Attendance Policy

Date Policy due to be reviewed: September 2027

Committee Responsible for Policy: Full Trust Board

WORK HARD | BE KIND | AIM HIGH

Current Context

'Central to raising standards in education and ensuring all pupils can fulfil their potential is an assumption so widely understood that it is insufficiently stated - pupils need to attend school regularly to benefit from their education. Missing out on lessons leaves children vulnerable to falling behind. Children with poor attendance tend to achieve less in both primary and secondary school'.

The Government expects schools to promote good attendance and reduce absence, including persistent and severe absence, ensure every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled and act early to address patterns of absence.

Parents* are expected to perform their **legal duty** by ensuring their children of compulsory school age who are registered at school attend every day the school is open and arrive to school on time".

Definition of parent: Section 576 of the Education Act 1996
A parent in relation to any child or young person, includes any person:-

a) *all natural parents, whether they are married or not;*
b) *who is not a parent but who has parental responsibility for him/her; or*
c) *who has care of him/her*

This also includes all absent parents who must have regular contact and an ability to influence the child including his/her attendance (separated parents who do not accompany the other parent on the unauthorised leave should not be included). Parental partners can be included (whether they are married or the natural parent of the child as they have 'care' of the child. If a pupil lives with a grandparent or older sibling as their main carer they can also be included as they are the main care provider.

Principles of the Hillcrest Attendance Policy

This policy has been updated in line with DFE guidance 'Working together to improve school attendance' (July 2026) and Birmingham City Council 'Support First' framework and guidance (September 2026).

At Hillcrest School, we believe that good attendance and punctuality are important in helping students achieve the best that they can be. Education is important. Good attendance is integral to our school ethos and culture. Students should be at school, on time and ready to learn, every day the school is open, unless the reason for absence is unavoidable. All research shows that students who attend well achieve well.

The government has laid down guidelines which they expect students at secondary school to achieve in terms of attendance. Every student is expected to have a minimum attendance of **96%**. Students with attendance below 50% fall into the 'severe absentee' category and may require intervention from Birmingham Children's Trust or other external agencies as this level of absence is a potentially significant safeguarding concern.

There are a variety of reasons for students missing school. Some are unavoidable, but we would ask that parents support school in ensuring that your child's attendance meets both the school and the government's expectations. We recognise frequent absence is a potential symptom of a wider issue and improving a child's attendance will improve their overall well-being and educational outcomes.

Descriptor	Attendance	Equals absent number of days	Learning hours lost
Excellent	100% 99%	0 2	0 10
Good	98% 97%	4 6	20 30
Satisfactory	96%	7.5	37.5
Cause for Concern	95-90.1%	9.5-18	47.5 - 90
Significant Cause for Concern **Below 90% = Persistent Absence**	90% 89% 88% 87% 86%	19 21 23 25 27	95 105 115 125 135
Serious cause for concern = **Likely to trigger Penalty Notice Intervention**	85% 84% 83% 82% 81%	28.5 30.5 32 34 36	142 152 160 170 180

Any problems with regular attendance, especially any concerns about possible bullying, learning difficulties or anxiety, are best sorted out by the school, the parents/carers, and the student at an early stage. We will work in partnership with families to remove barriers to attendance. This will allow staff to identify the root cause of any absences and put appropriate support and interventions in place to safeguard the welfare of the child.

We will closely monitor your child's attendance and alert you if we feel there is an issue through the Studybugs App, letter, phone call or text. The school will undertake a wide range of early help measures to support students where attendance at school is an issue, including support from our Pastoral support Team, Safeguarding and Well-Being Coordinator or Learner Support Team. Where there may be an issue, particularly outside the school's control, and we fail to see an improvement, it may be necessary to make a referral to an appropriate external agency to ensure the student receives the support required to bring about an improvement, i.e. - School Nurse Service, Birmingham Children's Trust, Early Help Team or Forward-Thinking Birmingham. Similarly, we will follow the updated 'Support First' protocols to request Attendance Contracts, Notice to Improve referrals and Penalty Notice Fines if a student continues to have unauthorised absence from school despite school-based and external agency interventions.

The school follows the principles outlined in the updated guidance 'Working together to improve school attendance' (July 2026):

Expect

Aspire to high standards of attendance for all students and parents and build a culture where all can, and want to, be in school and ready to learn.

Monitor

The school will make rigorous use of attendance data to monitor patterns of poor attendance (at individual and cohort level) as soon as possible so all parties can work together to remove barriers to attendance before they become entrenched.

Listen and Understand

When a pattern is spotted, the school will discuss concerns with the student and parents, listen to and understand the barriers to attendance and agree how all partners can work together to remove them.

Facilitate Support

The school will attempt to help students and parents access the support they need to overcome barriers inside and outside school. **This may include early help or whole family plan where absence is a symptom of wider issues**.

Formalise Support

Where absence persists and school-based support is not working of not being engaged with, agencies will work together to explain the consequences clearly and ensure the support is also in place to enable families to respond. Depending on the circumstances this may include formalizing support through **an attendance contract or education supervision order.**

Enforce

Where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or not being engaged with, we will work with the Local Authority to request a **Notice to Improve,** and **penalty notice fine** in line with the National Framework or prosecution to protect the child's right to an education.

National Context

The 1996 Education Act (section 444) states that parents (including non-related adult carers in the child's household) have a legal responsibility to ensure that those of compulsory school age are educated, either by 'regular' attendance at school or 'otherwise'. The 2008 Education and Skills Act (section 155) specifies the same requirement regarding regular attendance at alternative provision.

The duty on parents is to ensure that their children are educated, either at a school or 'otherwise'. Education is therefore compulsory. In terms of 'otherwise' children may be educated by their parents/carers at home, by a private tutor or in establishments other than schools, i.e. - FE colleges from the age of 14, special units, hospitals or in alternative educational programmes or work experience. The law allows parents to choose the alternative options, provided they can demonstrate to the Local Authority that the education is full-time and 'suitable' to the child's education needs, up until the relevant leaving-date for all young people.

Schools must enter pupils on the admission register and attendance register from the beginning of the first day on which the school has agreed, or been notified, that the pupil will attend the school. For most students the expected first day of attendance is the first day of the school year. Every amendment made to the admission register and the attendance register must include: the original entry; the amended entry; the reason for the amendment; the date on which the amendment was made; and the name and position of the person who made the amendment. (DFE guidance - September 2022)

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Attendance Champion: Our designated member of the Senior Leadership Team responsible for whole-school attendance is Mr Damon Gariff (Deputy Headteacher and Designated Safeguarding Lead).

Our Attendance Clerk is Miss Stuart.

Our Senior Educational Welfare Officer is Mrs Gray.

The following have key responsibilities in the pursuit of high levels of attendance and punctuality:

Governors

- Recognise the importance of school attendance and promote it across the school's ethos and policies
- To ensure senior leaders set high standards of attendance for all students and parents and build a culture where all can, and want to, be in school
- Ensure school staff receive adequate training on attendance.
- Ensure the school has the appropriate staffing and resources to manage attendance systems.
- Ensure the school's attendance management processes are delivered effectively, and consistent support is provided for students who require it most.
- Appoint a link governor to focus on attendance
- To set and monitor progress towards annual targets for attendance
- To regularly review attendance data, discuss and challenge trends, and evaluate the overall effectiveness of attendance improvement strategies.

Headteacher

- To ensure that effective systems are in place to accurately record individual student, group and whole school attendance patterns.
- To ensure attendance support and improvement interventions are appropriately resourced, including where applicable through effective use of pupil premium funding.
- To ensure all teaching and non-teaching staff know the importance of good attendance, are consistent in their communication with students and parents, and receive the training they need.

