



Attendance Policy

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Whitehall Junior School

Pupil Attendance Policy

School Vision/Mission Statement

At Whitehall Junior School, we aim to serve our community, and provide education of the highest quality.

We believe that regular attendance at school is crucial in ensuring that every pupil can reach their full potential. Good attendance helps to build good habits of reliability and timekeeping needed for future study and employment. We want all pupils to make the most of school by attending regularly, enjoying and achieving.

Introduction and Background

Whitehall Junior School recognises that positive behaviour and good attendance are essential in order to raise standards of pupil attainment and to give every child/young person the best educational experience possible.

This policy is written with the above statement in mind and underpins our school ethos to:

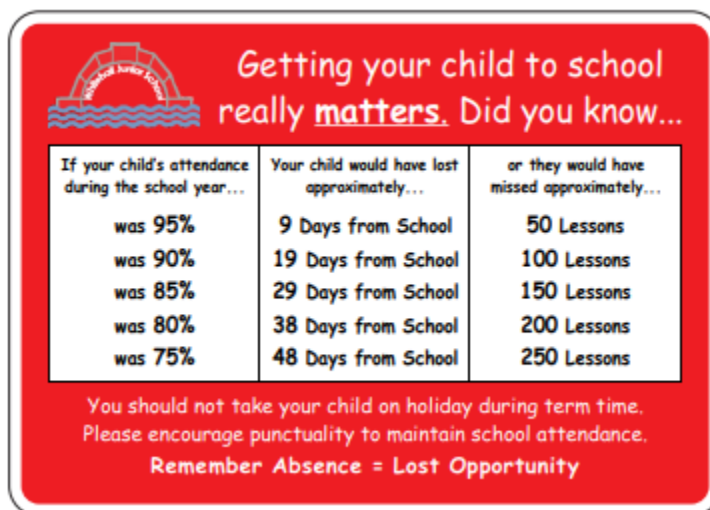
- promote children's welfare and safeguarding
- ensure every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled
- ensure that pupils succeed whilst at school
- ensure that pupils have access to the widest possible range of opportunities at school, and when they leave school

This policy has been developed in consultation with school governors, teachers, local Headteacher Associations, the Local Authority and parents and carers. It seeks to ensure that all parties involved in the practicalities of school attendance are aware and informed of attendance matters in school and to outline the school's commitment to attendance. It details the responsibilities of individuals and groups involved and the procedures in place to promote and monitor pupil attendance.

This policy aims to raise and maintain levels of attendance by:

- Promoting a positive and welcoming atmosphere in which pupils feel safe, secure and valued.
- Raising awareness of the importance of good attendance and punctuality
- Ensuring that attendance is monitored effectively and reasons for absences are recorded promptly and consistently.

For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. Any loss of time at school can adversely affect a child's attainment and all pupils benefit from regular school attendance.



It is a rule of this school that pupils must attend every day, unless there are exceptional circumstances and it is the *Headteacher/principal*, not the parent, who can authorise the absence.

Promoting Regular Attendance

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is the responsibility of parents, pupils and all members of school staff.

To help us all to focus on this we will:

- Give parents/carers details on attendance in our newsletters
- Report to parents/carers annually on their child's attendance with the annual school report.
- Contact parents/carers should their child's attendance fall below the school's target for attendance.
- Celebrate excellent attendance through rewarding individual and class achievements
- Reward good or improving attendance

School targets, projects and special initiatives

The school has targets to improve attendance and each child has an important part to play in meeting these targets.

The minimum level of attendance for this school is **96%** attendance and parents are informed annually about progress to this level and how their child's attendance compares.

The school's target is to achieve better than this however because good attendance is the key to successful schooling.

Through the school year absences and punctuality are monitored to show where improvements need to be made.

Information on any projects or initiatives that will focus on these areas will be provided in our Home - School bulletin and parents are asked for their full support.

Staff responsible for attendance matters in this school are:

Debbie Simmonds- Attendance Officer

Anneline Moloi- Headteacher/ Designated Safeguarding Lead

Role of the Governor

Issues regarding attendance are reported to governors during formal and informal visits.

Understanding types of absence

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by the parent/carer), as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required, preferably in writing. An email from a known address is acceptable.

Authorised absences are morning or afternoon sessions away from school for a genuine reason such as illness, medical or dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies, religious holidays or other unavoidable cause (you may be asked to provide evidence for your child before this can be authorised).

