HILL HOUSE SCHOOL

Attendance Policy

Key School contacts

Senior Attendance Champion	Caroline Rogerson Email: info@thehillhouseschool.com Telephone: 01302 776300
School Reception	Email: parents@thehillhouseschool.com Telephone: 01302 776300
School Absence Reporting Portal	https://hillhouse.myschoolportal.co.uk

1. Aims

a) Hill House aspires to high levels of attendance from all pupils. Good attendance is essential for all pupils to get the most out of their school experience, including their attainment, wellbeing and wider life chances.

b) The aims of this policy are as follows:

- to develop and maintain a whole school culture that promotes the benefits of good attendance.
- to ensure that every pupil in Hill House can benefit from and make their full contribution to the life of the school.
- to prioritise and where possible improve attendance and punctuality across the school, reduce absence and set out the Hill House's approach to the management of absence / non-attendance.
- to recognise the linkages between attendance / absence and pupil wellbeing, specifically ensuring a consistent whole school approach to safeguarding; and
- to help to promote a whole school culture of safety, equality and protection.

2. Scope and application

a) This policy applies to the whole school.

b) This policy is designed to address the specific statutory obligations on the school to record attendance and absence.

3. Regulatory framework

a) This policy has been prepared to meet the Hill House's responsibilities under:

- Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.
- Education and Skills Act 2008.
- The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024.
- Equality Act 2010; and
- Data Protection Act 2018 and UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR)

b) This policy has regard to all appropriate guidance and advice, including but not limited to:

- Working together to improve school attendance (DfE, August 2024).
- Toolkit for schools: communicating with families to support attendance (DfE, August 2024).
- Guidance for Parents on school attendance (Office of the Children's Commissioner, July 2024).
- 'Is my child too ill for school?' guidance (NHS, April 2024).
- Keeping children safe in education (DfE, September 2024).
- Children missing education (DfE, August 2024).

c) The following School policies, procedures and resource materials are relevant to this policy:

- Safeguarding policy
- Missing children policy
- Special Educational needs policy
- Attendance matters booklet
- Promoting Good Behaviour, Pastoral care and discipline; and
- Parent Contract

4. Publication and availability

a) This policy is published on the school website

b) This policy will be sent to parents when pupils join the school, and parents will be reminded of it at the beginning of the school year and when the policy is updated.

5. Definitions and interpretation

Where the following words or phrases are used in this policy:

a) references to **attendance** include references to attendance for all or part of the timetabled school day.

b) references to a **parent** means:

- any person who has parental responsibility for a pupil; and
- any person who has day to day responsibility for a pupil (i.e. lives with and looks after a pupil).

c) References to a **pupil** includes anyone who is receiving an education at the school.

d) **SAC** means the School's Senior Attendance Champion

6. Responsibility statement and allocation of tasks

a) The Governors have overall responsibility for all matters covered by this policy.

b) The Governors recognise the importance of school attendance and have appointed a designated senior leader to have overall responsibility for championing and improving attendance in School, referred to in this policy as the SAC.

c) To ensure the efficient discharge of their responsibilities under this policy, the Governors have allocated the following tasks:

Task	**Allocated to**	**When / frequency of review**
Keeping the policy up to date and compliant with the law and best practice	SAC	As required, and at least termly
Monitoring the implementation of the policy	SAC	As required, and at least termly
Analysing attendance and absence data	SAC	As required, and at least termly
Seeking input from interested groups (such as pupils, staff, Parents) to consider improvements to the School's processes under the policy	SAC	As required, and at least annually
Formal annual review	Governors	Annually

7. The importance of good attendance

a) The school recognises the importance of developing good patterns of attendance from the outset. This is an integral part of the school's ethos and culture. In building a culture of good school attendance it recognises:

- the importance of good attendance, alongside good behaviour, as a central part of the school's vision, values, ethos, and day to day life.
- the interplay between attendance and behaviour, bullying, special educational needs support, supporting pupils with medical conditions and / or disabilities, mental health issues, safeguarding wellbeing, and support for disadvantaged pupils.
- the importance of setting high expectations for the attendance and punctuality of all pupils and communicating these regularly and effectively to pupils and parents.
- children missing education can act as a vital warning sign to a range of safeguarding issues, including neglect, sexual abuse and child sexual and criminal exploitation.

