



HILLSTONE PRIMARY SCHOOL

School Attendance Policy

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Our Commitment to Attendance

Introduction

At Hillstone Primary School, we are committed to ensuring that every child has the opportunity to thrive through regular school attendance. We believe that attending school every day is essential for children to:

- Access high-quality learning
- Build emotional resilience
- Develop confidence and independence
- Reach their full potential
- Make a positive contribution to their community

Our Approach

We value every child and are committed to working in partnership with families to identify and overcome any barriers to attendance. Our approach is based on:

- Early identification of concerns
- Timely and appropriate support
- A child-centred, graduated response
- Strong relationships with families and external agencies

Our Attendance Team

The following staff members are responsible for monitoring and supporting attendance:

- Attendance Leader – Jason King
- Attendance Officer – Kate Hickinbottom
- Safeguarding Lead – Terri Scott

This team uses attendance data to:

- Identify patterns of concern
- Celebrate improvements and good attendance
- Raise concerns with parents and carers where necessary
- Share information with the Local Authority if required

Working with Families

If a child is absent and the reason is not known (e.g. a prolonged illness), we will contact parents or carers. Where concerns persist or there is a lack of engagement, we will follow the school's escalated approach to improving attendance, which includes:

- Offering support through the Early Help process
- Developing a shared plan with families to improve attendance
- Using a supportive, non-judgemental approach to build trust

Legal Responsibilities and Escalation

While our aim is always to work in partnership with families, we are required to follow national guidance. If attendance does not improve despite support, we may refer the case to the Local Authority for consideration of a Penalty Notice or other statutory intervention. This is always considered a last resort.

Monitoring and Reporting

- Each child's attendance will be reported to parents annually in their school report.
- If concerns arise, we will share the child's attendance profile with parents or carers.
- Whole-school and group attendance data will be monitored regularly and reported to the Trustee Board to ensure appropriate support is in place.

To Support Good Attendance, and Safeguarding, at Hillstone we:

- Ensure the school is welcoming and every child feels a sense of belonging and connectedness.
- Ensure the school site is open at the stated times.
- Ensure the regular, efficient, and accurate recording of attendance is complete by every class teacher each day. This further supports our approach to safeguarding within the school.
- Take safeguarding seriously and we will always contact you on the Hillstone day that your child is absent from school, this includes before and after-school clubs. If your child arrives late after the close of registration, we will record their arrival at the main office and transition the child to class.
- Consider any requests for leave in term time individually. This will be aligned to the Local Authority code of conduct.
- Notify the Local Authority within 5 days if a new child is joining the school roll.
- Inform the Local Authority of children whose parents have notified the school in writing and have opted for Elective Home Education.
- Work closely with the School Attendance Support Team.
- Notify the Local Authority of Children Missing Education (CME) – in line with the statutory DfE guidance (updated September 2025), schools must inform the Local Authority when a child of compulsory school age is not registered at a school and is not receiving suitable education otherwise than at a school (e.g. through elective home education or alternative provision).

A Whole School Approach To Supporting Attendance At Hillstone

Securing good attendance at Hillstone Primary School cannot be achieved in isolation. It requires a collaborative, whole-school approach, where all leaders and staff play a role in promoting and supporting regular attendance.

The Attendance Leader will work closely with other key leaders, including:

- Curriculum Leader
- Behaviour Leader
- SENDCo
- Pastoral Leader

Together, they will ensure that attendance is embedded across all areas of school life, and that strategies to improve attendance are aligned with teaching, behaviour, inclusion, and pastoral support.

The Strategic Approach

Hillstone Primary School adopts the Inclusive Attendance Framework, which places emphasis on building a school culture where every child feels a sense of belonging, connection, and value. We recognise that improving attendance is not just about monitoring absence, but about creating the conditions where children want to attend and are able to thrive.

Core Principles of Our Strategic Approach

- Belonging and Connectedness: We foster a positive school climate that helps children feel safe, supported, and included.
- Early Identification: We use data and professional insight to identify early triggers that may lead to poor attendance.
- Relationship-Based Practice: We prioritise building strong, trusting relationships with children and families before any escalation.
- Collaborative Support: We work with internal and external partners to address barriers to attendance holistically.

