



Attendance and Punctuality Policy

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We are a UNICEF Rights Respecting School

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1. Aims

Our school aims to meet its obligations with regards to school attendance by:

- Promoting good attendance and reducing absence, including persistent absence*
- Promoting good punctuality so that all children can make a positive start to their school day
- Ensuring every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled
- Acting early to address patterns of absence

We will also support parents to perform their legal duty to ensure their children of compulsory school age attend regularly, and will promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

*Persistent absenteeism (PA) is any attendance figure below 90%.

2. Legislation and guidance

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

This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the school census, which explains the persistent absence threshold and the Tower Hamlets Policy on 'Holidays and Leave in Term Time'

3. School procedures

3.1 Attendance register*

By law, all schools are required to keep an attendance register, and all pupils must be placed on this register.

The attendance register will be taken at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. It will mark whether every pupil is:

- Present
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity
- Absent
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

- The original entry

- The amended entry
- The reason for the amendment
- The date on which the amendment was made
- The name of the person who made the amendment

*See appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes.

Every entry in the attendance register will be preserved for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

Pupils must arrive in school by 9am on each school day. Children arriving after this time will be recorded as late.

The register for the first session will be taken by 9:15 on each day. The register for the second session will be taken within 15 minutes of the end of the specified lunch period for the year group.

3.2 Unplanned or unexplained absence

Parents must notify the school on the first day of an unplanned absence – for example, if their child is unable to attend due to ill health as soon as practically possible (see also section 6).

Parents must contact the school office and select the option to report an absence.

Absence due to illness will be authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, or if a child is absent for a period over 3 days, the school may ask parents to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents will be notified of this in advance. The case will be referred to the Attendance and Welfare Advisor for further action. This may include contact with the local authority and/ or a home visit.

3.3 Medical or dental appointments

Missing registration for an emergency medical or dental appointment is counted as an authorised absence; advance notice is required for authorising these absences.

However, we encourage parents to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary. For example, where children have appointments in the morning, school staff will set the expectation that the child must attend school for the afternoon session. If there are issues with persistent appointments being made in school time within a family group, this will be escalated by relevant staff to involve members of the Senior Leadership Team and Attendance Welfare Officer.

Applications for other types of absence in term time must also be made in advance. Information relating to whether the school can authorise such absences can be found in section 4.

3.4 Extended Leave*

*Further details on granting term-time leave can be found in section 4

As outlined in our parental documentation, we advise that parents **requesting extended leave must arrange a meeting with the Attendance lead/ officer before booking a trip**. At this meeting the reasons for extended leave will be discussed and a form will be completed. Authorised extended leave will be recorded as 'H' code and unauthorised will be recorded with the 'G' code. Tower Hamlets extended leave literature , along with details of potential charges, will also be shared at this point.

As a school we strongly discourage parents from taking their children out of school for extended periods of time and this is shared with parents on our website and through letters.

Please refer to Appendix 3 Tower Hamlets Policy on 'Holidays and Leave in Term Time' for further information.

3.5 Lateness and punctuality*

*For more details see section 7

A pupil who arrives late but before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code (L code).

A pupil who arrives after the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code. Office staff will amend this to the late code after the child has made their way to class.

3.6 Following up absence*

*For more details see section 6

The school will follow up any absences to ascertain the reason, ensuring proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary. They will identify whether the absence is approved or not and identify the correct attendance code to use.

School/ Senior Admin staff will use judgment and support of attendance lead and AWO to make the decision of authorised or not. For example, children with common colds who are otherwise healthy will be asked to come to school.

3.7 Reporting to parents

Parents will be informed if their child's attendance or punctuality is of concern to the school. This will be done at the earliest convenience. Otherwise, parents will be informed of their child's attendance record upon request, intervention of the attendance team or through specific awards and by our annual school report.

4. Authorised and unauthorised absence

4.1 Granting approval for term-time absence

Headteachers and the Attendance/ Pastoral Team may not grant any leave of absence to pupils during term time unless they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'. A holiday or family visit to see distant relatives is not considered to be exceptional circumstances.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the headteacher's and Attendance/ Pastoral Team's discretion, using guidance from the local authority, which can be found in Appendix 3.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** may include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments – as explained in sections 3.2 and 3.3
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart
- Attendance at a funeral for close relatives

Unauthorised absence examples may include:

- Visiting family overseas and not being able to find flights in holiday time
- Trying to reduce the cost of flights
- Travelling for extended periods because of family bereavement or sickness
- Family celebrations

4.2 Legal sanctions

Schools refer absence to the local authority who can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age.

