

Attendance and Punctuality Policy

September 2023

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Section 1: Rationale

1.1 Statement of intent

For a child to reach their full educational achievement a high level of school attendance is essential. We are committed to providing an education of the highest quality for all our pupils/students and endeavour to provide an environment where all pupils feel valued and welcome.

Parents and pupils play a part in making our school so successful. Every child has a right to access the education to which he/she is entitled. Parents and teachers share the responsibility for supporting and promoting excellent school attendance and punctuality for all.

Every opportunity will be used to convey to pupils and their parents or carers the importance of regular and punctual attendance. For our children to take full advantage of the educational opportunities offered it is vital your child is at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. The routines children develop around attendance and punctuality at school are the same as the expectations of any future employer in the world of work. High attainment, confidence with peers and staff, and future aspirations depend on good attendance.

As the schools is part of the Wellbeing and Mental Health in Schools (WAMHS) programme, the school's provision is informed and aligned to the following framework, as set out by Hackney's 'Guidance for schools and support services' guidance on Emotionally based school avoidance (EBSA).



1.2 Why Regular Attendance is so important

Learning and wellbeing:

- Statistics show a direct link between under-achievement and absence below 95%
- Regular attenders make better progress, both socially and academically
- Regular attenders find school routines, school work and friendships easier to cope with
- Regular attenders find learning more satisfying
- Regular attenders are more successful in transferring between primary school, secondary school, and higher education, employment or training.

Safeguarding:

Your child may be at risk of harm if they do not attend school regularly. Safeguarding the interests of each child is everyone's responsibility and within the context of a school, promoting the welfare and life opportunities for your child encompasses:

- Attendance
- Behaviour Management
- Health and Safety
- Access to the Curriculum
- Anti-bullying
- Failing to attend school on a regular basis will be considered a safeguarding matter

Section 2: Operating the Policy

2.1 Our Aims:

- To ensure that every child is safeguarded and their right to education is protected
- To ensure the school attendance target is achieved, through rewards and incentives for good attendance and punctuality
- To raise standards and ensure every child develops and achieves, through a high level of school attendance and punctuality
- To ensure all the stakeholders, governors, parents, pupils and staff receive regular communication, about the importance of good attendance and punctuality
- To keep accurate, up-to-date records and have a robust and rigorous system for analysing attendance
- To identify causes of low attendance/punctuality with individuals, classes and groups of pupils and address them
- To work with external agencies, in order to address barriers to attendance and overcome them

2.2 Roles and responsibilities for attendance/punctuality

Promoting Good Attendance:

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility - parents, pupils and all members of school staff.

The school will publish each class's attendance percentage in its bi-weekly newsletter in to promote and celebrate good attendance. Attendance data is reported to parents and carers during the Autumn, Spring and Summer Parents' Evenings as part of an ongoing dialogue with families and the end of year percentage score is indicated in the annual end of year report.

Legal obligations:

- Parent(s)/carer(s): To secure education for their children, whether at school or otherwise and send them to school regularly once they are on the register
- The School: To register attendance and notify the Local Authority of absence from school
- The Local Authority: To provide education and to enforce attendance

Responsibilities of classroom staff

- To ensure quality first teaching every day; with lessons that are well planned and resourced so that they challenge, inspire and meet their learners' needs
- To complete the daily class attendance register with the pupils'
- To keep accurate and up-to-date daily records of pupil attendance through the SIMS register system
- Take a formal register of all pupils twice a day. This is done on the school's SIMS system between 9:10 and 9:20 and at 1:30pm
- To regularly remind children and parents about the importance of good attendance
- To provide a welcoming and safe environment, which encourages attendance and promotes the best performance from children.
- To establish good and effective communication links with parents/carers and work collaboratively in meeting the child's needs
- When required, to work collaboratively with other agencies to assist them in fulfilling their statutory duties, regarding for example, child protection
- To work with pupils and their families where attendance is a concern, identifying barriers to good attendance and working to overcome these
- To feed back to parents about pupil attendance and punctuality regularly and at Parents' Evenings

Responsibilities of parents/carers

Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is a parent/carer's legal responsibility (Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act) and permitting absence from school that is not authorised by the school creates an offence in law.

Children should only be kept at home, if they have a serious illness or injury. If this is the case, parents should contact the school first thing and leave a message on the phone or via email. If a child has a minor illness e.g. mild headache, stomach-aches etc. parents should inform the school and bring their child in. If the child doesn't get any better, school will contact the parent/carer straight away, to collect them. If pupils have a dental, clinic or hospital appointment, parents should let the school know in advance and complete an absence request form. Wherever possible, pupils should be brought back to school after appointments. Pupils should miss as little time as possible.

