



# Harmony Hill

## Primary School

*Together we flourish*

### **Pupil Attendance Policy**

2025



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# Harmony Hill Primary School Pupil Attendance Policy

## Introduction

All children of compulsory school age have the right to an efficient full-time education, regardless of age, aptitude, ability and any special needs s/he may have. Regular school attendance is essential if a child is to make the most of the educational opportunity available to them.

Harmony Hill Primary School takes seriously the responsibility to monitor and promote the regular attendance of all its pupils. It acknowledges that irregular attendance seriously disrupts continuity of learning, undermines educational progress, can lead to underachievement and low attainment and impedes the child's ability to develop friendship groups within school.

This policy seeks to ensure that all parties involved in the practicalities of school attendance are aware and informed of the school's commitment to attendance matters. It details the responsibilities of individuals and groups and the procedures in place to promote and monitor pupil attendance.

The 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 the awareness of the importance of a differentiated and relevant curriculum.
- Promoting opportunities to celebrate and reward pupil successes and achievements.
- Raising awareness of the benefits of good attendance.
- Ensuring that attendance is monitored effectively and reasons for absences are recorded promptly and consistently, and any patterns of poor attendance are actioned appropriately.
- Liaising with EA Education Welfare Officer as necessary.
- Liaising with other external agencies, such as Social Services, as appropriate.

## Pupil Responsibility

Pupils have a responsibility to themselves and others to play a positive role in the life of the school and to make the most of the educational opportunities available.

- To respect themselves and others.
- To do all they can to attend school regularly and punctually.
- To encourage friendship and a sense of belonging.
- To be happy and encourage others to feel happy.
- To inform a trusted adult if they feel they are the victim of bullying behaviour.
- To share with a trusted adult if they have worries or concerns that cause them to feel reluctant to attend school.



### Parent Responsibility

Parents have the prime responsibility for ensuring that their child attends school regularly and punctually. They also have a legal responsibility to ensure regular attendance for the duration of the school day. Parents should also make sure that the children arrive on time, properly dressed, with the right equipment and in a fit state to benefit from the education offered to them. **Parents may be sent to court by the Education Welfare Service if a child does not attend school regularly and punctually.** This consequence is to ensure that parents carry out their duty to secure suitable education for their children.

If a child is in the care of foster parents or in a residential home, it is important that the carers recognise their parenting role where attendance to school is concerned. They will be supported by close co-operation between the school, Education Welfare Services and Social Services where such a child's attendance is irregular.

Parents have a responsibility:

- To keep requests for their child to be absent to a minimum.
- To offer a reason for any period of absence, preferably before the absence or on the first day of absence.
- To ensure that their child arrives at school on time, properly dressed, with the right equipment and in a condition to learn. A reason should be offered for any lateness.
- To work closely with the school and Education Welfare Officer (EWO) to resolve any problems that may impede a child's attendance.
- To take family holidays during school holiday periods and be aware that the Department of Education does not grant school the power to agree to any holiday requests outside of agreed holiday periods.
- To be aware of curriculum requirements and be especially vigilant with regards to attendance during important academic periods.
- To support their child and recognise their successes and achievements, as well as to communicate openly with school regarding challenges and concerns that may be impacting attendance and engagement with school.

### School Responsibility

The school will endeavour to provide an environment that is conducive to educating every individual pupil. School attendance will be positively supported, wherever possible, and the promotion of good communication and co-operation between all parties involved will be paramount. The school has a statutory responsibility to record and monitor the punctuality and attendance of pupils for both the morning and afternoon sessions. A register of attendance has to be taken once at the start of the morning session. The register has to record whether a pupil is present, engaged in an approved educational activity off site or absent. If a pupil is absent, the register must record whether the absence was authorised or unauthorised.

School has a responsibility:

- To create a school ethos that pupils want to be part of.
- To meet the legal requirements set out by Government.



- To give a high priority to punctuality and attendance.
- To develop procedures that enable the school to identify, follow up and record unauthorised absence, patterns of absence and parent-condoned absence with effective monitoring and intervention.
- To consistently record authorised and unauthorised absences.
- To develop a range of effective strategies to follow up intermittent and long-term absenteeism and promote good attendance.
- To encourage open communication channels between home and school.
- To develop procedures for the reintegration of long-term absentees.
- To liaise regularly with Education Welfare and to develop procedures leading to a formal referral to the EWO, where necessary.
- To adequately provide for pupils with difficulties, within the bounds of resources available, and ensure the appropriate delivery of the curriculum.

