



HILLCREST SCHOOL
AND SIXTH FORM CENTRE

Attendance Matters: Attendance Policy 2021-22



IMPORTANT Please Read



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 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 regularly 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 or not 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.

It is also important to note that even though a parent may not live in the same home as the student that parent is still responsible for ensuring the child attends school every day.

Policy update on Covid-19

The most up-to-date guidance from the DFE states that ‘it is vital for all children to attend school in order to minimise, as far as possible, the longer-term impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on children’s education, well-being and wider development.’

School attendance remains mandatory. All students who are not displaying standard Covid-19 symptoms are expected to attend each day. In preparation for all students to safely return to school, we completed all relevant health and risk assessments in line with local and national guidance.

Where parents/carers continue to have anxiety or concerns regarding their child attending school, an appointment should be made with the relevant College Leader and/or Mr Connor-Hemming (Deputy Headteacher) to discuss the concerns and put appropriate support measures in place. However, the school maintains the right to issue sanctions, including Fixed Penalty Notice Fines, in line with the local authorities’ code of conduct.

However, there are still some circumstances where students cannot attend school due to Covid-19. These arrangements are outlined in the section in this policy on 'Absence in circumstances related to Covid-19'.

Principles of the Hillcrest Attendance Policy

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. 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.

- ***6 out of 10 students with over 95% attendance (missing no more than 10 days a year) gain 5 GCSE grade 4+***
- ***Only 1 in 10 students who are poor attendees gain 5 GCSE A* - C grades***
- ***2 in every 10 poor attendees leave school with no qualifications at all***

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

The government has laid down guidelines which they expect students at secondary school to achieve in terms of attendance. They are set at **95%** attendance.

A student will fall below 95% if they miss as little as half a day over a 2-week period
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It is the expectation of the school that all students **will** achieve at least 95% attendance. There are a variety of reasons for students missing school. Some are unavoidable, but we would ask that you support us in ensuring that your child's attendance meets both the school and the government's expectations. Any problems with regular attendance, especially any concerns about possible bullying learning difficulties or anxiety linked to Covid-19 pandemic, are best sorted out by the school, the parents and the student at an early stage. We will closely monitor your child's attendance and alert you if we feel there is an issue. The school undertakes a wide range of early help measures to support students where attendance at school is an issue. Where there may be an issue 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.

The school follows the **'Wise Up'** programme to monitor attendance:

EXCELLENT	<p>Your child's attendance is above 98%. They are 'WISED UP' on attendance. As well as being an excellent attender your child will almost certainly achieve the best grades for her ability and have real opportunity in further education or the world of work</p>
GOOD	<p>Your child's attendance is 96-97% They are 'GETTING WISE' Your child is likely to achieve their grades that will give them real opportunities to continue their studies or in the world of work.</p>
SATISFACTORY	<p>Your child's attendance is 95% and is in line with national expectations. Your child is likely to achieve their target grade but her outcomes will be improved further if her attendance improves.</p>
UNSATISFACTORY	<p>Your child's attendance is 94-90%. They are below the national government threshold of 95% <u>Your child will miss up to 18 days each school year</u> and this will make it difficult for her to achieve her best</p>
CONCERN	<p>Your child's attendance is between 85-90%. They 'NEED TO WISE UP' as attendance is <u>significantly below</u> expectation!</p>

	<p>Parents / Carers may face a <u>fixed penalty fine</u> as your child's attendance is below 90% and they are 'Persistent Absentees'</p> <p><u>Your child is missing so much time from school that it will be difficult for her to keep in touch with lessons or work</u></p>
SERIOUS CONCERN	<p>Your child's attendance is below 85%</p> <p>You need to 'WISE UP and TAKE ACTION NOW' as you will face a fixed penalty fine or further legal prosecution if your child's attendance does not improve!</p> <p><u>Your child is missing so much time from school that it will be almost impossible for her to keep in touch with lessons or work!</u></p>

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 a school or 'otherwise'. Education is therefore compulsory. In terms of 'otherwise' children may be educated by their parents 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 – August 2020)**

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

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

Governors

- To set and monitor progress towards annual targets for attendance
- To evaluate the effectiveness of the Attendance Policy

Headteacher

- To ensure that effective systems are in place to accurately record individual student, group and whole school attendance patterns.