If issued with a penalty notice, parents must pay £60 per child/ per parent within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the local authority.

The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice ultimately rests with the local authority and their code of conduct for issuing penalty notices. This may take into account:

- Attendance percentage over time
- A number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year
- One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission
- Where an excluded pupil is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason

If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute the parent or withdraw the notice.

5. Strategies for promoting good attendance and punctuality

Description of action	Person(s) Responsible
Ensure that there is a collective team responsibility	HT/ SLT securing involvement of all staff
Class attendance awards	AHT
Half termly letters home to share (and celebrate good or improved) attendance	AHT and PCT
Visual messages to children and parents – attendance league table in prominent place around the school	AHT/ CTs
Written messages to parents: letter home at the start of each year, reference in newsletters, regular reminders re appointments and term time leave	HT
New EYFS parents: admission and transition meetings/ EYFS meetings (Nursery in particular)	PCT / AHT
Information on website	AHT/ ICT team

Workshops with parents: e.g. prevention of illness, dealing with minor illnesses, building resilience and importance of good attendance	AHT/ AWO/ PCT
Reference to attendance in school reports/ parents meetings	CTs/ Admin
Ring bell at 9.00 am, signalling lateness in class–clear message	HT
Staff positioned at entrance of school, taking down names of children who arrive late	PCT
Staff positioned at gate/ entrance, encouraging children to be more punctual when arriving late	HT/ DHT/ AHT
Workshops with Parent Worker re importance of being punctual and establishing good sleeping habits/ morning routines	AHT/ AWA

6. Attendance monitoring and actions

6.1 Attendance monitoring

The school will monitor pupil absence on a daily basis. This will be supplemented by the support of the Attendance and Welfare Officer who will attend school weekly, on Wednesdays for a full day.

Parents are expected to call the school in the morning if their child is going to be absent due to ill health (see section 3.2) as per the signed home school agreement. If a child continues to be ill, parents will be asked to contact school on a daily basis to update us on the child's wellbeing, unless medical notes have confirmed a longer period of absence. If parents do not make contact, admin staff will contact the family. Further support can be sought from SLT/AWO/ at this point.

If a pupil's absence goes above 3 days, and we have not received supporting medical documentation, we will contact the parents to discuss the reasons for this. If after contacting parents a pupil's absence continues to rise, we will consider involving our Attendance and Welfare Office or referring to other agencies.

The persistent absence threshold is 10%. If a pupil's individual overall absence rate is greater than or equal to 10%, the pupil will be classified as a persistent absentee. A weekly attendance report is shared to update the Headteacher and SLT on the details of persistent absence, as well as summaries of attendance across the school.

More details on monitoring can be seen below:

Description of action	Person(s) Responsible
Twice daily recording (non-) attendance- Electronic Registers	CTs, OM
Attendance spreadsheet- tracking low attendance and identifying general issues with a specific focus on children with attendance below 90% (Persistent absence) during weekly meeting	AWO/PCT/AHT
Termly reports to Governing Body	HT supported by AHT
Termly submitting statutory data reports to Local Authority	OM
Write an Annual Report to school, including comparison with local and national data	AWO
Statutory Annual Register inspection and report to Governors	AWO and HT

Pupil-level absence data is collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. We compare our attendance data to the national average, and share this with governors.

6.2 Improving attendance actions

The following actions may be implemented to support children and families with poor attendance:

Description of action	Person(s) Responsible
Continue to buy into the Attendance and Welfare Officer Service Level Agreement	HT
AWO meeting with Attendance Lead/ PCT/ OM weekly	AWO
Half termly report of actions taken by AWO to HT	AWO
Voicemail/ calling on first day of absence and all subsequent days and correctly recording reasons- challenge weak or unclear reasons (e.g. 'temperature' is not acceptable, specific reasons should be requested)	Admin/ PCT

