



Highcliffe School

Attendance Policy

The importance of good attendance

The aim of this booklet is to outline the importance of regular attendance at school in order to emphasise the impact it can have on your son/daughter's academic progress.

If young people do not attend school regularly, they will experience difficulty in keeping up with their studies. In addition, they also miss out on the many activities and opportunities that are on offer at Highcliffe to support and nurture their growth into young adults.

Setting good patterns of attendance is vital. An attendance rate of 90% may sound impressive in the first instance, but it actually means that a student only attends for 4.5 out of every 5 school days. All students at Highcliffe are therefore set an attendance target of 95%.

Educational research indicates that less than 40% of students in secondary schools with an average of 15 days or more absence per year get 5 GCSE passes.

In addition to attendance, it is important to point out the need for students to be punctual. Students **MUST** be in their Tutor rooms for the start of the school day at 8.30am. Late arrival to school and class is disruptive to the learning of other students and will result in a break time, lunch or after school detention.

Students who develop a pattern of poor attendance and lateness will be the focus of support from the school Learning Support Guidance Team who regularly hold attendance panel meetings. In addition, students will be referred to the Education Social Work and Attendance Service (ESWAS) who will work with the school, student and parents to ensure that attendance patterns improve.

Why is it important to attend school

Government legislation entitled

'Every Child Matters: Change for Children' sets out a much more inclusive approach to provide for the well-being and education of children. This requires effective working partnerships between parents, students and school, student and the contribution of external agencies where this is appropriate.

The Government's aim for every child, whatever their background or their circumstances, is to ensure that they:

- Are healthy
- Stay safe
- Enjoy and achieve
- Make a positive contribution
- Achieve economic well-being

This policy should be read in conjunction with the school's Safeguarding Policy and Procedures (including Child Protection). All our practice and activities must be consistent and in line with the Safeguarding Policy and Procedures noted above. Any deviations from these policies and procedures should be brought to the attention of the Headteacher so that the matter can be addressed.



Children's Services

County Hall, Colliton Park
Dorchester
Dorset DT1 1XJ

Telephone: 01305 251000
Direct line: 01305 or 01202 224166
Fax: 01305 or 01202 224499
Minicom: 01305 267933
Email: j.g.nash@dorsetcc.gov.uk
DX: DX 8716 Dorchester
Website: www.dorsetforyou.com

Date: November 2008

Your ref:

My ref: kg/dst support/jgn/lts/parents

Dear Parents

School Attendance and the Education Social Work and Attendance Service

Dorset County Council are aiming to improve attendance in Dorset schools still further and are exploring ways to do this. We are delighted to be able to support the tremendous work being carried out at Highcliffe School in this area and feel that the work and strategies, such as the attendance booklet, dedicated attendance line, attendance letters, half-termly audit and attendance targets, will help ensure that parents and students realise the importance of good school attendance and the vital role it plays in helping young people achieve success.

Highcliffe School and the Educational Social Work and Attendance Service work very closely together to ensure students attend school regularly. A recent attendance audit was carried out at Highcliffe School to ensure high standards of registration are maintained which support the Every Child Matters and Standards agenda. I would urge parents to use the dedicated attendance line to inform the school of student absences each day of absence and to confirm in writing on student return to school. This helps the monitoring of attendance and unauthorised absences.

It is important that students arrive in school on time as their education starts at 8.35am each morning. Parents and students should be aware that if a student is more than 30 minutes late at the start of the day, this will be seen as an unauthorised absence for the morning session and will reflect on the overall attendance of the student.

You will, no doubt, have seen the recent press release from the DCSF on absence and the focus on reducing holidays in term time. Please can I take this opportunity to remind you that the law states that up to 10 days holiday can be authorised by a Headteacher **only in exceptional circumstances and it is not an entitlement** for students to have any time off for holidays.

I would like to thank you, parents and students, for your support regarding attendance. I would also like to thank Highcliffe School for their work on their "Attend to Learn" policy and the dedicated team who are working with ESWAS and families to ensure good attendance for all.

Yours sincerely

John Nash
Director for Children's Services



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What Can Parents do to Help?

- If you suspect that your son / daughter may be unhappy at school, please make contact with us as soon as possible via their Tutor. This will alert us to any problems and help us to work with you towards resolving any issues.
- Ensure that your son / daughter comes to school regularly, arrives on time and follows the school's 'Dressed to Learn' Guidelines.
- Make sure that your son / daughter understands that you do not approve of them missing school.
- Ask well in advance if you need your son / daughter to miss school for any special reason and / or medical appointment.
- If at all possible, try to arrange appointments outside the school day.
- Avoid taking your son / daughter out of school during term time, especially when they will be taking examinations / assessments.
- Make your son / daughter aware that their participation in some Year Group activities will be dependent upon your son / daughter meeting their attendance target of 95%.

Notifying the School of any Absence – Years 7 to 11

All students are electronically registered during AM tutor time and every lesson by staff. However, there may be times when your son/daughter will be unable to attend school due to illness. In which case, please follow these guidelines.

- On each day of any absence please contact the school by telephone or email before 10am.

Dedicated Attendance Line 01425 282337

Email: attendance@highcliffe.dorset.sch.uk

- If the school has not been notified of an absence by 10am, parents will automatically be contacted by our Group Call Service. Please note that this is an automated service and has been put in place to alert parents to the fact that their son/daughter is not present in tutor.
- When your son/daughter returns to school, please ensure that they bring a note to confirm the reason for the absence, which should be handed to their Form Tutor on their first day back.
- It is important that students take responsibility for this in order to ensure that attendance records are kept up to date and to avoid any unnecessary reminders having to be issued. Reminders will be issued for a limited time after which the absence becomes unauthorised.

