



# **Highgate Primary Academy**

## **Attendance Policy**

Regular and punctual school attendance is important. Pupils need to attend school regularly if they are to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them by law. Highgate Primary Academy fully recognises its responsibilities to ensure pupils are in school and on time, therefore having access to learning for the maximum number of days and hours. Missing out on lessons leaves children vulnerable to falling behind. Children with poor attendance tend to achieve less in both primary and secondary school.

**The government expects:**

**Schools, Local Authorities and Multi-Academy Trusts to:**

- Promote good attendance and reduce absence, including persistent absence;
- Ensure every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled; and, act early to address patterns of absence;
- Parents to perform their legal duty by ensuring their children of compulsory school age who are registered at school attend regularly;
- All pupils to be punctual to their lessons;

School Attendance: Statutory guidance and departmental advice, DFE Nov 2016.

Highgate Primary Academy expects the highest attendance and punctuality from all pupils, at all times. We support pupils and their families to ensure that excellent attendance is achieved.

**Our Attendance Target for 2019-20 is 96%**

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

**Overall 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 reaches their full educational potential, 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

### **Rights and responsibilities for attendance/punctuality:**

The Legal Framework:

There are legal obligations on:

- The parent(s) to secure education for their children, whether at school or otherwise, to 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.

### **Procedures**

Our school will undertake to follow the following procedures to support good attendance:

- To maintain appropriate registration processes;
- To maintain appropriate attendance data;
- To communicate clearly the attendance procedures and expectations to all staff, governors, 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 Attendance Service or appropriate agencies of any child whose attendance causes concern and where parents/carers have not responded to school initiatives to improve;
- To report attendance statistics to the Local Authority and the DfE where requested;
- All staff should be aware that they must raise any attendance or punctuality concerns to the nominated person with responsibility for monitoring attendance.

## **Responsibilities**

All members of school staff have a responsibility for identifying trends in attendance and punctuality. The following includes a more specific list of the kinds of responsibilities which individuals might have.

### **Class teachers are responsible for:**

- Keeping an overview of class and individual attendance looking particularly for either poor overall attendance, anomalies in patterns of attendance and/ or unusual explanations for attendance offered by children and their parents/ Carers;
- Informing the nominated person where there are concerns and acting upon them;
- Providing background information to support referrals;
- Monitoring follow-up once actions have been taken to correct attendance concerns;
- Emphasising with their class the importance of good attendance and promptness ;
- Following up absences with immediate requests for explanation which should be recorded appropriately;
- Discussing attendance issues at consultation evenings where necessary;
- To ensure that rewards and incentives for attendance and punctuality are being used.

### **The Principal is responsible for:**

- The overall management and implementation of the policy;
- Overall monitoring of school attendance;
- Trends in authorised and unauthorised absence;
- Monitoring individual attendance where concerns have been raised;
- Working with the Education Welfare Service;
- To deal with parental requests for extended leave in line with Local Authority policies and procedures;
- To consider the use of Penalty Notices, in line with Local Authority policies and procedure.

### **School Office Staff / Attendance Coordinator is responsible for:**

- Collating and recording registration and attendance information;
- Taking and recording messages from parents regarding absence;
- Ensuring the Absence/Late register is completed;
- Contacting parents of absent children where no contact has been made;
- Recording details of children who arrive late or go home early;
- Keeping an overview of class and individual attendance looking particularly for either poor overall attendance, anomalies in patterns of attendance and/ or unusual explanations for attendance offered by children and their parents/ carers and reporting concerns to the Family Welfare and Safeguarding Lead /Principal;
- Sending out standard letters regarding attendance;

- First Day Response: Contacting home if no reason for absence is received. This is completed by phone; text or home visit (by family Welfare) on first day of absence:
- To complete FPNs as instructed;
- To maintain clear communication with the SLT regarding attendance and punctuality;
- To oversee the admission and induction of new pupils.

