



# High Bank Junior Infant and Nursery School

## Attendance Policy

**Review:** May 2018

**Next review:** May 2020

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## Introduction

We are committed to enabling and encouraging all members of the school to reach out for excellence. For children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend school regularly and children should be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

Pupils will be supported to understand that attendance at school is vital if they are to make the best progress and we will provide an environment that is welcoming and in which they feel valued. We recognise the vital role of parents and have established strong home school links.

## Regular attendance

Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any pupil's absence disrupts teaching routines so may affect the learning of others in the same class.

Ensuring regular attendance at school is the parent's legal responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

## Promoting Regular Attendance

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility - parents, pupils and all members of school staff. We celebrate success and we recognise the importance of attendance through an attendance reward scheme.

## Absence Procedures

### If a child is absent parents must:

- Contact the school office as soon as possible on the first day of absence; by e-mail, phone, letter or you can call into school. The school has a telephone answer service which can be used if the office is closed.

### If a child is absent the school will:

- Follow the first day calling procedure- **see appendix 1**
- Invite parents in to discuss the situation with the Head Teacher or School Family Support Officer if absences persist (see our attendance procedure);
- Refer the matter to the Attendance and Pupil Support Officer if attendance continues to cause concern.

## Telephone numbers

There are times when we need to contact parents about lots of things, including absence, so it is important that school holds up-to-date contact numbers. Numbers are checked regularly by school.

## The school day

Morning	8.50 a.m. to 12.00 p.m.
Afternoon	1.00 p.m. to 3.15 p.m.

Pupils are welcomed into school from 8.50am and there are morning tasks for them to complete. We expect pupils to be in class and on task at this time. The registers are marked at the

beginning of the morning and afternoon session. Alternatively, our Breakfast Club begins at 8:00am for children who choose to attend.

### **Lateness**

Registration is a key part of the school day and pupils are expected to arrive punctually. The sessions begin at 8.50 a.m. and 1.00 p.m. Poor punctuality is not acceptable; late arriving pupils may disrupt lessons.

In the morning the pupil entrances are closed at 8.55am. **All pupils arriving after this time must enter school through the main entrance.** All pupils arriving after 8.55am will be marked as late in the register.

At **9.10am** the registers will be closed. In accordance with the Regulations, if your child arrives after that time they will receive a mark that shows them to be on site, but this will **not** count as a present mark and it will mean they have an unauthorised absence. This may mean that you could face the possibility of a Penalty Notice if the problem persists.

If your child has a persistent late record you will be asked to meet with the Head Teacher and/or the Attendance and Pupil Support Officer to resolve the problem, but you can approach us at any time for advice and support if you are having problems getting your child to school on time.

### **Absence**

If your child is ill and has to stay at home, please inform the school either by telephone or e-mail before 9am. The law requires the school to record any unexplained absences as 'unauthorised absences'.

We would ask that parents/carers make routine medical and dental appointments outside of school hours wherever possible. Please inform the school, in advance, if your child has to leave school early or during the school day. Please note that pupils will only be allowed out of school during the day if they are collected from the classroom by a parent or other known adult. Parents must first call at the office in order to sign their child in/out of school.

### **Understanding types of absence**

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by the parents), as either **AUTHORISED** or **UNAUTHORISED**. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required, in writing.

**Authorised absences** are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason such as illness, medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, religious observance, family bereavement, emergencies or other unavoidable causes.

**Unauthorised absences** are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been given. This type of absence can lead to the Authority using sanctions and/or legal proceedings. Unauthorised absences include:

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily
- Absences which have never been properly explained
- Children who arrive at school too late to get a mark
- Persistent minor ailments without the support of a doctor's note
- Shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- Day trips and holidays in term time.

## **Special occasions**

A request for a child to attend a special occasion during school time, e.g. family wedding must be made in advance and the Head Teacher will make the decision as whether to authorise the absence. Parents will be notified of the Head Teacher's decision.

## **Bereavement**

The school is sensitive to family requests for a child's attendance at funerals or associated events. The Head Teacher will offer the family advice over absence in this instance.

## **Days of Religious Observance**

Up to three days attendance, per academic year, at a religious observance held by a religious body will be granted as an authorised absence. The Head Teacher should be consulted in advance of the event.

