

19<sup>h</sup> September 2024

### **Attendance 2024-2025**

Dear Parents and Friends of Castle Hill,

Firstly, we would like to thank you for your continued support in ensuring your child attends school regularly. Last year, the school's overall attendance continued to be above the national average (95% vs 94% nationally) but our aim continues to be for an overall attendance of over 96%. With a change in Government, the drive to improve school attendance continues to be a major focus as all evidence shows that good school attendance results in better pupil attainments and pupils being better prepared for life after school.

In Autumn 2024, new statutory guidance was sent to school (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-improve-school-attendance>). Our policy reflects this guidance and a link to view this on our website is below.

The Government outlines the legality of school attendance as follows:

*“The law entitles every child of compulsory school age to an efficient, full-time education... It is the legal responsibility of every parent to make sure their child receives that education...” (paragraph 10)*

*Parents, “... have an additional legal duty to ensure their child attends school regularly. This means their child must attend every day that the school is open, except in a small number of allowable circumstances such as being too ill to attend or being given permission for an absence in advance from the school.” (paragraph 11, Department for Education (2024) Working together to improve school attendance)*

### **Why is attendance so important?**

When looking at the future attainment of children with poor attendance, it is clear why good attendance is vital:

For pupils that miss between 10% and 20% of school (80-90 % attendance):

- Only **35%** manage to achieve 5 GCSEs including English & Maths (C grade or above/4 or above) compared to **73% of pupils with over 95% attendance.**
- Only **66%** of pupils achieved the required standard (ARE) at KS2 SATs (English & Maths) compared to **87% of pupils with over 95% attendance.** (Every Day Counts, DfE (2011))
- **An attendance rate of 90%, over the course of an academic year, is the equivalent of missing a month of school time.**

Please find the latest guidance to parents from the Government here:

<https://educationhub.blog.gov.uk/2022/09/02/back-to-school-week-everything-you-need-to-know-about-school-attendance/>

### **New attendance rules – unauthorised absences**

The Government guidance is clear about not authorising absences for holidays, family celebrations and irregular patterns of absence. Please see attached a parental guide that outlines what will not be authorised and the impact on parents for not complying with these attendance rules. For parent leaflets regarding attendance rules and the new exceptional absence request form, please visit - <https://www.castlehillprimary.net/attendance>

### **How do we track attendance?**

At Castle Hill, we are passionate about ensuring your child receives the best education in order for them to thrive in future life, which is why we aim for 100% attendance from all our pupils.

We track:

- Daily attendance (each day has 2 sessions)
- Punctuality – persistent lateness means that the child loses valuable learning time at the start of the day

### **How can you support us?**

We really value your support in ensuring pupils have high attendance by:

- Sending a message to school on **EACH** day that your child is not in school with the reason for absence
- Respond to phone calls from our Admin Team relating to unexplained absence
- Providing medical evidence if your child is going to be too unwell to attend school for an extended period, more than 5 days
- Providing medical evidence if your child has ongoing medical appointments (e.g. appointment letters)
- Ensuring your child is in school punctually every day (before registers close at 08:50)
- Doing your best to ensure that appointments are made outside of school hours.

### **When should you be keeping your child off school?**

Most illnesses are classed as minor and your child should continue to come to school. **Children do not need to be kept off school for minor illnesses, such as a sore throat or cold.** Please read the NHS guidance on this here:

<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/is-my-child-too-ill-for-school/>

Illnesses that mean your child should stay at home:

- If your child is too unwell to attend (ie has a temperature, sickness and/or diarrhoea)
- **Your child has a rash.** This could be the first sign of an infectious disease. Always check with your GP before sending them to school.
- **With cases of vomiting or diarrhoea, students should stay off school for 48 hours after being sick before returning.**

### **How will you be contacted if we have concerns about attendance?**

We have a stepped approach for tracking absences (please see our Attendance Step by Step Flowchart below and on our website here: <https://www.castlehillprimary.net/attendance>). Our aim is to work in partnership to understand and support you in overcoming barriers to your child's attendance, particularly in cases of persistent absences. Different members of the Attendance Team will contact you if your child's attendance continues to cause concern. Each half term, you will receive notification of your child's % attendance and how this equates to lost learning time.

If your child has more than 5 days of unauthorised absences, then it may result in a penalty warning notice and eventually a fine. Please refer to the school's policy (please see below the link to our website) for more information.

### **Can you request absence for other reasons apart from illness?**

- Schools should not authorise absence for holidays in term time unless there are **exceptional** circumstances ('exceptional' is defined as 'rare, significant, unavoidable and short')
- Compassionate leave can be requested (e.g. for a family funeral), but this is at the discretion of the headteacher

- Only a maximum of 5 days will be authorised by the school in exceptional circumstances, and this is at the discretion of the headteacher
- Leave of absence for family celebrations or holidays will not be authorised
- Leave of absence during and leading up to statutory testing times will also not be authorised (Y1 Phonics Screening Check **June 2025**; Y2 SATs **May 2025**; Y4 Multiplication Tables Check **June 2025**; Y6 SATs **22<sup>nd</sup> April – 15<sup>th</sup> May 2025**).

### For the families of those children that have not yet returned to school

Please note that if requests were not received by the last day of the Summer term in July, then the absence will be unauthorised. Please also note, that no family holiday requests will be authorised. Where exceptional circumstances have been agreed, a maximum of 5 days only will be authorised. In some cases, families will be receiving a separate communication and will be invited into a meeting with a member of the attendance team once the child has returned to school.

For more information on attendance and penalty notices, please follow the links below which can also be found on our website:

1. The School's Attendance Policy can be found under our Attendance web page  
<https://www.castlehillprimary.net/our-school/attendance>
2. Working together to improve attendance (DfE, 2002) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-improve-school-attendance>)
3. Everything you need to know about school attendance (DfE)  
<https://educationhub.blog.gov.uk/2022/09/02/back-to-school-week-everything-you-need-to-know-about-school-attendance/>
4. Is my child too ill for school (NHS)  
<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/is-my-child-too-ill-for-school/>

For further information parents/carers can visit Hampshire County Councils website at: [HCC Parent Attendance Advice](#)

We hope that this letter helps explain why your child attending school is vital and the importance of us working together to prevent absence becoming an issue.

If you have any questions or concerns, then please speak to your child's class teacher in the first instance. We would like to thank you for your continued support

Yours sincerely



John DF Martin



Ms Willmouth



Mrs Lund - Attendance Champion

