorised absence (not covered by any other code/description)	Unauthorised absence
P	Approved sporting activity	Approved Education Activity
R	Religious observance	Authorised absence
S	Study leave	Authorised absence
T	Traveller absence	Authorised absence
U	Late (after registers closed)	Unauthorised absence
V	Educational visit or trip	Approved Education Activity
W	Work experience	Approved Education Activity
X	Non-compulsory school age absence	Not counted in possible attendances
Y	Enforced closure	Not counted in possible attendances
Z	Pupil not yet on roll	Not counted in possible attendances
#	School closed to pupils	Not counted in possible attendances

Registers will be called promptly at **9.15** and **1.20** by the class teacher.

Registers will close at **9.30** and **1.30**.

Categorising Absence

A mark will be made in respect of each pupil during registration. Any pupil who is not present at this time will be marked unauthorised absent unless leave has been granted by the school in advance or the reason for absence is already known and accepted by the school as legitimate. Where a reason for absence is given and accepted by the school at a later stage, the register will be amended in such a way that the original entry and the amendment / correction are distinguishable.

School staff will amend the registers to indicate lateness if a pupil arrives after the register closes.

School recognises the clear links between attendance and attainment, and attendance and safeguarding children. If absence is frequent or continuous, and except where a pupil is clearly unwell, staff at Hillside Special School will challenge parents about the need and reasons for their child's absence and will encourage them to keep absences to a minimum. A note or explanation from a child's home does not mean an absence becomes authorised. The decision whether or not to authorise an absence **will always rest with the school**.

Absences will be authorised in the following circumstances:

- (a) where leave has been granted by the school in advance, for example –
 - a pupil is involved in an **exceptional** special occasion e.g. family wedding
 - in **exceptional** circumstances, where permission has been granted for a family holiday for which the parents have sought permission in advance
- (b) where the school is satisfied that the child is too ill to attend;
- (c) where the pupil has a medical appointment (although parents should be encouraged to make these out of school hours wherever possible, and to return their child to school immediately afterwards – or send him/her to school beforehand);
- (d) where there is an unavoidable cause for the absence which is beyond the family's control, e.g. extreme weather conditions;
- (e) the absence occurs on a day exclusively set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parent belongs;
- (f) the pupil lives more than two miles (if he/she is under eight) or three miles (if he/she has reached eight) and no suitable transport arrangements have been made by the Local Authority;
- (g) the pupil is of no fixed abode, his/her parent is engaged in a trade which requires him/her to travel, the pupil has attended school as often as the nature of the trade permits **and**, having reached the age of six, he/she has attended 200 sessions in the preceding 12 months;
- (h) in other **exceptional circumstances** (e.g. a family bereavement) and **for a very limited period**.

Except in the circumstances described above, absences will be unauthorised.

Some examples of reasons for **not** authorising absence would be:

- no explanation has been given by the parent/carer;
- the school is not satisfied with the explanation;
- the pupil is shopping during school hours;
- the pupil is absent for **unexceptional** reasons, e.g. a birthday;
- the pupil is absent from school on a family holiday without prior permission;
- the pupil has been stopped during a truancy sweep and is unable (or the parent/carer is unable) to give a satisfactory reason for the absence.

Approved Educational Activity

Where a pupil is engaged in off-site approved educational activities, the school will check his/her attendance on a daily basis before entering the appropriate code in the register.

Collection and Analysis of Data

A member of the school's office staff will ensure that attendance data is complete, accurate, analysed and reported to the Headteacher.

Accurate attendance returns are made to the DfE within the stipulated time frame.

Systems and Strategies for Managing and Improving Pupil Attendance

1. On a daily basis office staff will go through the registers between 9.30 am and 10.00 and any absences will be noted. If no explanation has been received, school will attempt to contact the parent/carer.
2. If the child returns to school with no explanation of the absence from their parent/carer, a letter/ e-mail will be sent to the parent/carer requesting this information.
3. If a pattern of concern re attendance is developing, the Headteacher will speak to the parent/carer about their child's pattern of absences.
4. If there is no significant improvement, the Headteacher will contact the parents/carers and invite them into school to discuss attendance.
5. Once point 4 is reached the Education Welfare Officer should receive copies of all previous attempts made.