Common Triggers We Monitor

Our staged approach helps us identify and respond to factors that may impact attendance, including:

- Mental health and emotional wellbeing
- Breakdown in communication or trust between home and school
- Relationship challenges within families or peer groups
- Lack of access to support networks (both in-school and external agencies)

By addressing these issues early and compassionately, we aim to prevent attendance concerns from escalating and ensure every child has access to their full educational entitlement.

Aims of the Inclusive Attendance Framework

Hillstone Primary School follows the Inclusive Attendance Framework to ensure that attendance is promoted and supported in a way that is equitable, proactive, and responsive to the needs of all pupils.

The key aims of this framework are to:

- Increase overall school attendance and reduce levels of persistent absence, in line with national expectations and school-set targets.
- Ensure that attendance is effectively managed across the school, with appropriate staffing, systems, and resources allocated to support this work.
- Enable the school to make informed use of attendance data to target interventions appropriately, with a particular focus on key demographic groups identified in the DfE's Working Together to Improve School Attendance guidance (updated 2025), including:
 - Pupils eligible for Free School Meals (FSM)
 - Pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

- Pupils with social care involvement
- Pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds
- Pupils with mental health or emotional wellbeing needs

This framework supports our commitment to ensuring that every child has the opportunity to attend school regularly and benefit from a high-quality education.

Objectives

The objectives of Hillstone Primary School's Inclusive Attendance Framework are to:

- Create a school ethos where good attendance is recognised as the norm and every child is encouraged to aim for excellent attendance.
- Make attendance and punctuality a whole-school priority, embedded in our culture, systems, and daily practice.
- Set focused targets to improve both individual pupil attendance and overall school attendance levels.
- Embed the Inclusive Attendance Framework, clearly defining roles and responsibilities and promoting consistency in how attendance and punctuality are supported across the school.
- Record and monitor attendance and absenteeism, applying appropriate strategies to reduce absence and respond to emerging concerns.
- Develop a systematic approach to collecting, analysing, and using attendance data to inform decision-making and target interventions effectively.
- Provide support, advice, and guidance to parents and children, fostering mutual cooperation between home and school to encourage good attendance and address any identified issues.
- Celebrate good attendance and punctuality through weekly whole-class rewards – Hillstone Hearts – reinforcing a positive culture and recognising collective effort.

Understanding Barriers to Attendance and Safeguarding

Hillstone Primary School recognises that poor attendance is often a sign of wider challenges in a child's life. These may relate to difficulties at home or in school, and can include:

- Bereavement
- Family separation or divorce
- Domestic abuse
- Mental health concerns
- Social care involvement

We encourage parents and carers to inform the school of any changes in circumstances that may affect their child's attendance, wellbeing, or behaviour. This enables us to offer timely support, including through the Early Help process, and to work together to remove barriers to attendance.

Safeguarding and Attendance

Safeguarding is a priority at Hillstone. Any concerns about a child's welfare will be reported to:

- Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) – Jason King
- Deputy DSL – Terri Scott

We follow the statutory guidance outlined in Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) and our Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

Supporting Vulnerable Pupils

Some children may require additional support to maintain good attendance. This includes pupils who are:

- Vulnerable or at risk
- Living with medical conditions
- On an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP)

We proactively monitor these pupils and take early action to prevent non-attendance from escalating. This includes gathering information, offering targeted support, and reviewing the impact of interventions.

Initial Steps Taken by the Attendance Officer

To understand and address attendance concerns, the Attendance Officer will:

- Review school records, including those from previous schools
- Consult with staff about the child's engagement with the curriculum
- Liaise with the SENDCo to check if the child is on the SEND register
- Listen to the voice of the child, exploring any difficulties such as curriculum access or bullying, and identifying how these issues can be addressed

Persistent and Severe Absence

- Children with attendance below 90% are classified as Persistently Absent
- Children with attendance below 50% are classified as Severely Absent

Severe absence indicates that all internal support and intervention has not led to sufficient improvement. In such cases, we will escalate concerns and work with external partners to ensure the child receives the support they need.

First Day Contact Procedures

At Hillstone Primary School, we expect parents and carers to contact the school at the earliest opportunity on each day of their child's absence. This helps us ensure your child is safe and allows us to offer support if needed.

