



Mill Hill
EDUCATION GROUP

Attendance and Punctuality Policy

Instilling values, inspiring minds

Attendance and Punctuality Policy 2024 2025

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1 Introduction

Mill Hill Education Group (the 'Group') is the trading name of The Mill Hill School Foundation. It is a group of independent mainstream Schools which together educate girls and boys aged 6 months to 18 years. It currently comprises:

Pre-Prep/Prep

Grimsdell*

Lyonsdown*

St Joseph's in The Park*

Keble Prep*

Belmont

* denotes school with EYFS pupils

Pre-Prep/Prep/to GCSE

Abbot's Hill

Kingshott

Senior Schools (Day and Boarding)

Mill Hill School

Mill Hill International

Cobham Hall

This Policy relates to all Group Schools (including Early Years Foundation Stage [EYFS] settings).

Mill Hill Education Group is committed to promoting high levels of attendance and punctuality. The Group recognises that central to raising standards in education, to ensuring uninterrupted progress, and making pupils feel a part of the school body, pupils need to attend school regularly. Being absent without leave can have a serious effect on a child's academic and social progress and development on their welfare. Missing out on lessons leaves children vulnerable to falling behind. Full attendance on every school day is expected, along with specific weekend requirements such as, Foundation Day, Open Mornings and Fixtures.

The aims of this policy are as follows:

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

The Group will therefore

- work with parents to promote punctuality and good attendance and reduce absence, including persistent absence.
- effectively monitor school attendance.
- respond promptly and appropriately to attendance problems to ensure compliance with relevant education legislation, regulations and guidance, which includes:
 - [The School Attendance \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2024 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#);
 - [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2024 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#);
 - DfE Guidance (from 19th Aug 2024, this is statutory guidance): [Working together to improve school attendance \(applies from 19 August 2024\) \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#);
 - [Toolkit for schools: communicating with families to support attendance](#) (DfE, September 2023);
 - [School behaviour and attendance: parental responsibility measures](#) (DfE, May 2020);

- [Guidance for parents on school attendance](#) (Office of the Children's Commissioner, September 2023);
- ['Is my child too ill for school?' guidance](#) (NHS, April 2024);
- [Mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance: guidance for schools](#) (DfE, February 2023);
- [Support for pupils where a mental health issue is affecting attendance](#) (DfE, February 2023);
- Guidance published by the Independent Schools' Inspectorate (ISI); and
- Advice published by the respective Local Authorities (LA), regarding school attendance.
 - [School attendance | Barnet Council](#) (Mill Hill School, Mill Hill International, Belmont, Grimsdell, Lyonsdown)
 - [Absence and attendance | Enfield Council](#) (Keble Prep)
 - [Attendance guidance - Hertfordshire Grid for Learning \(thegrid.org.uk\)](#) (St Joseph's in the Park, Kingshott, Abbot's Hill)
 - [School attendance - Kent County Council](#) (Cobham Hall)

The Group recognises that unexplained, persistent (less than 90% attendance) and/or severe (50% attendance) absences from education for prolonged periods and/or on repeat occasions can act as a vital warning sign to a range of safeguarding issues including neglect, child sexual and child criminal exploitation – particularly county lines. The Group must ensure that its Schools' immediate response to persistently absent pupils is robust, such that it helps prevent them becoming a child missing education in the future. This is particularly important for children known to social care.

The Group recognises that improving and maintaining good attendance is a school leadership issue and will regularly review attendance data in the School. The Group recognises the importance of developing good patterns of attendance from the outset. This is an integral part of each School's ethos and culture.

In building a culture of good school attendance the Group recognises:

- the importance of good attendance, alongside good behaviour, as a central part of the school's vision, values, ethos, and day to day life;
- the interplay between attendance and wider school improvement efforts, building it into strategies on attainment, behaviour, bullying, special educational needs support, supporting pupils with medical conditions and / or disabilities, mental health issues, safeguarding wellbeing, and support for disadvantaged pupils;
- the importance of setting high expectations for the attendance and punctuality of all pupils and communicating these regularly and effectively to pupils and parents;
- that attendance is never "solved" and is a continuous process requiring revision and updating of messages, processes and strategies; and
- children missing education can act as a vital warning sign to a range of safeguarding issues, including neglect, sexual abuse and child sexual and criminal exploitation.

Parents and teachers share the responsibility for promoting excellent school attendance and punctuality for all. Every opportunity will be used for staff to convey to pupils and their parents/carers the importance of punctuality and attendance, setting high expectations for every pupil and consistently communicating these expectations to pupils and parents. Where there are challenges to attendance, the School will work effectively and respectfully with pupils, their families and, where appropriate, local authorities to address them.

Under the legislation parents/carers are responsible for ensuring their children attend school regularly and punctually. Failure to do so could result in legal action being taken against them by the Local Authority.

The habits young people develop around punctuality and attendance during their time with the Group are the same as the expectations of any higher education establishment or future employer in the world of work.

