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The Mill Hill School Foundation

Attendance and Punctuality Policy

2023 2024



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1 Introduction – Attendance and Punctuality

The Mill Hill School Foundation ('The Foundation') comprises the following Schools: Mill Hill School, Belmont School, Grimsdell Pre-Preparatory School, Mill Hill International, Cobham Hall, Keble Preparatory School, Lyonsdown School and St Joseph's in the Park.

The Mill Hill School Foundation is committed to promoting good attendance and punctuality. The Foundation 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 Foundation 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 guidance published by the Independent Schools' Inspectorate (ISI) and advice published by the Barnet Local Authority (LA), regarding school attendance.

<https://www.barnet.gov.uk/citizen-home/schools-and-education/parents/attendance-at-school.html>

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.

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 Foundation are the same as the expectations of any higher education establishment or future employer in the world of work.

2 Registration and Absence

The school register is a legal document. The Foundation 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 Foundation schools.

3 What is expected of parents/carers?

Parents have a legal duty to ensure that 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 the school or email the appropriate school office 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 Housemaster.

There is 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.

Parents of international boarders

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.

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 may wish to contact parents where a pupil falls below 95% 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 – 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 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. 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 Foundation's Safeguarding and Protecting the Welfare of Pupils.

7 Attendance of Child Student/Student Visa Sponsored Pupils

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 the Mill Hill School Foundation, 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/educational visit 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 office for it to be recorded on the MIS. At MHS and MHI, rolls for trips are also taken on the Evolve system.



Where possible, colleagues should avoid organising on site events that cut across the formal registration period. If this is unavoidable, staff must inform Tutors, HMM and the Attendance Officer of the pupils who are affected e.g. a sporting fixture, Chapel Choir, Community Action initiative.

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 Foundation schools, attendance reports are downloaded from iSAMS half-termly and saved electronically or in hard copy. These are kept for a period of no less than three years after the date on which the entry was made.

This review: November 2023

Next Review: Autumn 2024

This Policy has been approved by the Education Committee of the Court of Governors, 22nd November 2023

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Grimsdell

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