### **Responsibility of the Class Teacher**

Class teachers are responsible for:

- Keeping an overview of class and individual attendance, looking particularly for either poor overall attendance, anomalies in patterns of attendance and/or unusual explanations for absence offered by children and their parents/guardians.
- Informing the principal where there are concerns and agreeing actions to try to move forward as effectively as possible.
- Providing background information to support referrals.
- Monitoring impact once actions have been taken regarding attendance concerns.
- Emphasising with the class the importance of good attendance and punctuality and encouraging a classroom atmosphere and environment that supports a positive ethos of welcome and inclusion.
- Ensuring that the curriculum is delivered within a culture of inclusion and in such a way that the pupil feel that they have and can succeed.
- Following up unexplained absences with parents, with immediate requests for explanation.
- Discussing attendance issues at consultations evenings/days.
- Applying the same principles listed above to persistent patterns of lateness.
- Setting and supporting personal attendance goals for Individual pupils whose attendance has been a cause for concern and encouraging this in a positive manner.
- Ensuring pupil attendance figures are published accurately with the annual academic reports.

### **The Role of the Education Welfare Team**

The Education Authority (EA) has a responsibility to provide education and promote regular attendance of all statutory school age children. Through the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) the Education Authority provides support to schools and parents to fulfil their legal duty. The EWO is the enforcement agency of the Education Authority and, as well as providing guidance and support through its officers, may take a parent to court for not fulfilling their duty in relation to school attendance.



### School Procedures for Recording and Monitoring Attendance

#### Definitions and Clarifications

The school uses the following definitions when monitoring absence and punctuality.

- All lateness after 9:10am will be marked as L – Late before register closes.
- All lateness beyond 9:30am will be marked as U – Late after registers have closed. It should be noted that a U code counts as an Unauthorised Absence for the duration of that session.
- Pupils with attendance below 86% are considered 'Persistent Absentees' and their attendance will be monitored following the school attendance procedure (See Appendix for letters and procedures.)
- All term-time applications for holidays will be recorded as unauthorised.
- Parents may be fined by the EWO for taking their child on holiday during term time.
- In the majority of circumstances, reasons for absence may be offered by phone, email or through SeeSaw.

The following reasons are deemed as acceptable reasons for an authorised absence.

- The child is ill or is prevented from attending school by unavoidable cause.
- The child is absent on days exclusively set apart for religious observance in their particular faith.

A reason for a period of absence is always required. In the first instance, if a note or phone call has not been provided immediately after a period of absence, an 'Absence Notification Form' will be sent home. This should be returned to school the following day. If this form is not returned, the relevant attendance mark will be lodged as 'D', 'did not provide a reason for absence.'

#### Monitoring

- The Principal/VP or senior management team and the EWO will review the attendance of all the school's pupils on a termly basis. Any pupils identified as cause for concern, or less than 86% attendance, will be reviewed on a more regular basis.
- A letter will be sent to the parents of any pupil identified as having attendance problems informing them of the school's concerns and offering support to resolve any problems that may be impeding a child from attending.
- The pupil's attendance will be closely monitored and, if after a two-week period there appears to be no improvement, the parents of the pupil will be invited to a meeting with the Principal/VP or a member of the senior management team, to discuss the issue and hopefully resolve any difficulties preventing the pupil from attending.
- If the parent/s do not attend the meeting, or after such a meeting the attendance of the pupil does not improve, a formal referral to the EWO will be made.
- The SIMS attendance module provides many reports and information that assist the school to monitor attendance. These reports will be accessed when relevant and provide information to assist the school strategically management of attendance issues. The EWO will also have access to this information and will use the reports to support their role.



### Requests for leave of absence.

All term-time applications for holidays will be recorded as unauthorised.

The school will NOT provide any work for children who are absent from school due to a family holiday. Work will only be provided in the case of long-term sickness, bereavement or other exceptional circumstance at the discretion of the Principal.

### Following up attendance issues – procedures

#### The Half Termly Attendance Meeting

Each half term, the Senior Leadership Team will meet to discuss any concerns and follow up the progress of individuals. Prior to the meeting, the following information is collected:

- Attendance record for any child with less than 86% attendance.
- Attendance records for any child who is classed as a Persistent Absentee (below 86%).
- Attendance record for any child whose absence shows trends.
- Attendance record for any child who has been frequently arriving at school late.
- Class percentage totals.
- Attendance for any identified groups e.g. pupils with SEND or VPRS.

At this meeting, information will be shared about previous cases and decisions will be taken about the next stages of intervention where this is appropriate. **It is expected that reasonable steps have been taken by the school prior to EWO intervention.** Following the meeting, class teachers are notified of the outcome and agreed actions are discussed and followed up as is appropriate.

These meetings may result in a pupil/parent or family being referred for Education Welfare Intervention.