Deputy Headteacher (Pastoral)

- To monitor individual student, year group and whole school attendance and punctuality.
- To decide whether or not to authorise requested periods of absence.
- To make a judgement whether an absence that has not been requested is authorised or unauthorised.
- To provide Governors with information to enable them to evaluate the success of policy and practice.
- To liaise with Educational Welfare Officer to initiate Early Help support or co-ordinate Fast Track programme
- To ensure appropriate systems are followed if a child is deemed to be missing from education (CME)
- To co-ordinate communication with external agencies (ie – Police, Early Help, Children’s Social Care, SENAR, Forward Thinking Birmingham) for vulnerable students and/or students deemed to be at risk of harm as a result of non-attendance.
- To implement attendance and Getting It Right reward systems

College Leader

- To monitor the attendance and punctuality of students in their respective year group
- Meet with parents/carers to set targets for Attendance Action Plans and review outcomes
- Undertake ‘Three Houses’ assessments and facilitate appropriate early help support measures to improve a student’s attendance and educational outcomes.

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, College Leader and Educational Welfare Officer
- 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, College Leader 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.
- 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 Fast Track Procedures are implemented in cases where persistent absence exists.
- To co-ordinate ‘Child Missing from Education’ (CME) referrals as required.

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.

- To ensure that Fast Track Procedures are implemented in cases where persistent absence exists.

Daily Procedures: Registration

Under the 2006 Education Regulations the school is **legally** required to register students twice daily. Registers are marked in the morning between 8.45 and 8.50am and during period 5 in the afternoon. It is essential that all students are registered on both occasions.

School starts at 8.40am when all students should be in their form base or designated year group meeting area, in preparation for the register being taken at 8.45am-8.50am. 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

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.

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. ***If your child cannot come to school because of illness you should advise the school on the first day of absence by telephone.*** If no message is received, we will assume that your child is absent without your permission. We will then make every effort to contact you. It is essential that the school is kept informed of changes of contact details such as phone numbers and addresses. In cases where we continue to be concerned we may make a 'home visit' or request the police to undertake a 'Safe and Well' visit. Parents are encouraged to ensure that their child brings in a letter confirming the reasons for the absence when the child returns to school.

Once contact (verbal and/or written) 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 has the right to request medical evidence if a parent rings 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, print screen of medical notes, as well as letters concerning hospital appointments or any other relevant evidence. The Head Teacher may not authorise medical absence without this evidence.

The school **may** authorise absence under certain specific circumstances. However, the parent 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 where students are involved in any supervised sporting events or trials, theatre performances and participation in acts of religious worship.

Parents/carers are encouraged to read the Public Health England publication 'Guidance on Infection Control in Schools and other childcare settings' (September 2014) as it provides useful guidance on

whether an illness necessitates students taking time off school. This has been updated in light of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Authorised Absence from School

According to the DFE guidance (August 2020), 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 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 in such cases. Medical evidence can take the form of prescriptions, appointment cards, etc. rather than doctors' notes.

Code M: Medical or dental appointments

Missing registration for a medical or dental appointment is 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.

Code C: Other circumstances

This code will be used for any authorised non-medical reasons for a child's absence from school, i.e. – family funeral.

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 school work. 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.

Code E: Exclusion from school

If no alternative provision is made for a student to continue their education whilst they are excluded 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 excluded pupil from the sixth consecutive day of any fixed period or permanent exclusion. Where alternative provision is made they will be marked using the appropriate attendance code.

Code H: Holiday authorised by the school

Head teachers should not grant leave of absence unless there are exceptional circumstances. The application must be made in advance and the head teacher must be satisfied that there are exceptional circumstances based on the individual facts and circumstances of the case which warrant the leave. Where a leave of absence is granted, the head teacher will determine the number of days

a pupil can be away from school. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the head teacher's discretion.

Code J: Interview

This code will be used when it has been agreed that the student can miss school to attend an interview or entrance exam.

Code P: Approved sporting activity

This code will be used in times of approved sporting activities in school times, i.e. – training sessions, trials and sporting events.

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 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.

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 (August 2020) 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 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 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 they should record it as unauthorised.

