

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Aims

We believe that good attendance plays an essential part in pupils' social and emotional development and academic attainment. The target attendance for all children is a minimum 97%. Attending school punctually and regularly allows pupils to participate fully in the school community and builds the discipline necessary for a good transition to secondary school and the increasing independence of young adulthood.

We have clear systems for monitoring attendance and punctuality and where problems and patterns are identified we believe in providing early support to ensure that difficulties are dealt with before they escalate.

We work in partnership with all children's services to ensure that all of our pupils are enabled to achieve punctual, regular school attendance.

We will apply the Attendance Policy rigorously and consistently to build an environment where good attendance and punctuality is an expectation of all members of the school community.

Promoting Regular Attendance

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

To help us all to focus on this we will:

- Let you know to how your child is performing in school, what their attendance and punctuality rate is and how this relates to their attainment.
- Celebrate good attendance by displaying class achievements.
- Reward good or improving attendance through class competitions and certificates

Understanding types of Absences

Every half-day absence from school must be categorised by the school as either **AUTHORISED** or **UNAUTHORISED**. Therefore, information about the cause of any absence is always required.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason like illness. Medical/dental/optician appointments should be made outside of school hours, where possible. The appointment letter should be shown to the school office in advance.

If not possible, then the child needs to attend their appointment and attend school for the remainder of the school day. They must not have a whole day of absence from school. Parents/carers are responsible for providing proof of these appointments to the school office when collecting their child early or dropping their child off late due to an appointment.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable include:

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily
 - Truancy before or during the school day
 - Absences which have never been properly explained
 - Shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
 - Day trips and holidays in term time
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Persistent Absenteeism (PA)

A child 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 fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

We monitor all absence thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority and parents/carers will be informed of this immediately.

PA children are tracked and monitored carefully by the School Pastoral Team, and we also combine this with academic mentoring where absence affects attainment.

All PA cases are also automatically made known to the school's Educational Welfare Officer.

This type of absence can lead to the Borough of Tower Hamlets using sanctions and/or legal proceedings.

Absence Procedures - What is the Role of the Parent?

If your child is absent, you must:

- Contact us as soon as possible on every day of absence.
- Or you can come into school and report to reception, who will arrange for a member of staff to speak with you.
- If your child is due to have a planned medical procedure/operation, you must notify the school in advance and provide documentary evidence.
- Ensure that any changes to their contact information is given to the school office.

If your child is absent, we will:

- Contact you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you;
- Ask you to provide medical evidence, for example, a doctor's letter or prescription, medication.
- Refer the matter to the school's Educational Welfare Service.

The Education Welfare Service (Synergy Education & Welfare Service Limited)

Parents/carers are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any problems together. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, the school may refer the child to the school's Education Welfare Officer. They will also try to resolve the situation by agreement but, if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed and unauthorised absences persist, these Officers can use sanctions such as Penalty Notices, Fines (£60, rising to £120 if not paid within 28 days (Anti-social Behaviour Act 2004) or prosecutions in the Magistrates Court.

Alternatively, parents/carers or children may wish to contact the Education Welfare Officer 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.

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Lateness

A pupil who arrives late:

- Before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code
- After the register has closed, will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code.

Children arriving late for school MUST go directly to the school office to be recorded on the electronic register.

How we manage lateness

The school day starts at **9.00am** and we expect your child to be in class at that time. Pupils are admitted to school at 8.50 a.m. and should be in their class to be registered by their class teacher by **9:10 a.m.**

If your child arrives **after 9.00am** they are late and need to go directly to the school office to be recorded on the electronic register.

Children who arrive **after 9am** but before 9:10 are coded "L" (late) in the register.

If your child has a persistent late record you will be asked to meet with the Educational Welfare Officer to resolve the problem, but you should approach us at any time if you are having problems getting your child to school on time.

Children picked up late after school

Such incidents can cause distress to children who are keen to see their parents/carers at the end of the school day and should be avoided at all cost.

Parents/carers must telephone the school office if they are running late and inform them as to the time of their arrival in school. On arrival, the school office will ask parents/carers to fill in a brief form detailing the reason for late collection.

Children not picked up after school

The school will make all reasonable effort to contact parents/carers who fail to collect their child after school. From 4.15/4.30pm the school must contact the Emergency Duty Team at Social Services who will take over the care of the child.

Term Time absence

The school will only grant a leave of absence to children during term time if they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'. A leave of absence is granted at the Head's discretion. The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, considering the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request.

Valid reasons for authorised absence include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the child's family belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the family's religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart

Taking leave in term time will affect your child's schooling as much as any other absence. All applications for leave must be made in advance.

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Any period of leave taken without the agreement of the school, will be classed as unauthorised and may attract sanctions such as a Penalty Notice.

If children are on leave without authorisation the Borough of Tower Hamlets has the power to issue Fixed Penalty Notices of £60, rising to £120 if not paid within 28 days (Anti-social Behaviour Act 2004).

Children Missing From School

In cases where the school is unable to make contact with parents about a child's absence, the school's Designated Safeguarding Lead will be informed and will make a decision about reporting the child to the LA as missing from education.

Where a parent notifies the school that their child has left the school, we will inform the LA and keep the child on our roll until receiving confirmation from the child's new school that they have attended.

The school will notify the LA of any pupils who have been removed from the school roll, including those who are home-schooled.

Monitoring Attendance and Punctuality

The senior leadership team works closely with class teachers, the school office and the Educational Welfare Officer. School registers are monitored weekly to identify class attendance and punctuality percentages. Individual attendance and punctuality is monitored on a daily basis.

The school office checks the registers weekly for outstanding unauthorised absences and discusses these with the Education Welfare Officer. Only the school may authorise an absence if they are satisfied that a valid reason has been provided by the parent/carer.

Legal Sanctions

The school or local authority can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age.

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

What is the Role of the Parent?

Children are expected to attend school regularly, punctually and appropriately prepared for lessons. Parents and carers are responsible for ensuring their children attend school every day and on time.

Any absence must be reported **before 8.45am** to the school office only in one of the following ways:

- Telephone call or voicemail message to
 - In person at the school office
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The Federation of St John's & St Paul's Whitechapel CE Primary Schools
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