Hillsgrove Primary School

Attendance Policy

Kind minds, strong skills, bright futures.

Academic year 2026–2027 | Approved by the Local Governing Body

Policy owner	Approval and review
Principal / Senior Attendance Champion	Approval date: 20.11.2026 Next review: 20.11.2027

1 Our vision and commitment

At Hillsgrove Primary School, our vision of kind minds, strong skills, bright futures shapes our approach to attendance. Every child deserves a full-time education and a school where they feel safe, valued and able to succeed. Being in school regularly and on time helps children build friendships, develop confidence and make the most of every learning opportunity.

- Kind minds: we listen to children and families, respond with understanding and work together to remove barriers to attendance.
- Strong skills: regular attendance and punctuality enable children to build secure knowledge, practise skills and make sustained progress.
- Bright futures: we encourage positive habits, aspiration and a sense of belonging that will support children throughout their education.

Attendance is everyone's responsibility. We have high expectations for all pupils while recognising that health, disability and wider family circumstances can affect attendance. We work with families and Bexley's Education Welfare Service to provide early, proportionate help. Formal action is considered when appropriate and in accordance with statutory guidance.

Our aims

- Promote regular attendance and punctuality, and ensure every child can access the full curriculum.
- Identify absence and lateness promptly, monitor patterns and take early action.
- Reduce persistent and severe absence, especially where attendance gaps exist between groups.
- Set clear responsibilities and procedures, and work with families and partners to improve outcomes.

2 Attendance expectations and school contacts

We expect pupils to attend every session when they are able to do so, unless a lawful reason for absence applies. Our school-wide improvement target is 96%; this is not an entitlement to take time off. Parents of children of compulsory school age have a legal duty to ensure regular attendance.

Contact	Details
Senior Attendance Champion / Principal	Ms Kathryn Laurie – via school office
Attendance Officer	Charmaine Powell – via school office
Family Liaison Officer	Mandy Beadle – via school office
School office	020 8303 4949 | admin@hillsgrove.bexley.sch.uk
School address	Sidmouth Road, Welling, Kent DA16 1DR

The school day and punctuality

Time	Arrangement
8.30–8.45 am	School gates open; pupils arrive in time to start learning.
8.45 am	School day begins.
8.50–9.00 am	Morning registration period. Register closes at 9.00 am.
After lunch (1.00 pm)	Afternoon registration; proposed closing time 1.10 pm.
3.15 pm	School day ends.

Pupils arriving after the start of the school day must report to the office and sign in using the school's visitor/registration system. A pupil arriving after the register opens but before it closes is recorded late (code L). A pupil arriving after the register closes is recorded absent for that session using code U unless another code accurately records the reason. Repeated lateness is monitored and we work with families to resolve any barriers.

Reporting an unexpected absence

Parents should telephone the school office by 8.45 am, or as soon as practically possible, on the first and each subsequent day of absence. Leave the pupil's name, class, reason for absence and expected return date. If the reason is unclear, the attendance team will contact the family for further information.

3 Registers absence and safeguarding

Recording and following up absence

We maintain electronic admission and attendance registers (Bromcom). Attendance is recorded for morning and afternoon sessions using current national codes. Amendments retain the original and revised entries, reason, date and identity of the authorising staff member. Records are retained for the statutory period of six years.

- The office follows up unexplained absence on the first day, and checks unexplained absence for each session. Further contact is made if there is no response; the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) is informed where there are concerns.
- If the child's whereabouts cannot be established or there is a safeguarding concern, the school follows the safeguarding and children missing education procedures. This may include welfare checks or a risk-assessed home visit, and liaison with social care or the local authority.
- The correct absence code is entered as soon as the reason is established, no later than five working days after the session. Parents are asked to keep contact details current and provide more than one emergency contact wherever possible.

Authorised and unauthorised absence

The Principal or authorised staff member determines the appropriate attendance code. Absence is authorised when it meets a lawful reason, such as genuine physical or mental illness, a medical or dental appointment, religious observance where applicable, or exceptional leave granted in advance. Other statutory circumstances are recorded using the appropriate national code.

Unauthorised absence includes term-time holidays without approval, shopping, birthday celebrations, unexplained or unjustified absence, and late arrival after registration closes unless another authorised code applies.

Illness and appointments

Children who are genuinely unwell should remain at home until they are well enough to return, following relevant NHS and public health guidance. Parents should arrange medical or dental appointments outside school hours where practicable. When that is not possible, inform the office in advance and provide appointment information if needed. Pupils should attend before and after appointments where practicable.

We do not routinely require medical evidence for illness. Where there is genuine, reasonable doubt about the absence, or repeated or prolonged illness makes it necessary to understand needs and arrange support, proportionate evidence may be requested. We will consider alternative evidence and individual circumstances; a GP letter is not automatically required.

