



# **HILLINGDON PRIMARY SCHOOL**

## **Attendance Policy**

### **Document Control**

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September 2024	Statutory updates approved	Ops Group
October 2024	Adopted and implemented by the school	Co-Principals
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# Elliot Foundation Academies Trust Values

## 1. Put children first

- a. We trust and value your professionalism
- b. We share the responsibility for the learning and welfare of all of our children
- c. Our purpose is to improve the lives of children

## 2. Be safe

- a. Don't assume that someone else will do it
- b. Look after yourself, your colleagues and all children
- c. We are all responsible for each other's safety and well being
- d. Discuss any concerns with an appropriate member of staff

## 3. Be kind & respect all

- a. People are allowed to be different as are you
- b. Kindness creates the positive environment we all need to flourish
- c. This kindness should extend to ourselves as well as to others

## 4. Be open

- a. If you can see a better way, suggest it
- b. If someone else suggests a better way to you, consider it
- c. We exist to nurture innovators and support those who take informed risks in the interests of children

## 5. Forgive

- a. We all make mistakes
- b. Admit them, learn from them and move on

## 6. Make a difference

- a. Making the world a better place starts with you
- b. Model the behaviour that you would like to see from others

## Related Policies and Documents

[TEFAT Attendance Policy](#)

[TEFAT Safeguarding Policy](#) and [Local Safeguarding Arrangements](#)

[TEFAT Supporting Pupils with Medical Needs Policy](#)

[Guidance for Parents on School Attendance](#)

[Fines for parents for taking children out of school: What you need to know](#)

The Education Act 1996

The Education Act 2002

The Education and Inspections Act 2006

Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024

The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2024

The Education (Information About Individual Pupils) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2024

[DfE Working together to improve school attendance August 2024](#)

[DfE Summary table of responsibilities for school attendance August 2024](#)

[DfE Children Missing Education \(CME\) guidance August 2024](#)

### 1. Introduction

Promoting good school attendance and reducing absence is vital to: ensure children's day-to-day welfare and safeguarding; ensure that every pupil has access to full-time education; ensure that pupils make good progress academically and personally and to ensure that pupils leave us with the best possible opportunities for their future.

This policy aims to ensure that all pupils attend school regularly; consequently they will be able to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available.

The policy outlines the **responsibilities for the school and parents\*** in ensuring that pupils' attendance at Hillingdon Primary School is the best it can be. It also describes the strategies used by the schools, alongside The Elliot Foundation Academies Trust and London Borough of Hillingdon (LBH) to support and improve attendance.

\* Where the term 'parent' has been used it applies to all of those with parental responsibility, including carers.

### 2. The importance of culture and curriculum

Learning and achievement drives everything that we do at Hillingdon Primary School. Our job, in partnership with parents, is to build the foundations for a successful education, to enable each child to discover the joy of learning, to help them to fulfil every aspect of their potential and to encourage their growth into effective citizens, ready to play their part in the world and their community.

We strongly believe that a key component to children achieving success is regular attendance. If children are not attending school then they cannot benefit from our broad and balanced curriculum and the extra-curricular opportunities we offer. To put this in context, 90% attendance equates to 19.5 days (almost 4 weeks) absence from school in one year. If continued throughout a child's primary school education, he / she will miss nearly two and a half terms (7 months) of school in a seven year period. An absence of this magnitude will have a significant impact on the child's education. We further believe that by setting high

expectations for pupils' attendance at primary school we are helping to instil a mind-set that will benefit children throughout their academic career and later life.

At Hillingdon Primary School we recognise that school must be a place where children feel valued, safe, welcome, accepted and supported in order for them to want to attend. This culture is established and maintained through the inclusive ethos of our school, our Personal Development curriculum, high expectations regarding pupil and staff conduct, and a staffing structure that supports dedicated and effective pastoral care. It is further supported by effective and regular communication between staff teams, teachers and parents.

We understand that some of our pupils may have greater barriers to attendance than their peers. These can include pupils who suffer from long-term medical conditions or who have special educational needs and disabilities, or other vulnerabilities. Whilst we will continue to have high expectations of attendance for these pupils, we will also work to build strong relationships with their families so that we can better understand the individual barriers to attendance and offer appropriate support to maintain and improve regular attendance.