Therefore, parents are expected to:

- Ensure their child attends school and arrives on time every day
- Not arrange medical and dental appointments in school time if possible
- Telephone to inform the school to on the first day of absence for their child
- Provide an explanation of any absence
- Discuss with the Headteacher, any planned absences well in advance and complete an absence request form.
- Promote a good attitude to learning
- Work in partnership with the school and other agencies in the best interests of their child; this includes informing the school about significant influences and changes in the child's life, which may impact on learning

Responsibility of the Headteacher and the role of Governors

The Headteacher is responsible for ensuring this policy is implemented consistently across the school, and for monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors.

The Headteacher also supports other staff in monitoring the attendance of individual pupils.

2.3 Absence Procedures

First Day Absence:

A child not attending school is considered a safeguarding matter. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required.

If your child is absent you must:

- contact us as soon as possible on the first day of absence

If your child is absent we will:

- Telephone or text you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you – this is because we have a duty to ensure your child's safety as well as their regular school attendance. If we cannot contact you, we will use the emergency contact provided. In some circumstances, we might at this stage, carry out a home visit to check on wellbeing.
- Record the absence on the school's internal database - SIMS.
- Invite you in to discuss the situation with the Headteacher if unexplained and / or frequent absences occur

Second Day Absence:

We will make all reasonable enquiries to establish contact with parents/carers and the child, including making enquiries to known friends and wider family. If contact has not been established on the second day of absence, and a home visit has not already taken place, a member of the SLT will visit the family home to try to establish contact. If contact is not made, the school is required to start child missing in education procedures and will inform the local authority, as well as the police.

Pupils are tracked and monitored carefully through our pastoral system and we also combine this with academic interventions, should absence affect attainment.

In some instances, we will make a further telephone on each day of your child's absence, even when we have established contact on the first day of absence. This is to check on your child's wellbeing and establish more specific detail about the reason for absence, if this was ambiguous at the time of the first call.

Telephone numbers:

There are times when we need to contact parents about lots of things, including absence, so we need to have your contact numbers at all times. Help us to help you and your child by making sure we always have an up to date number - if we don't then something important may be missed. There will be regular checks on telephone numbers throughout the year.

The School Attendance Officer:

Parents or children may wish to contact the SAO themselves to ask for help or information. They are independent of the school and will give impartial advice. Their telephone number is available from the school office or by contacting Hackney Learning Trust on 02088207000

Lateness:

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If your child misses the start of the day they can miss work and do not spend time with their class teacher getting vital information and news for the day. Late arriving pupils also disrupt lessons, can be embarrassing for the child and can also encourage absence.

The school gates will be open from 9am and children are required to arrive on the site by 9.10am. A member of the SLT will greet the children on their arrival at the school gate, and members of the SLT in the playground and bottom hall, will guide children to their classes.

Children arriving after the gate has been closed will need to enter school via the entrance on Church Street, and enter the building through the school office. They will then be signed by a member of the office staff and registered as late.

If a child has 5 or more registered lates over one half term, the school will send a message at the beginning of the next half term (see Template 1).

If punctuality does not improve, a meeting will be organised between parents/carers and the Headteacher as appropriate.

Please ensure that your child is collected promptly at the end of the school day. Where late collection is persistent and/or significantly late, the school will take any uncollected pupil to a place of safety and share concerns, as necessary, with other agencies.

Leavers

If your child is leaving our school (other than when transferring to the secondary school) parents are asked to:

1. Provide the school with comprehensive information about their plans, including any date of a move and your new address and telephone numbers, your child's new school and the start date when known. This should be submitted to our school in writing
2. If pupils leave and we do not have the above information, then your child is considered to be a child missing in education. This requires schools and local authorities to then carry out investigations to try and locate your child, which includes liaising with Children's Services, the Police and other agencies. By giving us the above information, these investigations can be avoided.

Summary of Procedures

Daily Procedures	By whom	Outcome/action
Parents ensure that pupils arrive at school on time.	Parents/carers	Children's attendance 97% or better
Parents inform school by 9:30am if their child is absent that day.	Parents/carers	Designated member of office staff update registration
Pupils arriving late at school are registered at the reception by the designated member of office staff.	Designated member of office staff responsible for late registration	Absence mark on SIMS amended to a late mark by designated member of office staff
Teachers record attendance using SIMS. This is done between 9:10am and 9:20 and again after 1.30pm	Teachers	Staff use a paper register if required.
Class registers are checked following registration at the start of the school day.	Designated member of office staff	All registers are completed.