Attendance Champion - Deputy Headteacher (Pastoral)

- To ensure key elements of the pastoral and whole school curriculum promote the benefits of good attendance and set high standards for all students and parents/carers.
- To establish and maintain effective systems for tackling absence and ensuring they are consistently implemented by all members of staff.
- To systematically monitor individual student, year group and whole school attendance, absence rates and punctuality to identify trends and patterns, implement timely and appropriate school-based interventions to improve attendance and evaluate their impact i.e., Young Carer cohort
- To track the use of absence codes, trends and patterns to facilitate timely and targeted attendance discussions between students and staff, and co-ordinate staff CPD opportunities.
- Analysing and monitoring attendance data, including explicit benchmarking against local, regional and national levels.
- To decide whether to authorise requested periods of absence in line with national guidance.
- To make a judgement whether an absence that has not been requested is authorised or unauthorised.
- To benchmark attendance data against local, regional and national levels to identify areas of focus for improvement.
- To provide Headteacher and Governors with information to enable them to evaluate the success of policy and practice.
- To co-ordinate early help support in school for targeted vulnerable non-attending students, i.e. - referral to Safeguarding and Well-Being Co-ordinator for students with attendance impacted by mental health concerns.

- To liaise with Educational Welfare Officer to initiate Early Help support or co-ordinate the 'Support First' programme in line with the Birmingham Attendance Support Team and National Framework for Penalty Notices for School Absence.
- To work collaboratively with the NPOC to interpret whole school attendance data and continue to reduce levels of persistent and severe absence.
- To ensure appropriate systems are followed if a child is deemed to be 'absent' from education.
- To co-ordinate communication with external agencies (i.e. - School Attendance Support Team, Police, Early Help, Children's Social Care, SENAR, Forward Thinking Birmingham) for vulnerable students and/or students deemed to be at risk of harm due to non-attendance, particularly if a student with an allocated worker has an unauthorised absence or a student's attendance falls below 50%.
- To co-ordinate processes for Attendance Contracts and engage with the School Attendance Support Team to implement Notice to Improve referrals.
- To co-ordinate the effective use of Studybugs to communicate attendance matters to parents and ensure all parents download the App to improve communication about absences.
- To implement attendance and Getting It Right incentives and reward systems and make effective use of Pupil Premium funding and wider school resources to target interventions.

Head of Year

- To monitor the attendance, absence and punctuality patterns in their respective year group and use this data to implement targeted interventions to improve individual attendance.
- Build positive relationships with families, listen to them and understand barriers to attendance and work with families to remove them.
- Meet with parents, as early as possible, to complete Attendance Support Plans and review outcomes.
- Complete daily attendance checks and support Attendance Clerk with first day communication with parents if a student is absent.
- Follow up all unauthorised absences within five days of the initial absence.
- Communicate with parents at the end of each day to check if their child will be well enough to attend school the following day and offer appropriate support to ensure they can attend.
- Undertake 'Three Houses' assessments and facilitate appropriate early help support measures to improve a student's attendance and educational outcomes.
- Plan year group attendance data to share with form tutors and co-ordinate the form tutor attendance monitoring and Three Houses programmes as part of the wider pastoral curriculum.
- Ensure effective support is in place for students returning to school after a period of absence, i.e. - support them to bridge gaps in knowledge or learning, referral to Careers Advisor, request for 1-2-1 tuition.
- To refer individual families to Birmingham Children's Trust or Early Help Team for advice and support to improve the attendance of targeted students.
- Close monitoring of new admissions in their first six weeks at school to identify issues and remove potential barriers to attendance.
- Regularly celebrate good and improved attendance, i.e. - College Achievement Assemblies, Attendance display boards, Attendance Roll of Honour, Improved Attendance Programme, Inter-form attendance challenges, fortnightly 100% attendance draws, use of Pupil Premium funding for incentives.

SENDCO

- Daily monitoring of the attendance and absence rates of SEND students
- Facilitate daily phone calls and other forms of communication with the parents of absent SEND students.
- Manage the daily Attendance Hub provision for SEND students and/or students experiencing social and emotional difficulties to ensure they are prepared to attend lessons throughout the day.
- Complete Section 19 referrals to work with the local authority to ensure students with complex medical needs can access their education in school or remotely, i.e. - home tuition.
- Complete James Brindley referrals to ensure students with complex medical needs can continue to access their education through Hospital School provision.

All Teaching Staff

- To have high expectations for all students and consistently promote the benefits of good attendance.
- To use emotional coaching techniques and language to celebrate student attendance and encourage them want to attend school/their lessons.
- To consistently follow all systems to celebrate attendance and tackle absence.
- To make any reasonable adjustments, as recommended by Attendance Champion and/or SENDCo, to ensure students can access learning, particularly after returning to school from a period of absence.
- To ensure all lesson registers are taken in a timely and accurate manner in the first five minutes of lessons.

Form Tutors

- To ensure AM registers are accurately taken and absences recorded appropriately within the first five minutes of form period.
- To have high expectations for all students and consistently promote the benefits of good attendance.
- To establish reasons for absence(s) from school when a student returns from absence and share relevant information with Head of Year, Safeguarding Team or Learner Support.
- To complete weekly Three Houses and Attendance Monitoring form period tasks each week and share relevant information with Head of Year, Safeguarding Team or Learner Support.
- To ensure students review their attendance and absences patterns in their individualised Achievement Profiles.

Attendance Clerk

- To prepare, manage and co-ordinate the use of Attendance data.
- To work in partnership with key agencies if attendance and/or punctuality are an issue, including regular meetings with the Deputy Headteacher, Head of Year and Educational Welfare Officer.
- To co-ordinate the daily monitoring of Studybugs to ascertain reasons for absences and ensure the appropriate absence code is recorded on the register by the fifth day of the initial absence.
- To write to parents/carers regarding their child's attendance, at least termly, and more often for those whose attendance is causing concern.
- To arrange meetings with parents/carers to discuss support and set targets for those experiencing attendance difficulties.
- To prepare relevant attendance reports, when requested to do so by the Deputy Headteacher, Head of Year or Education Welfare Officer
- Where the school are not made aware of the reason for a child's absence, they will contact parents/carers by text/telephone call on the first day and send the Education Welfare Officer to complete a home visit on the third day of unexplained absence from school.
- To ensure that a satisfactory reason for every absence has been established for each child at the end of the week, preparing letters on behalf of the Deputy Headteacher where a satisfactory reason has not been established.
- To ensure that 'Support First' Procedures are implemented in cases where persistent unauthorised absence exists i.e. - request for Attendance Contract and Notice to Improve.
- To notify the Local Authority when a student has been recorded with the I code, and the school has reasonable grounds to believe they will be absent for 15 consecutive days or cumulatively due to illness or sickness.
- To complete 'Child Absent from Education' referrals as required and take appropriate action.
- To track the completion of daily registers and provide the Deputy Headteacher with information on any registers not taken.

Education Welfare Officer

- To support the whole school response to attendance, through regular meetings and the monitoring of individual children's attendance.
- To work effectively with families to improve educational outcomes of pupils, particularly regarding understanding carer-related barriers to attendance for young carers.
- To undertake home visits and 'safe and well checks' if a student has been absent from school for three days without communication from home or if they have been absent from school for a period through illness or other authorised circumstances that school are aware of.
- To ensure that 'Support First' Procedures are implemented in cases where persistent unauthorised absence exists and continues, i.e. - complete Formal Attendance Meetings (FAM).

Safeguarding and Well-Being Coordinator

- To provide timely and appropriate support to students (and their families) when mental and physical health issues have impacted on regular attendance.
- To provide early help support to students and families as required as part of the 'Support First' programme to remove potential barriers to attendance. Particularly in regard to understanding carer-related barriers to attendance for young carers.
- To undertake family intervention programmes to support parents to establish attendance routines.
- To refer individual families to Birmingham Children's Trust or Early Help Team for advice and support to improve the attendance of targeted students.
- To access support from the School Nurse Service to ensure appropriate medical support is accessed for students with confirmed or suspected medical conditions.

Daily Procedures: Registration

Under the 2006 Education Regulations the school is **legally** required to register students twice daily. **Registers are marked in the morning at 8:45am and during period 4 in the afternoon**. It is essential that all students are registered on both occasions.

