



## **ATTENDANCE POLICY OCTOBER 2020**

### **Introduction:**

This is a successful school and your child plays their part in making it so. We aim for an environment which enables and encourages all members of the community to reach out for excellence. For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and your child should be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

It is very important therefore that you make sure that your child attends regularly and this Policy sets out how together we will achieve this.

### **Why Regular Attendance is so important:**

Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any pupil's absence disrupts teaching routines so may affect the learning of others in the same class.

Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is your legal responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

### **Promoting Regular Attendance:**

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

### **To help us all to focus on this we will:**

- Give you news on attendance in our regular school newsletters.
- Children causing concern in terms of attendance will be highlighted and the school will report to parents/carers on expected improvements until the school is happy with attendance.
- Celebrate good attendance by displaying class achievements – through the weekly presentation of Brainy Bear, prizes given in assembly for half termly and termly 100% attendance and end of year achievement.

### **Understanding types of absence:**

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by the parents), as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for reasons such as illness, medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable cause.

Pupils need to attend both morning and afternoon sessions each day to achieve 100% attendance. Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been given. This type of absence can lead to the Local Authority (Participation Team) using sanctions and/or legal proceedings. This includes:

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily
- truancy before or during the school day
- absences which have never been properly explained
- children who arrive at school too late to get a mark
- shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- day trips and holidays in term time
- excessive illness without medical evidence
- travelling to visit sick relatives.

Whilst any child may be off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents and the child. If your child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and usually make things worse.

You can support your child by:

Ensuring regular and early bed times

Helping with homework

Having uniform and equipment prepared the night before

Providing a healthy breakfast

Reporting any academic or social concerns promptly

Retaining open & honest communication with your child's school

Being positive about school (even if your own experience was less than positive)

Encouraging your child to invite friends home for play dates

Discuss any problems with the class teacher or learning mentors.

Religious Observance. One day per year is authorised for religious observance. However, although authorised, this is still a recorded absence and will result in less than 100% attendance. This is in line with borough policy.

### **Persistent Absenteeism (PA):**

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we need parents' fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

We monitor all absence thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority and you will be informed of this immediately.

PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully through our pastoral system and we also combine this with academic mentoring where absence affects attainment.

All our PA pupils and their parents are subject to an Action Plan and the plan may include: allocation of additional support through a Mentor or Teaching Assistant, individual incentive programmes and participation in group activities around raising attendance. All PA cases are also automatically made known to the Participation Officer who will meet with parents.

## **Absence Procedures:**

### **If your child is absent you must:**

- Contact us as soon as possible on the first day of absence.
- Or, you can call into school and report to reception.

### **If your child is absent we will:**

- Telephone you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you.
- Invite you in to discuss the situation with our Attendance Officer and/or Learning Mentor, Assistant Headteacher or Headteacher if absences persist.
- Refer the matter to the Participation Officer if attendance moves below 90%.

## **Telephone numbers:**

There are times when we need to contact parents about lots of things, including absence, so we need to have your contact numbers at all times. So help us to help you and your child by making sure we always have an up to date number – if we don't then something important may be missed. There will be an annual check on telephone numbers but it is a parent's responsibility to advise the school as soon as possible of any changes. In an emergency the school can only contact you immediately if numbers are correct.

## **The Participation Officer:**

Parents are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the 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 Participation Officer from the Local Authority. He/she 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 Penalty Notices (currently £60 per parent rising to £120 if unpaid after 21 days. If unpaid after 28 days a summons to Court will be issued for each unpaid Penalty Notice) or prosecutions in the Magistrates Court. The legislation is the Education Act 1996 sec. 444(1) and 444(1A).

"If any child of compulsory school age who is a registered pupil 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 is 01895 250858 or [participationteam@hillingdon.gov.uk](mailto:participationteam@hillingdon.gov.uk)

## **Removing children from the school roll:**

Should parents take their child out of school for longer than 20 unauthorised days, the absence will be reported to the Participation Officer. Following safeguarding checks by the CME team (Children missing in education), the child's name may be removed from the school roll. Should the child's name be removed from the roll, parents would need to re-apply for a school place on their return. A child may only be re-admitted if the school has a vacant place for them.

### **Lateness:**

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If your child misses the start of the day they can miss work and do not spend time with their class teacher getting vital information and news for the day. Late arriving pupils also disrupt lessons, can be embarrassing for the child and can also encourage absence. Registers are marked by 9.00 am and your child will receive a late mark if they are not in by that time.

At 9.30am the registers will be closed. In accordance with the Regulations, if your child arrives after that time they will receive a mark that shows them to be on site, but this will **not** count as a present mark and it will mean they have an unauthorised absence. This may mean that you could face the possibility of a Penalty Notice if the problem persists.

If your child has a persistent late record you will be asked to meet with the Learning Mentor and/or Attendance Officer to resolve the problem, but you can approach us at any time if you are having problems getting your child to school on time.

### **Late Collection:**

It is a parent's duty of care to ensure that their children are collected at 3pm. Details of children who are regularly collected late after school will be forwarded to the Participation Officer for action as necessary.

### **Exceptional Leave:**

Taking holidays in term time will affect your child's schooling as much as any other absence and we expect parents to help us by not taking children away in school time. Remember that any savings you think you may make by taking a holiday in school time are offset by the cost to your child's education. There is **no** automatic entitlement in law to time off in school time to go on holiday.

The Participation Team can issue Penalty Notices for any unauthorised absence. Penalty Notices can be issued to each parent/carer concerned and for each child's absences. If unauthorised leave is repeated the Participation Team may summons each parent to Court.

### **School targets, projects and special 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 schooling and we believe our pupils can be amongst the best in Hillingdon.

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 Newsletters and we ask for your full support.

Mrs C Veale, Headteacher

Mrs J Bailey, Attendance Officer

Mrs L Holland, Learning Mentor

**Summary:**

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures and its attendance policy to parents and to promote attendance. School attendance data must be available to the Local Authority & 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 and pupils as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible. Regular attendance optimises your child's attainment. It is also a fundamental part of the Every Child Matters intentions to:

Be Healthy

Be Safe

Enjoy & Achieve

Make a positive contribution

Achieve economic well-being

N.B.

A copy of the Attendance Policy will be kept in the school reception (available to all parents/carers) and on the school website. Any families requiring support will be given a copy of the policy and asked to sign for it. Staff, Governors and pupils will have access to the policy. It will be reviewed on an annual basis.

This policy was reviewed and approved by the Board of Governors of Minet Infant and Nursey school in October 2020. The policy will be reviewed again in October 2021.