

## **Hillside Specialist School & College**

### **WHOLE SCHOOL ATTENDANCE POLICY – Reviewed Nov 2017**

#### **Rationale:**

At Hillside Specialist School & College we recognise that attending school regularly has a positive impact on learning, progress and therefore the best life chances for children. We will encourage good attendance for all pupils, by offering an environment in which pupils feel valued and part of the school community. Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will affect their learning.

A pupils absence can also disrupt teaching/class routines so may also affect the learning of other pupils in the same class. Ensuring a child's regular attendance at school is a parents responsibility and permitting absence from school without good reason creates an offence in law and may result in a prosecution.

Department for Education (DfE) guidance states that all schools should have effective systems and procedures for encouraging regular school attendance and investigating the underlying causes of poor attendance which should be set out in an attendance policy. These systems should be reviewed regularly and modified where necessary to reflect the circumstances of the school.

#### **Aims**

We will:

- Promote a culture across the school which identifies the importance of regular and punctual attendance.
- Make attendance and punctuality a priority for all those associated with the school; including pupils, parents, teachers and governors.
- Further develop positive and consistent communication between home and school.
- Where necessary, set targets to improve individual and whole school attendance levels.

#### **Rights, Roles and Responsibilities**

We will develop a procedural framework which defines agreed roles and responsibilities for:

- Parents and carers
- Pupils
- School staff
- Governors

It will complement this policy, and identify how we will deliver our aims in respect of regular and punctual attendance.

This procedural framework will include guidance on:

- Registration
- Punctuality
- What constitutes unauthorised absence

- Leave of absence
- Systems for monitoring attendance and punctuality for individual pupils
- Systems for dealing with absence
- Criteria and systems for referral to and working with the Pupil Attendance Support Team and School Attendance Consultant
- Systems for monitoring whole school attendance and action planning
- Appropriate alternative curricular arrangements

### **Leave of Absence**

Following the September 2013 amendment to The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, schools cannot authorise any leave other than in exceptional circumstances. In Hillside Specialist School & College the Headteacher is the person authorised by the governing body, to make this decision. If the leave is being requested for a holiday, approval should be obtained prior to making any bookings.

Leave of absence **SHALL NOT** be granted unless:

- a request for leave has been made in advance, by a parent with whom the pupil normally resides, and
- the Headteacher considers that leave of absence should be granted due to the **EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES** relating to the request.

Additional information regarding leave of absence is included with the procedural framework.

### **Religious Absence**

The school will authorise one day of absence per religious festival, e.g. Eid, (i.e. the day set aside by the religious body of which the parent is a member) but no more than 3 days in any one academic year. Parents must request this leave in advance.

Parents may request additional leave in advance and this can only be authorised by the Headteacher if it is felt that an exceptional circumstance applies.

### **Use of Penalty Notices**

In the event of persistent and prolonged unauthorised absence Hillside Specialist School & College can request that the Local Authority issue a Penalty Notice in respect of unauthorised absence. This can include:

- a leave of Absence which is taken without a prior request being made
- leave taken after a prior request has been made and parents have been informed that the period of absence would be classed as unauthorised but the leave is taken regardless of this advice.
- days taken in excess of the agreed period of leave; without good reason.

Parents also risk losing their child's school place if they do not return from leave, as agreed, and readmission cannot be guaranteed.

### **Partnership Working**

Hillside Specialist School & College will work with the Pupil Attendance Support Team, the School Attendance Consultant and other support agencies as appropriate to ensure regular attendance at school. The criteria for referral and areas of responsibility for staff will be set out in the procedural framework.

## **Monitoring, Analysis, Action Planning**

Hillside Specialist School & College will use electronic systems for monitoring attendance at both individual pupil and whole school level, and will analyse patterns and trends of non-attendance to inform future action planning and target setting in respect of whole school attendance matters.

## **Persistent Absence**

The minimum attendance level which is expected at our school is 95%. It is when attendance falls below this level that school will consider whether it is appropriate to offer support in order to improve the situation. Both local and central government pay particular attention to reducing the number of pupils who fall into the persistent absence category. From September 2015 a pupil becomes a persistent absentee when their attendance falls below 90% at any point during the school year; whether the absences are authorised or unauthorised. When attendance nears this level children miss significant amounts of schooling; meaning that their educational progress is put at risk. We need parents' full support in ensuring that attendance does not reach this level. However, if for any reason a child's attendance does fall into this category parents will be asked to do all they can improve the situation.