The school recognises that there may be times where children of different faiths observe religious festivals that fall outside of school holidays and weekends, in these cases only the Headteacher can decide to authorise the absence. The request for an authorisation must be submitted in advance.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no 'leave' has been given. This type of absence can lead to the Local Authority (School Attendance Support Team) using sanctions and/or legal proceedings. This may include:

- parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily e.g. because they had a late night or for non-infectious illness or injury that would not affect their ability to learn.
- absences which have never been properly explained
- children who arrive at school after the close of registration are marked using a 'U'. This indicates that they are in school for safeguarding purposes however is recorded as an absence for the session.
- shopping trips
- looking after other children or children accompanying siblings or parents to medical appointments
- their own or family birthdays
- holidays taken during term time without leave, not deemed 'for exceptional purposes' by the Headteacher- may result in the school applying to the local authority to issue a penalty notice or if you have previously been issued a Penalty Notice, the school may request a direct prosecution by the local authority.
- day trips
- other leave of absence in term time which has not been agreed

Absence Procedures

If a child is absent from school the parent/carer must follow the following procedures:

- Contact the school on the first day of absence **before 9am**. The school has an answer phone available to leave a message if nobody is available to take your call, or call into school personally and speak to the office staff
- Contact the school on every further day of absence, again **before 9am**.
- Ensure that your child returns to school as soon as possible and you provide any medical evidence if requested to support the absence.

If your child is absent we will:

- Telephone or text you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you
- Write to you if we are concerned about your child's attendance
- Invite you in to school to discuss the situation
- Refer the matter to the Local Authority School Attendance Support Team for relevant sanctions if attendance deteriorates following the above actions

Telephone Numbers

There are times when the school needs to contact parents about lots of things, including absence, so we need to have current contact numbers at all times. Parents should ensure the school is informed of any changes.

Lateness

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If a child misses the start of the day they can miss work and not spend time with their class teacher getting vital information and news for the day. Late arriving pupils also disrupt lessons, can be embarrassing for the child and can also encourage absence. Good time-keeping is a vital life skill which will help our children as they progress through their school life and out into the wider world.

How we manage lateness:

The school day starts at **8:35am** when children can begin to come into school. Registers are taken at **8:45am** and your child will receive a late mark 'L' if they are not in by that time. Children arriving after **8:50am** are required to come into school via the school office if accompanied by a parent or carer and provide a reason for their lateness which is recorded. The school may send home 'late notes' in order to keep parents and carers informed. From time to time the Attendance and Wellbeing Officer, Headteacher or Deputy Headteacher will undertake a 'Late Gate' check, greeting late arrivals at the main entrance to the school.

At 9:30am registers will be closed. In accordance with the Regulations, if your child arrives after that time, they will receive a '**U**' mark that shows them to be on site, but this will **not** count as a present mark, and it will mean they have an unauthorised absence. This may mean that you could face the possibility of being issued with a Penalty Notice if the problem persists.

If your child has a persistent late record, you will be asked to meet with the Headteacher and /or the Attendance Officer, but you can approach us at any time if you are having problems getting your child to school on time. We expect parents and staff to encourage good punctuality by being good role models to our children and celebrate good class and individual punctuality.

If leave of absence is authorised, the school will not provide work for children to do during their absence. Parents are however advised to read with their children and encourage them to write a diary while they are away.

Exceptional Leave

There is no longer any entitlement in law for pupils to take time off during the term to go on holiday. In addition, the Supreme Court has ruled that the definition of regular school attendance is "in accordance with the rules prescribed by the school".

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 were amended in September 2013. All references to family holidays and extended leave have been removed. The amendments specify that Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are "exceptional circumstances" and they no longer have the discretion to authorise up to ten days of absence each academic year.

It is a rule of this school that a leave of absence shall not be granted in term time unless there are reasons considered to be exceptional by the Headteacher, irrespective of the child's overall attendance. Only the Headteacher or his/her designate (not the local authority) may authorise such a request and all applications for a leave of absence must be made in writing on the prescribed form provided by the school. Where a parent removes a child when the application for leave was refused or where no application was made to the school, the issue of a penalty notice may be requested by this school.

At Whitehall Junior School, 'exceptional circumstances' will be interpreted as:

... being of unique and significant emotional, educational or spiritual value to the child which outweighs the loss of teaching time (as determined by the Headteacher). The fundamental principles for defining 'exceptional' are events that are "rare, significant, unavoidable and short". By 'unavoidable' we mean an event that could not reasonably be scheduled at another time.