### **3. Attendance systems and procedures**

#### **3.1. Attendance Registers**

Accurate and timely registers enable the school to safeguard children as well as to recognise and act upon any concerning attendance patterns. Staff follow the school Register Protocol which is reviewed and shared at least annually. Registers are taken at the start of every morning and afternoon session.

We expect pupils to arrive at school on time and be collected on time. School starts at 8.45am and ends at 3.15pm for all pupils. Pupils are required to be in their class, ready to learn, from 8.45am. Pupils who are not in their classrooms by 8.45am are recorded as 'Late.' This will be recorded in the register as 'L.'

Our registers close at 9.15am. Those arriving after registers close will receive an unauthorised late absence mark for that session. This will be recorded in the register as 'U' and will negatively impact the pupil's overall attendance percentage.

If a child is being educated off-site for any reason, the school will make daily contact with the provider to ensure attendance is recorded accurately.

#### **3.2. Recording and responding to absence**

- During pupil inductions, parents are informed of the requirement to contact school on the first day of a child's absence to explain the reason.
- Contact must be made via the school absence line (01895 590087 option 2) or via email at [attendance@hillingdonprimaryschool.org.uk](mailto:attendance@hillingdonprimaryschool.org.uk).
- Contact must be made by 9.30am at the latest.
- If no reason is given, or further information is required, a phone call is made to parents.
- Once sufficient information has been gained, an absence code is determined by the appropriate member of staff in line with DfE guidance in [Working together to improve school attendance](#) (August 2024). This decision is based on the information provided by parents when a child's absence is reported and will influence whether an absence is authorised or not.

### **3.3. Home visits**

Home visits are routinely carried out by a member of the Welfare / Pastoral Care Team, and this may include a member of the Senior Leadership Team if no contact can be made by phone, further information is needed or to see how a child is. Home visits are not pre-arranged and can be made at any time, at the discretion of the school. Staff will always carry their school ID and will expect to see the child in question, if only briefly, in order to ascertain how they are.

### **3.4. Monitoring irregular attendance**

The Attendance and Welfare Officer monitors pupils arriving late to school and cases where attendance is below 95% fortnightly. Class teachers are also expected to share concerns regarding a child's attendance and / or punctuality with the Attendance and Welfare Officer. They share responsibility for encouraging punctuality and high attendance among their class and are notified of any action taken to address attendance concerns in their class.

### **3.5. Actions taken to improve attendance**

For pupils who are regularly late, where their absence has increased or there is a pattern of absence (e.g. regular absence on a Monday), actions are taken which aim to prevent children missing more school and becoming or remaining a 'Persistent Absentee' (the definition of persistent absence is attendance below 90%).

These actions may include but are not limited to the following:

#### **Actions taken where punctuality is a concern:**

- a. If a pupil is regularly late to school a letter is sent to parents to advise that their child's punctuality is being monitored.
- b. If a pupil's punctuality does not improve, parents are required to attend a meeting at school to discuss the reasons for lateness, consider if any support can be offered by the school (see 3.6 below) and agree actions to improve punctuality. The child's punctuality will continue to be monitored.
- c. Parents may be encouraged to make use of the school's breakfast club to improve punctuality. There is a charge for this club.

#### **Actions taken to address attendance concerns:**

- a. Letters are sent to parents to inform them that their child's attendance is causing a concern.
- b. Parents may be required to attend a meeting at school to discuss the reasons for absence, consider if any support can be offered by the school (see 3.6 below) and agree actions to improve attendance. If parents are unable to make the first appointment, one further appointment time will be offered before moving to a panel meeting.
- c. A panel meeting may be held at school to formally explain the consequences of persistent and severe absence to parents; provide an opportunity to further discuss the barriers to attendance; and explore the help that is available to avoid those consequences. The school may be supported at the panel meeting by the LBH Attendance Support Team.
- d. Section 5, Formal and Legal Interventions, details the further action that may be taken if the school based actions detailed above have not been effective and/or have not been engaged with by parents.