School starts at 8:40am when all students should be lined up outside their form room in preparation for the register being taken at **8:45am**. At this time, they should collect items for the day and make sure that they are aware of any changes/arrangements to the day's activities. **It is a legal requirement that a register is taken at the start of the day**. Not only does the process allow us to monitor attendance but also to act as a student checklist in respect of health and safety issues - e.g., Fire Drill and Lockdown.

Each year a school calendar is sent out and is also on the website which clearly indicates the days when your child is expected to be in school. If your child tells you that school is to be closed on a day not indicated on the school calendar, please check by telephoning the school.

Daily Attendance Routines

Timings	Staff	Actions
8:00-8:15/8:30am	HoY	Pre-emptive phone calls to priority students - those highlighted as needing help or encouragement to get into school. This may also be high priority students that were absent yesterday and that data analysis suggest they may be absent again. All outcomes to be recorded on Class Charts. Individual cases to be referred to Attendance Clerk on Monday and Thursday to target EWO visits.
8:15-8:45am	AC	The Attendance clerk checks all telephone and Studybugs messages and inputs absences into Bromcom. Attendance Clerk checks reasons for absence that may have been authorised by Studybugs and changes absence code on Bromcom. The Attendance Clerk updates missing absences from the previous day to ensure there are no recorded N codes in the system. The Attendance Clerk will notify the DHT and HoY of any communication from parents that required immediate attention.
8:45-9:10am	Tutors	Daily form period - AM registers completed by form tutors. Students marked late if they are not in form room by 8:45am. This must be completed on time and accurately. Once tutors have completed the register, they are advised to scan the room to check if the register is correct and complete a head count. It is essential the register is taken by 8:50am. Tutors to welcome back students after absences – discuss reasons and highlight impact on learning. Is any additional support required? Complete weekly Three Houses as directed by HoY when student is absent for three times in a half-term. Ensure completed notes are saved in shard area for HoY and DHT to review.
8:45-9:10am	Learner Support & SAWC	Personalised support for targeted individual students to help them prepare for the school day and resolve any issues impacting on emotional well-being.
8:45-9:10am	Various AC DHT	Lates duty - students sign in using iPad and late marks recorded on system. Students issued with late detention slips. Students arriving after 9:10am must ensure building through main reception and go to Attendance Office to sign in. U code will be used on Bromcom if students arrive at school after 9:15am. Attendance Clerk checks all form registers have been submitted and follows up with tutors any registers not submitted by 9:00am, particularly registrations covered by external supply staff. The Deputy Headteacher records the names of staff that have not completed their registers accurately on a central spreadsheet. This information is used to support or challenge staff as appropriate.
9:10am	AC	Attendance Clerk runs daily absence reports to check for any discrepancies. The absence report is uploaded to the Teams Attendance folder and becomes a live attendance document that can be accessed by the AC, DHT and HoY.

		The Attendance Clerk will complete all register codes where the reason for absence is known.
9:10-10:10am 9:30am	AC and HoY HoY	Heads of Year have one allocated period per week to focus on making attendance phone calls across all year groups. The target is to ensure all calls home are completed by 10:10am. Information will be added to the live Teams attendance document by AC and HoY. AC will ensure students late to school are removed from the document as soon as possible to ensure phone calls can target students not in school. Staff are required to encourage parents to send their child into school as quickly as they can to ensure they can at least get marked present for PM registration. Any relevant safeguarding information to be recorded on CPOMS. Attendance Clerk runs the daily fire drill list.
10:10- 10:20am 10:20- 10:50am	AC and DHT AC	Attendance Clerk and Deputy Headteacher meet to discuss absences and reasons provided by parents. Decision made on whether absence will be authorised by school and discussion about late detentions based on information provided by parents and students. Attendance Clerk continues to follow up unexplained absences and responds to additional messages received via Studybugs
11:00am	Studybugs	Automatic Absence and PA Absence Chaser sent to parents who have not contacted school to explain their child's absence
11:30am	Studybugs	Automatic Late Chaser sent to parents to advise their child was late to school
11:30am	AC and DHT	Monday and Thursday - Decision reached on EWO home visits Additional visits will take place for absent pupils on other days of the week if we are concerned about their safety and well-being. EWO home visit reports to be added to CPOMS by AC and DHT to co-ordinate response and interventions required.
1:15-1:30pm	Teaching staff	Staff take period 4 register and PM mark recorded on system
1:30 onwards	Attendance Clerk	Attendance Clerk checks period 4 registers and follows up any incomplete or untaken registers
2:00-3:00pm	Attendance Clerk	Attendance administrative work – attendance letters, Studybugs alerts, daily N codes amended, absence chasing slips completed and issued to students
3:15pm	Learner Support & SAWC	Personalised support for individual students to review the school day and prepare students to return to school the following day.
3:30-4:00pm	HOY	Pre-emptive phone calls to parents to encourage attendance the following day - focus on students absent today with unauthorised absences / PA students with repeated absence patterns.

Absence from School

Regular attendance at school is the responsibility of parents and carers. Under the 1996 Education Act parents commit an **offence** if the child does not attend school regularly, without an acceptable reason. If your child cannot come to school, you should advise the school on the first day of absence by telephone or the Studybugs App (this can be downloaded to devices or can be accessed through the school website).

If you do not contact the school to explain your child's absence, we will make every effort to contact you by sending a Studybugs Alert or a telephone call by 11:00am. If no message or reply is received from you, this will be recorded on the register as an unauthorised absence. It is essential that the school is kept informed of changes of contact details such as phone numbers, addresses and email addresses.

In cases where we continue to be concerned, for example three days of unauthorised absence, we will make a 'home visit' or request the police to undertake a 'Safe and Well' visit.

Parents/carers are encouraged to ensure that their child brings in a letter confirming the reasons for the absence or appropriate medical/professional evidence when the child returns to school.

Once contact (via Studybugs, telephone call or letter) has been made with the parent the school will determine if the absence is to be authorised or unauthorised.

The school will only **authorise** a medical absence if the circumstances are unavoidable. The school may request medical evidence if a parent contacts the school to confirm the student is unwell: medical appointment card with one appointment entered, letter from a professional, doctor's note, medication prescribed by a doctor, copy of prescription, receipts for medication purchased from pharmacists, print screen of medical notes, as well as letters concerning hospital appointments or any other relevant evidence. However, we do not expect parents/carers to pay for a letter from their doctor regarding absence but do ask parents/carers to provide as much information from the doctor or medical professional as they are able to. We will endeavour to only request medical evidence when absence is frequent, unexplained and impacting on academic progress. In such cases, the Headteacher may not authorise medical absence without this evidence.

The school **may** authorise absence under certain specific circumstances. However, the parent/carer must contact the Headteacher in advance to secure authorisation. This **may** include work-related interviews and meetings with external agencies (i.e. Forward Thinking). The Headteacher **may** also authorise events in which students are involved in supervised sporting events or trials, theatre performances, and acts of religious worship.

We work with parents/carers, students, and external agencies to try to resolve any issues that may affect a child's attendance and to offer early help and interventions as soon as possible. In those rare cases where we are unable to make meaningful contact with parents/carers, or where parents do not engage with the school's offer of support, and the issue with school absence continues, we are asked by BCC to make a more formal referral to Birmingham Children's Trust. This referral does not require parental consent if we feel the child is potentially at risk of significant harm as a result of not regularly attending school.

Authorised Absence from School

According to the DFE guidance (July 2026), the following codes are to be used for **authorised** absences on the register:

Code I: ILLNESS (not medical or dental appointments)
We will authorise absences due to illness (physical or mental health) unless we have genuine cause for concern about the veracity of an illness. If the authenticity of illness is in doubt, we will request parents/carers to provide medical evidence to support illness. We will record the absence as unauthorised if not satisfied of the authenticity of the illness and will advise parents/carers in such cases. Medical evidence can take the form of prescriptions, appointment cards, etc. rather than doctors' notes. We will notify the Local Authority when a student has been recorded with the I code and school has reasonable grounds to believe they will be absent for 15 consecutive days or cumulatively due to illness or sickness.