We will not consider applications for leave during term time:

- at any time in September. This is very important as your child needs to settle into their new class as quickly as possible.
- during assessment and test periods in the school's calendar affecting your child.
- when a pupil's attendance record already includes any level of unauthorised absence or they have already been granted authorised leave within that academic year.

Whilst any child may occasionally have time off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents and the child. If a parent thinks their child is reluctant to attend school then we will work with that family to understand the root problem and provide any necessary support.

The School Attendance Support Team

Parents are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any problems together. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, the school may refer the child to the Attendance Support Officer from the Local Authority. He/she will also try to resolve the situation by agreement but, if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed and unauthorised absences persist, these Officers can use sanctions such as Penalty Notices (currently £80 rising to £160 if unpaid after 21 days. If unpaid

after 28 days a summons to Court will be issued for each unpaid Penalty Notice) or prosecutions in the Magistrates Court. The legislation is the Education Act 1996 sec. 444(1) and 444(1A). See Appendix 1 for Hillingdon Council Fact file on penalty notices.

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

Alternatively, parents or children may wish to contact Attendance Support themselves to ask for help or information. They are independent of the school and will give impartial advice. Their telephone number is 01895 250858 or attendancesupport@hillingdon.gov.uk

Persistent Absenteeism (PA)

A pupil is defined by the Government as a '**persistent absentee**' when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason. Absence at this level will cause considerable damage to any child's education and we need a parent/carer's fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

We monitor all absences, and the reasons that are given, thoroughly. If a child is seen to have reached the PA mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark we will inform the parent/carer. PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully. We also combine this with academic tracking where absence affects attainment. All our PA pupils and their parents are subject to a school-based meeting and the plan may include: allocation of additional support through the School Nurse, Attendance Officer, Home School Liaison Worker, Local Authority Attendance Support Officer, Stronger Families Key Worker or Social Care. We may also use circle time, individual incentive schemes, individual targets and participation in group activities to support us in raising attendance.

Performance Licences

The applicant for a Performance Licence (usually the production company or theatrical agent) is obliged to seek the view of the school when applying for an absence request. Such a request will only be considered by the school when the child's attendance is at least 90% and the child is making at least expected levels of progress. A request may be declined if either of these thresholds is not met or if the timing of the requested absence could be detrimental to the child's education.

Deletion from Roll

For any pupil leaving Whitehall Junior School, other than at the end of Year 6 parents/carers are required to complete a 'Pupils moving from school' form which can be obtained from the school office. This provides the school with the following information: Child's name, class, current address, date of leaving, new home address, name of new school, address of new school. This information is essential to ensure that we know and safeguard the whereabouts of all our pupils. In such cases, Attendance Support should be notified.

Children Missing Education

In Children Missing Education - Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities (2016), children missing education are defined as those who are not on a school roll or receiving suitable education

otherwise than at school. Those who are regularly absent or have missed 10 school days or more without permission may be at risk of becoming 'children missing education'.

There will not always be a safeguarding concern for children and young people who are missing education. Most children and young people are moving schools supported by their parents/carers, schools and local authority admissions services. A smaller number, however, are at risk of dropping out or disengaging from education and being out of school, they are at risk of exploitation, going missing and significant harm

As a result of daily registration, schools are particularly well placed to notice when a child has gone missing. If a member of the school becomes aware that a child may have run away or gone missing, they should try to establish with the parents/carers what has happened. If this is not possible, or the child is missing, the designated safeguarding teacher/advisor should, together with the class teacher, assess the child's vulnerability.

In the circumstances of a child going missing who is not known to any other agencies, the Headteacher should inform the Children Missing Education (CME) Officer of any child who has not attended for 10 consecutive school days without provision of reasonable explanation. Prior to doing so, the school should have made enquiries to ascertain whether the child is still residing at the home address and is not attending or whether the child is missing.

Equal Opportunities

- That every member of the school community experiences equal chance, irrespective of ethnic origin, race, religion, colour, nationality, political beliefs, disability, age, sex or sexual orientation.
- That every member of the school community is valued as an individual and that everyone understands that stereotyping, discrimination, prejudice and racism will not be tolerated.

Summary

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures & its Attendance Policy to parents and to promote attendance. School attendance data must be available to the Local Authority & the Department for Education. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend.

