

*"At Hilltop Infant School, everyone will work together in a nurturing environment to provide each child with challenging opportunities that encourage a desire for life-long learning."*



Hilltop Infant School  
*Attendance and Punctuality Policy*

Ratified by the Governing Body Spring 2012

Signature John Young

Chair of Governors

Due for Review 2013

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION AND STATEMENT OF INTENT

Hilltop Infant School recognises that punctual and regular school attendance is an essential precondition of social inclusion and a prerequisite to effective learning. Hilltop Infant School believes that children should attend school regularly and punctually because school plays a vital part in children's learning. (Hilltop Infant School recognises that some parents and carers\* may choose to home educate their children rather than send them to school.) (\*Where parents are referred to in this document this should be taken to include carers and guardians.)

### **PUNCTUALITY and ATTENDANCE**

Punctuality is vital if children are to settle in to the school day and to learn effectively. Late arrivals take up valuable teaching time and it can also be upsetting for children to arrive after the morning session has started. We do understand that occasionally families have a difficult morning but teaching sessions start very soon after the beginning of the school day and it can be disruptive for the whole class if children regularly arrive late.

- 1.1 Hilltop Infant School is therefore committed to improving levels of school attendance and punctuality. It aims to do this by:-
  - a) promoting the value and importance of regular school attendance and punctuality;
  - b) reducing all forms of unjustified absenteeism and lateness, especially levels of persistent absenteeism. (A child is classified as being a persistent absentee if he/she has an absence rate of 20% or more).
- 1.2 Hilltop Infant School sets a range of attendance and absence targets, including statutory and non-statutory, and incorporates these into its plans
- 1.3 Hilltop Infant School believes that success in achieving these targets will be best achieved if principles of active and meaningful partnership (with parents, pupils and other agencies and services) inform all Hilltop Infant School activities.
- 1.4 In order to improve levels of school attendance and punctuality Hilltop Infant School will employ four key strategies:-
  - a) the provision of one-to-one support to individual children who experience difficulties in attending school regularly;
  - b) the provision of consistent and equitable support to parents, ensuring, through an appropriate balance of assistance and insistence that all parents are able to meet their legal responsibilities in relation to school attendance;

- c) the development of effective multi-agency working practices in order to facilitate early intervention and the delivery of a seamless service;
- d) the development of a range of relevant performance indicators and the subsequent setting of realistic yet challenging targets.

1.5 In developing its policy and practice for promoting school attendance Hilltop Infant School will endeavour to ensure that the need to recognise the national context and central government priorities is balanced by the need to respond to the local context and particular priorities within Essex.

## **2.0 RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE SCHOOL**

2.1 At Hilltop Infant School, we are responsible for supporting the attendance of our pupils and for responding to difficulties and issues which might lead to non-attendance.

2.2 Our aim is always to adopt a positive and proactive approach towards attendance matters and to encourage parents to take an active role in the schooling of their children. We believe that this can play a major role in maintaining levels of attendance and punctuality and in reducing absenteeism.

2.3 It is a legal requirement that the school will:-

- a) be open to all children for 380 sessions each school year;
- b) maintain attendance registers (either manual or computerised) in accordance with the relevant regulations (see Appendix 1);
- c) accurately record and monitor all absenteeism and lateness;
- d) clearly distinguish between absence which is authorised and absence which is unauthorised according to criteria laid down by the DfE (schools should remind parents that it is the decision of the headteacher as to whether or not an absence will be authorised);
- e) submit termly absence returns through School Census and publish information relating to levels of attendance and absence and include details of these in the school's prospectus;.
- f) set annual targets to reduce absence and submit these targets in accordance with the relevant regulations.

2.4 This whole school policy on attendance and punctuality has been developed in discussion with staff, governors, parents and pupils taking account of relevant guidance issued by the DfE.

2.5 The aims of the school are to:

- a) give a high priority and value to attendance and punctuality and ensure that specific strategies are in place in order to achieve this;
- b) ensure compliance with all relevant statutory requirements (particularly with regard to the maintenance of attendance registers and the setting of targets;
- c) ensure that clear attendance information is regularly communicated to parents through the school prospectus, through newsletters, through parents' evenings or through other media; (parents should be specifically reminded of their legal responsibilities for ensuring their children's regular and punctual attendance);
- d) collect and make effective use of attendance data to monitor progress/trends and set targets for improvement – for individuals, classes, year groups and the whole school;
- e) provide clear guidance to staff on the practice of registration and on such connected issues as the appropriate categorisation of absence;
- f) identify clear procedures to identify and follow up all absence and lateness (allocating individual staff roles and responsibilities);
- g) recognise the crucial importance of early intervention and provide appropriate strategies;
- h) make provision for first-day of absence contact, particularly in relation to children who are known to be poor attenders or who might otherwise be considered to be at risk;
- i) identify a range of both proactive and reactive strategies to promote attendance and address absenteeism, especially persistent absenteeism;
- j) provide for a clear and unambiguous hierarchy of sanctions which may include the imposition of Penalty Notices;