Families will be supported in this via school's systems for managing persistent absence. This support may involve the need for parents, and children if appropriate, to agree to a parenting contract. Due to the seriousness of a persistent absence status it is highly likely that such cases will be referred to a local authority attendance team (Pupil Attendance Support Team).

Absence data for individual pupils who are classed as persistent absentees are reported to the Department for Education annually; along with termly whole school absence figures.

## **Monitoring the attendance of pupils who are educated off site**

The attendance of all pupils who are educated off site, or those who are dual registered, will be monitored in accordance with the procedures outlined within the procedural framework.

## **Review of Whole School Attendance Policy**

Hillside Specialist School & College will review this policy and the associated procedural framework annually.

**Last review date:** 14 November 2017

**Next review date:** 14 November 2020 (or sooner if required)

## **WHOLE SCHOOL ATTENDANCE POLICY PROCEDURAL FRAMEWORK**

This document forms part of Hillside Specialist School & College's Whole School Attendance Policy. It sets out the rights, roles and responsibilities for parents/carers, pupils, school staff and governors; and the systems and procedures in place to identify how the school will deliver its aims in respect of regular and punctual attendance. It will be reviewed annually.

### **Rights, Roles and Responsibilities**

Hillside Specialist School & College believes that it is important that Parents and Carers, Pupils, School Staff and Governors all work in partnership to encourage good attendance for all pupils. The following is a summary of the rights, roles and responsibilities for individual groups of stakeholders.

#### **Parents and Carers**

- Ensure children attend school regularly and punctually
- Contact school on the first day of absence and provide a reason for non attendance.
- If children are absent for more than 1 day, to inform the school office daily of the continued absence and update as to the reason.
- To avoid leave in term time wherever possible. Where this is not thought possible, contact the school as soon as possible prior to the first proposed day of absence to request authorisation in writing.
- To advise the school if they become aware of problems with attendance
- To co-operate with the school in promoting and improving attendance e.g. attending meetings, participation in Parenting Contracts and supporting the school in agreed intervention/action plans
- Adhere to systems for late registration.
- To try and make routine medical/dental appointments out of school hours. If this is not possible then to make sure children attend school prior to or following the appointment.

#### **Pupils**

- Attend school regularly and punctually
- Acknowledge behaviour needed out of school e.g. early bedtime
- Communicate to parent/teacher if there is an issue that may affect their attendance

#### **School Staff**

The Headteacher has overall responsibility for ensuring that there are appropriate and efficient systems in place to promote and support the school attendance policy, that these are adhered to and training is given where appropriate. The Headteacher is also responsible for liaison with individual families, the School Attendance Consultant and the Pupil Attendance Support Team (PAST) to ensure appropriate support is given where attendance concerns are identified and for liaison with the Local Authority and DfE to ensure that the school conforms to all statutory requirements in respect of attendance.

However, Hillside Specialist School & College believes that all staff have responsibilities and a role to play in promoting good attendance by:

- Providing a welcoming atmosphere for children & safe learning environment
- Ensuring an appropriate and responsive curriculum
- Providing a sympathetic response to any pupil's concerns
- Being aware of factors that can contribute to non-attendance
- Being aware that pupil attendance is the responsibility of all school staff
- Participation in training regarding school systems and procedures
- Willingness to communicate to children and parents about attendance

- Completion of the attendance registers in accordance with legislation and under the direction of the Headteacher

Some staff will have specific individual responsibilities to support the attendance policy and these are outlined in the procedures section of this framework.

### **Governors**

- Ensure compliance with The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, as amended
- Adopt an Attendance Policy and review it annually
- Agree targets for attendance at Hillside Specialist School & College
- Ensure that they receive reports from the Headteacher regarding school attendance as part of the school monitoring or school profiling exercise
- Where the school is not meeting its attendance target, or when the Governors believe there is cause for concern, to require a review of the systems and procedures in place to promote good attendance
- To promote the strong link between attendance and educational attainment to parents and pupils where appropriate and ensure that the school attendance policy and procedures are communicated effectively
- Authorise the Headteacher (or other designated person) to consider and make decisions regarding leave of absence requests.
- Work with the Headteacher in establishing criteria against which leave requests will be considered. This is important to ensure the process is equitable and consistent

### **Procedures**

#### **Registration**

School starts at 9.10am.

