

Dear Parents and Carers,

The Importance of Attendance and Punctuality

Our Approach to Attendance: Attend Every day, Feel Connected

At Holly Primary School, we are committed to ensuring that every child feels safe, supported, and able to attend school regularly. We know that good attendance is closely linked to achievement, wellbeing, and a sense of belonging, but we also recognise that attending every day is not always straightforward.

Our aim is to:

- Work with families, not against them
- Understand the reasons behind absence
- Provide support early and compassionately
- Help every child to attend as often as they can

Why Attendance Matters

Every day in school helps children to:

- Build confidence and friendships
- Keep up with learning
- Develop routines that support wellbeing

To help make this clearer, we now talk about **days missed rather than percentages and how many spells of absence (how many times a child is absent from school) a child has been absent for.**

- 98% = 4 days missed
- 94% = 12 days missed
- 90% = 19 days missed
- 85% = 29 days missed

Even small amounts of absence can add up and impact learning over time. However, our focus is always on supporting improvement, not blame.

Consistent attendance is one of the strongest indicators of academic achievement. When students are present every day, they not only keep up with lessons and homework, but they also develop positive routines, build strong relationships with their peers and teachers, and grow the confidence needed to thrive in their learning. Poor attendance can lead to gaps in learning, lower achievement, and difficulties keeping up with peers. When a child is not in school, they cannot learn. Last year, a child with:

- below 95% (+10 days absence) achieved roughly 1 grade lower than a child with +95%
- below 90% (+19 days absence) achieved roughly 2 grades lower than a child with +95%
- below 80% (+38 days absence) achieved roughly 3 grades lower than a child with +95%

Understanding Authorised and Unauthorised Absences

We do have a very clear policy regarding when absences which are deemed unauthorised. These reasons are in conjunction with NHS guidelines and the purpose of providing clarity is to support parents when children do not want to attend school.

- **Authorised absences** are those permitted by the school, usually for reasons such as illness, medical appointments, or exceptional family circumstances (e.g., a close family bereavement).
- **Unauthorised absences** are absences that the school has not agreed to. These may include holidays during term time, days off for birthdays, or absences without explanation. The table below provides a more detailed explanation of unauthorised absences and how we can support your child.

The table below is aimed at supporting families when their child says they are ‘feeling unwell’ or ‘do not want to come to school’.

What will be counted as an unauthorised absence?	What can be done to help in this situation?
Colds, coughs, headaches, nausea, hay fever, sore throats, migraines, period pains, cold sores or conjunctivitis, feeling sick/unwell	• Please check the NHS guidance: "Is my child too ill for school?" • Let the school know your child is feeling ill so we can monitor them in school, if the illness is minor. • Please give them doses of recommended medicine before school, for mild illnesses. • If your child has been diagnosed with migraines by your GP, please let the school know. • If your child feels unwell in school, they should report to the Student Engagement Office and a trained First Aider can support them (children must never use their phones to contact parents to say they need picking up).
No communication at all from a parent or carer	• Parents and carers have a duty to call in and explain their child's absence. • For family emergencies, please ensure you contact us about your situation, and we will offer support.
Unevidenced medical appointments (doctors, dentist, etc.)	• You can send in a screenshot of appointment confirmations.
Holidays	• Please always book holidays during the school holidays only.
Feeling tired after a weekend sports fixture, other extracurricular event or enrichment activity.	• Inform the school that your child is tired. We can monitor and support in school.
Physical injuries that could be catered for in school	• If your child has a physical injury, contact the school for support on how they can attend.
Your child refuses to attend school	• Call our Attendance Team immediately and we can offer support.

	If your child is experiencing friendship issues, or is worried about a past incident, send them to school and let us know. We can best support your child when they are in school.
Head lice and nits	Please treat your child's hair with a medical shampoo and call school to let us know.
Low mood or anxiety	- Call our Attendance Team immediately and we can offer support. - If your GP, or other medical professional, has expressed concerns about your child's mental health, please contact school for support
Sunburn	Please apply appropriate after-sun cream and give doses of appropriate medicine. Contact us if you need further support.
Unevidenced and unagreed sporting/musical activities	All external sporting/music activities must be evidenced and agreed by the Head Teacher.
More than one day for religious observance	- Children are granted 1 day for religious observance. - Further absences would be unauthorised.
Lack of uniform or item is missing or broken	- We can provide your child with spare uniform for the day/week to ensure they do not miss learning. - If you require financial support, we can help. Please contact your child's Head of Year/Class Teacher to enquire about what support can be provided.
Collecting students from school without a valid reason.	- School will contact you if it is felt that they need to be collected. For example, an injury that needs to be assessed by a medical professional. - If your child feels unwell in school, they should report to Attendance Team and a trained First Aider can support them (children must never use their phones to contact parents to say they need picking up). School will contact you if they feel they are too unwell to be in school.

The Legal Position and Fines

The government sets out a legal expectation that all children attend school regularly.

Where there are ongoing unauthorised absences and support has not improved attendance, schools may need to refer to the Local Authority. This can lead to:

- Penalty notices (fines) or Enforcement
- Or further legal action in more serious cases

Recent national changes mean:

- Fines can be issued more quickly for repeated unauthorised absence
- There are limits on how many fines can be issued within a period

However, our shared aim is always: To provide support first and avoid legal action wherever possible.

We will always try to:

- Work with you early
- Offer help and guidance
- Put supportive plans in place

From September, the school will be expected to refer cases to the Local Authority where there is an unauthorised leave of absence of 5 days (10 sessions) or more within a 10-week rolling period, including holidays taken during term time.

This may result in a Penalty Notice being issued of up to £160 per parent, per child. Please be aware that both parents may be fined for each child.

In some cases, the Local Authority may decide that prosecution through the Magistrates' Court is more appropriate. This is more likely where there have been longer or repeated periods of unauthorised absence, or where a parent/carer has already received two penalty notices within a three-year rolling period.

The current Penalty Notice arrangements are as follows:

- **First offence:**
£160 per parent, per child if paid within 28 days, reduced to £80 per parent per child if paid within 21 days.
- **Second offence:**
£160 per parent, per child (no reduction available).
- **Third offence:**
A Penalty Notice will not be issued. The case will be referred directly to the Magistrates' Court.

Any legal proceedings would relate to section 444 or 444(1A) of the Education Act 1996. Magistrates' fines can be up to £2500 per parent per child, and cases found guilty in Magistrates' Court can show on the parents future DBS certificate due to a 'failure to safeguard a child's education'.

We strongly encourage families to **avoid booking holidays during term time**. If you are experiencing difficulties or need support with your child's attendance, please contact the school so we can work together to find a solution.

Reporting Absences

If your child is unable to attend school, you must inform us as soon as possible on the first day of absence, explaining the reason. Without this, the absence may be recorded as unauthorised. Please report absences to the school absence line by calling 01623 477280. You can also email us on office65@holly.notts.sch.uk please include your child's full name and class..

How You Can Help

- Ensure your child arrives at school on time every day.
- Avoid taking holidays or time off during term time.
- Book medical appointments outside of school hours whenever possible.
- Contact us promptly if you are experiencing any difficulties with your child's attendance—we are here to support you.

At Holly Primary School, we aim to work together and really appreciate your support in making sure your child attends school and makes the most of their education. Together, we can give the students the best possible chance for a bright future.

Yours sincerely,
Mr White