

Attendance Policy – appendix

Hillocks Primary Academy

September 2023

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1 Academy statement

We follow all aspects of attendance guidance outlined in the [Diverse Academies Attendance Policy](#)

The agreed aims of our policy appendix are to:

- Ensure our pupils attend every day possible so that they access full learning opportunities. The expectation is that children should maintain an attendance of at least 97%
- Ensure our parents comply with the parental duty stated under Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 for making sure their child of compulsory academy age receives full time education.

Poor attendance has been shown to impact on learning and attainment, not just in the current academy, but also throughout a child's education leading to limited life choices. For our pupils to fulfil their potential, we have a duty to encourage, support and enforce good attendance. Whilst we recognise the difficulties and challenges for some families in taking holidays, and as an academy we will seek creative solutions to work together with parents, there is a duty on parents and academies to ensure pupils access their full entitlement. In line with Local Authority guidance, the governors at Hillocks Primary Academy recognise the necessity of issuing penalty notices, where attendance, particularly where absence is unauthorised, fails to meet those standards expected by the academy (i.e. attendance should not fall below 90% in any 6-week period). The academy year is structured with sufficient holiday breaks across the year, to enable most families to arrange holidays outside of term time.

Our staff and governors commit to the following at Hillocks Primary Academy:

- An effective attendance policy appendix needs to be supported by parents in partnership with the academy
- Pupils who are working in a stimulating environment with exciting lessons will want to attend the academy
- Pupils need to attend the academy regularly if they are to take full advantage of the educational opportunities and make good progress
- Establishing good patterns of attendance at an early age will support positive attendance throughout the academy. We therefore expect the same commitment from parents of children in our Foundation Stage

Where there are concerns about attendance, we address these speedily and rigorously:

At Hillocks, we define attendance concerns where:

- Parents take children out of our academy in term time

- Parents take children out of our academy at the start of a term / year or prior to or during Key Stage 1/Key Stage 2 test periods
- Pupils are absent on individual days whether explained or unexplained
- There is unexplained absence
- Patterns of absence e.g., regular Mondays / Fridays
- Medical needs or extenuating circumstances impact on attendance

Holidays in term time

In line with government legislation, the Academy Principal, Miss C Gledhill, is unable to authorise leave for holidays during term time, unless there are exceptional circumstances, which may be:

- A funeral
- A wedding of an immediate relative
- Holidays which have to be taken in term time due to the circumstances of the child/family (e.g., medical needs) N.B. this does not include parental job leave / flight availability

Our parents will be informed within 7 academy days, as to whether the request has been authorised or unauthorised.

There are approximately 190 academy days (380 sessions) a year, which your child is expected to attend. There are also approximately 71 days (142 sessions) of academy holidays. This is over 13 academy weeks. Please ensure that your holidays are taken during this period.

2 Roles and responsibilities

Governors Role

Under current government legislation, all absence figures, together with the reasons for absence, must be reported to the governors Local Academy Committee, Local Authority (LA), and the Department for Education (DfE).

It is the Hillocks Local Academy Committee's responsibility to monitor and evaluate attendance on a termly basis:

- Agree that the academy follows the trust overarching policy adhering to national guidance
- Agreeing the academy policy appendix, which enables the academy to secure attendance which is at least in line with government and local expectations
- To promote the importance of good attendance throughout the academy and local community
- As parent governors, to uphold the agreed Attendance Policy
- To support the Academy Principal, where applicable, to make joint decisions

Academy Principal's Role

- Ensuring parents and carers are informed about the academy attendance policy
- Developing strategies to improve attendance
- Outlining the importance of maximum attendance to parents at every opportunity at new parents' meetings, open evenings and newsletters
- Outlining to parents the procedure for notifying the academy about pupils' absences
- Ensuring letters are sent as stated in the procedure, by the Attendance Lead
- Investigating absence where related to safeguarding or wellbeing concerns
- Liaising with staff to work with families to improve pupil attendance
- Enforcing attendance procedures rigorously, including requesting for penalty notices to be issued where appropriate
- Analysing attendance for vulnerable groups with the Attendance Lead.