Morning Registration is between 09:10am and 09:30am

Afternoon Registration is between 13.00pm and 13:35pm

Each class teacher or their nominated representative is responsible for marking children present in the register at morning and afternoon registration. The registers must be completed and taken to the school office promptly to avoid discrepancies. The class teacher must ensure that the marked register, plus any notes received regarding absence, is returned to the school office by 9.45am and 13:35pm

Any child arriving after registers have been closed will receive a mark that shows them to be on site but **not** count as a present mark and will mean they have an unauthorised absence.

The school office is responsible for entering attendance on the electronic register and for inputting absence codes on a weekly basis.

Pupils arriving at school after the registration periods must go to the main entrance and request entry via the school office. For health and safety reasons pupils arriving late must be accompanied by an adult.

#### **Authorised and Unauthorised Absence**

In every instance it is the Headteacher who determines whether an absence is recorded as authorised or unauthorised. Normally, this decision is made based on information provided by parents/carers. However, in certain circumstances it may be necessary for parents to provide further evidence of reasons for absence before authorisation is granted eg sight of a prescription, prescribed medication, a medical appointment card or similar.

The school office is responsible for maintaining records of reason and length of absence.

- **Parents/Carers are required to contact the school on the first day of absence**, advising of the reason for the absence and expected return date; if known.
- Where a verbal message is taken by school staff this should be relayed to the office staff and the class teacher informed
- Where a written note is received by the class teacher this should be returned to the school office with the register
- Where the absence is for several days, the Parent/Carer is responsible for informing the school office of the continued absence and updating them as to the reason for the absence on a regular basis
- Where the absence is for several days without explanation, or the reason provided is unsatisfactory, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and will be addressed with parents promptly. Schools have a responsibility to report such absence to the Local Authority after a period of 10 school days, or sooner if appropriate
- The reason for absence should be linked directly to the pupil (e.g. illness or medical appointment of/for the child). Reasons for absence relating to parents or siblings may not be authorised

If a child is absent and no contact has been made by the family, the school office will contact the family on the first day of absence, by 10am. If contact cannot be made the Headteacher should be informed and, in the case of prolonged or repeated absence without justification being given, the Headteacher will determine whether a referral to the Pupil Attendance Support Team should be made.

The Headteacher is responsible for determining what is classed as authorised and what is classed as unauthorised absence.

Examples of authorised absence:

- Medical or Dental appointments, which relate directly to the pupil and unavoidably fall during the school day
- Illness of the pupil
- Leave which has been authorised by the Headteacher due to exceptional circumstances

Examples of unauthorised absence:

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily
- truancy before or during the school day
- absences which have never been properly explained
- children who arrive at school after the register has closed
- shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- day trips and leave in term time which have not been agreed
- days that exceed the amount of leave agreed by the Headteacher

The school office is responsible for inputting the appropriate absence code on the electronic register. Where they are not certain whether an absence is authorised or not they should seek advice from the Headteacher.

Office staff may also use the comments facility within SIMS in order to log specific reasons for absence. This facility will allow school staff to monitor and manage developing patterns of absence more effectively and share such information with parents.

### **Signing Out**

The school office is responsible for overseeing the procedure for releasing children where parents/carers have requested and been granted leave during the school day.

Children can only be released to a parent or authorised carer/family member. When an authorised adult is picking up a child within school time the school office is responsible for ensuring that they sign the child out on the electronic InVentry system. The school office is responsible for inputting the appropriate absence code on the electronic register.

When a child leaves the school site after the morning or afternoon register has been taken, the original mark must remain in the register and the InVentry evacuation printout sheet should be referred to during an evacuation situation to ensure all pupils can be accounted for.

### **Leave of Absence**

Following the September 2013 amendment to The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, schools cannot authorise any leave other than in exceptional circumstances. In Hillside Specialist School & College the Headteacher is the person authorised by the governing body, to make this decision. If the leave is being requested for a holiday, approval should be obtained **prior** to making any bookings.

Leave of absence **SHALL NOT** be granted unless:

- a request for leave has been made in advance, by a parent with whom the pupil normally resides, and
- the Headteacher considers that leave of absence should be granted due to the **EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES** relating to the request.

