

THE HARLINGTON AND SUNDON ACADEMY TRUST



HARLINGTON LOWER AND SUNDON LOWER SCHOOL **ATTENDANCE POLICY**

Approved by Curriculum Trustee Committee: February 2023
Next review: February 2025

INTRODUCTION

Regular and punctual school attendance is vital if pupils are to benefit from the educational opportunities the Harlington and Sundon Academy Trust has to offer them. Both schools recognise their responsibilities to ensure pupils are in school and on time, therefore having access to learning for the maximum number of days and hours. Both schools encourage full attendance by working to make school a happy, caring, positive and stimulating environment in which all pupils can flourish.

Our policy applies to all children registered with the Harlington and Sundon Academy Trust and this policy is made available to all parents/carers of pupils who are registered at the schools on the school's website. We also seek to work closely with parents and to apply current regulations and monitoring procedures in line with current requirements. This policy has been written to adhere to the relevant Children's Acts, Education Acts, Regulations and Guidance from the Department for Education in addition to guidance from the Local Authority.

Although parents/carers have legal responsibility for ensuring their child's good attendance, the Head Teacher and Trustees work together with other professionals and agencies to ensure that all pupils are encouraged and supported to develop good attendance habits. Procedures in this policy are followed to ensure this happens.

Children who are persistently late or absent soon fall behind with their learning. Children who are absent from school frequently develop large gaps in their learning which will impact on their progress and their ability to meet age related learning expectations.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

This attendance policy ensures that all staff and Trustees are fully aware of and clear about the actions necessary to promote good attendance.

This policy aims to:

- Improve pupil's achievement by ensuring high levels of attendance and punctuality. Achieve a minimum of 96% attendance for all children, apart from those with chronic health issues.
- Create an ethos in which good attendance and punctuality are recognised as the norm and seen to be valued by the school.
- Raise awareness of parents, carers and pupils of the importance of uninterrupted attendance and punctuality at every stage of a child's education.
- Work in partnership with pupils, parents, staff and the Access and Inclusion Service so that all pupils realise their potential, unhindered by unnecessary absence.
- Promote a positive and welcoming atmosphere in which pupils feel safe, secure, and valued, and encourage in pupils a sense of their own responsibility.
- Establish a pattern of monitoring attendance and ensure consistency in recognising achievement and dealing with difficulties.

- Recognise the key role of all staff, but especially class teachers, in promoting good attendance.

We maintain and promote good attendance and punctuality through:

- Raising awareness of attendance and punctuality issues among all staff, parents and pupils.
- Ensuring that parents have an understanding of the responsibility placed on them for making sure their child attends regularly and punctually.
- Equipping children with the life skills needed to take responsibility for good school attendance and punctuality appropriate to the child's age and development.
- Maintaining effective means of communication with parents, pupils, staff and Trustees on school attendance matters.
- Developing and implementing procedures for identifying, reporting and reviewing cases of poor attendance and persistent lateness.
- Supporting pupils who have been experiencing any difficulties at home or at school which are preventing good attendance.
- Developing and implementing procedures to follow up non-attendance at school.

DEFINITIONS

Authorised absence

An absence is classified as authorised when a child has been away from school for a legitimate reason and the school has received notification from a parent or carer. For example, if a child has been unwell and the parent telephones the school to explain the absence. Only the school can make an absence authorised. Parents do not have this authority. Consequently not all absences supported by parents will be classified as authorised.

Unauthorised absence

An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of the school. Therefore the absence is unauthorised if a child is away from school without good reason, even with the support of a parent.

PROCEDURES

Both schools will undertake the following procedures to support good attendance:

- To maintain appropriate attendance data.
- To communicate clearly the attendance procedures and expectations to all staff, Trustees, parents and pupils.
- To have consistent and systematic daily records which give detail of any absence and lateness.
- To follow up absences and persistent lateness if parents/carers have not communicated with the school.
- To inform parents/carers what constitutes authorised and unauthorised absence.
- To strongly discourage unnecessary absence through holidays taken during term time.
- To work with parents to improve individual pupils attendance and punctuality
- To refer to the Access and Inclusion Service any child whose attendance causes concern and where parents/carers have not responded to school initiatives to improve.
- To report attendance statistics to LA and the DfE where requested.
- All staff should be aware that they must raise any attendance or punctuality concerns to the Head Teacher who is responsible for monitoring attendance.

