



Attendance Procedure

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INTRODUCTION

This is a successful school and each student makes a valuable contribution. Our aim is for an environment which enables and encourages all members of the school community to feel valued and heard. For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and arrive on time every day. At The Skills Hub, this time is 9.30am for a 9.45am start. This procedure applies to an authorised timetable and any extended day.

It is very important therefore that children attend regularly and this policy sets out how this can be achieved.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this procedure is to ensure that all stakeholders including parents/carers and students understand the importance of education and their roles and responsibilities. Research has shown that there is a direct correlation between school absence and final GCSE grades. Poor attendance also affects young people's ability to make and sustain friendships and can interrupt the routine of school life, making it hard to settle when they do attend. The attendance pattern for all students is monitored weekly, with the school seeking to work actively with parents and carers to ensure regular attendance.

SCOPE

The aim of this procedure is to encourage students to attend school and to take advantage of the educational opportunities available. Parents/carers have the primary responsibility for ensuring that children of compulsory school age (5 to 18 year olds) with a Statement of Special Educational Needs or an Education, Health and Care Plan attend an establishment authorised by their Local Authority. The Skills Hub aims to support and assist parents/carers to meet this responsibility.

OVERVIEW

The Skills Hub expects all students on roll to attend the programme they have been offered. Regular attendance is expected and the support available is explained to students and parents at their induction meeting.

We know that poor attendance can seriously affect each student's:

- Attainment in school
- Relationships with others and their ability to form lasting friendships
- Confidence to attempt new things and work alongside others.

Persistent absence affects life chances and The Skills Hub has a duty to report it to the local education authority for further action; we will challenge any unauthorised absence.

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility – parents, carers, students and all members of school staff.

To help us all to focus on this we will:

- Report to you termly on how your student is performing at school, what their attendance and punctuality percentage is and how this relates to their attainments.
- Celebrate good attendance by displaying individual and group achievements.
- Reward good or improving attendance through certificates and reward trips.

Attendance can be summarised as follows:

96 -100%	Excellent! Congratulations! This will help all aspects of progress and life in school. This gives a good start in life and supports a positive work ethic.
91 – 95%	You are at risk of underachievement. Your absence could affect your best chances of success. Please talk to someone; that we may help you to attend.
85 – 90% Persistent absentees 90% and below	Serious risk of underachievement. Absence is now affecting attainment and progress at school. It is important that you talk to someone; we will work with you to improve your attendance.
Below 85%	UNACCEPTABLE – Absence is causing SERIOUS CONCERN and underachievement. It is affecting your levels progress and is disrupting learning. We will work with you and the Participation Team to improve your attendance.

PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITY

Parents/carers have a legal obligation to ensure children attend regularly and on time. Ensuring regular attendance is essential and permitting absence from school without good reason is an offence by law and may result in prosecution.

AUTHORISED AND UNAUTHORISED ABSENCES

An absence is classed as authorised when a child is away from school for a legitimate reason and the school has received notification or a request from a parent or carer. For example, if a child has been unwell and the correct medical evidence is received the school can authorise this absence. Other occasions where the school *may* authorise an absence include attending the wedding of a family member, family bereavement or to attend court. All requests must be made in writing to the Principal. **Note: these still count negatively and will affect the attendance percentage.**

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider essential and for which no authorisation has been given. This type of absence can lead to the Local Authority Participation Team becoming involved. Support will be offered initially but if unauthorised absences continue, the Participation Team have the right to apply a fine or legal proceedings.

Examples of unauthorised absence include:

- Parents/carers keeping children off school to go shopping, to care for a sibling, a student's/parent's/sibling's/relative's birthday.
- Refusal by the student to attend an allocated session.
- Absences that have never been explained.
- Children who arrive too late to get a mark.
- Illness without medical evidence.
- Holidays in term-time.

If a child is reluctant to attend school, please communicate this as soon as possible.

Parents/carers can support their child by:

- Ensuring regular and early bed times, appropriate to the age of the child.
- Having uniform and equipment prepared the night before.
- Reporting any academic or social concerns promptly.
- Retaining open and honest communication with the school.
- Having a positive attitude towards school attendance.

PERSISTENT ABSENTEEISM

A student becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 15% or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's educational prospects.

We monitor all absence thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the persistent absence mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority and you will be informed of this immediately. Persistently absent students are tracked and monitored carefully by our Family Liaison Practitioner who will work with the Participation Team to support your child to attend.

All persistently absent students and their parents are subject to an action plan which may include allocation of additional support through a Skills Coach, individual incentives programmes and participation in group activities around raising attendance. All persistent absence cases are also automatically made known to the Participation Team.

ABSENCE WITHOUT REASON

When a student is absent, the attendance administrator will record the absence in the register and an automated truancy call is triggered. As part of our safeguarding procedures, the school will endeavour to contact the parents/carers and other emergency contacts if information has not been received regarding the reason for the absence. This will happen for every day of non-attendance where no call has been received informing us of absence and reasons why.

ILLNESS AND MEDICAL APPOINTMENTS

When a student is unwell, parents/carers should contact the school before 9am on the first day of absence. A call must be made for each day of absence. When a student is absent due to illness or a medical appointment, evidence may be requested. This can be an appointment card, letter, prescription, prescribed medication packs or boxes with the child's name printed on them. This will still be a negative mark.

The absence is unauthorised until the evidence is received. Once the evidence has been received the absence will be changed to 'authorised'. When The Skills Hub is concerned about the amount of school missed due to illness, we may share information with external agencies such as social services. In some cases, the school nurse may make an unannounced visit to check the health of your child.

Parents/carers should ensure that every effort is made to make or arrange medical appointments outside school hours.