A record of identified absent children is printed and if the parent has not contacted the school, each child's absence is verified through visits to each of the classes where a child has been marked absent.	Designated member of office staff in collaboration with class teachers.	Absences verified.
A text message is sent by the school to the parents/carers of children confirmed absent. This is then followed up by a phone call. If there remains no dialogue between the school and parent at this stage, the absence is recorded as unauthorised.*	Designated member of office staff.	Contact with parent/carer actively sought and absence is preliminarily categorised.
*If contact hasn't been made with the parent/carer, the school will use the emergency contact provided.	Designated member of office staff to contact emergency contact and notify headteacher of outcome.	Reason for absence verified wherever possible. In some circumstances, the school will carry out a home visit to check on wellbeing.
Parents provide reason for absence on child's return	Parent	Absence details are updated on the school's database (SIMS) by the designated member of office staff.
Ongoing Absence	By Whom	Outcome/action
<p>If a child is absent for a second day, the Headteacher is notified and further attempt made to contact parent/carer and emergency contact if the parent/carer is not contactable.</p> <p>If contact was made on the first day of absence, but there remains some uncertainty as to the precise reasons for the absence, a second call will be made.</p>	Designated member of office staff in collaboration with the Headteacher/SIT.	Reason for absence verified wherever possible.

If parent/carer or the emergency contact has not been established, the school will make enquiries with known friends and wider family.	Designated member of office staff to inform Headteacher, Headteacher, prior to school's contact with known friends and wider family.	Reason for absence verified wherever possible.
The Headteacher or a member of SLT will visit the home address of the child. If contact is not established, the school will contact the local authority and the police.	SLT to take responsibility for home visit and referral to professional bodies.	Home visit and referral to professional bodies if contact with parent/carer not made.
Weekly Procedures	By Whom	Outcome/Action
Class data is collated from SIMS to complete the weekly absence report proforma. This enables comparison at the end of each week.	<p>The designated member of office staff saves this in the attendance folder on the school's admin drive. Here it can be accessed by all members of the SLT and Inclusion Team.</p> <p>Particularly low data from a class or classes is flagged by the designated office member.</p>	<p>Class attendance data is published in the bi-weekly newsletter to celebrate classes with high attendance.</p> <p>The Headteacher, with support from SLT, investigates the context of the data with follow-up as appropriate.</p>
If a child has been absent for 5 days, and this spans more than one school week, this is flagged to the Headteacher.	Designated member of office staff to notify the Headteacher if a child's absence reaches 5 days and spans more than one week.	<p>The Headteacher will follow up directly with the family as required.</p> <p>A record of correspondence will be kept on SIMS.</p>
Bi-weekly Procedures	By whom	Outcome/action
<p>Data from SIMS is collated to complete a fortnightly attendance report.</p> <p>This flags children's whose attendance falls within the ranges of 90-95%, 80-89% and below 80% and identifies the SEND and PPG children.</p>	Designated member of office staff.	The Headteacher will monitor and oversee communication with families of children whose attendance is a concern.
Half Termly Procedures	By whom	Outcome/action
<p>Step 1 Children whose attendance falls below the target threshold of 81% - 90% are identified from attendance data.</p> <p>Step 2 The data of students who had extenuating circumstances is removed (For example, if a student was ill)., had tested positive for COVID19 or was isolating due to COVID).</p>	*Designated member of office staff to generate data from SIMS and send the list of families to receive correspondence to the Headteacher, <u>prior to the communication being made.</u>	<p>A message is sent by the designated member of office staff. A list of the families who will receive this communication is provided to the Headteacher in advance of the message being sent.</p> <p>Child's attendance continues to be monitored. If there is no improvement, parents/carers are required to attend a meeting with the Headteacher.</p>

<p>Step 3 A list of personalised messages is generated with the <u>number of days</u> missed, within the first three days of the start of term (Template 2).</p> <p>Step 4 *A message is sent by the school at the beginning of the half term, with the number of absence days recorded over the previous half term (Template 2).</p> <p>Step 5 This is repeated at the beginning of each half term.</p>		
Children whose half termly attendance has fallen below 80% are called to the school for a meeting with the Headteacher.	Designated member of office staff to refer specific attendance data to Headteacher and parent/carer called to the school in collaboration with Headteacher.	<p>A plan of action is agreed between parents/carers and the Headteacher to improve attendance.</p> <p>Child's attendance continues to be monitored and outside agencies involved if attendance continues to be a concern.</p>
<p>Data from SIMS is collated to monitor the attendance of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SEN children; • Children with an EHCP; • EAL children; <p>and</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PPG children <p>Comparative gender and ethnicity data will also be collated.</p>	<p>Designated member of office staff collates the data electronically and emails it to the SLT and SENDCo.</p> <p>Data is saved in the attendance folder on the school's shared admin drive.</p>	Data is analysed to identify concerns in attendance of potentially vulnerable groups to inform whole school actions to support families and improve attendance of these children.