Attendance Lead's Role

- To attend the attendance network meetings and work with the Academy Principal to develop strategies to improve attendance
- To refer to class teacher, SENDCO or Academy Principal where absence may be due to medical needs or welfare issues
- To report attendance weekly, half termly, termly and annually to the Academy Principal;
- To provide reports to class teachers before parents' evenings
- To deal with requests for leave in term time, in the same week they are received
- To send letters in response to requests as agreed with the Academy Principal
- To send letters confirming referral for a penalty notice
- To analyse patterns in attendance
- To make referrals to the Local Authority i.e., Enforcement, Children Missing in Education, Family Service, Early Help Unit
- To hold attendance meetings with Parents/Guardians
- To provide termly reports for the governors Local Academy Committee
- To provide attendance information for end of year reports.

Attendance Assistant's Role

- To monitor attendance daily for pupils of concern and record details
- To inform Academy Principal/ Designated Safeguarding Lead where a pupil with safeguarding issues is absent
- To process attendance letters

Class Teacher's Role

- To administer registration efficiently and promptly
- To make it clear to their pupils that they value maximum attendance
- To encourage punctual arrival at the academy
- To be alert to emerging patterns of authorised absence and speak to parents where there are any concerns
- Investigate where absence may be due to issues affecting pupil welfare e.g., bullying / anxiety / home circumstances and put support in place
- Refer to SENDCO, Behaviour & Attendance Lead, Academy Principal of concerns
- To inform the Academy Principal/Designated Safeguarding Lead immediately, if a child on a protection plan is absent or if there are any concerns whatsoever about the whereabouts of a child
- To discuss attendance with parents at parents evening.

Parents' Role

Under Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 parents and carers are responsible for making sure that their child receives efficient full-time education, suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and any special needs and disabilities they may have, either by regular attendance at the academy or otherwise.

Parents, guardians and carers must ensure that they are fully aware of the academy's Attendance Policy, as any absence will have a huge impact on your child's learning. Regular academy attendance is essential and parents, guardians and carers, together with our academy staff, all have a part to play in ensuring full potential is achieved.

Parents must ensure that their child/children:

- Are in class ready for teaching by the start of the day at 9.00 am
- Inform the academy of any absence and keep us updated with regards to any prolonged absence. If we are not informed of a reason for absence, this will be considered as unauthorised
- Inform us of leave as far in advance as possible
- Make applications for leave in writing on the Academy's Leave of Absence Form, giving the reason for the request
- Work with the Academy and The Family Service, to improve lateness and attendance
- Avoid medical and dental appointments during the academy day. Medical appointments do not normally need a full day; therefore, children should only be absent for the length of the appointment. They should attend the academy before the appointment and return to the academy immediately after

- Do not take holidays in academy term time

If parents, guardians or carers are worried about their child's attendance at the academy, they should:

- Talk to their child; it may be something simple that they need help in resolving
- Talk to their child's class teacher in the first instance to gain the academy support
- Talk to either Mrs Houghton, the Attendance & Behaviour Lead, or Mrs Weldon, Attendance Assistant

Pupils' Role

- To arrive at the academy for 8:50 am on time.
- To report to the Academy Office if late (after 9:00am).
- To attend the academy on every possible day.

3 Persistent absence thresholds

Absence includes holidays, illness, medical appointments and lateness (after registers close at 9.25am).

A persistent absentee has an attendance of 90% or less. 90% attendance is equivalent to 19 days absence in a year. These pupils are missing 4 weeks of schooling a year; it will be very difficult for them to keep up and achieve their best potential.

Pupils with 80% attendance are missing a day for every week of school. It will be almost impossible to keep up with work.

Penalty notices

In line with guidance provided by Nottinghamshire County Council, the Local Academy Committee at Hillocks Primary Academy, support the process for a referral for a penalty notice, which could be made in the following circumstances:

- More than 3.5 days unauthorised absence over a 6-week period
- More than 3.5 days unauthorised absence, where this is for the purpose of a holiday in term time
- Where parents fail to ensure that their child attends regularly, even though support has been provided by the Academy
- Where there is a repeated pattern of unauthorised absence leading to attendance below 96%
- Where a pupil is persistently late for 10 separate instances over a period of 6 academy weeks and where these are signified as a 'U' in the attendance register.

Penalty notices for poor attendance

The government set the persistent absence threshold to 10% from September 2015, therefore where the attendance of a pupil falls below 90%, this can lead to a penalty notice being issued, where there are concerns about unauthorised absence. The issue of PNs may also be affected in cases of illness, and where the legitimacy of the absence (such as fabricated illness) is open to question and, following continued support from the academy, the attendance does not improve.

Pupils are given support to minimise the impact of poor attendance.