REGISTERS

Both schools will keep an admission register which contains the personal details of every pupil in the school, along with the date of admission or re-admission to the school, information regarding parents and carers and details of the school last attended. All pupils will also be included on the

school's attendance register. Every amendment made to the admission register and the attendance register must include: the original entry; the amended entry; the reason for the amendment; the date on which the amendment was made; and the name and position of the person who made the amendment. Every entry in the admission register and attendance register will be preserved for a period of three years after the date on which the entry was made.

The schools will inform the local authority of any pupil who is going to be deleted from the admission register, as soon as the grounds for deletion are met and at the latest when the deletion occurs where the pupil:

- Has been taken out of school by their parents and are being educated outside the school system, e.g. home education (see below for home educated children);
- Have ceased to attend school and no longer live within reasonable distance of the school at which they are registered;
- Have been certified by the school medical officer as unlikely to be in a fit state of health to attend school before ceasing to be of compulsory school age, and neither he/she nor his/her parent has indicated the intention to continue to attend the school after ceasing to be of compulsory school age;
- Are in custody for a period of more than four months due to a final court order and the proprietor does not reasonably believe they will be returning to the school at the end of that period;
- Have been permanently excluded.

The schools will inform the LA of any new pupils starting mid-year at the school and being added to the admission register.

At agreed intervals, the schools must give the LA the name and address of every pupil who does not go to school regularly and inform the LA if a pupil has been continuously absent without the school's authorisation for not less than 10 school days, specifying the cause if known.

Procedures

Registers will be marked in the morning and the afternoon prior to lessons taking place. Registers will be held securely and any amendments should show who made the amendment and why.

Late arrival

Pupils must not be marked present if they were not in school during registration. Morning registration will close at 9.00 am and afternoon registration will close at 1.15pm. Pupils arriving late, but before registers close, will be marked late (L). Those arriving after registration has closed will be entered as (U) arrived late after registration or with an appropriate absence code. On late arrival to school, parents must bring their child to the School Office and sign them in.

Parents/Carers are responsible for:

- Ensuring that their child attends school regularly and punctually unless prevented from doing so by illness or attendance at a medical appointment.
- Emailing the school office on the first morning of absence between 8.00am-9.00am and on every subsequent day of absence. On the first day of absence, if no communication has been received explaining the reason for a pupil's absence, a member of staff will call to find out the reason for the absence. A record will be kept of any emails/telephone conversations with parents/carers regarding a pupil's absence. Staff will continue to follow up children who are absent, involving outside agencies as necessary.
- Informing the school in advance of any medical appointments in school time. If a child needs to leave school during the day the school should be informed in advance. On the day of the absence parents should come to the school entrance to collect and sign out their child. On their return (if applicable), parents should come to the school entrance to return their child and sign them in.
- Making requests for authorised absence in term time, only if absolutely necessary as these are not automatically authorised.

- Talking to the school as soon as possible about any child's reluctance to come to school so that problems can be quickly identified and dealt with.

Persistent absence

Persistent absence has a significant impact on the attainment and wellbeing of pupils. Evidence shows that, children with low attendance make on average less than two thirds of the annual progress made by pupils with high attendance. Absence will therefore be monitored to identify levels and patterns of absence. Where a pupil is absent frequently, whether authorised or unauthorised, the school will work closely with the child, parents and outside agencies and put strategies in place to improve attendance or ensure appropriate alternative provision. Persistent unauthorised leave may result in the School Attendance Officer issuing a Penalty Notice (see below).

The Education Welfare Officer visits regularly to check and monitor attendance. The EWO carries out regular register checks to identify children with low attendance (usually below 85%) and works with the school to improve attendance and may issue fixed penalty fines if attendance support meetings held by the school do not improve attendance.

Monitoring Attendance

Our School Attendance Officers have the responsibility for ensuring that all of the attendance data is accurately recorded on the RM G2 Integris attendance software. Regular meetings are held with the Head Teacher to discuss all attendance concerns and appropriate actions are taken following these meetings such as letters sent to parents or meetings arranged to discuss attendance concerns with parents.

FAMILY HOLIDAY IN TERM TIME

In September 2013 the regulations governing family holidays taken during term time changed. The scope for Head Teachers to grant 10 days leave of absence for family holidays in certain circumstances during term time and for longer periods in exceptional circumstance was removed. There is no right or entitlement to any term-time leave and requests for such leave may only be granted in exceptional circumstances.

It is for the Head Teacher to decide whether the circumstances are truly exceptional and he/she will only authorise the holiday if he/she believes this to be the case.