Code U: Arrived late to school after 9.15am

If a student arrives after 9.15am without any written or verbal confirmation from parents/carers to explain their lateness, the school will mark the pupil with the U code. This means that, although the student is in school, she is marked absent for the entire morning. This will be marked as an authorised absence and could result in prosecution for parents/carers if the pupil is persistently late.

Absence in circumstances relating to Covid-19

A new category has been added to record instances when a student is '**not attending in circumstances relating to coronavirus (COVID-19)**'.

Code X: not attending in circumstances relating to coronavirus (COVID-19)

This code is used to record sessions where the pupil's travel to or presence at school would conflict with:

- guidance relating to the incidence or transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19) from Public Health England or the Department of Health and Social Care¹²; or
- any legislation (or instruments such as statutory directions) relating to the incidence or transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19).

In line with DFE guidance, no parent will be penalised for following official public health advice for their child not to attend school.

In all cases of self-isolation, we ask parents/carers to inform us immediately about the outcome of a test. In line with DFE guidance, we should not require evidence of negative test results or other medical evidence before admitting children or welcoming them back after a period of self-isolation. However, for the safety of all other members of the community, we would ask parents/carers to provide this evidence if they are able or willing to.

Shielding advice for all adults and children paused on 1 August 2020. This means that even the small number of pupils who will remain on the shielded patient list can return to school, as can those who have family members who are shielding. If in future, rates of the disease rise in local areas, children still on the shielding list (or family members still on the shielding list) from that area, and that area only, may be contacted by the government and advised to stay at home and shield during the period

where rates remain high. Families will receive a letter if they are required to shield again that parents will be able to share with the school. Non-attendance in accordance with guidance from PHE or the DHSC will be recorded as code X.

Periods of isolation at home (including national and local lockdowns)

If rates of the disease rise nationally and/or locally, schools may need to prevent some pupils from attending. In the event of this, we will follow PHE or DHSC guidance on what measures are necessary in the event of a national/local lockdown. Where attendance is to be limited to certain groups, ‘not attending in circumstances related to coronavirus (COVID-19)’ - code X – will be used for students who are asked not to attend. In such cases, work will be set for students remotely and students will be expected to attend daily registration periods and all live lessons.


Code Y: Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

This code can be used where a pupil is unable to attend because:

- The school site, or part of it, is closed due to an unavoidable cause; or
- The transport provided by the school or a local authority is not available and where the pupil’s home is not within walking distance; or
- A local or national emergency has resulted in widespread disruption to travel which has prevented the pupil from attending school.

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.

	<p><u>To whom it may concern</u></p> <p>Hillcrest School is committed to working with pupils and parents / carers to improve pupil attendance and achievement by reducing absence. Please confirm by signature or practice stamp that (insert pupil name) _____ has attended the surgery or practice today.</p> <p>Is this condition likely to impact further on her school attendance? YES / NO</p> <p>Signed _____ Date _____</p> <p>Practice name / stamp:</p>
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Parents are asked to make routine medical and dental appointments outside school hours wherever possible. Where such appointments in school time are unavoidable, parents should inform the school in advance so a decision can be made whether to authorise the absence or not.

Safeguarding

The school reserves the right to invite parents 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 make contact with 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 parent / carer.

Children Missing From Education (updated LA guidance May 2021)

The school recognizes that when a child goes missing from school it is a potential indicator of abuse or neglect, i.e. – sexual abuse, peer-on-peer 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 5 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 College Leader, form tutor, subject teachers and other students to check if any reasons for absence can be identified
- Conduct home visit(s) and note observations (ie – 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, make contact with the school to check the siblings attendance and reasons for any absence.

A referral will be made to 'Child Missing from Education' (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 any child is absent from school for more than five days without confirmation from parents. Every attempt will be made to communicate with parents 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, ie – 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 a 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 will 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 S Connor-Hemming) as part of the reintegration programme and relevant support will be offered to the pupil / family as necessary.

Reluctance to go to school:

Sometimes students seem anxious about leaving home to go to school. They may tell you that they feel unwell or give another reason to not attend. You 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 still feel anxious about Covid-19 and are fearful of being in lessons with other students.