#### School procedures in cases for intervention

Although a range of strategies and actions will be taken on an informal basis, a formal procedure is applied where an absence remains unexplained or is identified as pattern-forming. An example of the process is outlined below:

- Discussion by the class teacher on an informal level with the parent, with positive reminders about the importance of regular attendance and punctuality.
- An informal letter, outlining attendance to date and comparing to expected/whole school attendance, will be sent home by the class teacher.
- If attendance continues to be a cause for concern a letter will be sent by principal, vice principal or member of SLT, enclosing a pupil attendance grid highlighting a pattern of absence/punctuality and that the pupil's attendance will be monitored for the rest of the term.
- If attendance falls below 86%, parents will be invited in to meet with the principal, vice principal or member of the SLT, and informed that failure to improve attendance will result in a referral to the EWO.
- Should the child's attendance percentage continue to fall, or if parents decline to engage with the school on this issue, the EWO will be informed accordingly.
- A recognition certificate or encouragement letters will be given to children who have significantly improved their attendance.

#### Monitoring

The principal may report periodically to the school's Board of Governors, the attendance percentage for the school and on any specific trends and/or difficulties with individuals.







Appendix

**Letter 1** – If attendance falls below 86%

**Letter 2** – If attendance continues to fall below 86%

**Letter 3** – If attendance does improve a letter to acknowledge this improvement

**Letter 4** – A letter to be sent at the beginning of the year to highlight the child's poor attendance in the previous academic year and the need for improved attendance.

**Letter 5** – A response for a request for time off during the school term.



Date

Dear

Student:

DOB:

Following a recent attendance review, we have noticed that .....’s attendance currently stands at .....% which has fallen below the school attendance target of .....%.

We have high expectations at Harmony Hill and continually strive to raise attendance levels to maximise the educational achievements of all our pupils. There is a great deal of evidence which clearly shows that even quite low levels of absence have a negative impact on achievement and attainment.

We appreciate that every situation is different and there may be specific issues which are making it difficult for your child to attend school.

If you would like to discuss your child’s attendance, please do not hesitate to contact me on the number below and I would be more than happy to discuss your concerns.

We will continue to monitor .....’s attendance and hope to see an improvement in the future.

Yours sincerely



Date

Dear

Student :

DOB:

.....

Further to our recent letter I am disappointed that .....’s attendance has not improved and currently stands at .....%.

Poor attendance is taken very seriously at Harmony Hill and research shows a clear link between absence and poor progress in school.

We would like to invite you to a meeting on ..... at ..... to discuss this matter.

Should .....’s attendance remain irregular; we may have to refer this matter to the Educational Welfare Officer who may consider more formal action.

We look forward to meeting with you to discuss any concerns you may have so we can continue to support your child in making good progress. We hope that you will work with us to improve .....’s attendance and, therefore, avoid the need for this matter to be referred to the EWO.

If you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact me via email or by telephone.

Yours sincerely



Date

Dear

Student :

DOB:

Since writing to you on ..... we have been monitoring .....’s attendance and we are really pleased to see that there has been a significant improvement.

.....has reached the attendance target and we have celebrated this with your child today.

Thank you for working in partnership with us and supporting .....’s regular attendance.

We look forward to seeing excellent attendance continuing over the next .....

Yours sincerely



Date

Dear

Student :

DOB:

At the end of the last academic year, you will be aware that .....’s reported attendance figure was .....%. The table below outlines Department of education expectations, which we endorse.

100% Attendance	0 Days Missed	Excellent
95% Attendance	9 Days of Absence 1 Week and 4 Days of Learning Missed	Satisfactory
90% Attendance	19 Days of Absence 3 Weeks and 4 Days of Learning Missed	Poor
85% Attendance	28 Days of Absence 5 Weeks and 3 Days of Learning Missed	Very Poor
80% Attendance	38 Days of Absence 7 Weeks and 3 Days of Learning Missed	Unacceptable
75% Attendance	46 Days of Absence 9 Weeks and 1 Day of Learning Missed	Unacceptable

We have high expectations at Harmony Hill and continually strive to raise attendance levels, to maximise the educational achievements of all our pupils. There is a great deal of evidence which clearly shows that even quite low levels of absence have a negative impact on achievement and attainment.

We appreciate that every situation is different and there may be specific issues which were making it difficult for your child to attend school.

As we embark on a new school year, we hope that we can work in partnership to ensure that your child attends school and is able to flourish.

Yours sincerely,



Date

Dear

Student :

DOB:

I am writing in response to your letter/email/telephone call requesting permission for ..... to be absent from school on .....

Government guidelines which came into effect on 1<sup>st</sup> September 2013, prevent schools from granting any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances.

If you feel that your request falls within this category, please contact the school through the email account giving details of your reasons.

If there are no exceptional circumstances the leave of absence will be catergorised as an 'unauthorised absence'.

Yours sincerely,