IMPORTANT: Child Protection and safeguarding concerns must be acted on immediately, in line with the school Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

Section 3: Recording and Monitoring

3.1 Recording absence

Teachers take a formal register of all pupils twice a day. This is done on the school's SIMS system between 9:10 and 9:20am and at 1:30pm.

Every half-day absence from school has to be recorded and classified by the school as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required.

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, emergencies or other unavoidable cause.

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 Hackney Learning Trust using sanctions and/or legal proceedings. This includes:

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily
- Truancy before or during the school day
- Absences which have never been properly explained
- Children who arrive at school too late to get a mark
- Shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- Day trips and holidays in term time which have not been agreed

Whilst any child may be off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best addressed collaboratively between the school, the parents and the child. If your child is reluctant to attend, it is advised that this is communicated to the school at the earliest opportunity. If the child is allowed to stay at home, this can establish a cycle which can become difficult to break. It can also prevent a longer term solution being found more quickly.

3.2 Persistent Absenteeism and Lateness:

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% 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 parents' full support and cooperation to address this.

The calculation for this is:

- [A pupil's individual overall absence **divided** by a pupil's individual possible sessions] multiplied by 100. If this is greater than or equal to 10, the pupil is classified as persistently absent.

Schools are legally required to share information from their registers with the local authority. This includes:

- The name and address of any pupil who fails to attend school regularly or has missed school for 10 days or more without the absence being recorded as authorised.

Local authorities may seek, and schools are expected to provide, more frequent data where it is essential to fulfilling their obligations under the Education Act and the expectations set out in the new guidance. This allows local authorities to facilitate quicker, more efficient joint working and better target their area wide attendance strategy.

We monitor all absences thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA mark or is at risk of falling into this category is given priority and you will be informed of this immediately.

At the end of each half term, if a child's attendance data shows that their attendance is between 81% - 90% and no specific circumstance is on record to explain this, you will receive a message from the school at the beginning of the next half term.

If the child's attendance percentage has not improved, by the end of the following half term, the parents/carers will be called to a meeting with the Headteacher.

If a child's attendance has fallen below 80%, the parent/carer will be called to a meeting with the Headteacher at the school.

At the end of each half term, data from SIMS is collated to monitor the attendance of SEN, EAL and PPG children, as well as to enable gender and ethnicity comparison. This data is analysed to identify concerns in attendance of potentially vulnerable groups to inform whole school actions to support families and improve attendance of these children.

Over each half term, if your child has been registered late on 5 or more occasions, the school will send a message at the beginning of the next half term (Template 1, p12). If there is no improvement during the next half term, a meeting will be organised between the parents/carers and the Headteacher. You can approach us at any time if you are having problems getting your child to school on time.

Section 4:

4.1 Absence Requests

The school recognises and values the diversity of its community and also that many children have family members abroad. The school is committed to working with families to support according to individual needs and circumstances. Amendments to school attendance regulations were updated and enforced from September 2013: The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations state that Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. The fundamental principles for defining exceptional are rare, significant, or unavoidable, which means the event could not reasonably be scheduled at another time. There are no rules on this, as circumstances vary from school to school and family to family. There is, however, no legal entitlement for time off in school term time to go on holiday and in the majority of cases holiday will not be authorised. Parents/carers wishing to apply for leave of absence need to fill in an application form the school office in advance and before making any travel arrangements. Only the Headteacher may grant leave in term time where the circumstances are exceptional. Family emergencies need careful consideration. It is not always in the best interest of the child, nor appropriate for them to miss school for family emergencies that are being dealt with by adult family members. Being at school, friendships and support from staff can provide children with stability and care during difficult times. The routine of school can provide a safe and familiar background during times of uncertainty.

If you have exceptional circumstances, which have lead you to request leave in term time for your child/children, please complete the required form, which you can obtain from the school office. The Headteacher will then make a decision, on whether or not the leave can be lawfully authorised and will do so only if there is a genuine, exceptional and urgent reason for a child to be absent during term time.

Please note:

- Requests that your child be absent in the days before or after a school holiday, to either accommodate travel or extend the holiday arrangements themselves, will **not** be considered as reasonable by the school. Whilst the school appreciates that travelling during term time is more expensive, as stated above, there is no legal entitlement for time off in school term time to go on holiday. Holiday travel is expected to take place outside of term time.
- Late return to school following a school holiday, as a result the child/family being on holiday, is not an acceptable reason for a child to be absent from school. This also applies to related absence on the final day, or within the final week, of a term.