If this is the case, please contact the school as soon as possible to speak to the relevant College Leader. In any of these circumstances, your child's College Leader will work closely with you and your child to address the concerns and put relevant support measures in place. This may involve working with our Emotional Well-Being Advisor (Danielle Haslam), Senior Learning Mentor (Mrs Bunce) or accessing support from appropriate external agencies, ie – School Nurse Service, PAUSE, Forward Thinking Birmingham.

Sharing Panel Placement and Alternative Provision

Students can be placed on Managed Move 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 on a daily basis 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 on a daily basis 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 (August 2020); '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 wishes to withdraw a child from the school, the child will be known as 'Electively Home-Educated'.

Any parent wishing to withdraw their child from the school will be required to confirm this in writing to the Headteacher (Mrs Davies). 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 or not to accept this new arrangement or challenge it. However, parents are unable to withdraw their child from school if they are subject to a 'School Attendance Order'.

Children with Special Educational Needs statements (Education, Health and Care Plans) can be home educated. Where the statements sets 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 2021), the school will work closely with the local authority and other key professionals (ie –social or family support workers) to ensure parents 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.

Part-time or reduced timetables

Updated DFE guidance (June 2021) 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 (ie – 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 supervised at all times 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 (ie – 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 (ie – 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 C 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 DFE guidance (June 2021), 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.

Leave of Absence in term time

In March 2017, The Supreme Court confirmed the definition of regular attendance as ‘in accordance with the rules prescribed by the school’. If parents wish to take their child out of school during term time we advise parents to send a letter into school outlining the reasons for and dates of the leave of absence. Parents 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 'Advice on School Attendance' parents* can **no longer** expect schools to authorise leave of absence for the purpose of a family holiday for up to 10 school days per year. 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/s 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 apply to the **Local Authority (Fast Track)** for a **Penalty Notice Fine (£60-£120)** to be issued by the Court Section or other legal proceedings by the Local Authority. The £60 Penalty Notice will need to be paid in full separately by both parents within 21 days and will rise to £120 if paid between 22 and 28 days. If the penalty notice is not paid within 28 days, parents can be prosecuted under section 444(1), the Education Act 1996.

As part of the Spotlight programme, the Local Authority can take legal action and issue a Fixed Penalty Notice fine under the following circumstances:

- a student's absence is marked as an unauthorised absence (G code), i.e. –family holiday – Not agreed or extra days absence in excess of the agreement;
- a student has been absent for a minimum of 5 school days of G code and has had 5 school days of other unauthorised absence in the previous 12 calendar months;
- a student has been absent for at least 10 school days of G codes, where they have been no other unauthorised absence in the previous 12 calendar months

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 to note that the student may also be removed from the school register if the parent 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 have 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 remain in contact with the school even though the student has not returned to school by the agreed date.

In line with current guidance on Covid-19, parents/carers should fully consider that their child may need to self-isolate following trips overseas that require a period of quarantine. If a student is required to be in quarantine on arrival in, or return to, the UK, code X will be used in the register.

Persistent 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.

According to the DFE guidance (August 2020); '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 may be guilty of an offence and can be prosecuted by the local authority'. In addition, 'Local authorities have the power to prosecute parents 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)'

When a student's attendance falls below 90% (at any stage of the year) she will be allocated an **Attendance Mentor** who will track her attendance on a weekly basis. The student's College Leader will contact parents to discuss the attendance concerns and formalise an **Attendance Action Plan** to secure an improvement in attendance. We recognise that a student's attendance may fall below 90% as a result of their, or their parent's, on-going anxieties about covid-19. We will endeavour to work with families in such cases to address concerns and put appropriate early help support mechanisms in place before initiating the standard **Fast Track** (Fixed Penalty Notice) process.

The school may also consider implementing a **Parenting Contract** if the student continues to be absent from school without authorisation. A Parenting Contract is a voluntary agreement between the school and parent, and will contain improvement targets with set timescales and an overview of the support provided by the school to support the child and her family. Parental failure to comply with the contract may be used as evidence if the Local Authority decides to prosecute parents.