Code M: Medical or dental appointments
Missing registration for a medical or dental appointment can be counted as an authorised absence. However, we encourage parents/carers to make appointments out of school hours. Where this is not possible, the pupil should only be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary for the appointment. Parents must request this leave of absence from school in advance if it is to be authorised by the school and must also provide evidence of the appointment.

Code C: Other circumstances
This code will be used for any authorised non-medical reasons for a child's absence from school. Parents must request this leave of absence in advance and must be authorised by the Headteacher, who will determine the number of days a student can be absent from school i.e. - family funeral, family wedding. The Headteacher will consider parental/carer request for Leave of Absence on an individual basis and take a range of factors into account when determining if the absence can be authorised.

The DFE does not consider a need or desire for a holiday or other absences for the purpose of leisure and recreation to be an exceptional circumstance. Leave of absence will also not be authorised for a student to take part in a protest activity during school hours.

Code C1: Leave of absence for purpose of participating in regulated performance or undertaking regulated employment abroad
Schools can grant leave of absence for students to undertake employment (paid or unpaid) during school hours or for a student to participate in a performance.

Code C2: Leave of absence subject to a part-time timetable
In exceptional circumstances, where it is in the student's best interests, a temporary part-time timetable may be required to meet their individual needs. This code will be used when a student is absent from school with leave because they are subject to a part-time timetable as agreed by the school and parent/carer.

Code D: Dual Registered
This code will be used if a student is registered at two schools.

Code B: Off-site educational activity
This code will be used when a student is present at an off-site educational activity that has been approved by the school, supervised and measures have been taken to safeguard students. This code will not be used for any unsupervised educational activity or where a student is at home doing schoolwork. We will ensure that they have in place arrangements whereby the provider of the alternative activity notifies us of any absences by individual students. We will then record the student's absence using the relevant absence code. Approved absences may include attending taster days at other school, attending courses at college, attending alternative provision arranged and agreed by the school.

Code E: Suspension from school
If no alternative provision is made for a student to continue their education whilst they are suspended but still on the admission register, they will be marked absent in the attendance register using Code E. Alternative provision will be arranged for each suspended student from the sixth consecutive day of any fixed period suspension or permanent exclusion. Where alternative provision is made, they will be marked using the appropriate attendance code.

Code J1: Interview
This code will be used when it has been agreed that the student can miss school to attend an interview or entrance exam at another educational establishment or interview with a prospective employer.

Code K: Attending education provision authorised by the local authority
This code will be used when a student is attending a place, other than the school or any other school at which they are registered, for educational provision arranged by the Local Authority.

Code P: Approved supervised sporting activity
This code will be used in times of approved sporting activities in school times, i.e. - training sessions, trials and sporting events. The activity must be supervised by a person authorised by the school and at a location agreed by the school in advance.

Code Q: Unable to attend school due to lack of access arrangements
This code will be used by the local authority who are in the process of making access arrangements or have failed to make access arrangements to enable a student to attend school.

Code R: Religious Observation
We will treat absence as authorised when it is due to religious observance. The day must be exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the parents belong. Where necessary, we will seek advice from the parents' religious body about whether it has set the day apart for religious observance. The school will only authorise one-day absence for religious events.

Code S: Study Leave
This code will be used for a student to study for a public examination, and the leave has been agreed in advance with parents/carers. Study leave will not be granted by default once teaching of the exam syllabus is complete.

Code T: Parent travelling for occupational purposes
This code will be used when a parent/carer has no fixed abode and is travelling in the course of their trade or business, and the student is travelling with them.

Code V: Educational visits and trips
This code will be used for attendance at an organised trip or visit, including residential trips organised by the school, or attendance at a supervised trip of a strictly educational nature arranged by an organisation approved by the school.

Code W: Work Experience
Work experience is for pupils in the final two years of compulsory education. We will ensure we have in place arrangements whereby the work experience placement provider notifies the school of any absences by individual students. Any absence will be recorded using the relevant code.

Code Y: Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances
Y1 - Unable to attend due to transport normally provided not being available
This code will be used when a student is unable to attend school because the school is not within walking distance of their home (3 miles) and the transport to and from school that is normally provided for the student by the school or local authority is not available

Y2 - Unable to attend school due to widespread disruption to travel
This code will be used when a student is unable to attend school because of widespread disruption to travel caused by a local, national and international emergency.

Y3 - Unable to attend school due to part of the school premises being closed

Y4 - Unable to attend school due to the whole school site being unexpectedly closed
This code will be used when the school is closed unexpectedly, i.e. adverse weather conditions.

Y5 - Unable to attend school as student is in criminal justice detention
This code will be used when a student is in police detention, remanded in youth detention awaiting trial or sentencing or detained under a sentence of detention.

Y6 - Unable to attend school in accordance with public health guidance or law
This code will be used when the student's travel to or attendance at school would be contrary to the guidance relating to the incidence or transmission of infection or disease published by the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care.

Y7 - Unable to attend because of any other unavoidable cause
This code will be used when there is any other unavoidable cause, not listed in Y1-Y6, that prevents a student from attending school. This cause must be something that affects the student, not the parent.

Unauthorised Absence from School
Unauthorised absence is where a school is not satisfied with the reasons given for the absence. These are an **offence** by the parent. Such circumstances include:

- A student not attending school to go shopping for school clothes
- A student not attending school as it is her birthday or the birthday of a family member
- A student not attending school as the family have gone to the airport to meet a visiting relative
- A student not attending school due to attending a hospital appointment for another family member
- A student not attending school due to the fact the family returned late in the previous evening from a family holiday or event in another part of the country
- A student not attending school as they are looking after younger siblings
- A student attends a medical appointment in the morning but then fails to return to school for afternoon lessons

However, the Headteacher will take specific circumstances into account and use her discretion to determine if an absence is to be unauthorised. It is important that parents/carers notify the school in advance of an absence, where possible, to seek the Headteacher's authorisation.

According to the DFE Guidance (July 2026), the following codes are to be used for **unauthorised** absences on the register:

Code G: Family holiday not authorised by the school or in excess of agreed period
If a school does not authorise a leave of absence and the parents/carers still take the child on holiday, or the child is kept away for longer than was agreed, the absence is unauthorised. The regulations do not allow schools to give retrospective approval. If the parents/carers did not apply for the leave of absence in advance, the absence must be recorded as unauthorised.

Code N: Reason for absence not yet provided
Schools should follow up all unexplained and unexpected absences in a timely manner. Every effort should be made to establish the reason for a pupil's absence

Code O: Absent from school without authorisation
If the school is **not satisfied** with the reason given for absence, we will record it as unauthorised. This code will also be used if parents/carers do not contact the school to confirm the reasons for their child's absence within 5 days of the initial absence.

Code U: Arrived late to school after 9:15am
If a student arrives after 9:15am without written or verbal confirmation from parents/carers explaining their lateness, the school will mark the student with the U code. However, the school reserves the right to determine that the reasons for lateness are not satisfactory. This means that, although the student is in school, she is marked absent for the entire morning session. This will be marked as an authorised absence and could result in prosecution for parents/carers if the pupil is persistently late.

Medical Appointments

We do appreciate that it is often difficult for parents/carers to obtain written confirmation of medical appointments. Parents/carers can obtain 'Medical Authorisation Cards' from school to take with them to the doctors to confirm their child has attended a medical appointment (see below). Parents/carers must ensure the card is stamped, dated and signed by the practice to confirm their child has attended a medical appointment.

If it is necessary for a student to be out of school for a medical appointment during the school day, the student should come into school prior to the appointment and return to school directly after the appointment. It is not appropriate for students to be absent from school for a full day to attend a medical appointment.

Parents/carers are asked to make routine medical and dental appointments outside school hours wherever possible. Where such appointments in school time are unavoidable, parents/carers should inform the school in advance so a decision can be made whether to authorise the absence or not.