**Family Liaison Officer is responsible for:**

At Highgate Primary Academy we have employed a Family Liaison Officer, to offer additional support to Parents / carers and pupils. This includes support in relation to:

- Improving school attendance by carrying out home visits, attending meeting with the parent / carer;
- To identify with parents the reason for poor attendance and work with parents to achieve improved attendance and reduce exclusions;
- Monitor attendance levels & punctuality;
- Offer parent support (EHA) and attendance plans;
- Identify patterns of absence, analysis of attendance data and tracking;
- Talk to pupils on a 1:1 basis regarding attendance related matters;
- Refer to outside agencies for additional support for families including School Health, Attendance Service, Police, Youth Offending Team & Social Care;
- To liaise with and report to with outside agencies such as the Education Welfare Service;
- To meet with parents where attendance is a concern;
- Attend SAP Meetings;
- To report to the Local Authority, as requested;
- To support SLT with the promotion good attendance and punctuality, through finding/organising incentives.

**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;
- Contacting the school office on the first morning of absence;
- Informing the school in advance of any medical appointments in school time. For the absence to be recorded as a medical absence we do require evidence from the doctor or dentist. (Appointment card/letter);
- 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;

- 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.

**The Astrea (Dearne) Educational Welfare Officer and Local Authority Educational Welfare Service are expected to:**

- Support the school in improving attendance, through whole school initiatives and individual pupil interventions;
- Work with families and other agencies to remove barriers to good attendance;
- Ensure that parents are informed of their responsibilities in relation to attendance;
- Uphold and enforce the law in respect of attendance, child employment, and child protection.

### **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.

### **Registers**

- Registers are legal documents and will be marked twice a day;
- Parents must always give reasons for absence to the school;
- Schools are to determine whether absence is authorised or unauthorised in exceptional circumstances, considering factors such as frequency, duration, attendance patterns, i.e. within reason;
- Staff must be observant of situations where absence is continually condoned by parents.

## **Registration**

- All the school doors open at 8.45 am until 8.55 am. This time is sufficient for all pupils to come into their classroom.
- Each class teacher has the responsibility for keeping an accurate record of attendance. Any pupil who is absent must be recorded at the beginning of the morning and afternoon session.
- The attendance register must be completed by the class teacher by 9.00 am and by 1.00 pm.
- All attendance records are documented using SIMs software, which is supported by the Local Authority.
- Attendance registers are legal documents and these must be kept secure and preserved for a period of three years after the date they were last used.

## **Lateness**

Repeated absence at the beginning of a school session can amount to failure to attend regularly for the purpose of 1996 Education Act. The school seeks to improve general punctuality and to improve attitude of persistent offenders by:

- Informing parents of our expectations and offer ways of helping combat lateness.
- Parents of persistent offenders must be contacted, and reported to the Attendance Officer if no improvement.
- Praise and acknowledge latecomers who improve.
- Ensure that staff set a good example by arriving punctually for lessons.
- All children and parents must understand that lateness is actively discouraged, although sensitivity may be appropriate in some cases.
- Other incentives may be used to improve levels of punctuality
- The Attendance Officer and Family Liaison Officer will be used to support pupils and families with any of the above issues.
- Once the doors are closed at 8.55am the only way to get into school is via the school main reception office. Any pupil who comes into school this way from 8.55 am will be marked as late in the attendance record and the minutes late will be recorded on SIMS. Records are kept of those pupils who are late, this is documented on the electronic register for each pupil (Attendance code L). Any child who arrives for school later than 9.25 a.m. will be marked as having an unauthorised absence for the morning.

## **Monitoring Attendance**

Our office staff have the responsibility for ensuring that all of the attendance data is accurately recorded on the SIMS attendance software. Regular meetings are held with the Principal 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.

We use a traffic light system, the purpose of colour coding helps staff, Parents and Pupils have a clear understanding of our expectations.

- **Red Zone:** Under 90% Students in the red zone are more likely to underachieve, find making friendships difficult and misbehave. Legal action may also be taken against Parents/Carers of Red Zone pupils.
- **Amber Zone:** 91% - 95% Students in this zone are still at risk of underachieving due to the absence level. Students who miss school regularly are more likely to suffer from school related stress. If your child is in the Amber Zone we will contact you to make you aware.
- **Green Zone:** 96% - 100%

We expect students to have Green attendance throughout their education. Those in the Green are more likely to do well in examinations, have better job opportunities and can develop strong friendships within school. These thresholds are agreed in accordance with the guidance in recent changes to persistent absenteeism as set out in DFE guidelines September 2015.