Seeking medical evidence after 3 days of absence	PCT
Arrange a home visit if parents can't be contacted and if no reason has been given	AWO/ AHT/ PCT
Leaving Stepney Park- Liaise with family and new school until a place at a new school has been secured	AWO/ AHT/ DSL
Ensure all requests for term time leave are referred to the Headteacher	LM, OM + HT
Issuing PNs for leave in term time and where appropriate for PAs - zero tolerance	AWO/AHT/PCT
Actions for children with attendance below 90%- (PAs) Arrange to meet with parents to establish reasons for PA and to secure commitment for improved attendance	AWO/AHT/PCT
Actions for children with attendance below 90%- (PAs) Arrange a home visit where appropriate- seeking medical evidence if applicable	AWO/AHT/PCT
Actions for children with attendance below 90%- (PAs) Refer to Social Services as last resort , when there are other safeguarding issues. If attendance does not improve and school does not authorise the absence then a statutory response should be made by the AWA: in the first instance a Penalty Notice and as a further means of escalation follow court procedures. The latter can be done immediately if it is deemed more appropriate.	AWO/AHT/PCT/DSL
Regular policy review and monitor correct implementation	HT/AHT

7. Punctuality

7.1. Punctuality tracking

Description of action	Person(s) Responsible
Tracking daily lateness by the door until 9.10 and by office thereafter and the amount of lateness - handwritten	PCT/Admin

Record lateness in RM Integriss	OM
Maintain a daily punctuality tracker and record the arrival time of children who are late, taking action as appropriate	AHT/ PCT
Weekly report to HT	PCT/ AHT
Termly reports to Governing Body	HT supported by AHT

7.2 Punctuality Actions

Description of action	Person(s) Responsible
Weekly meeting with AWO	AWA/AHT/OM
Challenge reasons for lateness	CT in class/ PCT/ Admin
Ensure bell is rung at 9.00 am each day	HT/ AHT
Point out lateness upon entry	HT + DHT
Arrange a meeting with parents once a child has had persistent lateness	AHT and AWO
Termly: Identify children who did not have any occurrences of lateness and give Early Bird certificates	AHT
Pastoral care team providing parenting support where parenting is an issue	PCT

8. Roles and responsibilities*

*For more details see appendix 2

8.1 The governing body

The governing body is responsible for monitoring attendance figures for the whole school on at least a termly basis. It also holds the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy.

8.2 The headteacher and SLT

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 and ensures fixed-penalty notices are issued, where necessary.

8.3 The Attendance Welfare Officer from Local Authority

The attendance officer:

- Monitors attendance data at the school and individual pupil level
- Reports concerns about attendance to the headteacher and SLT
- Works with LM/AHT/HT to tackle persistent absence
- Arranges calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues
- Advises the headteacher when to issue fixed-penalty notices

8.4 Class teachers

Class teachers are responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the school office.

8.5 Office staff

Office staff are expected to take calls and listen to voicemails from parents about absence, recording details of these conversations on the RM Integris system.

9. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed regularly by the Senior Leadership Team and the Attendance Officer. At every review, the policy will be shared with the governing board.

10. Links with other policies

This policy is linked to our child protection and safeguarding policy

Appendix 1: attendance codes

The following codes are taken from the DfE's guidance on school attendance.

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	Pupil is present at morning registration
\	Present (pm)	Pupil is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Pupil arrives late before register has closed
B	Off-site educational activity	Pupil is at a supervised off-site educational activity approved by the school
D	Dual registered	Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
J	Interview	Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
P	Sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
V	Educational trip or visit	Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised, or approved, by the school
W	Work experience	Pupil is on a work experience placement

Code	Definition	Scenario
Authorised absence		
C	Authorised leave of absence	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
E	Excluded	Pupil has been excluded but no alternative provision has been made
H	Authorised holiday	Pupil has been allowed to go on holiday due to exceptional circumstances
I	Illness	School has been notified that a pupil will be absent due to illness
M	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment

R	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance
S	Study leave	Year 11 pupil is on study leave during their public examinations
T	Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence	Pupil from a Traveller community is travelling, as agreed with the school
Unauthorised absence		
G	Unauthorised holiday	Pupil is on a holiday that was not approved by the school
N	Reason not provided	Pupil is absent for an unknown reason (this code should be amended when the reason emerges, or replaced with code O if no reason for absence has been provided after a reasonable amount of time)
O	Unauthorised absence	School is not satisfied with reason for pupil's absence
U	Arrival after registration	Pupil arrived at school after the register closed