### **3.6. Attendance / Punctuality Meetings**

School staff strive to build strong working relationships with families to support conversations about a pupil's attendance / punctuality. Before any formal or legal attendance action is taken we meet with parents / carers to work together to discuss the reasons behind a lapse in punctuality / attendance and develop personalised support to improve attendance. A wide range of support may be offered, including but not limited to the following:

- A team around the family approach, incorporating support for the family from one or more staff members, such as the Pastoral Care Manager and Assistant Principal for Inclusion;
- Draw on expertise and support of external agencies such as the school nurse;
- Establish strategies for removing any in-school barriers the pupil may face, including considering support or reasonable adjustments to uniform, routines, and lunchtime arrangements;
- Incorporating a time limited phased return to school after a period of absence.

Pupils who have been suspended or who are absent for long periods because of ill-health receive appropriate support to return to school, build confidence and bridge gaps in their learning. These plans are drawn up in collaboration with parents and the pupil (providing they are able to understand the process).

### **3.7. Attendance and safeguarding**

Concerns about any extended or persistent absence are referred to the appropriate team or staff member. It is recognised that poor attendance may be a sign or symptom of a wider safeguarding issue that requires support (this includes but is not limited to domestic abuse, mental health difficulties, FGM, CCE, CSE or financial strain). Where there are concerns about a child's welfare, action will be taken in line with the Trust's Safeguarding Policy.

### **3.8. Children Missing from Education (CMfE) Referrals**

Academies have safeguarding duties under section 175 of the Education Act 2002 in respect of their pupils, and as part of this should investigate any unexplained absences. If a child is absent and contact cannot be made with parents directly (by phone or home visit), and their whereabouts cannot be confirmed by any of the additional named contacts held by school, then the LBH's CMfE team is notified immediately via the Stronger Families Hub and police are asked to carry out a safe and well check at the home address.

The CMfE team is also notified if a child is known to have moved out of the area so is no longer attending, or if a parent enquiring about a school place states that their child is not currently attending a school.

Pupils who are continually absent for 20 school days or more without prior authorisation from the Principal may be removed from the school roll (regulation 9(i) of the [School Attendance \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2024](#)). Parents / carers will be notified by letter and a deadline provided for the child to return to school. The Attendance and Welfare Officer will consult the LBH Attendance Support Team for advice and guidance prior to removing a child from the school roll.

### **3.9. Recognising and rewarding good attendance**

To help children and their parents understand the importance of regular attendance and monitor their own and their class's attendance, it is discussed and celebrated in the following ways:

- A culture of good attendance is promoted from the start of a child's educational journey at Hillingdon Primary School. Attendance expectations are discussed during pupil welcome meetings and we carefully monitor the attendance of non-statutory school aged pupils in our nursery and reception classes to reinforce the message that attendance matters.
- Teachers discuss attendance and punctuality with parents at parent consultation meetings.
- A copy of each pupils' attendance and punctuality record is given to parents alongside their annual school report. Comments are made when appropriate.
- Weekly attendance certificates are presented to the class with the highest attendance in each key stage assembly.

## 4. Term-time leave of absence requests

A leave of absence request form **MUST** be completed in all circumstances, as far in advance as possible, and a minimum of 5 school days before the requested absence starts. Forms must be requested from and returned to the school office, accompanied by supporting documentation evidencing the reason for the request. Incomplete forms will not be considered.

The Co-Principals will **only** authorise leave during term time in **exceptional circumstances, when absence during term time is absolutely unavoidable**. This decision is entirely at the Co-Principals' discretion, based on the information provided by parents in writing, at the time the request is made.

Where a period of absence is authorised in exceptional circumstances, the number of days will be determined by the Co-Principals. For this reason, it is strongly recommended that permission for leave is obtained *before* travel or accommodation are booked.

This is in line with [DfE guidance](#) which states that:

37. Schools are then expected to consider each application individually taking into account the specific facts and circumstances and relevant background context behind the request. If a leave of absence is granted, it is for the school to determine the length of the time the pupil can be away from school.