The following are examples of what the local authority consider might reasonably be seen to constitute exceptional circumstances:

- a parent or other close relative of the child has a serious, life-threatening or terminal medical condition and it is believed that the holiday requested may be the last opportunity for the family to experience such an event
- a parent is in the armed forces and is shortly due to be posted overseas to a known danger-spot, such as Afghanistan
- the family is in an extreme state of crisis and it is considered that the holiday in question may help the family to avert or better deal with this crisis

The following are some of the reasons which will not be considered exceptional:

- Availability of cheap holidays
- Availability of desired accommodation
- Poor weather experienced in school holiday periods
- Overlap with beginning or end of term
- Desire for a specific type of holiday (e.g. skiing)

The Head Teacher will also consider a number of other factors in reaching a decision, including:

- Whether the parent has made a similar request(s) in previous years. If this is the case he/she will be less likely to consider favourably the latest request.
- The child's previous attendance record. If the child has a poor attendance record it is highly unlikely that the Head Teacher will authorise any leave unless the child's absence was related to a serious medical condition or the circumstances are truly exceptional
- The level of disruption likely to be caused to the child's education. For example, the school will not generally authorise any absence during internal or external examinations.

Generally the Head Teacher will only agree to grant leave for the purposes of a family holiday during term-time if he/she believes that that holiday will cause only minimal disruption to the child's education and/or be in the child's best interests. If the leave is granted, the Head Teacher will determine the number of school days a child can be away from school. If the Head Teacher decides that there are exceptional circumstances and that the leave can be authorised, this will make it very unlikely that any further future requests for leave will be considered.

The decision to grant leave of absence is a decision that can only be made by the school. Only the school is able to authorise an absence; not parents or even the LA.

Requesting Leave of Absence

- All requests for term-time leave should be made in advance by the parent with whom the child normally resides;
- Any request for leave must be made in advance. Holidays cannot be authorised retrospectively.
- Parents/guardians who consider that they meet the criteria of 'exceptional circumstances' must download the relevant 'Leave of Absence' form available from the school website. If this is not possible, a form can be requested from the school office. This form should be completed by a parent/carer and returned to the school office for consideration. The Leave of Absence form will be returned to the parent/carer indicating if the request has been authorised or unauthorised.
- If holiday is taken without consultation or school authorisation, the absence will be 'unauthorised'. Unauthorised leave may result in the School Attendance Officer issuing a Penalty Notice (see below). Warning notices will be issued before a penalty may be imposed.

Penalty Notices

In Central Bedfordshire the Central Bedfordshire Access and Inclusion Service, in consultation with schools (and other agencies where appropriate) will be responsible for the issuing of Penalty Notices. The code of conduct of Central Bedfordshire in issuing and recovering penalty notices is set out in Annex 1.

MISSING CHILDREN

A child going missing from education is a potential indicator of abuse and neglect. The school therefore has in place appropriate safeguarding responses (set out in the procedures below) in relation to children who go missing from education, particularly on repeat occasions, to help identify the risk of abuse and neglect, including sexual and other abuse or exploitation and to help prevent the risks of their going missing in future.

Children with no prior concern noted

- If a child fails to attend school without explanation, the school will seek to contact parents/carers that day.
- The school will make further attempts to contact the parents/carers during the first two weeks of unexplained absence. If these enquiries, or other information provided to the school, give reasonable cause for concern in relation to the welfare of the child, the school will alert the appropriate agencies, including Social Care or the Police.

- If a child fails to attend school for 10 consecutive days without explanation and attempts to contact parents/carers prove unsuccessful, then the school will complete a Missing Child Report Form and send this to the Education Welfare Officer (EWO).

Children with prior child protection or other welfare concerns

- The school will take account of any child protection or other welfare concerns, including where there is a possibility of travelling to conflict zones, FGM and forced marriage in deciding how to deal with the unexplained absence of individual pupils and may decide to involve other agencies including Social Care or the Police without delay.

ANNEX 1 PENALTY NOTICES – EXTRACT FROM CODE OF CONDUCT OF CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

Circumstances where a penalty notice may be issued.