Students with known medical conditions or special educational needs and disabilities

The school recognises that some students face greater barriers to attendance than their peers, including those who suffer from long-term medical conditions, including mental health, or who have special educational needs and disabilities. We will be mindful of the barriers these students face and put additional support in place where necessary to help them access their full-time education. These may include:

- Making reasonable adjustments where a student has a disability
- Making reasonable adjustments to uniform, routines, access to support in school and lunchtime arrangements
- Considering a temporary and time-limited phased return or part-time timetable
- Offer additional 1-2-1 tuition
- Putting in place an individual healthcare plan
- Engaging with other external agencies, including School Nurse and other healthcare professionals, and making appropriate referrals to access wider support
- Offering emotional counselling support in school from our Safeguarding and Well-Being Co-ordinator
- Support with school transport
- Authorising medical appointments during the school day, as required
- Prepare and regularly review Medical Alert Cards

Students with long term illnesses and other health needs may need additional support, such as alternative provision by the local authority.

Students with known significant and serious health conditions with fifteen or more continuous or cumulative illness absences (including diagnosed mental health conditions) will be reported to the Local Authority (Section 19) and a referral may be made to James Brindley School after receipt of appropriate medical evidence.

We will seek consent from parents to refer to School Nurse Service for a Health Care Plan for students with a known underlying medical condition with irregular attendance.

Frequent Illness Absence Protocol

The 'Frequent Illness Absence Protocol' refers to illnesses where there is no known medical condition.

Only where the school has genuine and reasonable doubt about the authenticity of the illness will medical evidence be requested to support the absence.

Where a student (with no known underlying medical condition) has three or more instances of illness absences in a half-term or five in a term, parents/carers will be invited into school for an informal meeting and offered an

early help assessment. School will ask the parent/carer to take their child to see the GP to rule out any underlying medical conditions.

If after six weeks of early help being provided, and if the student continues to have illness absences from school, and their attendance is below 85%, consent will be sought for a school nurse referral. If consent is granted, school will allow the school nurse to complete their intervention before moving on to the 'formalise support' stage if attendance has not improved.

Implementing the tiered absence approach through trigger points

Tier 1: Universal Prevention	**Trigger 1** **1 day absence**	**Standard absence protocols:** Phone call home by AC/HoY Absence Information card is issued to students on return to school if parents/carers do not contact school.	**Attendance improves = no action** **No improvement = move to trigger 2**
Tier 2: Early Intervention	**Trigger 1** **2 days' absence within a half-term**	**Standard absence protocols:** Phone call home by AC/HoY Absence Information card is issued to students on return to school if parents/carers do not contact school. AC sends Studybugs Alert (2 days) HOY meets with students and makes telephone contact with parents/carers to discuss absences and offer initial Early Help. HOY monitoring for next 10 days - 1% Better Card	**Attendance improves (no further absence in next two weeks) = Studybugs improved attendance alert sent to parents/carers** **No improvement = move to trigger 3**
Tier 2: Early Help intervention	**Trigger 3** **3 days' absence within a half-term**	**Standard absence protocols:** Phone call home by AC/HoY Absence Information card is issued to students on return to school if parents/carers do not contact school. AC sends Studybugs Alert (3 days) and medical evidence request letter Form tutor - priority Three Houses HoY - meeting with parents/carers to agree Attendance Support Plan. Social worker/Family Support Workers to be	**Attendance improves (no further absence in next two weeks) = HoY positive phone call to parents/carers and shout out points issued**

		made aware of meeting. Early Help to be offered as required. Reset targets on 1% Better Card. SENDCO/Learner Support - ensure staff are aware of supportive strategies EWO - Priority home visits	**No improvement = move to trigger 4** 
Tier 3: Intensive intervention	**Trigger 4** **4-5 days' absence within a half-term**	**Standard absence protocols:** Phone call home by AC/HoY Absence Information card is issued to students on return to school if parents/carers do not contact school. AC sends formal Risk of PA letter and resends medical evidence request letter. Safeguarding - Social or Family Support Workers to be notified of on-going concerns despite initial parental/carer meeting. 4 days = DHT/SLT Link - telephone conversation with parents/carers to discuss on-going absences and strategies to improve attendance. 5 days = DHT / SLT Link meeting with students and parents/carers to reset Attendance Support Plan if majority of absences are unauthorised and set targets to improve attendance over the next three weeks. Social or Family Support Worker to be invited to meeting. Formal Early Help to be offered as required. SAWC/SENDCO - Referral to School Nurse Service and/or DLP SEN School Nurse. RCADS assessment to be considered. Medical Alert Card and Health Plans to be explored, referral to external health agencies and	**Attendance improves (no further absence in next two weeks) = DHT/SLT Link positive phone call to parents/carers and shout out points issued**

		parental/carer consent to be obtained to contact GP/health professionals. DHT/SENDCO - Section 19 referral to be considered. Discussion about adding students to the SEND register if diagnosed medical condition. Amendments to One-Page Profile to identify/remove barriers. EWO - priority home visits (twice per week as required)	**No improvement = move to trigger 5** 

Tier 4: Specialist Prevention	**Trigger 5** **6+ day absence in a half-term**	**Standard absence protocols as above on each day of absence** **School-based:** Headteacher - meeting with parents/carers when student absent for more than 6 days in a half-term EWO - priority home visits (two per week as required) DSL - Referral to Birmingham Children's Trust if pattern of unauthorised absence continues and parents/carers do not engage with school. Co-ordination of further multi-agency meetings to address needs as required. Signpost parents/carers to additional support. AC/EWO – Parents/carers invited into school for Formal Attendance Meeting (FAM) if there is an on-going pattern of unauthorised absence. Social or Family Support worker invited to attend. SAWC - RCADS assessment to be completed, STICK referral to be considered. Request parental/carer consent to contact GP. Medical Alert Card and Health Plans to be completed, referral to external health agencies and parental/carer consent to	**Attendance improves (no further absences in three-week period) = DHT letter to parents/carers to recognize achievement**

		be obtained to contact GP/health professionals. SENDCO - Meeting with SEND parents/carers to address barriers to learning and impact on attendance. Advice from CAT/EPS for complex needs and attendance barriers. Further amendments to One-Page profiles. Preparation for Adulthood focus for KS4 to reduce risk of NEET.	**No improvement = move to trigger 6** 

Tier 5: Legal Intervention	**Trigger 6** **10+ day absence**	**Standard absence protocols as above on each day of absence** 5 days unauthorised absence in 10-week period after FAM -Notice to Improve letter sent to parents/carers One day unauthorised absence after Notice to Improve = referral to Attendance Legal Team Governors Attendance Panel – formal Parent/Carer Attendance Contract Continued DSL/SENDCO/SAWC intervention outlined in tier 4 - preparation of medical evidence to support Section 19 referral to Local Authority for students with complex and on-going medical needs.	

Safeguarding

The school recognises the importance of good attendance for vulnerable children. Regular attendance is an important protective factor and provide the best opportunity for needs to be identified and support provided.

The school reserves the right to invite parents/carers into school to discuss any attendance issues that raise potential safeguarding concerns, i.e. - female genital mutilation, criminal/sexual exploitation, domestic violence, forced marriage, honour-based violence, sexual harassment and violence, radicalisation, mental health and online activities. For example, if the school has any concerns about FGM or forced marriage, parents/carers will be asked to provide flight details and tickets to confirm the dates in and out of the UK, as well as the names of all family members going on the visit abroad and the address the family will reside at. The safeguarding team will also speak with the student(s) to confirm they are happy to go on the visit abroad and they understand why they are going on the visit. If the school has any concerns, after this level of investigation, the safeguarding team reserve the right to contact the police and/or Forced Marriage Unit to refer these concerns.

In addition, if the school suspects that a student may be at potential risk of harm as a result of their absence from school, particularly if we are unable to contact the parent/carer and student, the Safeguarding team reserve the right to refer these concerns to the appropriate external agencies, i.e. - Early Help, Children's Social Care (CASS), police. The school will inform parents/carers if a referral is to be made. However, this may not appropriate in every circumstance depending on the nature of the safeguarding concern and a referral may be made without informing the parents/carers.

If attendance falls below 90%, the school will actively engage with allocated key workers for students with social workers or Family Support workers. Workers will be invited to attend informal 'Attendance Support Plan' meetings or Formal Attendance/Attendance Contract meetings.