- k) set up effective networks for liaising with other involved agencies and services such as Education Welfare Officers (EWOs), Social Care, the Police, Health, etc;
- l) establish procedures for reintegrating long-term absentees and children who may, for specific reasons, have been on a reduced timetable;
- m) identify an interesting, flexible, and accessible curriculum which encourages regular attendance;
- n) provide for regular structured meetings between school staff and the EWO;
- o) ensure that reasonable steps are taken by the school before a referral is made to the EWO;
- p) stress to parents the importance of continuity of learning, particularly in relation to family holidays during term-time See Appendix B;
- q) inform governors, who will challenge or support as necessary;
- r) identify a key senior member of staff, the headteacher, with overall responsibility for attendance;
- s) ensure that good practice is identified and disseminated;
- t) help create an ethos and culture which encourages good attendance, addressing school-based causes of poor attendance such as bullying, racism, an inappropriate curriculum, etc.

### **3.0 RESPONSIBILITIES OF PARENTS**

3.1 Parents are responsible in law for ensuring that their children attend the school at which they are registered regularly, on time, properly dressed and in a fit condition to learn. (Parents are also responsible for ensuring that their children stay at school once they have registered.)

3.2 Parents can do a great deal to support the regular and punctual attendance of their children. Parents should:-

- a) take an active interest in their child's school life and work;
- b) attend parents' evenings and other school events;

- c) ensure that their child completes his/her homework and goes to bed at an appropriate time;
- d) be aware of letters from school which their child brings home;
- e) ensure that their child arrives at school on time each day;
- f) ensure that their child only misses school for reasons which are unavoidable or justified, such as illness or days of religious observance;
- g) always notify the school as soon as possible - on the first morning - of any absence;
- h) confirm this in writing when the child returns to school;
- i) avoid booking family holidays during term-time;
- j) talk to the school if they are concerned that their child may be reluctant to attend;
- k) consider and sign the Home-School agreement.

### 3.3 **ABSENCE FROM SCHOOL**

Parents should telephone the school to inform us of the reason for their child's absence on their first day off. If we do not hear from them we will telephone to find out why the child is absent.

All absences from school are recorded in our registers and any unauthorised absences are totalled at the end of the school year and reported to you, in line with DfE regulations. Our Educational Welfare Officer monitors data regularly to check registers and discuss pupil absence/lateness.

After any absence from school a letter should be sent into the school office with the reason for absence. This will enable us to insert the correct code in the register.

## Appendix A Authorised Circumstances

**Authorised absences** fall into the following categories

<b>Sickness</b>	Where school is advised by letter or verbal explanation by parent or other responsible adult (by telephone or personally).
<b>Holiday</b>	See Appendix B
<b>School's discretion</b>	Where permission is specifically sought and approved for absence outside the above two categories, e.g. for urgent family business or on compassionate grounds. (Such permission can be sought and approved after the absence in extremely urgent circumstances).
<b>Medical</b>	Dental treatment, speech therapy, opticians etc.

Any absence not authorised is recorded as an unauthorised absence in the register - one school day equalling two sessions, morning and afternoon.

If parents have to take their child out of school, they should call at the office first to sign the child out. A member of the office staff will collect the child from the classroom.

**An appointment card or letter for medical/dental appointments should be shown to staff when children are being taken out of school for appointments.**

Children should not be collected or dropped off between 12 noon and 1pm.

## **Appendix B Holidays in term time**

### **HOLIDAYS/LEAVE OF ABSENCE**

Should it be necessary for a family to take annual holiday during term time, then a green request form should be obtained from the entrance lobby, completed, and returned to the school.

At the school's discretion a maximum of ten days in an academic year (September to July) may be granted. This is not an automatic entitlement. Time away from school can be detrimental to a child's educational progress and we do ask that families consider carefully before requesting such holiday absences.

If children miss the first days in their new class in September it can be very difficult for them when they return. Friendships have been formed and class routines learned.

Absences for unavoidable personal reasons, other than holidays, should be discussed with the Headteacher wherever possible and a request made in a letter.

***In line with the majority of Wickford schools the following will not be authorised;***

- ***holidays taken in the first two weeks in September,***
- ***holidays taken by Year 2 pupils when teacher assessments are being finalised,***
- ***odd days mid-week.***
- ***any time off where child's attendance is below 90%.***

***No holidays in excess of 10 days will be authorised.***

## **Appendix C Penalty Notices**

***Taking your child out of school during term time could be detrimental to your child's educational progress.***

Parents should not normally take their children on holiday in term time. **There is no legal right to do so.** However, you may apply to the school for leave of absence for up to 10 days. A term time holiday will only be authorised by the school if they believe there are special circumstances which warrant it. (The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006)

If the absence is not authorised and the holiday is taken, the case will be referred to the Education Welfare Service who may issue a Penalty Notice for £100 (or £50 if paid within 28 days) to each parent for each child taken out of school.

Respect , Enjoyment, Self-Esteem, Team Work, Inclusion, Pride, Honesty, Security, Creativity, High Aspirations