If No Contact Is Made

If we do not hear from you, the school will:

- Send a text message or make a phone call to check on your child's wellbeing
- If concerns persist, we may:
 - Conduct a home visit
 - Send a letter outlining our concerns
 - Invite you to meet with a member of staff to discuss your child's attendance

Ongoing Concerns

Where attendance concerns continue and we are unable to make contact, we will:

- Continue to make telephone calls, send texts or emails
- Carry out announced and unannounced home visits
- Escalate concerns in line with our safeguarding and attendance procedures

Legal Responsibility

Parents and carers are legally responsible under the Education Act 1996 for ensuring that their child attends school every day and on time. Failure to do so may result in formal intervention by the Local Authority.

We urge families to talk to us early if there are any difficulties. We are here to help and will always work with you to support your child's attendance and wellbeing.

Parental Responsibility for Securing Full-Time Education

Parents and carers are legally responsible for ensuring that their child receives a full-time education, either by attending school or through other suitable arrangements. At Hillstone Primary School, we work in partnership with families to support this responsibility, always prioritising the welfare and safety of the child.

Definition of 'Parent'

The term parent includes:

- Natural parents
- Individuals with parental responsibility under the Children Act 1989
- Individuals who have care of the child under the Education Act 1996

Authorising Absence

- Only the school can authorise absence. Parents do not have the authority to do so.
- All absences will be treated as unauthorised unless satisfactory evidence is provided.
- Contact from a parent or carer is accepted as initial evidence. However, if a child's attendance continues to cause concern, the school may request medical evidence, such as:
 - Appointment cards
 - Prescription slips
 - Medical letters or notes

Absences may be recorded as unauthorised if evidence is not provided.

Medical and Dental Appointments

- Parents should make medical and dental appointments outside of school hours wherever possible.
- If this is not possible, children should attend school before or after the appointment.
- Appointment cards or confirmation should be provided as evidence.

Examples of Unsatisfactory Explanations for Absence

The following reasons will not be authorised:

- A child's or family member's birthday
- Shopping for school uniform
- Hair appointments
- Closure of a sibling's school for INSET or other reasons
- Oversleeping or "couldn't get up"
- Minor illness without medical evidence
- Term-time holidays taken without school authorisation
- Head lice (please inform the school so we can notify parents confidentially)

Punctuality

At Hillstone Primary School, we place a strong emphasis on punctuality as part of our commitment to good attendance and safeguarding.

Start of the School Day

- Doors open: 08:40am
- Doors close: 08:50am (prompt)
- Registers close: 09:00am

Children arriving after 09:00am will be marked as late.

Late Arrivals and Absence Coding

- Late marks after the register closes will be recorded as an unauthorised absence for the morning session.
- If a child arrives at school after 09:30am, they will be recorded with a 'U' code, which denotes unauthorised absence due to lateness.

Evidence and Authorisation

- Absence due to lateness will only be authorised if a satisfactory explanation is provided, such as:
 - Attendance at a medical or dental appointment (evidence required)

- Absence will be recorded as unauthorised if the reason is not deemed valid, for example:
 - Oversleeping
 - Waiting for uniform to dry
 - General lateness without cause

Monitoring and Communication

- Punctuality is recorded and tracked using Scholarpack.
- Parents will receive:
 - Text messages for frequent lateness
 - Half-termly letters if punctuality or attendance is a concern

We ask all parents and carers to support their child in arriving at school on time every day, as lateness can disrupt learning and impact wellbeing.

Transition Following Long-Term Absence or Illness

Hillstone Primary School recognises that extended absence from school can significantly disrupt a child's learning, wellbeing, and sense of belonging. We are committed to ensuring that every child returning from long-term absence is welcomed, supported, and reintegrated effectively.