Suspensions or permanent exclusion

If a student is suspended or permanently excluded from school, parents/carers must ensure their child is not present in a public place during school hours during the first five days without reasonable justification. Where parents/carers fail to ensure their child is not in a public place under these circumstances, a penalty notice fine may be issued to the parents/carers.

Children Absent From Education

The school recognizes that when a child is frequently absent from school, particularly over an extended period of time, it is a potential indicator of abuse or neglect, i.e. - sexual abuse, child-on-child abuse, radicalisation, gang affiliation or criminal/sexual exploitation. The school follows the Birmingham LSCB procedures "Identifying and maintaining contact with children missing or at risk of going missing from Education 2013". Under sections 8f and 8h of the Education Regulations Act (2006), the school will make 'reasonable' enquiries into the location of pupils with five days continuous unauthorized absence or for those who fail to return from leave of absence granted during term time.

'Reasonable' enquiries include the following actions:

- Contact via phone/text/email from the first day of absence and repeated each day until contact is established (including any emergency contacts)
- Discussion with Head of Year, form tutor, subject teachers and other students to check if any reasons for absence can be identified.
- Conduct home visit(s) and note observations (i.e. - mail in porch/house looks empty/windows open)
- Speak to neighbours.
- If a relation advises the family is abroad, attempts will be made to obtain the address.
- If siblings are known to attend another school, contact the school to check the sibling's attendance and reasons for any absence.

A referral will be made to 'Child Absent from Education' (formally CME) to be investigated further by their safeguarding panel and appropriate interventions taken at that level, i.e. - refer to police.

The school reserves the right to contact relevant agencies to seek advice (Children's Social Care, Police Safe and Well-being referral, CME) if <u>any</u> child is absent from school for more than five days without confirmation from parents. Every attempt will be made to communicate with parents/carers to ensure the child is safe and well, including home visits by the Education Welfare Officer (EWO). The school will contact relevant agencies after two days' absence, without confirmation from parents/carers, if the child is subject to a 'Child Protection' or 'Child in Need' plan or considered vulnerable in other ways, i.e. - Family Plan.

There are many circumstances where a child may become missing from education, as outlined below.

- Students at risk of harm/neglect (school will follow standard Child Protection procedures for referrals to social care/police)
- Children of Gypsy, Roma or Traveller families (school will inform local authority when a GRT student leaves the school without identifying a new destination school)
- Families of Armed Forces (school will contact MOD Children's Education Advisory Service for advice on making arrangements for continuity of education)
- Missing children/runaways (direct referral to Children's Services and Police)
- Children supervised in the Youth Justice system.
- Children who cease to attend school.
- Family has relocated abroad.

Once the CME team have completed their investigation, a deletion from roll notice will be sent to school to confirm the student can be removed from roll. This may be the case when a student has not attended school for 20 consecutive school days or more without authorization, and both the school and local authority have exhausted reasonable enquiries, and an address cannot be identified for the family.

If/when a student returns from a period of extended absence appropriate daily attendance checks will be carried out and their attendance, behaviour, emotional and physical well-being will be monitored closely by the safeguarding team in school. Parents/carers will be invited into school with the pupil to meet the DHT Pastoral (Mr D Gariff) as part of the reintegration programme and relevant support with be offered to the pupil/family as necessary, i.e. - Safeguarding and Well-Being Co-ordinator.

Reluctance to go to school/Emotionally based school avoidance

Sometimes students seem anxious about leaving home to go to school. They may tell parents/carers that they feel unwell or give another reason to not attend. Parents/carers may notice that they are worried from things that they say e.g., that they do not want to do particular subjects, feel that they have no friends, are being harassed or bullied physically or online, or feel anxious about assessments in school.

If this is the case, parents/carers are encouraged contact the school as soon as possible to speak to the relevant Head of Year. In any of these circumstances, your child's Head of Year will work closely with you and your child to address the concerns and put relevant early help interventions and support measures in place. This will be co-ordinated through an 'Attendance Support Plan'. Support on offer may involve working with our Safeguarding and Well-Being Co-Ordinator or SENCO or accessing support from appropriate external agencies, i.e. - School Nurse Service, PAUSE, Forward Thinking Birmingham, STICK.

Where parents/carers are engaging with the school, but the child appears reluctant to attend, legal action is not always the appropriate route to take. The threat of legal action can cause further distress and anxiety for both parent/carer and child. It will only be used in this scenario where the parent/carer fails to engage appropriately with efforts to improve the child's attendance.

Sharing Panel Placement and Alternative Provision

Students can be placed on Off-site direction or Passport placements via the Oaks Sharing Panel. Alternatively, students could be placed at Alternative Provision placements in Years 9-11. In these cases, the Attendance Clerk will ring the placement school or provider daily to monitor attendance. Any concerns regarding a student's attendance will be referred to the Deputy Headteacher (Pastoral) and parents/carers will be contacted, and a meeting arranged, if necessary, with parents/carers and staff at the placement school or provider. It is our responsibility to ensure students attend placements daily and, if applicable, the school will engage with external agencies (i.e. - social workers/family support workers/youth offending team) to ensure the student attends the placement each day and is safe.

Home Education

Under the DFE guidance on attendance (July 2026); 'Parents have a duty to ensure their child of compulsory school age receives suitable full-time education, but this does not have to be at a school'. If a parent/carer wishes to withdraw a child from the school, the child will be known as 'Electively Home-Educated'.

Any parent/carer wishing to withdraw their child from the school will be required to confirm this in writing to the Headteacher. The school will forward this letter to the Local Authority, and the child will be removed from the Admission register at the Hillcrest School. The Local Authority will then determine whether to accept this new arrangement or challenge it. However, parents/carers are unable to withdraw their child from school if they are subject to an Education Supervision Order.

Children with Special Educational Needs statements (Education, Health, and Care Plans) can be home educated. Where the statements set out special educational provision that the child should receive at home, the local authority is under a duty to arrange that provision. The local authority must review the child's statement/ EHC Plan annually.

As outlined in 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' (September 2026), the school will work closely with the local authority and other key professionals (i.e. - social or family support workers) to ensure parents/carers of vulnerable children, including SEND, have fully considered if home education is in the best interests of the child and appropriate support is put in place for the family. The school reserves the right to challenge a parental/carer request to home educate their child if we feel this decision is not in the child's best interests and unresolved safeguarding concerns persist.

Part-time or reduced timetables

Updated DFE guidance (July 2026) states that 'in very exceptional circumstances there may be a need for a temporary part-time timetable to meet a pupil's individual needs. A part-time timetable must not be treated as a long-term solution and must have a time limit by which point the pupil is expected to attend full-time or be provided with alternative provision'.

A part-time/reduced timetable may be appropriate under the following circumstances:

- As part of an in-school support package - school, parent/carer, and other professionals (i.e. - social worker, family support worker, health professional) agree that a short-term (no longer than six weeks) reduced timetable would support a student who has become disaffected, to be supported back into full-time provision.
- For medical reasons - if a student has a serious medical condition, where recovery is the priority outcome. These arrangements would be made as part of a medical plan agreed with health professionals.
- Reintegration - as part of a planned reintegration programme into school following, for example, an extended period out of school following exclusion, non-attendance, school refusal.

A parent/carer must consent to this arrangement by signing an agreement form. By signing the agreement, parent/carers will confirm they will take responsibility for the student when working at home and guaranteeing the student will be always supervised at home. The objectives of any part-time/reduced timetable will be clearly recorded in this agreement, along with the agreed timescale (no more than six weeks).

A staged part-time/reduced timetable will only be used for a student with an Education, Health, and Care Plan after consultation with and agreement from relevant agencies (i.e. - SENAR). During this period, the school will continue to ensure the provision specified in the EHC plan is fully delivered.

A staged part-time/reduced timetable will only be used for children in care or subject to a child protection/child in need plan after consultation with and agreement from relevant agencies (i.e. - social worker, virtual school) at relevant core group meetings.

