



HILBRE HIGH SCHOOL HUMANITIES COLLEGE

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Approved by Curriculum Committee: 21st March 2017

Approved by Governing Body at meeting on 27th March 2017

Introduction

'Central to raising standards in education and ensuring all students can fulfil their potential is an assumption so widely understood that it is insufficiently stated - students 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.' *DfE publication: Advice on School Attendance 2014.*

Hilbre High School are committed to ensuring that all students attend school regularly, on time and prepared for learning. School attendance has been given a higher profile in recent years, and as a result rewards, incentives and efforts to maximise good attendance have been implemented. Improving attendance is frequently discussed in school during assemblies, staff meetings and parents' evenings.

The school has a clear and attainable target for students set at **96%**.

Students who maintain a 100% attendance record are rewarded every term with a variety of prizes and privileges, culminating in certificates and trophies presented at Hilbre's End of Year Awards Ceremony.

School Attendance

The national average attendance is currently 95%, and as such the school's target is set at 96% for all students. The DfE guidance outlines that attendance below 90% is classed as 'Persistent Absence' which may mean that parents/carers will incur Fixed Penalty Notices for such poor attendance, if deemed necessary by our school Education Social Worker (ESW). Above all, our students must attend school regularly in order to learn, to make positive relationships and to become accustomed to good habits in preparation for future employment.

All staff at Hilbre High School work with families to ensure that every student attends school and attends punctually. The school has an effective system of monitoring trends in student attendance and acknowledges the efforts of students who strive to maintain a healthy attendance record. Key staff will challenge the behaviour of students and parents/carers who give low priority to attendance and punctuality. Furthermore, Hilbre has an established effective system of communication with students, parents and appropriate agencies to provide mutual information, advice and support.

Punctuality

Students are expected to be in school and ready for Period 1 by 8:40am. Staff will be on duty on the front gate to ensure that latecomers provide a legitimate reason for their poor punctuality, and may issue an appropriate sanction. **If a student arrives to school between 8:45am and 9:15am (when registers have closed) the student's absence will be recorded as late (L).** A prompt arrival in school is crucial to a student's day. **If a student arrives in school after 9:15am, they will be marked as absent from school that morning, which equates to an unauthorised absence (U).**

Hilbre High School remains committed to 3 main aspects to improve outcomes for all of our students:

- Promote and reward good attendance (96% or above);
- Improve pupil punctuality;
- Reduce the number of students who are classed as 'Persistent Absence' (PA), i.e. below 90%.

Authorisation of Student Absence

In all cases of planned or unplanned absences, it is the parent's/carer's responsibility to notify the school on the first day of absence. **The Hilbre Absence Line is 0151 625 2883**, and should be called as early as possible, ideally before 9:00am to enable our Attendance Officer to account for a student absence. The authorisation of the absence of any student at Hilbre is the school's responsibility, so regular communication via telephone or e-mail is vital.

Illness or unforeseen absence:

Parents/carers should call the Hilbre Absence Line at the earliest convenience (0151 625 2883) to inform us of the reason for absence, and keep the school informed until the child/ward's return date. For significant periods of absence (over 5 working days) a medical note must be provided to explain prolonged periods of absence. Absences of this nature will be authorised by the Headteacher, and work will be provided for students if it is appropriate. On occasion, under certain circumstances such as a repeated pattern of poor attendance, we may request a medical note before the 5 working days have been completed.

If a student feels ill at school, they should locate the school nurse (RGN) and a phone call home will be made to arrange for a collection. **Under no circumstances must a child be collected from school by a parent/carer without notifying the school.**

Planned absences from school:

If a child/ward has a medical appointment, parents/carers must try to arrange times outside of school hours, where possible. If medical appointments are made within school hours, the school should be contacted, via telephone or e-mail, to confirm dates and times. All medical appointments must be accompanied with a medical note, letter or appointment slip to allow for authorisation from the Headteacher. It is the school's responsibility to authorise absences and, on occasion, we may seek further information/clarification before issuing approval.

Students will receive an EXEAT slip that will allow them to be signed out at the main office, or upon collection from parents/carers. This slip will be completed by a member of their House team or the Attendance Officer.

Holiday requests:

Recent DfE legislation stipulates that schools should not authorise any holiday within term time, unless there are exceptional circumstances. The school will consider exceptional circumstances for a holiday request if the duration is no more than 10 school days and it is the only family holiday. Usually, family crises, or parent/carer's employment restrictions dictate these types of requests.

Requests for term time holidays must be made in writing directly to the Headteacher, Mr Bellamy, with the reasons why the holiday cannot be booked outside of term time. Unless the circumstances are deemed exceptional, Mr Bellamy cannot authorise holiday requests. Hilbre High School politely requests that applications for leave of absence be made at least 1 month in advance of the scheduled break.