Please remember that you can keep up to date with the attendance and progress of your son/daughter by accessing our web site portal 'myHighcliffe'. Details regarding how to obtain access to this facility are available from office@highcliffe.dorset.sch.uk.

Students in the Sixth Form are issued with a 'SWIPE' card which they should use to enter and exit the school at the terminal provided in Sixth Form reception. In addition, they are registered electronically every lesson.

On the first day of absence please contact Mrs H White or Mrs A Bower by telephone on 01425 282322 or email, 6thattendance@highcliffe.dorset.sch.uk.

Please contact the Sixth Form Office on the first day of any absence and confirm in writing when your son/daughter returns to school. All absences, eg medical, interviews, etc, must be accompanied by a covering letter to be coded appropriately.



Holidays

Due to national changes in the structure of examination courses, assessments now place more emphasis on classroom based controlled tests. Holidays during term time will adversely affect preparation for controlled tests, assessments and coursework and they may be missed completely. These changes have made it necessary for the school to look at holiday applications during term time and it has been agreed with the Governing Body that holiday requests for students in Years 9,10,11,12 and 13 will not be granted because of the impact on the student's learning and examination work being missed. In exceptional circumstances eg family respite, consideration may be given by the Headteacher.

The school will still accept holiday requests for Years 7 and 8 and will assess each application. The school will look at the impact on learning, attendance record and reasons for request. It is important to note that if a student's attendance is less than 95% the holiday will not be authorised.

All requests for absence must be made on application forms available from the Student Support Office (and also the Sixth Form Office for Yrs 12 & 13).

What does the school do to reward good attendance?

The rewards of a good attendance record are:

- Secure learning.
- Strong peer relationships.
- Less 'catch up' work.
- Certificates for 100% attendance are awarded at the end of each term.
- Students who manage to complete the whole school year with full attendance will receive additional recognition for their achievement.
- Good attendance will help your son/daughter complete elements of 'The Highcliffe Challenge'.
- Participation in school activities is dependent upon students having achieved their attendance target.

Attendance for Learning in Secondary Schools (Ofsted)

Ofsted, the Government Agency responsible for the inspection of schools, place students into three categories in relation to the monitoring of attendance.

Below 85% = Persistent non-attenders

Between 85%-90% = Frequent non-attenders

Between 90%-95% = At risk of becoming frequent non-attenders

Statistics produced by Dorset Local Authority show a startling correlation between attendance and achievement. In analysing performance across the school, we have also identified that students who participate in extra curricular activities such as clubs, KS3 booster classes, coursework and revision classes etc also gain improved grades.

If a Highcliffe student is absent less than one day a month, they have a 87% chance of getting 5 A*-C grades.

Or put another way, if a student misses less than 7 days (including holidays, illness etc) in the year they have almost 9 chances in 10 of getting 5 A*-C grades.



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If a Highcliffe student is absent less than one day a fortnight, they have a 75% chance of getting 5 A*-C grades.

Or put it another way, if a student misses less than 15 days (including holidays, illness, etc) in the year they have 8 chances in 10 of getting 5 A*-C grades.

If a Highcliffe student is absent once a week or more, they have only a 20% chance of getting 5 A*-C grades.

Or put another way, if a student misses more than 30 days (including holidays, illness etc) in the year they have only 2 chances in 10 of getting 5 A*-C grades.

How attendance impacts on attainment:

Jane is in Year 8 - Her attendance rate is always around 90%
She thinks this is pretty good!

90% attendance means that Sally is absent from lessons for the equivalent of one half day each week

In Year 7, Jane's 90% attendance rate means that she missed the equivalent of four whole weeks of lessons in the school year.

If Jane continues to attend for 90% of the time over the 5 years at Highcliffe School, she will miss the equivalent of half a school year.

Our Goal 2012 - 2013

To ensure that:

- All students learn to their full potential in an informed, caring and supportive environment and that challenging learning experiences develop students as successful confident young adults.
- Each student is able to talk confidently about where they are with their learning and what steps they need to take to make further improvements.

Attendance & Performance at a glance.....

National statistics show that student attendance can 'dip' when they enter secondary education. At Primary School attendance is often over 97%. At Secondary School level the trend is for attendance to run between 93% and 94%. This change in the attendance trend creates a 'Learning Gap'. At Highcliffe we are determined to maintain the rate of attendance established at Primary School to promote student achievement.

Attendance figures for Highcliffe 2011-2012 = 93.91%

With your full support we hope to be able to report a school attendance figure in excess of 95% for the end of this academic year.

Please help us to ensure that we do our best for your son/daughter.

"I believe in using what you have, instead of mourning for that which you do not. In thirty years time, I want to be able to look back at my youth and know that I used by talents fully: that I wasted nothing." A former Highcliffe Sixth Form Student



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Striving to Improve

We always welcome feedback. To enable us to improve the level of information provided to parents and students it would be most helpful if you would forward any comments upon this booklet to office@highcliffe.dorset.sch.uk for the attention of the Headteacher.

In particular, we would like to know which features you have found to be beneficial and perhaps any other aspects of attendance and attainment that you feel you would like to have more information about.

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February 2013