38. Generally, the DfE does not consider a need or desire for a holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure and recreation to be an exceptional circumstance. Leave of absence should not be granted for a pupil to take part in protest activity during school hours.

After submitting a request for term time leave to be authorised, parents will be informed of the Co-Principals decision in writing within ten school days.

Periods of unauthorised leave may be referred to the London Borough of Hillingdon's Attendance Support Service. Parents could be issued with a penalty notice where the absence meets the new National Framework thresholds introduced in 'Working Together to Improve School Attendance (August 2024)'. Please see paragraph 5.2 below for further information.

### 4.1. Religious Observance

Pupils may request leave of absence for one day exclusively set apart for religious observance by the parents' religious body. Parents must complete a Religious Observance Form in advance of the date of observance and submit it to the school.

## 5. Formal and legal interventions

Hillingdon Primary School will always seek to resolve any attendance concerns by working to support the family with improving a child's attendance. Where this is not successful, or when those with parental responsibility for the child do not engage with this support, then the academy will work with the Local Authority's School Attendance Support Service to address poor attendance.

The first step would be to set up a formal attendance contract between parents and the school.

### 5.1. Attendance contract

- A formal written agreement between a parent and either the school or Local Authority to address irregular attendance at school.
- Are not legally binding but allow a more formal route to secure engagement with support where a voluntary early help plan has not worked or is not deemed appropriate.
- Are not a punitive tool, they are intended to provide support and offer an alternative to prosecution.
- Parents cannot be compelled to enter a contract, and they cannot be agreed in a parent's absence.
- Aim for the parent(s), and the pupil where they are old enough, the school and the Local Authority to work in partnership.
- Attendance contracts contain:
  - Details of the requirements the parent(s) is expected to comply with.
  - A statement from the school and/or Local Authority agreeing to provide support to the parent(s) to meet the requirements and setting out details of the support.
  - A statement by the parent that they agree to comply with the requirements for the period of time specified by the contract.
  - The period it will be in place for (most are for between 3 and 12 months but can be longer if needed).

If an attendance contract is not effective at improving a child's attendance, or is deemed not appropriate, the Local Authority has the option to progress as far as needed through the following, hierarchical legal interventions;

- **Education Supervision Orders (ESO)** - non compliance can lead to prosecution and a fine of up to £1000
- **Attendance prosecutions** - if found guilty, depending on the circumstances parents can be sentenced to a community order, a parenting order, a fine of up to £2500 or imprisonment of up to 3 months.
- **Parenting orders** - breaches can lead to a fine of up to £1000

Where safeguarding concerns exist, the school's designated safeguarding lead and children's social care services may decide that either a s.17 (Children in Need) or s.47 (Child Protection) plan is a more appropriate form of support.

### 5.2. Penalty Notices

Penalty notices are issued to parents as an alternative to prosecution where they have failed to ensure that their child of compulsory school age regularly attends the school where they are registered or, in certain cases, at a place where alternative provision is provided.



Penalty notices are intended to prevent the need for court action and should only be used where it is deemed likely to change parental behaviour and support to secure regular attendance has been provided and has not worked or been engaged with, or would not have been appropriate in the circumstances of the offence (e.g. an unauthorised holiday in term time).

All state funded schools must consider whether a penalty notice for absence is appropriate in each individual case where one of their pupils reaches the national threshold for considering a penalty notice.

Schools should not have a blanket position of issuing or not issuing penalty notices and should make judgements on each individual case to ensure fairness and consistency across the country.

The threshold is **10 sessions** of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks. A school week means any week in which there is at least one school session. This can be met with any combination of unauthorised absence (e.g. 4 sessions of holiday taken in term time plus 6 sessions of arriving late after the register closes all within 10 school weeks). These sessions can be consecutive (e.g. 10 sessions of holiday in one week) or not (e.g. 6 sessions of unauthorised absence taken in 1 week and 1 per week for the next 4 weeks). The period of 10 school weeks can also span different terms or school years (e.g. 2 sessions of unauthorised absence in the Summer Term and a further 8 within the Autumn Term). **A session is equivalent to one morning or one afternoon: 1 full day is 2 sessions.**

When a school becomes aware that the threshold has been met, they are expected to make considerations in line with DfE statutory guidance to decide whether to issue a penalty notice in each individual case.