Where a part-time/reduced timetable has been formally agreed, the sessions the student is not expected to attend will be marked with the C2 code unless arrangements for attendance at a supervised alternative provider are made. In that instant the B code would be used providing the student attended the alternative provision on that day. A student on a part-time/reduced timetable could still be a 'persistent absentee' in law should the number of sessions the child is not expected to attend constitutes more than 10% of all available sessions.

In line with Local Authority Attendance Strategy (2026 to 2029), the attendance clerk will complete the required online form to notify the Local Authority when a part-time/reduced timetable has been agreed for an individual student.

Flexi-schooling is an arrangement where a child is primarily electively home educated but attends school for part of their education by agreement with the school. We are not obliged to offer such arrangements, and these should not be confused with part-time timetables, as with flexi-schooling the child is still receiving a full-time education between home and the school. Where flexi-schooling is agreed and the school has authorised absence for the sessions not attended, these will be recorded using code C.

Leave of Absence in term time

If parents/carers wish to take their child out of school during term time, we advise parents/carers to send a letter into school outlining the reasons for and dates of the leave of absence. Parents/carers will then be invited into school to attend a meeting with the Deputy Headteacher to discuss the request, complete the necessary paperwork and provide confirmation of travel arrangements (i.e. - flights details / tickets). During the meeting a date will be agreed by which the student must return to school after the leave of absence.

Under the DFE Guidance (July 2026) parents/carers can **no longer** expect schools to authorise leave of absence for the purpose of a family holiday. The Headteacher may not grant leave of absence during term time unless there are **'exceptional circumstances'**. For example, there may have been a bereavement in the family or other serious circumstances or the Headteacher may be aware that a family is under strain and in need of time together.

The Headteacher will also determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted. **From this perspective leave of absence in term time is no longer a parental right and will only be authorised at the Headteacher's discretion**. Under DFE guidelines the school will notify the Local Authority if a parent/carer takes leave of absence **without** the Headteacher's permission. In these cases, the **G code** will be used on the register to show this absence is **unauthorised**.

Under these circumstances, the school will adhere to the 'National Framework for Penalty Notices for School Absence' (July 2026) and apply to the **Local Authority** for a **Penalty Notice Fine** to be issued to the parent(s). The fine will be £80 per parent if paid within 21 days and £160 per parent if paid within 28 days. If the penalty notice is not paid within 28 days, parents can be prosecuted under section 444(1), the Education Act 1996 and receive fines up to £1000 per parent, a parenting order, a criminal record and various other costs awarded against them.

If a second penalty notice is issued to the same parent(s) for unauthorised leave of absence within a rolling three-year period, a second penalty notice fine will be issued at the higher rate of £160 per parent.

If a parent(s) takes their child out of school for an unauthorised leave of absence for a third time in a rolling three-year period, prosecution or other attendance legal interventions will be considered by the Local Authority.

The rolling three-year period can also include transition from key stages (i.e. - Years 5-7, Years 6-8) and across different local authorities (i.e. - student has two authorised leave of absences in one local authority and another unauthorised leave of absence after moving to Hillcrest School in a rolling three-year period).

In addition, if the student does not return within 14 days of the agreed return date, the school will liaise with the Local Authority, which may result in the student losing their place at Hillcrest School. It is also important for parents/carers to note that the student may also be removed from the school register if the parent/carer decides to remove the student from the country for an extended period of time (more than six weeks).

It is important for parents/carers to note that the school will not authorise ANY leave of absence unless the school feels the circumstances are unavoidable.

Additionally, as previously outlined in the policy, the school reserves the right to either contact the parents/carers directly or make an immediate referral to social care or the police if the school feels a student is potentially at risk being taken out of school during term time. This is particularly relevant to concerns the school may have about sexual exploitation, forced marriage, female genital mutilation, and radicalisation.

The school also reserve the right to request parents/carers provide medical evidence if there is suspicion a student is away and leave has not been formally requested by parents. This is due to the high number of unauthorised term time holidays nationally at certain points of the year, i.e. - around school holidays.

The school will seek advice from the Local Authority if a student fails to return from an extended family holiday during term time and the school has made reasonable enquiries but cannot locate the student of their family. **This applies to leaves of absence that are both authorised and unauthorised by the school**. As a result, the school may remove the student from roll under such circumstances. However, we will keep the student on roll if the family remains in contact with the school even though the student has not returned to school by the agreed date.

Persistent Unauthorised Absenteeism

The school has a responsibility to reduce the number of students whose attendance is below 90% over the school year. **Students with attendance below 90% fall into the 'Persistent Absentee' category.** This is particularly relevant if any of the child's absences are unauthorised. A student with attendance below 50% will be identified as having 'severe absences' from school.

According to the DFE Guidance (July 2026); 'If a child of compulsory school age fails to attend regularly at a school at which they are registered or at a place where alternative provision is provided for them the parents/carers may be guilty of an offence and can be prosecuted by the local authority'. In addition, 'Local authorities have the power to prosecute parents/carers who fail to comply with a school attendance order (section 443 of the Education Act 1996) or fail to ensure their child's regular attendance at a school (section 444 of the Education Act 1996)'

How does the Local Authority 'Support First' framework and guidance work?

Stage 1 - Informal Early Help meeting

Parents/carers will be invited to an informal meeting where attendance is a concern (authorised or unauthorised). The meeting can take place online or via telephone. If social workers or family support workers are involved with the family, they will be included in discussions and invited to the meeting. The meeting will still proceed with the parents/carers if the external agencies are unable to attend.

The purpose of the meeting is to work collaboratively with parents/carers to identify any barriers to attendance, signpost support in the community and put appropriate early help measures in place to ensure the student can attend school more regularly. All points discussed, reasonable adjustments and actions agreed in the meeting will be recorded on an Attendance Support Plan.

If no external agencies are involved, parents/carers will be offered an early help assessment, and the school may consider it appropriate to refer the family to the Early Help Locality Hub for further advice. As part of this process, the student will complete a Three Houses conversation with an allocated mentor to establish their views and wishes. This will be completed even if the parent/carer fails to engage in the process.

If the parent/carer does not respond to the invitation to attend a meeting or to phone calls, a home visit will be undertaken by the Education Welfare Officer to discuss early help/in-school support and to raise the attendance concern.

Where parents/carers have not responded to phone calls, informal meeting invitations and home visits and where there is no allocated early help worker/family support worker/social worker, we will request an Early Help conversation with the relevant Early Help Locality Hub for further advice and support.

Based on the outcomes of discussions with parents/carers, we will decide if the case needs to be viewed as 'frequent illness' and begin the 'Frequent illness absence protocol' if required.

If the family require Early Help either from the school or via support services such as Think Family or Social Care and consent to support, we will give the intervention at least six weeks to have an impact on the student's attendance. We will move the process to stage 2 if the interventions have not led to an improvement in attendance and there are further unauthorised absences.

Stage 2 - Formal Attendance Meeting (FAM)

The Formal Attendance Meeting (FAM) will be arranged after the informal meeting/early help offer/reasonable adjustments have not had the required impact, the parent/carer is not responding to or engaging with the school, and the student has one unauthorised absence from school.

The FAM will be held with the Educational Welfare Officer, and any allocated early help/family support/social care workers will be invited to attend the meeting.

Parents/carers will be given at least seven days' notice by letter. The FAM must be held in person as parents/carers are required to sign the attendance contract that will be issued. If parents live apart from each other and there are concerns attending together, they will be invited to attend separate meetings. If parents/carers are unable to attend the meeting at school, due, for example, to disability, the meeting can be held at the parents'/carers' home address.

If the first FAM is missed by parents/carers, a second FAM will be arranged. Parents/carers will have a maximum of two opportunities to attend a FAM. Parents/carers will be offered another Early Help assessment during the FAM. If the offer is accepted, the process will be stopped at this stage, and arrangements made for the assessment to be completed, unless early help support has already been offered within the academic year. Where offered, if the parents/carers fail to attend the assessment, school will continue the process. If parents/carers work with the school to complete the assessment, the family plan will be given at least six weeks to enable the family to make the relevant changes and for attendance to significantly improve.