## **Holidays in Term Time**

The amendments made in 2013 to the [Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006](#) make it clear that that head teachers may **not** grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances.

Requests for Holidays **will not** be authorised, all requests involve a meeting with the Headteacher.

Under the regulations it is for the Head Teacher to determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted. Amendments to the 2006 regulations remove references to family holiday and extended leave as well as the statutory threshold of ten school days.

## **Exceptional Circumstances**

In making a decision the school will consider the circumstances of each application individually.

Any period of leave taken without the agreement of the school, or in excess of that agreed, will be classed as unauthorised and may attract sanctions such as a Penalty Notice.

Parents/carers may not authorise their child's absence as only the school can do this on the basis of the explanation provided by the parent/carer. High Bank JI&N School uses absence coding in line with the Local Authority (LA) guidance. Should parents/carers fail to provide a satisfactory reason for their child's absence the school will record such absence as unauthorised.

## **Persistent Absenteeism**

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 15% or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we need the fullest support and co-operation from parents to tackle this. We monitor all absence thoroughly.

## **School Responsibilities**

The school will record and monitor attendance in accordance both with the statutory requirements and with the principle that regular, uninterrupted attendance is vital to a child's educational progress.

Registers will be taken twice daily at the start of each morning and afternoon session and will be kept open for a maximum of 30 minutes (in accordance with DfE guidelines). Any child arriving after the register has been called will be recorded as late for that session. If a child arrives after

the register has closed but their parent/carer provides them with a note detailing a reason acceptable to the school, they are marked as authorised absence for that session. If they are late and fail to provide an acceptable reason they will be marked as unauthorised absence for the whole of that session.

Should a class teacher have particular concerns about an individual child's attendance or punctuality the Head Teacher will be informed. The Head Teacher will be alerted if any child's attendance falls below the school average. The Head Teacher is updated by the Business Manager every half term on attendance across school.

If a child is absent the class teacher will not enter any code in the register, leaving the office staff to select the correct code for that absence. The school will aim to contact by telephone, any parent who has failed to inform the school of the reason for an absence (first day calling - the primary aim being to check on the safety of the child). This phone call should be done, wherever possible, by 9.30am.

All absence notes from parents/carers should be dated and initialled by the class teacher and sent to the school office to be held on individual children's files. Only notes concerning absences about which there are concerns/queries should be brought to the attention of the Head Teacher (who may then choose to speak to the parents/carers concerned).

Where children have an illness that means they will be away from school for over 5 days, the school will, send material home so that they can keep up with school work. If the absence is likely to continue for an extended period or be a repetitive absence (such as necessary stays in hospital), the school will make arrangements for the child to be given tuition outside of school.

The Head Teacher will review attendance data each half term.

## Appendix 1

### Emergency Contact and First-day Calling Procedures

There have been three recent cases, which highlight the need for more robust emergency contacts and first-day calling procedures. These cases emphasise that these procedures are not only important for children who the school may consider 'Vulnerable' but actually important for all children as their absence in itself may be indicative that they have become vulnerable. The cases are summarised below for context:

- A mum died from an epileptic fit while bathing her children age 3 and 4. The next morning the school phoned home immediately after checking registers, no answer and so continued ringing through the contact list until they had an answer. A family member straight to the house and found mum had died, but the children were safe.
- A dad died from natural causes, Mum was working away from home, and the children were 2 and 4. In the morning Mum rang dad, no answer, but assumed he was doing the school run and continued with her working day. The school noted the absence of the 4 year old. They started first day calling 2 hours after registration and rang dad only, leaving a message. They did not ring anyone else on the contact list. They repeated the call to Dad at 3.40. Mum rang home at the end of her working day and now worried rang another school mum. Grandmother went to the home and could not gain access because of a key in the lock inside. The police gained entry at 8pm; the children had been alone with their deceased Dad all day.
- A mum died. School made a call to her when the child was not at school; the contact list was not used. No further calls were made. A letter was sent to the parent 3 days later. Eventually the house was entered 5 days later. The child, age 6 or 7 had also died. The child was non-verbal and had SEN.

As a result of these concerns please find below an example Emergency Contact form which asks for key information that may have been useful in the above and other circumstances, and also the recommended First-Day Calling Procedure.

It is expected that schools will review their current procedures and adopt these recommendations where appropriate. This is an example form that does not need to be used in its entirety if recommendations can be added into current forms/templates.