8. School responsibilities

a) The school acknowledges that attendance is the essential foundation to securing positive outcomes for all pupils and that everyone has a responsibility to take proactive steps to manage and improve attendance across the school community.

b) The school will consistently promote the benefits of good attendance, setting high expectations for every pupil and consistently communicating those expectations to pupils and parents.

c) Where there are challenges to attendance, the school will work effectively and respectfully with pupils, their families and, where appropriate, local authorities to address them.

d) The school will respond to non-attendance and / or lateness proactively, firmly, consistently and with care, with appropriate reference to this policy, its safeguarding and behaviour policies and the school's terms and conditions. It will act in a proportionate and targeted way in response to data and ensure intervention is regularly reviewed.

e) The school will have robust systems in place to track and record attendance, reasons for absence and patterns at an individual level and by cohorts or groups in order to identify pupils at risk of non-attendance and those who are persistently absent and it will monitor and analyse this data regularly to facilitate early intervention to address issues.

9. Staf responsibilities

a) The SAC

The Governors have appointed a senior member of staff of the school's leadership team as SAC to have overall responsibility for championing and improving attendance in school. Details of the individual appointed are at the front of this policy and are widely publicised within school.

The SAC's responsibilities are:

- to set a clear vision for improving attendance in school.
- to establish and maintain effective systems for tackling absence and make sure the systems are followed by all staff.
- to regularly monitor and evaluate progress, including the efficacy of the school's strategies and processes.
- to have oversight of and analyse attendance data; and
- to communicate clear messages on the importance of attendance to pupils and parents.

b) Staff with specific responsibilities for attendance:

The staff identified in Appendix 1 of this policy have day to day responsibility for monitoring and promoting good attendance and punctuality. They:

- have a formal routine for registers being taken accurately each morning and afternoon.
- record all absences promptly and accurately using the processes specified.
- seek explanations of absences required from pupils on their return to school.
- make enquiries about unexplained absences, including those within the school day, and follow up with pupil to ensure that an explanation has been formally given to the school.
- look out for trends or patterns in a pupil's attendance and inform the SAC of any specific concerns.
- deal with lateness to lessons consistently and promptly.
- consider appropriate sanctions for pupils who arrive late to a lesson in line with the school's behaviour and discipline policies; and
- discuss non-attendance and / or lateness with pupils and parents and emphasise the importance of punctuality and attendance.

c) All staff

- The school ensures that all teaching and non-teaching staff know the importance of good attendance and are consistent in their communication with pupils and parents about it.
- The school provides appropriate training and professional development for staff consistent with their roles and responsibilities.

10. School arrangements

The school will accurately complete admission and attendance registers and have effective day to day processes in place to follow-up absence. These registers must be kept electronically. Contact details of relevant staff can be found at the front of the policy and other details about the School's arrangements can be found in Appendices Appendix 1- Appendix 3.

11. Monitoring attendance

The school will undertake regular data analysis to identify and provide additional support to pupils or pupil cohorts that need it, and to look at historic and emerging patterns across the school and develop strategies to address them. Such analysis may include:

a) monitoring and analysing weekly attendance patterns and trends and provide support in a targeted way to pupils and families.

b) using this analysis to provide regular attendance reports to class teachers to facilitate discussions with pupils and to leaders (including the special educational needs coordinator and designated safeguarding lead).

c) undertaking frequent individual level analysis to identify pupils who need support and focus staff efforts on developing targeting actions for those cases

d) conducting thorough analysis of half-termly, termly, and full year data to identify patterns and trends.

e) benchmarking attendance data at whole school, year group and cohort level to identify areas of focus for improvement.

f) devising specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data.

g) monitoring the impact of school-wide attendance efforts, including any specific strategies implemented; and

h) providing data and reports to the Governors to support their work.

12. Pupil responsibilities

School attendance is important to pupil attainment, wellbeing and development. The school therefore has high expectations of pupils as to their attendance and has systems in place to reward good attendance and manage poor attendance.

Pupils should be aware that:

a) they are expected to be present in-person for the duration of each school day.

b) they are expected to arrive on time and attend all timetabled lessons and scheduled activities.

c) they should not leave a lesson or the school site without permission or otherwise in accordance with school rules;

d) they should engage with the school's arrangements for recording and managing attendance as set out in this policy;

e) any unexplained absence will be followed up.

f) persistent lateness or non-attendance will result in action being taken by the school. This may take the form of:

- offers of support to seek to identify and address any barriers to attendance.
- communication with parents.
- reporting to other agencies such as children's social care; and
- sanctions against them or their parents in line with the school's behaviour policies.

g) If pupils are having difficulties that might discourage or prevent them from attending school or specific lessons regularly, they may speak to their form tutor or any member of staff. Pupils are entitled to expect this information to be managed sensitively.