Stage 3 - Attendance Contract

The Attendance Contract will be agreed and signed by parents/carers at the Formal Attendance Meeting (FAM). The contract is to ensure the student has no further unauthorised absence over the following ten-week period.

Where parents/carers do not attend the FAM, they will receive a post-FAM letter informing them the school will refer to the Education Legal Team if their child has 10 sessions (five days) unauthorised absence in the following ten-week period.

Where parents/carers attend the FAM but refuse to sign the Attendance Contract, they will receive a post-FAM letter informing them the school will refer to the Education Legal Team if their child has 10 sessions (5 days) unauthorised absence in the following ten-week period.

The Attendance Contract will be reviewed during the ten-week period. If the student has one day unauthorised absence during the ten-week period, another FAM will be offered to review and amend the contract. The purpose of this meeting will be to work with parents/carers to ensure the student does not have any further unauthorised absences during the remainder of the ten-week monitoring period. If parents are offered another FAM to discuss the contract but fail to attend, the school can move immediately to stage 4.

Stage 4 - Enforcement

The school will refer parents/carers to the Education Legal Team if the student is absent from school for ten sessions (five days) during the ten-week monitoring period agreed in the Attendance Contract. For example, this could be three days unauthorised leave of absence (holiday) and two days unauthorised absence from school

for other reasons. U codes can also be used as part of this process (i.e. - student arriving at school after 9:15am). The ten-week rolling period can also span different terms of the year (i.e. - autumn/spring term) and different academic years (i.e. - summer and autumn term).

The Education Legal Team may issue the parent with a 'Notice to Improve' letter. The school will be asked to monitor the student's attendance and refer the parent back to the Education Legal Team if the student has a further unauthorised absence from school after the 'Notice to Improve' was issued. In these circumstances, the Education Legal Team will issue a Penalty Notice Fine to both parents/carers. Alternatively, the Education Legal Team may decide to issue a Penalty Notice Fine or commence court proceedings without initially issuing a 'Notice to Improve'.

Parents/carers will be fined £80 if they pay the Penalty Notice fine within 21 days, or £160 if they pay the fine within 28 days. Failure to pay within 28 days could lead to a fine up to £1000 per parent.

A maximum of two penalty notices per child and per parent/carer can be issued in the three-year rolling period. The three-year rolling period will also include any previous Penalty Notices issued when the student attended primary school or another secondary school. For example, if a student had five days (ten sessions) unauthorised absences in Year 7 and parents/carers has previously received a Penalty Notice when their child was in Year 6, this would be classed as the second Penalty Notice and a fine of £160 per parent would be automatically issued.

If a student continues to be persistently absent from school after the initial two penalty notices have been served, criminal prosecution or other attendance legal interventions will be considered by the Education Legal Team. At this stage fines could range from £1000-£2500, community order, parenting order or imprisonment for up to three months

Where a Penalty Fine has not been paid for the first cycle of five days (ten sessions) unauthorised absence, the Education Legal Team may go straight to prosecution if a student has a second cycle of five days (ten sessions) unauthorised absence at any stage of the next three years.

The Education Legal Team can, in cases of high level of unauthorised absences including where unauthorised leave in term time exceeds 30 days or more, decide to prosecute a parent(s) directly without issuing a Penalty Notice fine.

Punctuality

The 1996 Education Act requires that every student should attend school and be on time. It is better to be late than not to be in school at all, **BUT** when students arrive late it makes it difficult for everyone. The teacher has to stop and wait for the latecomer to settle down, the rest of the class is disrupted, and the latecomer misses the, often vital, first part of the lesson and will receive a consequence.

Persistent lateness to school does have a significant impact on a child's learning and overall attainment, as outlined below:

- Student is late to school 5 minutes each day = 3.4 days of learning lost during the academic year
- Student is late to school 10 minutes each day = 6.9 days of learning lost during the academic year
- Student is late to school 15 minutes each day = 10.3 days of learning lost during the academic year
- Student is late to school 20 minutes each day = 13.8 days of learning lost during the academic year
- Student is late to school 30 minutes each day = 20.7 days of learning lost during the academic year

To be marked present and on-time for school, students must be in their form room by 8:45am. Students who arrive after registration ***must*** sign in. Up to 9:10am this can be done at the student entrance - where a late slip can also be collected to be taken to period 1. After this time, students must report to student reception. Failure to sign in will lead to consequences being issued.

It is important to note that any student who arrives to school after **9:15am** with be marked with the **'U' Code** in the register. This means that, despite being in school, they will technically be marked absent from school for the morning sessions. It will be recorded on the register as an unauthorised absence.

If you are aware your child will be arriving late, please send her with a note explaining the circumstances or contact the school by telephone, i.e. - unplanned appointment at the doctors.

We do appreciate that many of our students rely on public transport which may make them late for school, particularly as a result of changes to bus services. However, it the parents'/carers' responsibility to make alternative arrangements to get their child to school if they are aware of on-going issues with public transport and road networks that may result in their child being repeatedly late for school.

Late Detentions

Students will receive a C2 consequence if they are not in their form room when the register is taken at 8:45am. They will be required to serve a 20-minute detention on the day if they arrive at school between 8:46-9:00am and a 30-minute detention if they arrive at school after 9:01am. If a student fails to attend the initial detention, they will be issued with a 40-minute detention. If a student fails to attend this second detention, the student will serve a full day internal isolation in our reset room. A C3 consequence will be issued if a student is late three times in a week.

The school will take specific circumstances into account when deciding whether to issue a detention, i.e. - proof of a medical appointment, interview, personal family circumstances, changes to bus services (frequency and times). All detentions will be served after school from 3.20pm onwards. Parents/carers will be notified by the ClassCharts App or text message if their child is required to remain behind after school that day to serve the 30-minute late detention.

If a student is late to school 5 or more times in a term, they automatically lose their place on any GIR celebration events at the end of the term, even if they meet other aspects of the GIR thresholds.

Communication with Parents

The Attendance Clerk will send a Studybugs alert or ring parents/carers on the first day of an absence to ascertain why a student is absent from school. Letters sent to parents/carers at the end of each term in relation to 'Getting it Right' also contain information on the child's attendance during the term. Each 'Getting it Right' letter also has an Attendance Certificate attached. This allows parents/carers to be informed of both their child's attendance and punctuality. Parents/carers are also informed about their child's attendance in the annual full report, at Parent's Evenings and Progress Review meetings. Further attendance information is accessible to parents/carers through the Studybugs App as this will automatically alerts parents/carers when they child's attendance rises above or falls below specific thresholds. The Studybugs App will also inform parents/carers if their child is absent from or late to school each day and will provide parents/carers with the opportunity to explain they their child is absent or late to school.

Rewards and Incentives

Students are rewarded for excellent attendance in many ways. Attendance Roll Calls are displayed around school and updated on a half-termly basis. Attendance is celebrated in fortnightly College assemblies. There is a half-termly prize draw for students with attendance above 98%, and a separate prize draw for those with 100% attendance. Students with the greatest improvement in attendance rates are also rewarded as an additional incentive. As part of the 'Attendance Support Plan' system, students will be set personalised attendance targets and rewarded for meeting them.

Students secure GIR points if they attend lessons and arrive on time. To be eligible to participate in termly GIR rewards events, students must meet the expected GIR thresholds and have attendance 96% or above. To be eligible for a Hillcrest Superstar Award at the end of the academic year, students are required to have attendance above 96% in at least two terms of the year.

Key Attendance People in school:
Headteacher - Mr S Abbotts
Deputy Headteacher/Attendance Champion - Mr D Gariff
Year 7 Head of Year - Miss C Hobley
Year 8 Head of Year - Miss J McDonald
Year 9 Head of Year - Miss A Adenike
Year 10 Head of Year - Miss H Winter
Year 11 Head of Year - Miss K Ankiah
Head of Sixth Form - Mr M Johnson

SENDCO - Ms N Birmingham
Safeguarding and Well-Being Coordinator - Mrs C McGettrick
Attendance Clerk - Miss M Stuart
Senior Education Welfare Officer - Mrs A Gray
Student Receptionist - Miss J Taylor