Leave during term time

Parents must request leave in advance by completing a Term Time Absence Request Form. The Principal may grant leave only where the relevant statutory grounds apply, including exceptional circumstances. Each request is considered on its own merits; the Principal determines the length of any approved leave. Holidays are not normally considered exceptional. Unauthorised leave may lead to formal action under the national framework.

4 Promoting attendance and using data

Celebrating attendance at Hillsgrove

Our attendance approach encourages children to feel proud of their achievements and to develop positive habits. The following arrangements are already in place:

- Classes are informed of their overall attendance. The highest-attending class receives the attendance trophy.
- Pupils achieving 96% attendance or above receive attendance certificates. The threshold was changed from 100% to keep children motivated even if they have missed a day or two through genuine illness.
- Pupils achieving 96% or above are entered into a prize draw for a £20 Amazon voucher.
- Year 6 pupils are ordinarily expected to have at least 95% attendance to be considered for ambassador roles.
- Parents receive information about their child's attendance at parents' evenings and in end-of-year reports.

We will celebrate individual improvement as well as high attendance. Rewards and ambassador eligibility are applied sensitively and reviewed for fairness, with reasonable adjustments and individual consideration for pupils affected by disability, health needs or unavoidable circumstances. Children should never feel pressured to attend when they are genuinely too unwell.

Monitoring attendance

The attendance team monitors Bromcom daily and analyses pupil, class, year group and cohort attendance weekly. The Senior Attendance Champion reviews patterns and the effectiveness of support, including persistent and severe absence, punctuality, unauthorised absence, SEND and disadvantaged pupil attendance. The school's Attendance Action Plan sets measurable improvement targets and is reviewed half-termly, with termly reporting to governors.

Attendance indicator	Meaning and response
96% and above	School improvement target; reinforce good attendance.
Above 90% but below 96%	Monitor emerging patterns; offer help early where concerns arise.
90% or below	Persistent absence: 10% or more of possible sessions missed. Targeted support and review.
50% or below	Severe absence: 50% or more of possible sessions missed. Urgent, coordinated support.

Thresholds guide monitoring but do not replace professional judgement. We intervene early where a pattern or safeguarding concern emerges, regardless of percentage, and consider the reasons for authorised as well as unauthorised absence.

5 Graduated attendance support

We identify the barriers behind absence and agree practical support with children and families. The following graduated approach is used flexibly, with approximately four-week monitoring periods where appropriate. Urgent concerns can be escalated sooner. For each intervention, record the attendance evidence, support offered, agreed actions, responsible staff member and review date.

Stage and lead	Trigger and action
Early conversation **Class teacher / attendance team**	Emerging absence or lateness. Share attendance information and impact on learning, listen to family concerns and agree practical initial support. Record contact and monitor.
Stage 1 **Attendance Officer / Lead**	Attendance below 96% or a concerning pattern. Send a supportive letter with attendance record, invite parents to discuss barriers and agree actions. Review in around four weeks.
Stage 2 **Attendance Lead / pastoral team**	Concerns continue despite Stage 1. Share updated attendance information, contact family directly, identify barriers and arrange targeted support. Monitor and review around four weeks.
Stage 3 **Senior Attendance Champion / pastoral lead**	Concerns persist, or pupil is persistently absent. Invite family to an attendance meeting, agree an individual attendance support plan and achievable targets, offer Early Help where appropriate, and set a review date.
Stage 4 **Principal / Attendance Lead / EWO**	Persistent absence or agreed targets not met despite support, or serious concerns. Review the support plan, consider EWO and wider agency involvement, and decide whether further support or formal intervention is appropriate.
Sustained improvement **Attendance team**	Recognise improvement, provide positive feedback to the family and continue proportionate monitoring.

Education Welfare Officer support

Hillsgrove has increased its Education Welfare Officer (EWO) allocation to nine days, enabling meetings approximately every three weeks. The attendance team uses these meetings to review individual cases, agree support, monitor progress and seek advice from Bexley where needed.

The school will offer a meeting at a mutually accessible time wherever possible. If parents cannot attend, we will seek their views and offer alternatives; actions and proposed targets will be shared in writing, with a clear opportunity to respond.

6 Inclusion health and severe absence

Support for children with additional barriers

Some pupils experience barriers linked to special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), physical or mental ill health, anxiety, neurodiversity, bullying, transport difficulties or family circumstances. We maintain high expectations while providing the support necessary for each child to participate in education.