13. **Additional needs**

a) Hill House recognises some pupils may find it harder than others to attend school, and will work with those pupils and parents to try to remove barriers to attendance by building strong, trusting relationships, and working together to put the right support in place.

b) The school will make reasonable adjustments where a pupil has a disability that puts them at a substantial disadvantage, in comparison with pupils without a disability, in relation to school attendance.

c) The school will also work with parents, and where appropriate with the local authority, to develop specific support approaches for attendance for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities e.g. ensuring the provision outlined in a pupil's education, health and care plan is accessed.

d) Where a pupil has an education, health and care plan the school will communicate with the local authority where the pupil's attendance falls or the school become aware of barriers to attendance that relate to the pupil's needs.

e) Suitable strategies and support will also be considered for pupils with any social, emotional or mental health issue that is affecting their attendance.

f) Where barriers are outside of the school's control, the school will work with parents and pupils to identify alternative sources of support or consider, where appropriate, making a referral for early help. The school will make a sickness return to the local authority if a pupil is recorded in the attendance register as absent using the national absence code I (unable to attend because of sickness) and there are reasonable grounds to believe that the pupil will have to miss 15 consecutive or cumulative school days or more for illness or the pupil's total number of school days missed during the current school year because of illness (whether consecutive or cumulative) will reach or exceed 15 school days.

14. **Parent / carer responsibilities**

a) The law entitles every child of compulsory school age to an efficient, full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude and any special educational need they may have. It is the legal responsibility of every parent to make sure their child receives that education.

b) This means pupils must attend every day that the school is open, except in a small number of allowable circumstances such as being too ill to attend or being given permission for an absence in advance from the school.

c) The school will help parents to understand what is expected of them and why attendance is important to their child's attainment, wellbeing, and wider development and provide clarity on the short and long term consequences of poor attendance.

d) Expectations the school places on parents can be found in Appendix 1 of this policy

e) Parents are bound by the terms relating to conduct and attendance in the parent contract and failure to ensure a child's attendance or engage with the school about it could amount to a breach of contract or a finding that the parent is treating the school unreasonably.

15. Training

a) **Staff:** The school ensures that regular guidance and training on attendance is arranged on induction and at regular intervals thereafter so that staff and volunteers understand what is expected of them by this policy and have the necessary knowledge and skills to carry out their roles. As a minimum this will include all staff understanding:

- the importance of good attendance and that absence is almost always a symptom of wider circumstances; and
- the school's strategies and procedures for tracking, following up and improving attendance.

b) Dedicated attendance training is provided to any member of staff with a specified attendance function in their role, including administrative, pastoral or family support staff and senior leaders. This should include:

- the law and requirements of schools including on the keeping of registers.
- the process for working with other partners to provide more intensive support to pupils who need it.
- the necessary skills to interpret and analyse attendance data; and
- any additional training that would be beneficial to support pupils and pupil cohorts overcome commonly seen barriers to attendance.

c) The school maintains written records of all staff training.

16. Information sharing

a) Personal information on attendance will only be shared in line with legal obligations and having regard to government guidance on attendance, safeguarding and children missing education.

b) The school, local authorities and other local partners should work jointly and share data on individual cases where it is of benefit to a pupil (e.g. health services where there are medical conditions or the police where there are extra-familiar harms).

c) Where appropriate the school will attend regular targeting support meetings

d) The school is legally required to share information from the registers with the local authority. As a minimum this includes:

- New pupil and deletion returns.
- Attendance returns.
- Sickness returns.

e) The law allows local authority officers access to the attendance and admission registers of all types of schools to carry out their functions under the Education Acts to support joint working between schools and local authorities. These officers are also permitted to take digital or physical extracts of the school's registers.

f) The school must provide specific pupil information on request to the Secretary of State. The school meets this requirement by having an electronic management information system containing the required information that can be used to provide the relevant information to the DfE. The school also uses this tool to monitor pupil level attendance and understand trends in attendance patterns.

g) Where appropriate, the school is expected to inform a pupil's social worker if there are unexplained absences.