1. A Penalty Notice can only be issued in cases of unauthorised absence.
2. The issuing of a Penalty Notice will usually be restricted to one in an academic year. If the child concerned continues to accrue unauthorised absences the case should be considered for referral to the Access and Inclusion Service.
3. If more than one parent* has parental responsibility, both parents will receive a Penalty Notice (i.e. one per parent per child). In situations where there is more than one pupil in a family with irregular school attendance, multiple Penalty Notices can be issued to the same parents during the year. However, this action must be subject to careful consideration and co-ordination.
4. The issuing of a Penalty Notice may be considered appropriate:
 - when the pupil has taken holiday during term-time and the absence has not been authorised by the school, providing the school has taken into account DfE guidance to inform its decision-making
 - in the early stages of intervention where the school or Access and Inclusion Service believes that the sanction will lead to an improvement in attendance, e.g. persistent late arrival at school
 - parents failure to attend/co-operate at a parenting contract meeting
5. To ensure consistence in the issuing of Penalty Notices, the following criterion will apply:
 - at least 10 sessions (5 school days) lost to unauthorised absence by the pupil during a 12 school week period.

Procedure for withdrawing penalty notices

A Penalty Notice can only be withdrawn in the following circumstances:

- when it has been issued to the wrong person
- when the use of the Penalty Notice did not conform to the terms of this protocol
- it contains a material error
- it has not been paid, and the LA has not and does not intend to instigate legal proceedings.

Payment of penalty notices

- The arrangement for the payment will be detailed on the Penalty Notice. The penalty is £60 if paid within 21 days of receipt of the notice, rising to £120 if paid after 21 days, but within 28 days of receipt of the Notice (a notice served by post is deemed to have been received on the second day after posting it by first class post).
- The LA will retain any revenue from Penalty Notices to cover enforcement costs.

- Non- payment of a Penalty Notice will result in the prosecution of parents* under the provisions of Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 unless: The Notice was materially defective; the LA has not started legal proceedings and has no intention of doing so.

Policy and publicity

The deployment of Penalty Notices as a sanction is included in the LA's Attendance Strategy. All school attendance policies should include information on the deployment of Penalty Notices which should be brought to the attention of parents.

The LA will include information on the use of Penalty Notices and other attendance enforcement sanctions in promotional information material.

Reporting and review

A review of the deployment of the Penalty Notices will be undertaken at regular intervals and the strategy amended as appropriate.

Definition of a parent

Section 576, Education Act 1996 defines a parent as:

- all natural parents, whether named or not
- any person who, although not a natural parent, has parental responsibility (as defined in Children's Act 1989) for a child or young person
- any person who, although not a natural parent, has care of the child or young person. A person with whom the child lives and who looks after the child, irrespective of what their relationship is with the child, is considered a parent in education law.

Throughout this document 'parent' means each and every person referred to within this definition.



We support children in becoming well rounded individuals where they naturally demonstrate the values of the school in all aspects of their lives.

Attachments:

Penalty notice warning letter
Leave of Absence form

Appendix A – Model attendance letter

Dear #,

Absence from school

I am writing to express our concern at #'s levels of absence.

Our school acknowledges that each family's circumstances are different and works in partnership with parents to provide the best education for every child. Pupils' welfare is of paramount importance to us and we believe that regular attendance throughout the year is essential for their success and fulfilment.

So far this school year, # has missed # days of school. This gives them an attendance of #%.

Children who attend less than 96% encounter a number of problems if this becomes a trend through school.

- They find friendships more challenging as they are absent so can become isolated from friends. Even one day a week can have a significant impact on friendship dynamics.
- They miss learning so often fall behind, this leads to gaps in learning and lowered self-esteem.

We want to work with you to avoid these problems occurring,

If you have any issues you would like to discuss please speak with your child's class teacher or myself. We would really like to support you.

Yours sincerely,

Headteacher

Appendix B – Model punctuality letter

Dear #,

Punctuality at school

I am writing to express our concern at # levels of lateness.

Our school acknowledges that each family's circumstances are different and works in partnership with parents to provide the best education for every child. Pupils' welfare is of paramount importance to us and we believe that regular punctuality throughout the year is essential for their success and fulfilment.

Your child currently has been late on # occasions.

Children who have high levels of lateness encounter a number of problems if this becomes a trend through school.

- They miss learning, so often fall behind. Even being 5 minutes late can lead to gaps in learning forming and to lowered self-esteem
- They find it difficult to settle as they miss the instructions and settling period at the beginning of the day.
- They find friendships more challenging as they miss the beginning of the day so can become isolated from friends.

We want to work with you to avoid these problems occurring and to support you in your efforts to get your child to school on time.

If you have any issues you would like to discuss please speak with your child's class teacher or myself.

Yours sincerely,

Headteacher