4 Process for monitoring attendance

Percentage Attendance	
99% - 100%	Excellent
96% - 98.9%	Good
95% - 95.9%	Satisfactory
93% - 94.9%	Requires Improvement (this equates to more than 1 day of absence every 4 weeks)
90% - 92.9%	At risk of persistent absence
Below 90%	Persistent absentee (this equates to more than 1 day off every 2 weeks)

When a child's attendance falls below 96%, the academy will send a Concerning Attendance Letter home

- If the concerns persist for another 2 weeks, we will write to the parents/carers advising them that their child's attendance will be monitored for 6 weeks from the date issued on the Concerning Attendance Letter
- If there is no improvement, we will arrange a meeting between the parent/carer and the Attendance Lead. This will be followed by a letter, confirming outcomes of the meeting and informing parents that if attendance does not improve, a request will be made for a penalty fine to be issued
- Where pupils are absent unauthorised for 3 days, a letter will be sent to parents warning that a penalty notice may be issued
- Where there have been concerns shared with parents and support has been offered, but attendance continues to be a concern, a request will be made for a penalty notice.

Sickness expectations

- We expect parents to notify the academy by 9:30am on the first day of any absence of their child. Failure to notify the academy, either by phone or Weduc message, on the first day, or

letter upon a child's return to the academy, will lead to the absence being marked as unauthorised

- We reserve the right to request a doctor's/consultant's letter, regarding recurring and frequent illness
- Please be aware that when a parent telephones the academy with information that their child is unable to attend due to illness, or other circumstances, this may not be automatically authorised, particularly if the child then gives us a contradicting reason for their absence. Your child's current and previous academy attendance will be taken into consideration and as a result, the absence may not be authorised
- Keeping your child off school with minor ailments such as a headache or slight cold is not acceptable at Hillocks Primary and may be unauthorised. Repeated absences will require us to request that you obtain medical evidence from your doctor's surgery. This may be in the form of a date stamped compliment slip, confirming your visit, or prescription or medicine 10 bottle. Any of the above is to be shown to a member of staff in the Academy Office. (Please note that the Academy is not asking any parent to incur a charge for such information and will not be liable for the cost)
- The Academy may decide to send a letter requesting medical evidence, when there has been no reason given and/or the absence has been 3.5 days or longer
- Persistent absence due to illness may result in a referral to the School Nursing Team.

Lateness expectations

At Hillocks Primary we expect good punctuality and recognise that it is an important life skill for our children to learn.

Our expectations and procedures regarding punctuality are as follows:

- Our children must be in class by 09.00 each day. The doors open at 08:50 to allow all children to be in class by 09.00. Registers will be taken as soon as possible after that time.
- Our children will be marked late if they arrive at the academy after 09:10, when they must enter through the main entrance
- If the arrival at the academy is after the registers have closed at 09.10, the pupil will receive an 'L' up until 09.25. After such time, the pupil will receive a 'U' which equates to an unauthorised absence, although we are aware that the pupil is on the academy premises, in accordance with health and safety
- More than 6 unauthorised incidents of arriving late with a 'U' code in a 6-week period, could result in a penalty fine
- If a pupil is late due to a medical appointment, they will receive an authorised absence coded 'M' if we have seen proof of the appointment, in the form of either a letter, an appointment card or text message.

- We expect that where possible; doctor and dentist appointments are to be made outside of academy hours or during academy holidays.

5 Rewards and recognition

6.1 Good attendance at Hillocks will be recognised informally through discussion with children and families. Where there has been an improvement in persistent absence, a letter of recognition will be sent to the family.

6.2 There are weekly class awards, announced in assembly, for the best attendance and where appropriate, the most improved class attendance.

6.3 The academy uses the HERO motto, which is 'Here, Every day, Ready to learn, On time'.

6 Attendance and curriculum

Children will be clear about the importance of good attendance and its impact on attainment, emotional well-being and future opportunities. This will be explicitly taught through whole school assemblies and addressed in the classroom as appropriate. All staff are committed to building positive relationships with children and families in order to promote good attendance. There is a supportive culture of questioning non-attendance and discussing reasons.

7 Attendance personnel / key contacts

Staff contacts

Rebecca Houghton (Assistant Principal)

01623 408785

rhoughton@hillocksprimary-ac.org.uk

Suzy Meeson (Family Support Worker)

01623 408785

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8 Appendix review

This policy appendix is reviewed annually to reflect national guidance and local academy strategies to managing attendance.