2 The School – Responsibilities re Registration and Absence

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

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

The School ensures that regular guidance and training on attendance is arranged on induction and at regular intervals thereafter so that staff and volunteers understand what is expected of them by this policy and have the necessary knowledge and skills to carry out their roles.

The school register is a legal document. Group schools take a register at the start of the morning session and again during the afternoon session, during Pastoral/House/class/Tutor time, or in the first lesson of the afternoon session. In addition, at Mill Hill School and Mill Hill International a register is taken at the start of every lesson.

The school follows up all absences to ascertain the reason for the absence, ensure the proper safeguarding action is taken and identify whether the absence is approved or not; and identify the correct way to code the absence on the register.

Only the school (and not parents/carers) can authorise an absence. Where the reason for a pupil's absence cannot be established at the time the register is taken, that absence shall be recorded as unauthorised. If a reason for absence is provided by the parent/carer, the school may decide to grant leave of absence which must be recorded as authorised using the appropriate national code.

Holidays during term time are normally refused unless there are exceptional circumstances which will be considered by the Head, at their discretion. Whilst the Head will consider all requests on a case-by-case basis, parents must be aware that requests will normally be refused. Where possible, a consistent approach will be adopted for siblings who attend different Group schools.

3 What is expected of parents/carers?

Parents have a legal duty to ensure that their child receives an efficient, full-time education suited to their age, aptitude and any special educational need. They must therefore make sure their child attends school regularly and arrives on time.

Parents should:

- Ensure their child attends daily (or on the days they are required to attend) and on time.
- Keep the school fully informed on all matters that might affect their child's attendance.
- Telephone, email or contact the school office via the school portal (whichever method/email address the school advises parents) on the first day of any absence, to provide an explanation for the absence.
- Provide proof of medical appointments or illness (e.g. prescription or appointment card) or a letter confirming the reason for absence when the school requests proof of absence.
- Make doctor and dental appointments for their children outside school hours/term time wherever possible.
- Plan family holidays outside of term time.
- Make a formal application in writing with a minimum of four working days' notice to the relevant Head for any term time leave of absence longer than one day.
- One day requests such as a wedding or funeral can be agreed by a child's Head, or Housemaster/mistress (Mill Hill School, Mill Hill International and Cobham Hall), or at Abbot's Hill this may be done by the Head or Deputy Head.

Parents are bound by the terms relating to conduct and attendance in the parent contract/Terms and Conditions, and failure to ensure a child's attendance or engage with the School about it could amount to a breach of contract or a finding that the parent is treating the School unreasonably. There is therefore an expectation on parents to work with the Foundation to resolve pupil attendance issues, attending meetings with the school and work with the local authority and any outside agencies should this be deemed necessary to support/resolve high levels of absence. In certain circumstances, the School may use an Attendance Contract with the Pupil/Parent to support improving attendance.

Parents of international boarders (Mill Hill School, Mill Hill International and Cobham Hall only)

Parents of international boarders must make sure that holidays are not extended either side of the School holidays. However, when taking (long-haul) flights, pupils will be permitted to leave School during the day of the last day of term or half-term. They will not be given permission to miss any part of the preceding school day unless there are extenuating circumstances. Permission may only be granted by the Head of the relevant school.

Parents are urged to book flights well ahead of the holidays so that they do not encounter problems with limited availability of flights.

4 What is Expected of Pupils?

Pupils are expected to be punctual and attend school every day school is in session (assuming they are fit and healthy enough to do so.)

Pupils should:

- Attend all lessons and all relevant activities when at school.
- Be punctual and arrive at lessons on time, particularly those which come after a break/ lunch.
- Be organised with the right equipment and ready to learn.
- In the case of sickness, pupils should inform their parents/carers who will in turn be expected to contact the school. (If a pupil decides to call the school themselves, the absence will not be authorised).
- Pupils are expected to follow the protocols in place for late arrival and can expect sanctions in line with the school's behaviour policy if they do not.
- Pupils may be asked to bring in proof of illness, sickness or other causes of absence.
- Pupils are encouraged to inform a trusted adult if they feel uncomfortable attending school for any other reason.

Additional Needs

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

Suitable strategies will also be considered for pupils with any social, emotional (emotionally-based schools avoidance or EBSA) or mental health issue that is affecting their attendance.

Where barriers are outside of the School's control, the School will work with parents and pupils to identify alternative sources of support or consider, where appropriate, making a referral for early help.

The School will make a sickness return to the local authority if a pupil is recorded in the attendance register as absent using the national absence code I (unable to attend because of sickness) and there are reasonable grounds to believe that the pupil will have to miss 15 consecutive school days or more for illness or the pupil's total number of school days missed during the current school year because of illness (whether consecutive or cumulative) will reach or exceed 15 school days.

5 Timeline of the Staged Approach for Managing Poor Pupil Attendance

In addition to the daily registers being taken, attendance statistics are formally checked by the relevant pastoral staff, and the school should generally contact parents to start a dialogue and provide support where a pupil falls below 95% attendance, to explore patterns of absence and consider possible interventions. While the circumstances of individual pupils and families will always be considered, parents and carers are advised that the following series of actions will take place:

- Stage 1 Below 90% attendance (persistent absence) – pastoral staff will email/call parent/guardian to advise that the pupil's attendance is becoming a cause for concern, discuss circumstances and agree a plan to improve attendance.