Holiday requests will be considered on an individual basis, where a student's attendance record may be used as a determining factor for authorisation. No holiday requests will be authorised during any student's examination period, so please be aware of this prior to booking any holidays.

Parental Responsibilities and Legislation

Hilbre High School operates a time-triggered system to try to prevent the eventuality of Fixed Penalty Notices being issued. Parents/carers may receive a variety of letters warning of their child's poor attendance or communication. In some circumstances, an Attendance Panel may be necessary to implement remedial measures to improve a child's attendance.

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).

Parents who fail in this duty may be prosecuted via the courts and fined up to £2,500 or, in some cases, imprisoned. Section 23 of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 provides that, as an alternative to prosecution, parents may be issued with a Fixed Penalty Notice if their child's absence from school is unauthorised. These may be issued if a student has 10 days unauthorised absence in any 1 term. Fixed Penalty Notices are for **£60 if paid within 21 days** and £120 if paid within 28 days.

Examples of practice at Hilbre High School to promote, maintain or improve attendance

Making attendance and punctuality a priority for all those associated with the school, including students, parents, teachers and Governors by:

1. Ensuring that Attendance policies and procedures are clearly explained on the school website and in school literature.
2. Upholding Department of Education legislation in relation to family holidays taken in term time by Mr Bellamy only granting leave of absence in exceptional circumstances in recognition that taking a child out of school in term time can impair their progress and development and that parents who remove their children from school in term time may be issued with a Fixed Penalty Notice (from 1st September 2013 these will be for £60 per parent, per child if paid within 21 days and £120 per parent, per child if paid between 22 and 28 days. Parents who fail to pay Fixed Penalty Notices may be prosecuted in court). Permission for leave of absence in exceptional circumstances must be applied for by writing directly to Mr Bellamy.
3. Highlighting the importance of attendance at the Welcome to Hilbre Evening, so that parents new to the school are fully briefed on the school's Attendance policy.
4. Featuring items on attendance in the Hilbre Endeavour in order to share information with the wider school community.
5. Providing INSET training for appointed/promoted staff so that all procedures are carried out efficiently and with consistency
6. Displaying materials at focal points, such as form rooms and House offices in order to promote the importance of good attendance.
7. Discussing attendance issues with the Education Social Worker (ESW) so that there is good liaison between school and the ESW service.
8. Use reward systems such as house credits, prizes, certificates etc. to encourage students to attend regularly.
9. Promoting parental partnerships using a range of opportunities so that parents experiencing difficulties feel able to approach the school for support and advice.

Purposeful start to the school day with a clear focus on attendance by

1. Maintaining unambiguous procedures for statutory registration by using e-registration and Lesson Monitor to ensure standardised recording of:
 - Authorised/unauthorised absence.
 - Students who arrive late.
 - Educational activity.

- Presence to Period 1.
- 2. Ensuring Attendance Officer/House Administrative Assistants make contact by telephone on the first day of absence, if not previously notified to school. If no contact is made, a letter is sent home.
- 3. Ensuring clearly defined late registration procedures and appropriate responses to lateness are maintained by all staff.
- 4. Utilising clear internal school procedures prior to referral to Education Social Workers.
- 5. Ensuring that an identified member of staff gathers information before meeting with the ESW.
- 6. Reviewing attendance regularly.

Providing support, advice and guidance to parents and students by

1. Providing support and advice through:
 - PSHE .
 - Assemblies.
 - Staff available to talk to students.
 - Learning Mentors available to counsel students.
 - 'Peer Mentor' system.
 - Homework clubs.
2. Setting aside area/time for parents to speak to staff and involve parents from the earliest stage.
3. Maintaining clear communication with parents.
4. Providing accurate and up-to-date contact information for parents.

Developing a systematic approach in gathering and analysing attendance related data by

1. Producing attendance reports as follows:
 - Annual/termly reports for Governors.
 - Weekly reports for Heads of House and Form Tutors.
 - Half termly reports for SLT with analysis by Year, House, Form, Gender, and vulnerable groups such as Special Needs, Ethnic Groups and LACES.
 - Attendance reports to be sent with student reviews.

To support attendance through rewards, sanctions and reintegration by

1. Making active use of the school's rewards and sanctions system.
2. Using a staged approach to supporting good attendance. As attendance decreases an increasing range of sanctions are used as outlined below, the choice of which depends on the nature of the young person, their family and the circumstances:

Letter 1: Initial concern letter.

Letter 2: Requires doctor's note/mentions legal implications of poor attendance.

Letter 3: ESW referral letter.