



Hilltop First School

Policy Document

ATTENDANCE POLICY



ROYAL BOROUGH OF WINDSOR AND MAIDENHEAD

Attendance Policy

(followed by Hilltop Attendance Policy & Procedures, page 4)

PURPOSE

This document outlines the Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead's responsibility for school attendance and policy. It covers:

- The legal framework
- Responsibilities of parents, schools and the Local Authority
- Statutory requirements, as referred to in the Education Acts and Regulations
- Department for Education Statutory guidance and departmental advice 'School Attendance' April 2013 and The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013.

SCOPE

This policy applies to all children and young people of compulsory school age attending RBWM schools.

OBJECTIVE

The objective of this policy is to alert schools and parents/carers to updated statutory guidance and to further improve the school attendance of pupils in RBWM schools.

Our aim is to raise the attendance rate of all pupils in all our schools.

RBWM strive to secure very high school attendance by all pupils and has a zero tolerance to any unauthorised absence.

STATUTORY GUIDANCE

The legal framework governing attendance at school is set by successive Education Acts and various regulations. Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 states that:

The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him/her to receive efficient full-time education suitable-

[a] to his/her age, ability and aptitude and

[b] to any special needs he/she may have.

either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

There are legal obligations on:

- Parents to secure education for their children, whether at school or otherwise, and to send them to school regularly once they are on the register.
- The Local Authority to provide education and to enforce attendance.
- Schools to register attendance and notify the Local Authority of absence from school.

The Local Authority has the power under the Education Act 1996 Section 444 (1) 444(1A) to take legal action to enforce attendance at school. This duty is exercised through RBWM's Education Welfare Service.

The local Authority also has the following legal powers to enforce school attendance:

- Prosecution for irregular school attendance
- Penalty Notices and Parenting Orders (Anti Social Behaviour Act 2003) for irregular attendance and unauthorised leave of absence
- School attendance Orders
- Education Supervision Orders.

RESPONSIBILITIES

The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead is committed to improving school attendance. Whilst school attendance, is generally high and absence rates are consistently below the national average and in line with statistical neighbours, there are pupils in our schools whose attendance remains below an acceptable level of 95%. As an authority we strive for 100% school attendance and have a zero tolerance of any unauthorised absence.

Regular attendance at school is central to social inclusion, equal opportunities, keeping children safe and has a major impact on a child's education, future and life chances. Prolonged absence, irregular attendance and lack of punctuality can all serve to undermine educational achievement resulting in considerable long-term disadvantage to children and young people. It is important that children leave school with the skills and qualifications that enable them to secure employment, continue their education or access training courses. In order to do this we need to maximise their educational and social developments.

Pupils who do not attend regularly may be placed at considerable risk and, in some cases, may be drawn into patterns of antisocial or criminal behaviour.

It is recognised that pupils may have difficulties in attending regularly for a variety of complex and often inter-related reasons. These may include:

- The pupil's educational, social and emotional development
- The pupil's medical history
- Social, economic and cultural considerations within the family and community
- Factors operating within school
- Availability of appropriate support from statutory and voluntary agencies within the community.

The primary responsibility for ensuring that children and young people attend school rests with their parents / carers. However promoting attendance and tackling absence is the responsibility of all agencies within the local authority and of schools.

Parents/Carers

- To meet the needs of any child in their care;
- To provide an education - this is fulfilled through state provision, private schooling or education at home;
- To ensure regular attendance of children of compulsory school age;
- To meet any social and emotional needs which affect access to education; these needs can be met either by the parent/carers or in partnership with other people/agencies;
- To ensure a good attitude to learning – this could be achieved by ensuring punctuality, appropriate dress and by fulfilling expectations of schools e.g. homework;
- To work in partnership with school and other agencies in the best interests of their child; this includes informing school about significant changes or influences in the child's life which may impact on learning.