- Stage 2 Below 85% attendance – parents/guardians will be invited to attend a meeting with appropriate pastoral staff to discuss the circumstances. Actions agreed and documented. Attendance targets put in place, with support where required, and monitored.
- Stage 3 Below 80% attendance - parents/carers will be asked to attend a meeting with the appropriate person in each school (Head, Deputy Head, member of SLT/SMT, or senior pastoral staff) to discuss circumstances, including possible consideration of amendments to the pupil's academic and co-curricular programme. They will agree a high-priority attendance improvement plan which might include interventions such as pastoral support, counselling or a reduced timetable. The School will report to and seek advice from the local authority.
- Stage 4 Below 75% attendance – there will be a formal review with the relevant school Head or appropriate member of SLT/SMT. It may include consideration of repeating the academic year and reviewing the pupil's place at the school, in accordance with the Foundation's Terms and Conditions. Input may include support from the pastoral team, the Education Welfare Officer, the pupil's GP, or mental health practitioner. If the pupil's visa is sponsored by the School, the review will include an academic assessment to ensure that the pupil can still realistically complete their course of study. If such a pupil cannot complete their course of study, the School will withdraw its sponsorship of the pupil.

Outside agencies, such as an Education Welfare Officer, a GP, a psychiatrist or psychotherapist may be contacted at any stage to support a pupil and their attendance. For the cases that require intensive family support, the school may make a referral to social services, usually in the form of an Early Help Referral.

Where a pupil has been through the stages above but then improved their attendance only for it to decline again, it is at the discretion of senior pastoral staff to decide which stage of the process the pupil should be placed upon, involving pupil and parents accordingly.

6 Children at Risk of Missing Education

On occasions when lengthy pupil absence is known and understood the school will support families to ensure a continuity of education.

The School will, after making appropriate checks, report to the Local Authority Education Welfare Service if it has a serious concern over a child's attendance or the child has been absent without the school's permission for a continuous period of 10 days or more. This Service has a duty to investigate the whereabouts of such children and negotiate their prompt return to suitable education. For further information, please refer to the Safeguarding and Protecting the Welfare of Pupils Policy.

7 Attendance of Child Student/Student Visa Sponsored Pupils (Mill Hill School, Mill Hill International and Cobham Hall only)

The School will monitor the attendance of any pupil who is attending the School under a Foundation sponsored CAS in line with the provisions of this Policy. In accordance with the UKVI requirements, the school will report any pupil who has missed 10 consecutive "expected contact points" without prior

authorisation from the Head of the relevant school. At Mill Hill Education Group, this represents unauthorised absence of ten days.

8 Educational Visits, Sports Fixtures, Music Lessons and Other Activities.

Staff who take pupils away on a sporting fixture/day or residential educational visits before a registration period (am or pm) must ensure that they take a face-to-face roll of the pupils travelling to the event and leave or email a copy of this list in the Front/Admin office for it to be recorded on the School's Management Information System (MIS). At MHS and MHI, rolls for trips are also taken on the Evolve system, at Keble Prep this is on Arbor.

Where possible, colleagues should avoid organising on site events that cut across the formal registration period. If this is unavoidable, these should be agreed with the Deputy Head, and staff must then inform the appropriate people in each school (a member of SLT/SMT, Form Tutors, Housemaster/mistresses (if relevant), teaching staff) and the Attendance Officer of the pupils who are affected e.g. a sporting fixture, Chapel Choir, Community Action initiative, to ensure the pupil names are recorded on the appropriate system.

9 Pupils Moving to a New Address and/or School

Where a parent or guardian notifies the school that the pupil will be moving to a new address will be recorded in the admission register: (a) the full name of the parent with whom the pupil will live, (b) the new address, and (c) the date from when it is expected the pupil will live at this address.

Where a parent notifies the school that the pupil is registered at another school or will be attending a different school, schools must record in the admission register: (a) the name of the other school, and (b) the date of when the pupil first attended, or is due to start attending, that school.

10 Preservation and Amendments to the Attendance register

At each of the Group schools, attendance reports are downloaded from iSAMS half-termly and saved electronically. These are kept for a period of no less than six years after the date on which the entry was made.

11 Information sharing

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

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

Where appropriate, the School is expected to inform a pupil's social worker and/or youth offending team worker if there are unexplained absences.

12 Record keeping and confidentiality

All records created in accordance with this policy are managed in accordance with the School's Retention of Records Policy.

The information created in connection with this Attendance Policy may contain personal data. The School's use of this personal data will be in accordance with data protection law. The Group/School has a published Data Privacy Notice on its website which explain how the Group/School will use personal data.

This review: September 2024

Next Review: Autumn 2025

This Policy was approved by the Education Committee of the Court of Governors on 18th September 2024.

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inspiring minds.



The Mill Hill Education Group is the brand name for The Mill Hill School Foundation.
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