The School will follow the guidelines outlines in BCC'S **Fast Track** process. As soon as attendance becomes a concern, parents will be advised via a letter from the Headteacher and will be invited in to attend an informal meeting where strategies to support the child's attendance can be explored. The school will also undertake a piece of work with the student (Three Houses), where any obstacles to education can be identified, and offer Early Help support. If a student does not attend school, despite the agreed support systems put in place by the school, absences will be marked as unauthorised and will contribute to any Fast Track action taken by the school.

If a student has ten days unauthorised absence in a 12-month period (not including any days of isolation as a result of covid-19), parents will be invited to attend a formal school attendance review meeting (SARM) where clear actions will be agreed and expectations about attendance including

legal consequences of further absence will be discussed. Following this, if the student has one further unauthorised absence, the process will be escalated and a formal warning notice (ELIT1) will be issued. The school will continue to use its discretion to determine if any absence after this time is authorised or unauthorised.

The student's attendance will then be closely monitored for a period of 10 school weeks. If at any point in this period, the student accumulates 10 further unauthorised absences (5 school days) a Family Information Sheet may be completed by the EWO and sent to Birmingham City Council's Court section.

Court section will consider proceedings under section 444 of the 1996 Education Act and 2007 Anti-Social Behaviour Act. This could result in a penalty notice being issued to parents/carers or court proceedings under the 'Single Justice' process. A **Penalty Notice will be issued for £60 to parents**. This will be issued to both parents even if one of the parents does not live with the student. Each parent will have 21 days to make payment. This will rise to £120 if the initial fine is paid between 22 and 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the Local Authority. **There is no right of appeal by parents against the penalty notice**. Failure to pay the Penalty Notice Fine will result in further legal action being taken by the courts, with the maximum fine currently £2,500 or three months in prison. These prosecutions are criminal proceedings and could result in parents/carers have a criminal record.

Under the 1989 Children Act the Local Authority has the power to issue an **Education Supervision Order** (ESO) and place a child under their supervision on the grounds that the child is not being 'properly educated' and is in danger of 'significant harm'. The Local Authority can issue an order if the child is persistently absent from school. The Local Authority appointed 'Supervisor' can give 'directions' to the parents on how the child should be educated and work with the parent to ensure the child attends school regularly. The Local Authority may use an ESO as an interim measure before moving directly to prosecution.

Under the 2003 Anti-Social Behaviour Act, if a student continues to have attendance issues after a parent has been convicted, the courts can also issue a **Parenting Order**. This legally requires the parents to participate in a programme of parenting support and counselling. If the unauthorised absence continues, a new case will be brought against the parent/s but previous parental failure to engage with the school and local authority can be cited.

If a Penalty Notice Fine is issued by the court, the school will be required to continue to monitor the student's attendance and begin the Spotlight process again if the student has a further 20 sessions (10 days) unauthorised absence from the date the fine was issued by the court. This may result in further legal action taken against the parent if the student continues to have periods of unauthorised absence from school.

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

In order to be marked present and on-time for school, students must be in their form room by 8.50am. Students who arrive after registration **must** sign in. Up to 9.15 this can be done at the student's 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 can lead to consequences being issued.

It is important to note that any student who arrives to school after **9.15am** will 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 and times in light of the Covid-19 pandemic. However, it is the parent's/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 arrive late to school after 8.50am. They will be required to serve a 30-minute detention on the day they are late to school. If a student fails to attend the 30-minute detention, they will be issued with a 40 minute SLT detention. If a student fails to attend this SLT detention, the student will serve a full day internal isolation in room 35 and the 40-minute detention will be reissued.

The school will take specific circumstances into account when deciding whether to issue a detention, ie – 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 text message if their child is required to remain behind after school that day to serve the 30-minute late detention.

The student's College Leader will meet with the student and their parents / carers if they are late to school 10 times in a year. If the student is late 15 times in a year, parents/carers will be invited into school to meet our Education Welfare Officer and Deputy Headteacher. If the student is late 20 times in a year, the parents/carers will be invited into school to meet the Deputy Headteacher and Headteacher. Finally, parents/carers will be invited to attend a 'Governors Attendance Panel' meeting if their child is late for school 25 times or more in a year. Parents/carers will be invited into

school again to attend another 'Governors Attendance Panel' meeting if their child continues to be late for school and a 'Governors Contract' will be formally signed by parents/carers.

