



Hilltop First School and Foundation Stage

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Headteacher: Ms Lynn Bima

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Dear Parents and Carers,

At Hilltop First School, we believe that every day of learning provides a foundation for your child's future. You are hopefully aware that the government expectation for school attendance is at least 95%. A recent review of our whole school attendance data has identified this as an area of concern. Our current whole school attendance for this academic year is 92.5%. 46% of pupils across the school have attendance below 95% - this is almost half of all pupils! Furthermore, the Department for Education considers pupils with attendance below 90% to be persistent absentees. 21% of our pupils fit this category. We also have a high number of pupils regularly arriving late to school.

Why is this a concern?

Research shows a direct link between high attendance and academic achievement. New learning builds upon what has previously been learnt and understood. Even missing a few days can lead to gaps that can be difficult to bridge.

In addition to learning, school is about community: building social connections, confidence and a sense of belonging. Each of these are important for learning. Walking into a classroom late can often mean a child starts the day feeling self-conscious. They have missed both the informal social start to the day as well as any initial instructions or explanations. A child who arrives at the office just five minutes late still has to get to class, unpack their belongings and settle into the classroom. It is likely that they will in fact miss ten minutes of classroom time.

Our Expectations and Policy

To ensure all pupils reach their full potential, we have outlined the following expectations:

- **Punctuality:** The school day begins promptly at 8:50am. Arriving on time ensures your child is settled and ready for the first lesson of the day. We are aware of the ongoing roadworks on Clewer Hill Road. Please build in a little additional time for your journey to allow for the detour and increased traffic.
- **Sickness absence:** Where a child is too ill to be in school, it is appropriate for them to remain at home. Many minor ailments do not require an absence if the child is otherwise well enough to participate in the school day. Parents may find the following link helpful: <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/is-my-child-too-ill-for-school/>
- **Reporting Absence:** If your child is too unwell to attend, please notify the school office by 9am via email or leaving a voice message.
- **Medical Appointments:** We ask that dental and medical appointments be made outside of school hours whenever possible. Where a morning appointment is unavoidable, please could children still come in for the first part of the morning so that they can be marked as present in the register and participate in the first lesson. Absence due to parents' medical appointments will not be authorised.

Government Guidance on Term-Time Holidays

The Department for Education has clarified that headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are "exceptional circumstances." Please note that holidays are not considered exceptional circumstances. In accordance with government regulations, unauthorised absences - including term-time holidays - may result in a referral to the Local Authority, which can issue a Fixed Penalty Notice.

Our full attendance policy can be found on the school website.



How can we work together to improve attendance?

We realise that often parents are not aware of how many days a child has missed over time. We will be sending home printed information slips regarding individual attendance where a pupil has dropped below 95%. We ask that parents please return the signed slip acknowledging receipt of the information. We do already monitor individual pupil absence each term and routinely send out letters to families where there are concerns. Moving forward, we will contact parents as soon as their child's attendance drops below 95%. Once a child's attendance drops below 90% every absence will be followed up with a phone call from either our attendance lead, Mrs Romanay-Bhatt or our attendance officer, Miss Usher.

We aim for every child to maintain an attendance rate of at least 95%. If you are worried about your child's attendance, please contact the office to arrange a meeting with myself. We understand that every family faces different challenges. If there are barriers preventing your child from attending school regularly—whether they are health-related, emotional, or practical - we want to help.

Thank you for your continued partnership in making Hilltop First School a place where every child can thrive.

Kind regards

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Lynn Bima', written in a cursive style.

Lynn Bima
Headteacher