17. Record keeping and confidentiality

a) All records created in accordance with this policy are managed in accordance with the school's policies that apply to the retention and destruction of records.

b) The information created in connection with this policy may contain personal data. The school's use of this personal data will be in accordance with data protection law. The school has published privacy notices which explain how the school will use personal data.

Appendix 1 School arrangements

1 Managing attendance

a) The school monitors, records and shares data about pupil attendance and as part of its duty to safeguard and protect pupils and promote attendance. It accurately completes admission and attendance registers as required by law and set out in Appendix 2 and Appendix 3 respectively. The admission and attendance registers must be kept electronically and retained by the school for the relevant time period as stated by law.

b) The school expects all pupils to be present at School for the whole of the school day, usually from the start of period one at 08:40am to close at 4.00pm, but this period may be extended, for example for school activities, sports fixtures or school trips.

2 The role of Parents

The school expects all Parents to:

a) make any application for an authorised leave of absence at the earliest opportunity.

b) notify the school of any absence or delay as soon as reasonably possible in accordance with this policy and when doing so, give an accurate explanation for this; and

c) cooperate with the school to explore possible barriers to attendance and to improve it where attendance has been raised as an issue.

3 Registration and attendance checks

a) In Junior School morning registration takes place at 08:40am, in senior school pupils must complete biometric registration by the same time. Registers remain open for 20 minutes after the start of morning registration.

b) Afternoon registration is at the close of the day for all pupils.

c) Once the morning and afternoon registers close, a pupil will be recorded as absent if not present in the classroom/lesson.

d) If a pupil is absent when the register started being taken and arrives after 8.45am they will be recorded as a late arrival (code L).

e) If a pupil arrives after the register has closed but before the end of the session without a satisfactory explanation e.g. because of an unavoidable cause, then this will be recorded as an unauthorised absence (code U) and the reasons given/not given will be recorded.

f) Teachers observe attendance in all lessons and compare with the school register for the day in order to identify and follow-up on absences from lessons that might occur after morning or afternoon registration

g) The school uses Live Register and iSAMS.

4 Reporting absence

a) If a pupil is to be absent from school for any reason, the parent should contact the school office by parent portal/ email / telephone by 9.00am on first morning of absence and each subsequent morning.

b) Where a pupil is ill, the school should be notified of the nature of the illness.

5 Managing absence

a) If a pupil is absent and parents have not been in touch to explain, then in the first instance the school office staff will contact parents to ascertain the reason. Calls will continue to all contacts held by the school until the reason has been ascertained or the DSL has been consulted.

b) Daily absence lists are reviewed by the SAC any necessary illness information is provided to the school nurse.

c) Absences are reviewed weekly by the SAC, following which contact may be made with parents to discuss the absence

d) In the case of persistent lateness, sanctions in line with the school's behaviour policy will be used.

6 Authorised absences

a) Authorised absence means that the school has either given approval in advance for a pupil to be away or has accepted an explanation offered afterwards as justification for absence.

7 Applications for an authorised leave of absence

a) Applications for authorised leaves of absence during the school day will only be granted in exceptional circumstances. All such applications should be made via the school's parent portal for consideration by the Head of Senior School/Head of Junior School.

b) The school will consider each application for an authorised leave of absence individually, taking into account the specific facts and circumstances, the pupil's past attendance record and the relevant background context behind the request.

c) Apart from illness or where there are additional needs, no pupil should be away from school without prior permission.

d) Dental or medical appointments should be made during school holidays or after the school day except in cases of emergency when the school office should be informed.

e) If a leave of absence is granted, it is for Head of Senior School/Head of Junior School to determine the length of the time the pupil is or was permitted to be away from School. It will be recorded as an authorised absence.

f) A leave of absence will usually be authorised for religious observance if the day concerned is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which parents and pupils belong. Parents are expected to make a request for this type of leave of absence in advance.

8 Reporting duties

a) The school has statutory reporting obligations if a pupil fails to regularly attendance their absence is unauthorised. The school must report unauthorised absences for a continuous period of 10 days or more to the local authority.

b) Action will also be taken in accordance with the Missing child policy and Safeguarding policy if any absence of a pupil from the school gives rise to a concern about their welfare.