During Long-Term Absence

The school will:

- Maintain regular contact with the child and family
- Offer support and guidance where appropriate
- Monitor the child's wellbeing and progress remotely, if possible

Planning the Return to School

When a child is ready to return, we will:

- Carefully plan the transition, ensuring the child feels safe, welcomed, and valued
- Provide a named member of staff to support the child with any concerns
- Ensure the child regains a sense of belonging and routine
- Offer emotional support where needed, particularly if the absence was due to illness, trauma, or family circumstances

In-Class Support

- The Class Teacher and Teaching Assistant will support the child in catching up with missed learning
- Adjustments may be made to the curriculum or timetable to ease the transition
- Additional support will be provided where needed, in line with the child's individual needs

Leave during Term Time

From 1st September 2013, the Government amended the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006. As a result, Headteachers may only grant leave during term time in exceptional circumstances.

Hillstone Primary School follows Birmingham City Council's Leave in Term Time Guidance for Schools and Academies:

https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/downloads/file/5462/leave_in_term_time_legal_process_stepby-step_guide

Requesting Leave

- Parents must submit a written request to the Headteacher before making any travel or leave arrangements.
- Retrospective requests will not be considered and will result in the absence being recorded as unauthorised.
- Each request will be considered individually, taking into account the child's attendance history and the nature of the request.

Exceptional Circumstances

Leave may be granted in exceptional circumstances, which may include:

- Cultural or religious observance
- Family emergencies
- Minority ethnic children returning to their country of origin for cultural reasons

In all cases, parents must justify why the leave must be taken during term time.

Consequences of Unauthorised Leave

- If a child fails to return and the school cannot make contact with the family, the child may be removed from the school roll in accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations.
- This may result in the loss of the child's school place.
- If leave is taken without permission, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised, and the school may consider legal action, including:
 - Issuing a Penalty Notice
 - Referral to the Local Authority

Using attendance data

Hillstone Primary School regularly monitors attendance to identify patterns, support pupils, and improve outcomes.

- Weekly attendance meetings are held between the Attendance Leader and Attendance Officer to review pupils of concern and plan support.

- Attendance data is shared with the DfE and relevant external agencies, in line with data protection laws.
- We use data to spot trends, target interventions, and improve attendance across the school.
- The Trustee Board receives regular reports and holds the school to account for attendance performance.

Persistent Absence

At Hillstone Primary School, we work closely with families to promote regular attendance and reduce Persistent Absence.

- A child is classed as Persistently Absent if they miss 10% or more of school sessions — this equals 38 sessions or 19 days across the academic year.
- Persistent Absence is a key focus for Ofsted and is reported to the Local Authority.
- If a child reaches the threshold and attendance does not improve, we may escalate concerns and consider legal action in line with statutory guidance.

Legal Duties and Attendance Recording

Under Section 7 of the Education Act 1996, parents are legally responsible for ensuring their child receives efficient full-time education, suitable to their age, ability, and any special educational needs — either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

- A child becomes of compulsory school age at the start of the term following their 5th birthday.
- The Local Authority has a statutory duty to ensure children receive education and may use legal enforcement where necessary.
- Hillstone Primary School supports Birmingham City Council's FastTrack on Attendance and will pursue legal action where fair and appropriate.

Attendance Recording

- Attendance is recorded twice daily (morning and afternoon) using Scholarpack, our secure electronic system.
- This data is shared with the Department for Education (DfE) as part of statutory reporting.

Legal Sanctions

Hillstone Primary School follows a supportive attendance process, which prioritises support first, but also recognises the need for legal action where attendance does not improve, and families do not engage.

Support First Approach

- We will always speak with parents to understand the reasons for absence.
- Support is offered at every stage, including Early Help and formal attendance meetings.
- If concerns persist and support is not engaged with, legal sanctions may be considered.

Penalty Notices

Under the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003, Penalty Notices may be issued when:

- A child takes unauthorised leave during term time.
- A child has at least 10 sessions of unauthorised absence, and further absence occurs after a written warning.

Penalty Notices are issued in line with Birmingham City Council's Code of Conduct.

- Fines are £80, rising to £160 if unpaid within 21 days.
- From 2024/25, parents can receive up to two fines per child in a three-year period.

Prosecution

If attendance does not improve despite support and intervention:

- The school may refer the case to the Local Authority.
- Legal proceedings may be initiated under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996.2
- Parents found guilty may face:
- A fine of up to £2,500
- A community order
- Up to 3 months imprisonment

Other Legal Interventions

Schools and local authorities may also consider:

- Parenting contracts
- Education Supervision Orders
- School Attendance Orders
- Parenting Orders

These are used based on the individual circumstances of each case and in line with the DfE's Working Together to Improve School Attendance guidance.