A penalty notice is an out of court settlement which is intended to change behaviour without the need for criminal prosecution. If repeated penalty notices are being issued and they are not working to change behaviour they are unlikely to be the most appropriate tool. Therefore, only 2 penalty notices can be issued to the same parent in respect of the same child within a 3 year rolling period and any second notice within that period is charged at a higher rate.

- The first penalty notice issued to a parent in respect of a particular pupil will be charged at £160 if paid within 28 days. This will be reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days.
- A second penalty notice issued to the same parent in respect of the same pupil is charged at a flat rate of £160 if paid within 28 days.
- A third penalty notice cannot be issued to the same parent in respect of the same child within 3 years of the date of issue of the first.

In a case where the national threshold is met for a third time (or subsequent times) within those 3 years, alternative action should be taken instead. This will often include considering prosecution, but may include other tools such as one of the other attendance legal interventions.

In addition:

- can only be issued by a head teacher or someone authorised by them (a deputy or assistant head), a Local Authority officer or the police;
- can be issued to each parent liable for the attendance offence or offences;
- can be used where the pupil's absence has not been authorised by the school;
- there is no right of appeal by parents against a penalty notice; and
- The London Borough of Hillingdon's Fixed Penalty Notice Code of Conduct can be found **here**: <https://www.hillingdon.gov.uk/school-attendance>.

## 6. Roles and responsibilities

### 6.1. Parents and carers are responsible for:

- Ensuring that their child attends school regularly and on time.
- Informing the academy on the first day of non-attendance by telephoning the school office.
- Ensuring that medical appointments are booked outside school time wherever possible.
- Speaking to the Pastoral Care Manager, Attendance and Welfare Officer, class teacher or relevant senior leader to seek support for any issues that may be preventing their child from wanting to attend school. Staff can be contacted via the school office, by email at [attendance@hillingdonprimaryschool.org.uk](mailto:attendance@hillingdonprimaryschool.org.uk) or by calling the school number: 01895 590087.
- Understanding and accepting that absences for family holidays or visits and special occasions will not normally be permitted. Approval will only be granted in truly exceptional circumstances, at the discretion of the Co-Principals.
- Working alongside the school to address and improve any patterns of poor attendance.
- Complying with the DfE statutory guidance on school attendance

### 6.2. Pupils, when developmentally ready to take some responsibility for their learning, are expected to:

- Attend school every day.
- Arrive on time, ready to learn.
- Tell a trusted adult if there is a problem that might lead to absence.

### 6.3. All staff are responsible for promoting good attendance. Those with specific responsibilities include:

- The Co-Principals, Ms Kelly and Ms Saidiya, are the school's **Senior Attendance Leads**. They are responsible for the strategic approach to attendance taken by the school. They can be contacted at [hillprimary@hillingdonprimaryschool.org.uk](mailto:hillprimary@hillingdonprimaryschool.org.uk), or by calling the school number: 01895 590087.
- The Attendance and Welfare Officer, Ms Childs, is the school's **Attendance Champion**. She can be contacted at [attendance@hillingdonprimaryschool.org.uk](mailto:attendance@hillingdonprimaryschool.org.uk) or by calling the school number: 01895 590087. She checks absence after each register period, carries out first day calling and home visits and supports parents with improving their child's attendance. She also monitors attendance data for individuals and groups and works with the Senior Attendance Leads to decide on and implement actions in response to patterns shown in data.
- **Class teachers and LSAs** discuss attendance daily and refer concerns to the Attendance and Welfare Officer.
- The **Co-Principals** decide whether term time leave applications are approved or not (see 'Term time leave of absence requests', above).
- The **Pastoral Care Manager, Assistant Principal for Inclusion and Attendance and Welfare Officer** work with children who face attendance barriers and families who need support.

Our school is supported to improve pupil attendance by the following partners:

- The London Borough of Hillingdon Attendance Support Team
- **The Elliot Foundation Academies Trust** Regional Director, DSL for the Trust and Legal, SEND and Governance Director
- School nurse