### **Additional Factors for Consideration**

Pupils attend school for a maximum of 190 days each academic year. Regular attendance is vital for your child's educational progress. The Local Authority expects that all parents/carers ensure their children attend school whenever possible. Absence during school time is largely prohibited by regulation and hinders academic progress. Even in exceptional circumstances, the following factors may be taken into account when considering an application for leave:

- Will leave at this point in time be detrimental to the pupil's education?
- Will he/she miss any national tests or examinations?
- Is his/her attendance a cause for concern?
- Is the proposed absence during the month of September or any other transition period?
- Has he/she already had leave during term time this year?
- Did he/she have leave of absence during term time in the previous school year(s)?
- Does he/she have any absences which have been recorded as unauthorised this year?

If work commitments are stated as supporting evidence towards an exceptional reason for requesting leave, parents will/may be asked to provide employer details and any additional evidence which shows why leave cannot be taken during the school holidays

Parents/Carers who need to request leave during term time should complete an application form, available from the school office as soon as possible prior to the first proposed date of absence. The Headteacher will consider the request and advise in writing within 5 days

whether the absence will be authorised or not. The Headteacher may request a meeting with parents before any period of leave is authorised.

### **Use of Penalty Notices**

The school takes unauthorised absence seriously and, particularly in the case of repeated unauthorised absences, will undertake further liaison with the family, pupil, the School Attendance Consultant and the Pupil Attendance Support Team as appropriate. Furthermore, Hillside Specialist School & College will request that the Local Authority issue Penalty Notices in respect of unauthorised absence. This includes;

- leave which is taken without a prior request being made
- leave taken after a prior request has been made and parents have been informed that the period of absence would be classed as unauthorised but the leave is taken regardless of this advice.

Hillside Specialist School & College may also request that the Local Authority issue a Penalty Notice for days taken in excess of the agreed period of leave; without good reason. Parents also risk losing their child's school place if they do not return from leave, as agreed, and readmission cannot be guaranteed.

The school office is responsible for recording leave requests in the electronic register and will retain copies of correspondence regarding requested leave of absence for 3 years. They will also be responsible for highlighting to the Headteacher if absence continues after the notified period. In this instance the Headteacher will undertake further liaison with the family, pupil, the School Attendance Consultant and the Pupil Attendance Support Team as appropriate and a Penalty Notice will be considered.

### **Monitoring, Analysis and Action Planning**

The Governors have determined that the Headteacher has overall responsibility for the monitoring, analysis and action planning of school attendance. The Headteacher is also responsible for ensuring that data is returned promptly to the Local Authority and DfE within deadlines. However, it is expected that the day to day implementation of this will largely rest with the class teachers who take the register and highlight causes for concern and the school office who are responsible for maintaining the school records on attendance and for highlighting causes for concern.

The Headteacher will review the attendance records at least once every half term to check that there are no outstanding causes for concern and that codes are being applied consistently. In addition, the Attendance Lead will address specific concerns as they arise.

The Headteacher is required to review this Whole School Attendance Policy and Procedure Framework annually and to report on attendance matters to the Governors termly. The Governors will also review the Attendance Policy at least annually to ensure that it continues to meet the school circumstances.

If there is a trend of worsening attendance in a particular group of pupils, discussions should be held between the Headteacher and appropriate staff to identify Action Plans to reverse the trend. It should also be reported to the Governors at the next full Governor's meeting.

Hillside Specialist School & College also uses whole school incentive and reward schemes in order to raise the profile of; and promote good levels of attendance. These schemes will be reviewed and changed regularly in order to ensure that children remain interested and motivated.



### **Monitoring the attendance of pupils who are educated off site**

When pupils are **dual registered**, their registration status will acknowledge this. For sessions when a dual registered pupil is expected to attend Hillside Specialist School & College the usual attendance procedures will be followed. When this pupil is expected to attend the other establishment our registers will display the D code (Dual Registration). As the Main School we retain responsibility for dual registered pupils. Therefore, the other establishment will be contacted regularly in order to ensure that this placement continues to be successful.

When pupils are **Present at an Approved Off-Site Educationally Activity** school will decide on the most suitable code.

The Headteacher is responsible for the pupil's education and wellbeing during these sessions. Therefore, before any of these codes are used school must ensure that the following criteria are met:

- ✓ that the activity is broadly educational in nature,
- ✓ it is suitable for the pupil's age and ability,
- ✓ it will complement the pupil's curriculum,
- ✓ it is taking place during the session for which the approved off-site educational activity code is being used, and
- ✓ that suitable supervision arrangements are in place

### **Criteria and Systems for referral to and working with the School Attendance Consultant and the Pupil Attendance Support Team**

The Headteacher is responsible for ensuring consistent referral of regular or unjustified absence. The criteria for referral are outlined in the systems below.