Appendix 2 Admission register

9 Admission register

a) In accordance with the requirements of the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 the school will:

- maintain an admission register of all pupils (of both compulsory and non- compulsory school age) admitted to the school (also known as the school roll); and
- inform the local authority of any pupil who is going to be added to or deleted from the school's admission register at non-standard transition points.

b) The admission register is kept electronically, and a back-up copy of the register is made at least once a month in the form of an electronic copy.

c) The school ensures that every entry in the school's admission register is preserved for six years beginning with the day on which the entry was made; and every back-up copy of the register is preserved for six years after the end of the school year that it relates to.

d) The admissions register contains specific personal details of every pupil in the school, including their date of admission, information regarding parents and carers and details of the school they last attended.

e) A pupil's name can only be deleted from the admission register for a reason set out in regulation 9 of the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024. When any of the situations set out in regulation 9 occurs, the pupil's name is deleted.

f) Where the School notifies the local authority that the pupil's name is to be deleted from the admission register, the school will provide it with the following information:

- the full name of the pupil.
- the address of the pupil.
- the full name and address of any parent the pupil normally lives with.
- at least one telephone number of any parent with whom the pupil lives or can be contacted in an emergency.
- the pupil's future address, the full name and address of the parent who the pupil is going to live with, and the date the pupil is expected to start living there, if applicable.
- name of the pupil's other or future school and pupil's start date or expected start date there, if applicable.
- the ground (prescribed in regulation 9) under which the pupil's name is to be deleted from the admission register

Appendix 3 Attendance register

10 Attendance register

a) The school records and monitors the attendance of all pupils (both of compulsory and non-compulsory school age) in accordance with the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) (Regulations) 2024

b) The school uses the appropriate national attendance and absence codes system to enable it to record and monitor attendance and absence in a consistent way which complies with regulation 10 of the Attendance Regulations.

c) The attendance register is kept electronically, and a back-up copy of the register is made at least once a month in the form of an electronic or printed copy.

d) The school will also use these records to identify patterns of poor attendance (at individual and cohort level) and work with pupils and Parents to resolve any issues before they become entrenched.

e) The school is required by law to take attendance registers twice daily - once at the start of the morning session and once during the afternoon session.

f) On each occasion it will be recorded whether every pupil is a boarder is:

- physically present in school when the attendance register begins to be taken; or
- absent from the school when the attendance register begins to be taken but attends before the taking of the register has ended; or
- attending a place other than the school; or
- absent.

g) The circumstances in which a pupil may be recorded as attending a place, other than the school, can include:

- Attending educational provision arranged by a local authority.
- For an educational visit or trip arranged by or on behalf of the school and supervised by a member of school staff.
- Attending a place for an approved educational activity that is a sporting activity.
- Attending an approved educational activity that is work experience provided under arrangements made by the school as part of the pupil's education.
- Attending a place for any other approved educational activity.

11 Recording absence

a) Absence will be recorded in accordance with the national absence codes set out in regulation 10 of the School Attendance (Pupil Registration)

(England) (Regulations) 2024 and statutory guidance Working together to improve school attendance relating to:

- leaves of absence.
- other authorised reasons.
- unable to attend school because of unavoidable cause.
- unauthorised absence.

12 **Remote education**

a) The school is required to record all absence from in-person lessons.

b) The school may, in limited circumstances, provide remote education to enable pupils, who are well enough to learn but unable to attend the school site, to keep pace with their education.

c) In the limited circumstances when the school decides to use remote education for individual pupils when they are absent, the following will be considered:

- ensuring mutual agreement of remote education by the school, parents or carers, potentially pupils, and if appropriate a relevant medical professional. If the pupil has an Education, Health and Care plan or has a social worker, the local authority should also be involved in the decision.
- setting a time limit within which the period of remote education provision should be reviewed, with the aim that the pupil returns to in person education with the required support in place to meet their needs.

d) Pupils who are absent from school and receiving remote education still need to be recorded as absent using the most appropriate absence code. The school will keep a record of, and monitor pupil's engagement with remote education, but this is not formally tracked in the attendance register. Where appropriate, this information may be used to make plans for a pupil's reintegration to school.

e) The school will utilise a digital education platform that will be kept up-to-date and keep pupils safe. Staff will remain trained and confident in its use.

13 **Unauthorised absence**

a) The "unauthorised absence" code will be used when prior permission for absence has not been given and where the school is not satisfied with the explanation given for absence or delayed attendance or where no explanation has been given meaning that the code for "unable to attend due to an exceptional circumstance" is not appropriate. Examples include:

- holiday has not been authorised by the school or is in excess of the period authorised
- the reason for absence has not been provided.

- a pupil is absent from school without authorisation.
- a pupil has arrived in school after registration has closed and without reasonable explanation.

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