HOLIDAYS

Student absence during term time can seriously disrupt a student's continuity of learning. Parents should avoid booking a family holiday in term time. Parents do not have an automatic right to withdraw students from school for a holiday and must apply for permission in advance. Holidays in term time will only be authorised in exceptional circumstances.

ARRIVAL TIMES / LATENESS

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If your child misses the start of the day they can miss work and do not spend form time getting vital information and news for the day. Late arriving students also disrupt lessons. This can be embarrassing for the student and can also encourage further absence.

All students **MUST** arrive for school on time, this is the time of arrival at school agreed at the student induction meeting. If students arrive 5-30 minutes after their start time they will be marked as late. If they arrive after 30 minutes of their start time they will be marked as unauthorised. In circumstances such as bad weather or transport difficulties, the register may be kept open for a longer period. If a start time has been agreed at induction that is later than when the school register closes students will be marked as unauthorised until they arrive for their session – at which point the mark will be changed to 'present' if they have attended on time.

Persistent lateness may lead to a fixed penalty notice.

SCHOOL RESPONSIBILITIES

The Principal holds responsibility for attendance matters, supported by the Senior Leadership Team (SLT), information management systems and administration staff. Attendance is recorded and data stored and analysed using the SIMs attendance Module. It is a statutory duty for The Skills Hub to maintain accurate registers; these are legal documents, and may be called for as evidence by a Court.

The Principal is the only person who can authorise an absence. The Skills Hub adheres to the DfE guidelines in authorising absence. Absence for any reason during term time is not allowed. Non-attendance is an important issue that is treated seriously. However, each case is different and The Skills Hub acknowledges that not one standard response will be appropriate in every case.

Consideration is given to all factors affecting attendance before deciding what intervention strategies to apply. In every case, early intervention is essential to support the student and their family to attend school regularly. It is essential that parents/carers keep the school fully informed of any matters that may affect their child's attendance.

ABSENCE PROCEDURES FOR PARENTS/CARERS

If your child is absent you must:

- Contact us soon as possible on the first day of absence, and every subsequent day of absence. The telephone number for The Skills Hub is 01895 446747
- Send a note on the first day they return with an explanation of the absence – you must do this even if you have already phoned us.
- Alternatively, you can call into the school and report to Reception, who will arrange for a message to be passed to the Family Liaison Practitioner and form staff/solution team.

If your child is absent we will:

- Telephone and text you with a truancy call on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you;
- Send you a letter asking you to contact us about your child's absence;
- Invite you in to discuss the situation if the absence persists without contact from you.

TELEPHONE NUMBERS

There are times when we need to contact parents, including absences or in an emergency. We need to have your contact number at all times. Please make sure that we always have an up-to-date number for you and another identified person in case you are uncontactable.

THE PARTICIPATION TEAM, POOR AND NON-ATTENDANCE

Parents/carers are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with 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 Local Authority Participation Team. Often an attendance panel will be the most helpful tool to explore the root cause of poor attendance and look to find solutions. Officers from the Participation Team 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 a Fixed Penalty Notice (this includes going on holiday in term time), which is £60.00 per adult per child identified. The fine needs to be paid in full within 21 days or it rises to £120.00 per adult per child identified. This escalated fine needs to be paid in full within 28 days.

If the fines are not paid a summons to court will be issued to the parents/carers for the original offence of poor attendance. In appropriate cases, parents and carers may receive a summons to Court without a Penalty Notice being issued.

In the event of conviction, magistrates may impose a fine of up to £2,500.00, a Community Order, Parenting Order or even decide on a term of imprisonment. The legislation is the Education Act 1996 sec. 44.1 and 44.1.a:

“If any child of compulsory school age who is a registered student 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 the Participation Team themselves to ask for help or information. They are independent of the school and will give impartial advice. Their telephone number 01895 250858 or email participationteam@hillingsdon.gov.uk

EXCEPTIONAL LEAVE

Taking holidays in term time will affect your child’s schooling as much as any other absence and we expect parents/carers to help us by not taking children away in school time. There is no automatic entitlement to have time off during term time to go on holiday.

1. It is widely known that the link between a student’s attendance and attainment is irrefutable.
2. Early poor attendance habits follow through into secondary school and affect chances of employment.
3. Research has shown that children who are not in school are most vulnerable and are easily drawn into crime. Those children who play truant are more likely to offend than those that do not.
4. All Hillingdon schools are encouraged to adopt a policy of not authorising Exceptional Leave. Outstanding cases remain at the discretion of the Headteacher to authorise (max. 10 days only).
5. The Principal will meet personally with every family applying for Exceptional Leave to stress the importance of good school attendance habits and links between attendance and attainment.
6. Exceptional leave will always be refused when a student’s attendance is less than 95%.
7. Exceptional leave will always be refused when the school is aware of any truancy.
8. Exceptional leave will always be refused when requests are regular (annual) or when patterns become identifiable.
9. Reasons for Exceptional Leave will be logged on the student’s record and shared as part of the transfer/transition process.
10. The Participation team can issue Fixed Penalty Notices for any unauthorised absence.

SCHOOL TARGETS AND INITIATIVES

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

The minimum level of attendance for this school is **95% attendance** and we will keep you updated regularly about progress to this level and how your child's attendance compares. Our target is to achieve better than this however because we know that good attendance is the key to successful.

Through the school year we monitor absences and punctuality to show us where improvements need to be made.

Information on any projects or initiatives that will focus on these areas will be provided in our newsletter and we ask for your full support.

SUMMARY

The Skills Hub has a legal duty to publish its absence figures and its attendance policy to parents/carers and to promote attendance. School attendance data must be available to the Local Authority and 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/carers and students to ensure a high level of attendance whenever possible.