It is imperative that schools also consider what arrangements have been made when children have been placed in Alternative Provision around Emergency Contacts and First-Day Calling Procedures.

In the context of a child being absent without contact from parent, please consider the following:

- Who is responsible for following up an absent child?
- Are the Emergency Contacts shared – when/how?
- Would the same first-day calling procedure be followed and by whom?
- Does the school accurately record the attendance of children in Alternative Provision?

### School Emergency Contact Form

#### Child's Details

Child's Surname		Child's Forename	
Date of Birth		Year Group	
Address			
Child's Phone Number (If have own phone)			
Adult(s) at this address			
Sibling within school		Sibling's Year Group	
Sibling within school		Sibling's Year Group	
Sibling within school		Sibling's Year Group	

#### Contact Details (Please include at least one contact that does not live at the same address as the child)

##### Contact 1

Name		Relationship to Child	
Address			
Parental Responsibility? (Y/N)		Is this person able to collect?	Could the child stay overnight?

		(Y/N)		(Y/N)	
Contact Number					
Additional Number					
Additional Number					
Email Address					

**Contact 2**

Name		Relationship to Child		
Address				
Parental Responsibility? (Y/N)		Is this person able to collect? (Y/N)		Could the child stay overnight? (Y/N)
Contact Number				
Additional Number				
Additional Number				
Email Address				

**Contact 3**

Name		Relationship to Child		
Address				
Parental Responsibility? (Y/N)		Is this person able to collect? (Y/N)		Could the child stay overnight? (Y/N)
Contact Number				
Additional Number				
Additional Number				
Email Address				

**Contact 4**

Name		Relationship to Child	
Address			
Parental Responsibility? (Y/N)		Is this person able to collect? (Y/N)	Could the child stay overnight? (Y/N)
Contact Number			
Additional Number			
Additional Number			
Email Address			

**Contact Details of Key Professionals  
(eg. for child who is CP or LAC– Social Worker/Virtual School, or YOT Worker)**

Name		Relationship to Child	
Contact Number			
Additional Number			
Additional Number			
Email Address			

Name		Relationship to Child	
Contact Number			
Additional Number			
Additional Number			
Email Address			

**Date Form Completed:****Date Received in School:****First-Day Calling Procedure****Primary Schools**

- 1) Class registers completed and saved
- 2) Late children checked against registers if recorded separately
- 3) Absence calls listened to/attendance emails checked

- 4) First day text sent to first name on contact list within half an hour of school start time asking for response
- 5) If no response to text call first name on contact list within 45 minutes of school start time
- 6) Ring down contact list until reply is received, ensuring where possible that someone from outside of the family home has been contacted
- 7) If no reply send second text and email to first and second contacts on list
- 8) Alert HT/DSL that this child is absent and no contact has been made within an hour of school start time
- 9) HT/DSL to risk assess the current level of concern and consider whether circumstances warrant a home visit
- 10) Home visit to be made following decision at 9, where possible by school staff or any other agency involved with the child
- 11) Contact Police to initiate a "safe and well" check if all other stages have been completed and there is still no contact regarding the absent child. This should be done using the 101 number.

### **Secondary Schools**

There is an expectation with the secondary school procedure that the child may be in more of a position to access help if required, and also that due to the volume of children within a secondary school a more realistic procedure needs to be in place for dealing with a greater number of pupils.

- 1) Class registers completed and saved

- 2) Late children checked against registers if recorded separately
- 3) Absence calls listened to/attendance emails checked
- 4) First day text sent to first name on contact list within an hour of school start time asking for response
- 5) If no reply send second text and email to first contact on list stating that the child is absent and the school are unaware of their whereabouts as no response
- 6) If known also try child's own phone number
- 7) Alert HT/DSL that this child is absent and no response has been received
- 8) HT/DSL to risk assess the current level of concern and consider whether circumstances warrant a home visit.
- 9) Home visit to be made following decision at 8, where possible by school staff or any other agency involved with the child
- 10) If no response by the end of the day, ring down contact list until reply is received stating that the child has not been in school all day and this will be recorded as an unauthorised absence if no response from parent is received
- 11) If child does not present in school on second day, there has been no contact received from any of the contacts and the child's whereabouts are still unknown, contact Police to initiate "safe and well" check. This should be done using the 101 number