### **Rewards & Recognition**

Although good attendance is an expectation the school seeks to improve whole school attendance by offering incentives, this may include:

- 100% Certificates
- Weekly Class attendance reward
- Prizes (both child and parent/family)
- Letters
- School / Class Events Attendance Meetings

The Principal and the Family Liaison Officer monitor individuals, classes, year groups, different ethnic groups, SEN and FSM pupils. They identify patterns and trends in absence/punctuality, including persistent absence. The systems and structures are then followed, to improve attendance for these individuals or groups. Letters are sent out to parents whose children's attendance is below 95% and parents who are concerned about their child's attendance, are invited to work in partnership with the school. Summary of procedures to promote good attendance/punctuality:

The following tables show specific procedures to maintain and encourage excellent attendance:

Daily Procedures	By whom	Outcomes/action
Parents ensure pupils arrive at school on time	Parents/carers	
Parents inform the school by 9am if their child is absent that day	Parents/carers	Office/Support staff update registration codes
Pupils arriving late to school are registered at the main office	Office Staff	Absence marks on SIMS amended to a late mark, with late minutes noted
Teachers record attendance using SIMS. This is done at 9am and 1pm.	Teachers	
1 <sup>st</sup> day absence phone calls are made to inform parents of their child's unexplained absence for that day	Office Staff	Update attendance codes; consider home visit if unreachable (day 3 priority)
External agencies informed of absences / home visits if necessary	Family Liaison Officer	

Weekly Procedures	By whom	Outcomes/actions
Attendance/punctuality statistics entered into Attendance Overview spread sheet to allow for monitoring and analysis	Office Administrator / Attendance Coordinator	Trends / Patterns Identified
Attendance/punctuality statistics produced and shared in Celebration and in Entrance Hall Display	Family Welfare Coordinator / SLT	Parents are able to see which class(es) have been successful with their attendance and punctuality
Class weekly Attendance reward	Teachers	Classes take part in weekly reward
Analyse attendance/punctuality data and information to identify cases of concern and develop appropriate interventions	Principal / Family Liaison Officer / Attendance Coordinator	Targeted intervention for individual concerns
Attendance Meetings arranged	Attendance Coordinator / Family Liaison Officer	Parents Carers invited to a meeting to discuss attendance concerns
Meet with EWO to discuss referrals / current cases	EWO / Attendance Coordinator	Mentoring and advice on attendance/ punctuality issues provided to all families

Half Termly Procedures	By whom	Outcomes/actions
Analyse attendance/punctuality data to monitor trends and progress	SLT	Future actions identified
Assemblies to promote attendance/punctuality and share term's data and progress	SLT	Attendance celebrated
Discussions as required in response to specific attendance/punctuality concerns of a particular cohort of pupils	SLT/ FLO / Attendance Coordinator	Future actions identified
Individual attendance/punctuality discussed with pupils and families, at parents' evenings	FLO / Attendance Coordinator/ Teachers	Mentoring and advice on attendance/ punctuality issues provided to all families
Analyse attendance/punctuality data and information to identify cases of concern and develop appropriate interventions	SLT/ FLO / Attendance Coordinator	Amend and refine interventions as appropriate
Meeting to discuss individual cases, monitor progress and refer new concerns. Support and meeting provided for pupils and families	SLT/ FLO / Attendance Coordinator	Mentoring and advice on attendance/ punctuality issues provided to all families
Review success and impact of attendance/punctuality strategies for the term	SLT/ FLO / Attendance Coordinator	Amend and refine interventions as appropriate

## Special Leave

'Leave in term Time Guidance' and the 2013 Amendment to the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations, leave for pupils during term time is not authorised under any circumstances. The school recognises that taking children out of school may constitute a safeguarding risk and will make necessary enquiries, in order to be satisfied that the child is not at risk. The school may contact outside agencies in order to ensure that a visit is legitimate and safe for the child/children. Head teachers may now only grant leave in term time where the circumstances are exceptional, for example:

- Death of parent/carer or sibling of the pupil
- Life threatening or critical illness of parent or sibling of the pupil
- Parent/carer recuperation and convalescence from critical illness or surgery (leave request to be made within 6 months of recovery and medical evidence required)

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 led you to request leave in term time for your child/ren, please complete the required form, which you can obtain from the school office. The Principal 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.

## **Penalty Notices**

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

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.
- These prosecutions are criminal proceedings and could result in you having a criminal record.

Reviewed: September 2019

To be reviewed: July 2020