Schools

- Are responsible for supporting the attendance of their pupils and for dealing with problems that may lead to absence
- To provide a welcoming and safe environment which encourages attendance and promotes the best performance from children;
- To contribute sensitively to the child's social, emotional and moral development ;
- To establish good and effective communication links with parents/carers and to work collaboratively in meeting the child's needs;
- To clearly state their expectations of parents/carers and children and make it explicit as to what they can reasonably expect from school, including help available within school and elsewhere;
- To promote both good attendance and the welfare of the child;
- To establish good working practice with the Education Welfare Service, the key LA agency in supporting attendance;
- To work collaboratively with other agencies to assist them in fulfilling their statutory duties e.g. Safeguarding;
- To keep accurate and up to date records on children's attendance and punctuality as required by legislation;
- To notify the LA, in accordance with legislation, of irregular attendance or of any continuous absence of more than two weeks not covered by medical certificate.

Local Authority

- To ensure that parents across the Borough are informed of their responsibilities in relation to attendance;
- To provide education suitable to the child's age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs;
- To identify, develop and establish good practice in respect to child welfare and access to education throughout the authority;
- To uphold and enforce the law in respect of attendance, employment of young persons, involvement in entertainment and safeguarding.

- To identify, develop and establish good practice in respect to child welfare and access to education throughout the Authority;
- To enable all LA Services with responsibility for children to work together effectively in the best interests of the child;
- To develop collaborative working across the statutory and voluntary sector so that the interests of children are met;
- To ensure that the work of the Education Welfare Service is targeted to support children, parents/carers and schools in relation to improving attendance;
- To monitor attendance across the Borough based on information provided by schools;

School attendance – Statutory guidance and departmental advice, August 2013 is available from

<https://www.education.gov.uk/schools/pupilsupport/behaviour/attendance>

This document includes advice on attendance codes and keeping pupil registers.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE FROM SCHOOL

The Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead actively discourages leave of absences in term time and strongly advises all schools to adopt this policy.

From September 1st 2013 The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 [Statutory instruments, 2013, No: 756] ‘prohibits the proprietor of a maintained school granting leave of absence to a pupil except where an application has been made in advance and the proprietor considers that there are exceptional circumstances relating to the application’

Implications for schools are:

- Any absence requested by a parent should be referred to as “leave of absence”
- Only applications made in advance can be considered
- Heads are prohibited from granting leave of absence except in “exceptional circumstances”
- Reference to “holiday” absence has been removed
- Relevant school documents will need to be updated, such as attendance policies, procedures, forms, letters

Implications for Parents are:

The LA will use their powers under the Penalty Notices and Parenting Orders (Anti Social Behaviour Act 2003) to issue Penalty Notices for unauthorised leave of absence. Penalty notices will be issued to each parent for each child.

ASSOCIATED DOCUMENTS

- School Attendance -Statutory Guidance and Departmental Advice - August 2013.
- Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead Penalty Notice Code of Conduct
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 [Statutory instruments, 2013, No: 756]
- The Education Act 1996
- The Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007

MONITORING EVALUATION AND REVIEW

This policy will be reviewed annually. The review will seek feedback from schools, parents and revise in accordance with these and any changes in legislation. The policy and any changes will be monitored by the Directorate Management Team.

HILLTOP WHOLE SCHOOL ATTENDANCE POLICY & PROCEDURES

Hilltop is committed to providing a full and efficient education to all pupils and embraces the concept of equal opportunities for all. We will endeavour to provide an environment where all pupils feel valued and welcome.

For a child to reach their full educational achievement, a high level of school attendance is essential. As a school we have a zero tolerance of unauthorised absence.

The primary responsibility for ensuring that children and young people attend school rests with their parents/carers. However promoting attendance and tackling absence is the responsibility of schools and agencies within the local authority. We will consistently work towards a goal of 100% attendance for all children. Every opportunity will be used to convey to pupils, their parents or carers the importance of regular and punctual attendance including e.g. newsletters and end of term reports. We recognise that parents have a vital role to play and there is a need to establish strong home-school links whenever there is concern about attendance.