4.2 Absence through child participation in public performances, including theatre, film or television work and modelling

Parents of a child performer can seek leave of absence from school for their child to take part in a performance. They must contact the Headteacher to discuss the nature and frequency of the work, whether the child has a valid performance licence and whether education will be provided by the employer during any future leave of absence. It is,

however, down to the Headteacher's discretion as to whether to authorise this and they will wish to discuss with you the nature and frequency of the absence and how learning will continue if absence occurs. Any absence recorded as part of a child's participation in a public performance is recorded as C, an authorised absence.

4.3 Absence through competing at regional, county or national level for sport

Parents of able sportsmen and women can seek leave of absence from school for their child to take part in regional, county, national and international events and competitions. It is, however, down to the Headteacher's discretion as to whether to authorise this and they will wish to discuss with you the nature and frequency of the absence and how learning will continue if absence occurs. Permission for your child to leave early or arrive late to attend coaching and training sessions is also at the discretion of the Headteacher and is not likely to be approved if it is a regular event, unless the sports club or association is providing an education tutor as part of their coaching.

4.4 Absence through access to private tuition

In the vast majority of cases where parents wish their children to access private tuition, this will happen outside of school hours. There may be exceptional circumstances where this is not possible. Written requests must always be submitted in advance and authorisation for an absence during school hours will be entirely at the Headteacher's discretion. If permission is given, the arrangement will be a formal one with days and times agreed and adhered to, and changes may only be made in advance and with the Headteacher's permission.

4.5. Absence through access to health services

Absence would be authorised for a child accessing a course of treatment through any branch of the National Health Service including specialist speech and language therapy and CAMHS (Children and Adolescents Mental Health Services). Absence may also be authorised for a child attending a course of therapy through an independent support agency such as an independent adoption support agency.

Section 5

5.1 Penalty Notices

If a child is taken out of school without the Headteacher's authorisation, it will be recorded as unauthorised absence. This may lead to the issuing of a penalty notice being issued by the school and legal action being taken.

5.2 Section 23(1) Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2007:

Penalty notices may be issued to the parent of pupils who have unauthorised absence from school. The amount of the penalty is £60.

- If this is not paid within 21 days the amount rises to £120.
- If not paid within 28 days the Local Authority will prosecute under section 444(1) unless it comes to our attention that the penalty notice had been issued in error.

5.3 Section 444(1) Education Act 1996:

"If you are the parent of a child of compulsory school age who fails to attend school regularly, you are guilty of an offence." The court can fine each parent up to £1,000 per child, order payment of the prosecution costs and/or make a Parenting Order.

Please note that:

- Penalties and prosecutions are in respect of each parent for each child.

- Parent' includes any person who is not a parent of the child but who has parental responsibility for the child (and applies whether or not that person lives with the child) or who has care of him/her.

Templates

Half Term Lateness Follow-up

Template 1:

Dear {Parent Name}. Last term, {Student Name} had {Number of days late in previous term} recorded lates at the beginning of the school day. Lateness can impact on your child's school routines, and the learning that takes place at the beginning of the school day. This term is a fresh start and we appreciate your support in getting {Student Name} to school on time every day.

Half Term Absence Follow-up

Template 2:

Dear {Parent Name}. Last term, {Student Name} missed {Number of days missed in previous term} days of school. School attendance is more important than ever, and absences can have lasting effects on learning. This term is a fresh start and we appreciate your support in getting {Student Name} to school every day.

References

This policy meets the requirements of the [school attendance guidance](#) from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on [school attendance parental responsibility measures](#). These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- [The Education Act 1996](#)
- [The Education Act 2002](#)
- [The Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2010](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2011](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2016](#)
- [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)
- [Increasing attendance with parent messages – Supportive 'how-to' guide for schools | The Behavioural Insights Team \(bi.team\) 2022](#)
- [Improving school attendance: support for schools and local authorities - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)
- https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1099677/Working_together_to_improve_school_attendance.pdf
- https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1073619/Summary_table_of_responsibilities_for_school_attendance.pdf
- https://search3.openobjects.com/mediamanager/hackney/fsd/files/emotionally_based_school_avoidance_ebsa_.pdf

This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the [school census](#), which explains the persistent absence threshold and is linked to the school's Safeguarding Policy.

This policy is reviewed annually by the Governing body

Policy Reviewed: September 2023

Policy Review Date: July 2024