A request for support will be made to the local authority attendance team (Pupil Attendance Support Team) when:

- School have informed parents of their concerns regarding attendance
- School have attempted to employ appropriate strategies in order to improve attendance
- School strategies have failed to prompt the required amount of improvement in attendance OR parents refuse to engage with school support

In addition to the above, the Headteacher (or designated person) can discuss general attendance matters with the Local Authority School Attendance Consultant. The purpose of such discussions would be to:

- Monitor progress towards targets, highlighting any concerns and identifying any action required
- To receive guidance on latest best practice
- To receive information about local and national trends and benchmarking
- To discuss whether current attendance policy and procedures are effective

### **School System for dealing with concerns about Lateness and Absence**

The school office is responsible for advising the Headteacher of pupils who are persistently late or absent as issues arise.

The class teacher is also responsible for raising concerns about lateness or absence of class members to the Headteacher as issues arise.

In addition, the Headteacher will use electronic systems to monitor the attendance of individual pupils at least once per half term.

Once concerns have been raised:

- School will communicate pupil's attendance in writing to all parents on a termly basis and annually in the school advice report.
- The Headteacher (or designated person) will discuss the matter informally with the family (including the pupil)
- Parents and children, if appropriate, will be asked to agree to a parenting contract, or take part in attendance panels, which will include the setting of targets and will be reviewed regularly
- When persistent lateness is an issue and/or parents fail to follow procedures by not accompanying late arriving pupils into school to sign them in, this will be communicated to parents via letter, text or a meeting in school as appropriate
- If lateness/absence persists, and school procedures fail to promote the required level of improvement, the Headteacher will contact the Pupil Attendance Support Team who will attend meetings with the family and Headteacher as appropriate and help school determine whether any further interventions are required. These interventions will include consideration of the use of legal measures.
- Incentive and reward schemes will be used for individual pupils, as appropriate.

### **Alternative provision and use of directions**

There are a range of reasons why pupils might be required to access educational provision at a venue other than their main school. The main reasons are listed below:

- Pupils who have been excluded, either for a fixed period (for more than 5 days) or permanently,
- When a pupil is unable to access provision at their main school for medical reasons
- When a pupil is required to attend another venue for the purpose of improving behaviour; either on a temporary basis or with a view to making a permanent move to the alternative provision (managed move)

When a pupil is required to attend alternative provision, the governors of the main school must issue a written 'direction' informing all parents of the alternative provision which their child is required to attend.

### **Pupils who are unable to attend school for medical reasons**

The introduction of new statutory guidance on 1<sup>st</sup> September 2014 places much more emphasis on the role of governing bodies in ensuring that pupils with medical conditions are able to fully access education in the same way as other pupils. A key element of this responsibility is reducing the amount of time missed by these pupils; whether their condition is short or long term. The school will work with parents and other relevant professionals to minimise absence for reasons of ill health. This may be as a result of specific practices or resources used within school or by sourcing more appropriate provision at another establishment. When education is to be provided at an alternative location, this will always be done via the use of a direction (please see the relevant section of this policy).

### **School System for reintegrating pupils who have had long term absence**

When a pupil has been absent from school for an extended period, the Headteacher, the class teacher and other support services will liaise with the family to ensure that a smooth reintegration is achieved.

### **Communication of Attendance Policy and Procedure**

It is important that the School's Policy on Attendance is communicated to all the stakeholders and that parents, pupils and staff know the procedures and systems that are in place to implement it.

The Governors have determined that:

- The Attendance Policy will be placed on the School Website
- Details of the Policy and the procedure for requesting absence in term time, and signing in and out of school will be disseminated as part of the new parent induction process e.g. induction package
- Reference to the School Attendance Policy regarding leave during term time is to be made clear when the school calendar of dates is sent out each year
- Summary of Responsibilities under the Attendance Policy will be contained in the Home/School Agreement
- Staff responsibilities will be contained in the Staff Handbook
- The Headteacher will ensure that staff receive training regarding their responsibilities in relation to the Attendance Policy and Procedures
- The Headteacher will provide a summary of attendance and causes for concern at least annually to the Governors
- Details of the absence record of the school will be communicated as part of the School Profile/Prospectus
- Attendance and punctuality will be included in newsletters on a regular basis
- Attendance will be reported to parents termly via attendance traffic light letters and annually via the end of year report which will include a certificate of attendance, where applicable