Code	Definition	Scenario
X*	Not required to be in school	Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend <i>*Also code currently used for children in self isolation due to Covid 19</i>
Y	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances	School site is closed, there is disruption to travel as a result of a local/national emergency, or pupil is in custody
Z	Pupil not on admission register	Register set up but pupil has not yet joined the school
#	Planned school closure	Whole or partial school closure due to half-term/bank holiday/INSET day

Appendix 2: Attendance Addendum

1. Attendance

Office Staff- codes to be used

Following government guidelines, children will be marked with an 'X' code (not required to be in school) in the register. The exception to this is that key worker/ vulnerable children who have been asked to come into school should not be marked with an 'X' code if they are not in attendance. As specified by the latest government guidance, children must be marked with a 'C' code (leave of absence authorised by the school). Key worker/ vulnerable children who are in attendance should be marked in using the '/' code. Children who have been offered a place at school who do not attend at any point should be given an 'X' code.

Registers for children attending school during lockdown can be found on the following link: https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1x_0hok_lf4p7CTSJoo9hJDiWJabm3QUScRwLYI8-Fo/edit#gid=950407578

Teachers and Support Staff

Teachers/ support staff will register their class at 9:30am and again at 1.30 pm (10:00am and 2:30 for EYFS). Using the tracking sheet, each child will be marked as either present or absent.

Non attendance

Children are expected to attend both registers on each day. In the first instance, office staff will follow up with families if their child has not attended registrations. Teachers, with the support of their Milestone Leads, will also make contact with parents if non- attendance continues. If a child has not registered for a third consecutive day, further action will be considered, including a home visit or intervention from the Attendance and Welfare Officer.

Appendix 3:

LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS POLICY ON HOLIDAYS AND LEAVE IN TERM TIME

The Department for Education has issued guidance to schools and Local Authorities in relation to holidays and leave in term time and this policy reflects the requirements of this guidance.

The School Governing Body has authorised the Headteacher to act on its behalf in ensuring that the school fully complies with the requirements.

Applications for Holidays or Leave in Term Time Any applications for leave in term time for other reasons must be submitted at least **10 days in advance** to the Headteacher. Applications **received during or after a pupil has been taken on leave during term time cannot be considered and the absence will be unauthorised.**

Parents/Carers must provide **supporting evidence of any exceptional circumstances and why the leave must be taken in term time instead of in the school holidays.** All applications will be considered carefully, including how the pupil's educational progress could be affected. Where the request for leave involves travelling abroad parents are asked to **produce the return tickets before leave is approved.**

Holidays in Term Time The guidance from the Department for Education states that applications from parents/carers for pupils to take leave in term time for the purpose of a holiday should not be authorised. Parents/Carers are expected to arrange holidays during school holiday periods when children can enjoy them without their education being disrupted. This position is fully supported by the Local Authority.

Any applications for holidays in term time will be refused by the Headteacher.

Leave in Term Time for Other Reasons Requests for leave in term time for other reasons can only be agreed in **exceptional circumstances and for the shortest possible period.** The School Governing Body also expects applications for leave in term time other than for holidays to normally be refused. However, in exceptional circumstances discretion may be appropriate, although this will very rarely happen and no more than 10 days will normally be agreed.

When considering an application for leave in term time for exceptional circumstances, the Headteacher must be convinced that:

Copy for parent, copy for pupil's school records

(1) The exceptional circumstances are **justified by supporting evidence** provided by the parents/carers related to the circumstances and that the supporting evidence is valid; and

(2) The evidence **necessarily warrants the child being absent from school in term time** - does the child have to be absent in term time due to the circumstances or can it wait until the school holidays?

Taking of Unauthorised Leave in Term Time Where parents/carers choose to take pupils on unauthorised leave in term time then the pupils will be **referred to the Attendance & Welfare Service for follow-up and consideration for action using the LBTH Penalty Notice Scheme to address Attendance-related Concerns**

A Penalty Notice may be served on an individual parent/carer per individual child basis when the child has had **6 sessions (3 days) of unauthorised leave in term time**. Where 2 parent/carers take 3 children on unauthorised leave in term time then they will receive 3 Penalty Notices of £60 each - £180 per parent and £360 in total. There is no right of appeal.

Losing the school place Parents are responsible for returning their child to school on time. After 4 weeks (20 school days) of unauthorised absence, the pupil's name will be removed from the register. Parents will then have to re-apply for admission when they return but it may not be possible for the pupil to return to this school.