Parents' / Carers' Responsibilities

The prime responsibility for ensuring children receive an appropriate and full-time education rests with parents/carers (defined by the Education Act 1996 as those with parental responsibility and those who have the care of a child), who will be supported and encouraged by Hillside Special School.

The Education Act 1996 states that all children should attend school regularly and punctually. Section 444 of the Act says :-

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

(NB Where the Education Act refers to “he”, it also means “she”)

Hillside Special School expects parents/carers will:

- ensure their children attend the school regularly;
- support their children's attendance by keeping requests for absence to a minimum;

- not expect the school to automatically agree any requests for absence, and not condone unjustified absence from school.

Parents/carers will also be expected to:

- notify school by telephone on the first day of absence and confirm in writing in the home/school book upon their child's return to school;
- ensure their child arrives at school on time, properly dressed and with the right equipment for the day;
- work in partnership with the school, for example by attending parents'/carers' meetings and consultations, taking an interest in their child's work and activities;
- contact the school without delay if they are concerned about any aspects of their child's school life. Hillside Special School will endeavour to support parents/carers to address their concerns.

Conclusion

Regular school attendance is a necessary contributor to ensuring positive outcomes for all children. These include:

- good school attendance supports children in reaching their maximum potential and enjoying the fulfilment this brings;
- the best way to safeguard children is to ensure they attend school regularly;
- regular attendance at school supports children's emotional and social health and development;
- the school curriculum teaches children to be healthy;
- schools and the LA have a statutory duty to promote the safety and welfare of children;
- membership of a school community builds confidence, gives children a sense of belonging and teaches them to contribute to and be responsible for the well-being of others;
- good school attendance supports engagement in further education, employment or training in the future, which in turn helps to support a prosperous and fulfilling life-style.

Reviewing the Policy

The school will review this policy each year.

Equality Impact Assessment

This policy has been screened for potential adverse impact on specific groups within the school community. It is not believed that this policy will have any such adverse impact.

A GUIDE FOR PARENTS/CARERS

1. When does my child need to be in school?

School opens for pupils at 8.45 a.m. Your child should be ready in good time for the school transport to ensure that they arrive on time.

2. Does the school need letters explaining my child's absence or will a phone call do?

We would expect a parent/carer to telephone the school on the first day of absence before 9.30am and confirm in writing in the child's home/school book upon their return. If you do not phone us, we will try to contact you.

If we do not receive an explanation, or if the explanation is unsatisfactory, we will not authorise the absence, and this will be shown on your child's end of year report.

3. What reasons will the school accept for absences?

- Illness
- Dental/medical appointment (Please make routine appointments after school or during the holidays, wherever possible)
- Day of religious observance
- Family bereavement
- **Exceptional** special occasions, eg a family wedding, where permission has been granted in advance using a Special Leave of Absence Request form
- Other **exceptional** circumstances, where permission has been granted in advance using a Special Leave of Absence Request form
- Attending an interview e.g. for college

Except in the case of illness, you should ask for permission for your child to miss school well in advance, giving full details. In cases of recurring absences through illness you may be asked to produce a medical certificate.

4. What is unacceptable?

The school will not authorise absence for day trips, visiting relatives, shopping or birthdays.

5. Will the school contact me if my child is absent?

We would expect a parent/carer to telephone the school before 9.30am on the first day of absence. If you do not phone us, we will try to contact you. This is to ensure your child's safety as well as their regular school attendance. If we do not receive an explanation, or if the explanation is unsatisfactory, we will not authorise the absence, and this will be shown on your child's Annual Review report.

If we are concerned about aspects of your child's attendance or punctuality we will contact you to discuss the best way forward.

6. What can I do to encourage my child to attend school?

Try to make sure your child gets enough sleep and gets up in plenty of time each morning. Ensure that he/she leaves home in the correct clothes and properly equipped. Show your child, by your interest, that you value his/her education.

7. My child is reluctant to come to school. What should I do?

Contact your child's teacher and openly discuss your worries. It is important that we identify the reason for your child's reluctance to attend school and work together to resolve the problem. In some cases you may find it helpful to discuss the circumstances of your child's difficulties with an Education Welfare Officer.

The school may also refer you to an Education Welfare Officer who works with staff and families if difficulties with attendance arise.