- Work with the pupil, parents, SENCO, DSL, Family Liaison Officer and relevant professionals to understand what is preventing attendance.
- Make reasonable adjustments and agree an individual plan, including realistic attendance milestones, pastoral support, adaptations to routines, access arrangements and safe reintegration where appropriate.
- Share information about emotionally based school avoidance (EBSA); Hillsgrove has already provided EBSA support information to parents and will follow up with families requiring help.
- Where a pupil has an Education, Health and Care Plan, work with relevant professionals and the local authority to ensure the provision and attendance support remain appropriate.
- Review the impact of support regularly; seek wider Early Help, health or social care support where needed.

Persistent and severe absence

A pupil missing 10% or more of possible sessions is persistently absent. A pupil missing 50% or more is severely absent. We treat severe absence as a priority for education, welfare and safeguarding. We will work with the pupil and family, provide an individualised plan, hold multi-agency meetings where appropriate and review attendance frequently.

Where health needs prevent a pupil from attending for a prolonged period, the school will liaise with the local authority regarding suitable education. Where we have reasonable grounds to believe a compulsory-school-age pupil will miss 15 days consecutively or cumulatively due to illness, we will make the required local authority sickness return.

Part-time timetables and reintegration

All pupils are entitled to full-time education. A temporary part-time timetable is used only in exceptional circumstances in the pupil's best interests, agreed with parents and relevant professionals, with clear objectives, an end date and frequent review. It is not a long-term solution to absence or a means of managing behaviour. The aim is return to full-time education as soon as appropriate, with safeguarding arrangements and accurate attendance coding.

7 Formal intervention and legal framework

Formal attendance intervention is considered in partnership with the local authority. We will consider the pupil's circumstances, whether support is appropriate and whether it has been offered and engaged with, as well as equality duties. Where support has not succeeded or is inappropriate, such as unauthorised term-time holidays, appropriate legal intervention may be considered.

National framework for penalty notices

A penalty notice must be considered when a pupil of compulsory school age has 10 sessions (five school days) of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks. The sessions may be consecutive or non-consecutive and include unauthorised lateness after the register closes. The period may cross terms or academic years. A notice is not automatic; individual circumstances and the most appropriate action must be considered.

Offence within a rolling three-year period	Penalty notice
First notice for the same parent and child	£80 if paid within 21 days; otherwise £160 within 28 days.
Second notice for the same parent and child	£160 payable within 28 days; no reduced rate.
Third or subsequent offence	A third notice cannot be issued within the three-year period; other legal action, including possible prosecution, will be considered.

Notice to Improve and other formal support

Where appropriate support has not been successful or engaged with and the national threshold has been met, a Notice to Improve will usually be considered as a final opportunity to engage with support and improve attendance. It sets out concerns, support available, required improvement and a period of three to six weeks. It is not normally required when support is inappropriate (for example unauthorised holiday).

The school and Bexley may consider attendance contracts, Education Supervision Orders or other legal interventions in accordance with the national framework and local arrangements. Any decision to seek a penalty notice will be documented, proportionate and consistent with Bexley's applicable code of conduct. Non-payment may result in prosecution for the underlying attendance offence.

8 Roles responsibilities and review

Role	Responsibilities
Trust and Local Governing Body	Ensure compliance with statutory duties; hold leaders to account; review attendance data, cohort gaps and the impact of interventions.
Principal / Senior Attendance Champion	Lead the attendance culture, implement the policy, oversee data and safeguarding systems, coordinate support and report to governors.
Attendance Officer and office team	Maintain accurate registers, follow up unexplained absence, analyse attendance, communicate with families, coordinate EWO meetings and log actions.
Teachers and support staff	Record attendance accurately for each session, promote belonging and punctuality, identify concerns, communicate with families and share relevant information.
SENCO, DSL and pastoral staff	Identify barriers, offer and coordinate adjustments and support, oversee safeguarding and liaise with other professionals.
Parents and carers	Ensure regular and punctual attendance, notify school promptly of absence, keep contact details up to date, request leave in advance and work with the school to remove barriers.
Pupils	Attend when able, arrive on time, engage in learning and speak to a trusted adult if something makes attendance difficult.

Equality and policy review

This policy will be applied fairly, consistently and in line with the Equality Act 2010. The Principal and Local Governing Body will review it annually, or sooner if guidance, legislation or local procedures change, seeking pupil and parent views. The policy will be published on the school website, provided when children join, and shared with families at the start of each year and when updated.

Related policies and statutory references

Read alongside Hillsgrove's Attendance Action Plan, Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy, Children Missing Education Policy, SEND and Inclusion Policy, Supporting Children with Medical Conditions Policy, Behaviour Policy, and Equality and Diversity Policy.

Education Act 1996; School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024; Equality Act 2010; DfE Working together to improve school attendance (July 2026, statutory guidance): https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-improve-school-attendance

Bexley penalty notices: https://www.bexley.gov.uk/penalty-notice-fines-school-attendance-changing