If there are problems which affect a pupil's attendance we will investigate, identify and work in partnership with parents and pupils to resolve those problems as quickly and efficiently as possible.

School attendance is subject to Education law and this school attendance policy is written to reflect these laws and the guidance produced by the Department for Education (DfE).

Each year the school examines its attendance figures and sets the attendance target which is approved by the Full Governing Body. The target for 2015/2016 is 96%.

We regularly review our systems for improving attendance to ensure that we are working towards meeting our target.

School Registration Procedures

- Morning registration will take place at the start of school from 8.50am. Once completed registers are sent down to the main school office. Any child arriving after 8.50am enters school via the main office and the parent/carer signs them in late stating the reason. Pupils arriving between 8.50am and 9.00am will be treated for statistical purposes, as present, but will be coded as late (L) before registers close. If they arrive after the registers close at 9.00am they are recorded as unauthorised (U). When a child is late it has a negative impact on the child's learning and disrupts all the children in the class.
- Any child who is absent from school at the morning or afternoon registration period has their absence recorded with the appropriate code agreed by RBWM.
- Afternoon registration is at 1.00pm.
- When making medical/dental appointments, every effort must be made to ensure appointments are outside school hours. Medical/Dental appointments must be accompanied by an appointment card or other written confirmation.

Absence from School

- First Day Calling

Parents/carers must give a written or verbal explanation, by ringing the school office and either speaking directly to a member of the office staff or leaving a message on the absence voicemail. If no explanation is received by 9.30am school staff will contact the parent. For the majority of parents this will be via text.

- Subsequent Absence

First Day Calling is repeated on each subsequent day if no acceptable explanation has been received. Social Care will be notified if there is an unexplained absence of a pupil who has a child protection plan in place.

- Frequent Absence

The school works in close partnership with the Education Welfare Officer (EWO), who visits the school each short term to assess any concerns with absence or punctuality.

In cases where a pupil begins to develop a pattern of absences, the school will try to resolve any concerns with parent/s. The Head teacher (or nominated member of staff) will liaise with the schools allocated Education Welfare Officer to ensure necessary action is taken when incidents of poor attendance and/or punctuality are identified.

Where incidents of poor attendance and/or lateness are identified through monitoring parents/carers will be notified in writing that this is a cause for concern. If this continues, the School will invite parents/carers in to discuss causes and ways forward including being in communication with the EWO.

THE LAW

Penalty Notices and Legal Action

The Education Act 1996 Section 444 (1) 444(1A) states that:

The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him/her to receive efficient full-time education suitable-

[a] to his/her age, ability and aptitude and

[b] to any special needs he/she may have.

either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

Failure to do so may result in legal action taken against the parent under the above legislation.

Leave of Absence

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 explanatory note states:

Regulation 7 of the 2006 Regulations is amended to prohibit the proprietor of a maintained school granting leave of absence to a pupil; except where an application has been made in advance and the proprietor considers that there are exceptional circumstances relating to the application.

Leave of absence taken without authorisation may be referred to the Education Welfare Service. This may result in prosecution in the Magistrates Court, or a Fixed Penalty Notice. If a Fixed Penalty Notice is issued, a separate Notice will be issued to each parent for each child.

The penalty is per parent per child and will be £60 if paid within 21 days, rising to £120 if paid between 22 & 28 days.

If the penalty notice is not paid each parent may be liable to prosecution at the Magistrates Court, and if proved, each notice may receive a criminal conviction and/or a fine to the maximum of £1,000 plus costs.

Application for term-time leave of absence must be made in writing in advance by the parent with whom the child normally resides. Leave of absence will only be granted where the Head teacher considers it is due to 'exceptional circumstances'. Parent will be informed in writing of the head's decision.

There are approximately 195 school days (390 sessions) a year which your child is expected to attend. There are also approximately 71 days (142 sessions) of school holidays. This is over 13 school weeks. Please ensure that your holidays are taken during this period.