All school staff are committed to working with parents and pupils as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible.

Regular attendance supports optimising your child's attainment.

Penalty notices for non-attendance at school

Advice for all parents and carers of children attending Hillingdon schools



School attendance and the law
Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2024 gives powers to Hillingdon Council to issue penalty notices where a parent/carer is considered capable of, but is unwilling to, secure an improvement in their child's school attendance.

Why is intervention necessary?

Increasing school attendance is a key priority nationally and locally because missing school damages a pupil's achievement chances, disrupts school routines and the learning of others and can leave a pupil vulnerable to anti-social behaviour and youth crime.

Above all, missing school seriously affects children's longer term life opportunities.

What is a penalty notice?

Under existing legislation, parents/carers commit an offence if a child fails to attend regularly and the absences are unauthorised by school.

Depending on circumstances such cases may result in prosecution under section 444 of the education act 1996.

A penalty notice is an alternative to prosecution which does not require an appearance in court whilst still seeking to secure an improvement in a pupil's attendance.

Payment of a penalty notice enables parents to discharge potential liability for conviction.

A child would need to have missed 10 sessions of school in a 10 week period and the absence would need to be recorded as unauthorised. The 10 week period can span two terms. Only two penalty notices can be issued per child, per parent in the space of three academic years.



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What are the costs?

First penalty notices are £160, reduced to £80 if paid within the first 21 days. There is a total time of 28 days to make payment. Penalty notices are issued per parent, per child and posted to your home address.

Second penalty notices are charged at £160 per parent, per child to be paid within 28 days.

Two penalty notices for non-attendance at school.

When are they used?

Hillingdon considers regular attendance at school is of such importance that penalty notices may be used in a range of situations where unauthorised absence occurs:

- Overt truancy (including pupils found during truancy sweeps)
- Parental condoned absence
- Leave during term time that school know or suspect is due to a family holiday being taken during the school term. Headteachers have discretion to consider exceptional leave and look at each case on its personal merit
- Persistent late arrival at school (after the register has closed)
- All pupils who are suspended or permanently excluded from school are required not to be in a public place, during school hours, without justification. This includes being accompanied by their parents.

In every case (except exclusion) a pupil will have had a minimum of 10 school sessions (i.e. five school days) lost to unauthorised absence before a penalty notice is considered.

The authority never takes such action lightly and would far rather work with parents/carers to improve attendance without having to resort to any enforcement actions.

Is a warning given?

A notice to improve is sent to parents before legal action is taken to give a final opportunity to work with the school to improve school attendance. This is not in every case, such as a holiday taken during term time where a notice to improve would not be applicable.

You are responsible for knowing the whereabouts of your child and their school attendance.

Is there an appeal process?

There is no statutory right of appeal once a notice has been issued, but on receipt of a warning you can make representation should you wish in writing to attendancesupport@hillingdon.gov.uk. Representations cannot be made over the phone.

You will need to outline error occurred with the process of issuing. The local authority decision is final in all penalty notice situations.

How do I pay?

Details of payment arrangements will be included on the penalty notice. You need to be aware that payment in part or by instalment is not an option with penalty notices.

What happens if I do not pay?

You have up to 28 days from the date of issue to pay the penalty notice in full, after which the authority is required under the act to commence proceedings in the magistrates' court for the original offence of poor attendance by your child.

If proven, this can attract a range of fines up to £2,500 and/or parenting orders, community sentences or custody, depending upon circumstances.

Can I be prosecuted if I pay the penalty notice but my child is still missing school?

Not for the period included in the penalty notice – payment discharges your liability in this respect. However it may be the case that a prosecution might be considered for further periods of poor attendance not covered by the notice, depending upon the circumstances. In that case, it is vital you work closely with your child's school and support agencies such as the Attendance Support team.

Can I get help if my child is not attending regularly?

Yes, the local authority and your child's school will give you advice if you need help to secure an improvement in your child's attendance.

It is very important you speak with the school or with the Attendance Support team at the earliest opportunity if you have any worries at all about securing your child's attendance.

You will be given the support required and agreed, either in an informal or a formal plan which will be reviewed at three weekly intervals.

For more information

✉ Attendance Support team,
Hillingdon Council, 4E/09 Civic Centre,
High Street, Uxbridge, UB8 1UW

☎ 01895 250858

@ attendancesupport@hillingdon.gov.uk