If a student is late to school 15 or more times in a year, they automatically lose their place on any GIR celebration events at the end of the year, even if they meet other aspects of the GIR thresholds.

Communication with parents

Letters sent to parents 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 to be informed of both their child's attendance and punctuality. Parents are also informed about their child's attendance in the annual full report, at Parent's Evenings and Progress Review meetings.

Rewards and Incentives

Students are rewarded for excellent attendance in many different 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 termly draw for students above 98% attendance. Students with the most improved attendance rates are also rewarded as a further incentive.

Students secure GIR points if they attend lessons and arrive on time. However, under the GIR system students will not earn GIR bonus points if they are absent school. It is therefore vitally important that students are in school every day to achieve the minimum expectation of 95% GIR points.

Improving attendance – WHAT PARENTS CAN DO:

1. Try to make all medical appointments (doctors, dentist and hospital) out of school time. Obviously, this is not always possible but in such cases, try to minimise the disruption to the day by getting an early morning appointment so that your child can attend afterwards OR a late afternoon appointment so that she can complete most of her timetable before leaving.
2. Encourage your child to take responsibility for being on time for school. Try to make sure she has an alarm clock that is reliable. Make sure that she has a realistic bedtime and will not be too tired to get up in the morning for school. Bags, books and other equipment should be prepared the night before. Regularly checking your child's planner can help you to do this.
3. Discourage your child from staying over night with friends during the week. This sometimes leads to them both being late (or not attending at all) the next day.
4. Check with the school's Admin Assistant – Attendance if you have any concerns about whether your child is present in school. Our Attendance Clerk is Mrs Stuart.
5. Leave of absence during term time is not a parental right. If there are special or exceptional circumstances please contact the Headteacher and decision will be made if the absence can be authorised or not.
6. Encourage your child to come to school even if she is feeling slightly unwell. Many aches and pains are forgotten when they are with friends and the school will contact you if it becomes necessary.
7. Talk positively about going to school – "What was good about school today?" "Did anything funny happen?"
8. Monitor your child's internet and social media use to ensure they are not experiencing any difficulties that may prevent them from wanting to attend school.

9. Take any worries seriously but do not show that you are unduly concerned. Believe that they will be sorted out. Contact your Child's Tutor or College Leader before the concerns escalate.

Improving attendance – WHAT SCHOOL DOES:

1. Mark the registers in accordance with the law twice a day.
2. Informs any parents / carers who have not contacted the school, of the absence of their child on a particular day.
3. Maintains records and monitors attendance of students on a regular basis.
4. Authorises absences in accordance with the government guidelines. Please note that **only** the school can authorise absence.
5. Contacts parents / carers when the attendance falls below acceptable levels and / or when particular patterns of absence are causing concerns.
6. Provides access to staff with whom attendance related issues can be discussed.
7. Works with external agencies to maintain good attendance and to support the student / family with any issues that may affect attendance and punctuality to school.
8. Provides re – integration support for students returning from absence.
9. Uses the 'Getting it Right' system to encourage students to arrive on time for school.
10. Maintains a range of strategies to encourage good attendance by means of rewards.
11. Works with relevant external agencies if a students' attendance becomes a concern, i.e. – Social Care, Forward Thinking, Pupil Support Service, Police, and YOT.
12. Uses the Fast Track campaign as a means of working with parents to resolve issues affecting attendance.

Key Attendance People in school:

Headteacher – Mrs J Davies

Deputy Headteacher / Designated Safeguarding Lead – Mr S Connor-Hemming

Year 7 Nightingale College Leader – Miss N Shaw

Year 8 Parks College Leader – Ms A Adenike

Year 9 Parks College Leader – Mr S Kennard

Year 10 Malala College Leader – Miss K Ankiah

Year 11 Malala College Leader – Miss A Ankiah

Head of Sixth Form – Miss A Muncey

SENCO / Inclusion Manager - Mrs J Penn

Learning Mentor – Mrs M. Bunce

Attendance Clerk – Ms M Stuart

Education Welfare Officer – Mrs A Gray

Student Receptionist – Miss J Taylor

The school has a legal responsibility to promote good attendance. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend school regularly. Our staff are committed to working closely with parents as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible. Your continued support in this matter is essential. Please work with us.