Children at risk of Missing in Education (CME)

Children Missing Education are a vulnerable group who may be at risk of harm or underachievement. CME includes children who:

- Have not taken up an allocated school place
- Have 5+ days of unexplained absence
- Have left school and their destination is unknown

Hillstone Primary School works with Birmingham City Council's Education and Inclusion Team to identify and refer CME cases. Referrals are made using the council's CME process, and the school will not remove a child from roll without consultation.

Celebrating Success

At Hillstone Primary School, we believe in recognising and rewarding good and improved attendance.

- Each week, the classes with the most improved attendance receives Hillstone Hearts.
- Classes collect these on a poster and exchange them for a half-termly treat, such as a park visit, movie afternoon, or extra playtime.
- We celebrate progress and challenge falling attendance, working in partnership with families to support every child's future.

If you have concerns about your child's attendance or would like to get involved in our school community, please contact Kate Hickinbottom – Attendance Officer.

Other Policies Supporting Attendance

- Behaviour Policy
- Teaching and Learning Policy
- Safeguarding & Child protection policy

Roles and Responsibilities

Parents and Carers

- Ensure children attend school regularly and on time — this is a legal duty.
- Avoid non-emergency appointments during school hours.
- Inform the school of absence on the first day, following school procedures.
- Understand that term-time holidays require prior authorisation.
- Attend meetings when requested and support attendance plans.
- Ensure children are collected on time by someone aged 16 or over.

Children

- Aim for excellent attendance and punctuality.
- Arrive on time, ready to learn, and follow procedures for lateness or leaving school.
- Never leave school without permission — this is a safeguarding concern.

Teaching Staff

- Promote punctuality and welcome children daily.
- Keep accurate registers and follow attendance procedures.
- Communicate concerns to leaders and support children returning from absence.
- Celebrate attendance success and help children monitor their own attendance.

Attendance Officer (Kate Hickinbottom)

- Monitor attendance, especially for vulnerable groups.
- Contact families, offer support, and escalate concerns when needed.
- Maintain accurate records and liaise with the Local Authority.
- Lead on rewards and ensure attendance data is shared with staff and agencies.

Attendance Leader (Headteacher – Jason King)

- Oversee attendance strategy and meet regularly with the Attendance Officer.

- Lead attendance assemblies and ensure attendance is promoted across school communications.
- Use data to link attendance with academic progress and participate in pre-legal meetings

Relevant Legislation

Hillstone Primary School's Attendance Policy is underpinned by the following legislation and statutory guidance:

Primary Legislation

- Education Act 1996 – including Section 7 (parental duty) and Section 444 (offences related to non-attendance)
- Children Act 1989 – safeguarding and welfare responsibilities
- Crime and Disorder Act 1998 – youth justice and anti-social behaviour
- Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003 – includes powers to issue Penalty Notices
- Education and Inspections Act 2006 – includes powers for parenting contracts and orders
- Sentencing Act 2020 – relevant for legal proceedings involving attendance offences

Secondary Legislation

- The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 – replaces the 2006 regulations and came into force on 19 August 2024
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007 – still in force, with amendments in 2024
- The Education (Parenting Contracts and Parenting Orders) (England) Regulations 2007

Statutory Guidance

- Working Together to Improve School Attendance (DfE, updated August 2024 – statutory from September 2025)

Relevant Government Guidance

Hillstone Primary School's Attendance Policy is informed by the following government guidance:

Statutory Guidance

- Working Together to Improve School Attendance (DfE, updated August 2024)
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE 2025)
- Children Missing Education (CME)
- Elective Home Education
- Alternative Provision: Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities
- Exclusion from Maintained Schools, Academies and Pupil Referral Units in England
- Supporting Pupils at School with Medical Conditions

- Ensuring a Good Education for Children Who Cannot Attend School Because of Health Needs

Non-Statutory Guidance

- Parental Responsibility Measures for Attendance and Behaviour
- Working Together to Safeguard Children
- Promoting and Supporting Mental Health and Wellbeing in Schools and Colleges
- Approaches to Preventing and Tackling Bullying