



Attendance Policy

2018-19

Reviewed & updated April 2018

This Policy has been agreed by the Governors, Staff and Pupils of William Davies Primary School.

It represents our commitment to striving for 100% attendance. It sets out the principles, procedures and practice the school will undertake. Strategies, sanctions and possible legal consequences of poor attendance and punctuality are also detailed, as well as rewards for, and benefits of good attendance. This policy will be reviewed, amended as necessary and published annually in accordance with current legislation and guidance.

Principles

- Receiving a full-time, suitable education is a child's legal entitlement;
- It is parents'/carers' legal responsibility to ensure this happens;
- Attending school regularly aids intellectual, social and emotional development;
- Good attendance practice safeguards the welfare of children whilst they are not in the care of their parents or carers;
- All children whose attendance is poor will be considered vulnerable.

These principles are enshrined in British law, within the Education Act 1996, the Children Act 1989, and other associated pieces of legislation.

Aims of the Policy

- To ensure that all children attend full-time or as near as possible to full time, in order to maximise their educational achievement and social development;
- To discharge the school's duty to safeguard the welfare its pupils;
- To ensure that all those responsible for children's education, including parents, carers, staff and governors understand and accept their responsibilities in relation to attendance;
- To minimise absence from school, thereby reducing levels of persistent absence;
- To improve the life chances of Newham's children and young people and prepare them to be fully contributing citizens when they reach adulthood.

Promoting Excellent Attendance

The Governors, Headteacher and staff will use all means available to them to promote the importance of good attendance and punctuality. These will include the home/school agreement at the front of the child's Home School record, induction procedure, newsletters, rewards and incentives for excellent attendance.

The school will also, when necessary, employ sanctions to improve attendance. Headteachers only have discretion to authorise leave of absence in term-time in the **most exceptional** circumstances. In such cases, the Headteacher must specify the date when the child must return to school.

Unauthorised leave of absence in term time is likely to result in the issue of a Penalty Notice. A Penalty Notice requires each parent to pay £60 per child, per period of absence, if they pay within 21 days. If they do not pay within 21 days, but pay within 28 days, the fine rises to £120 per parent per child. If they do not pay at all they risk prosecution under S.444(1) of the Education Act 1996.

In cases of persistent absence (less than 90%) the school may recommend to the Local Authority prosecution through the Magistrates Court.

In very serious cases of poor attendance for no acceptable reason, the school may involve other agencies such as Social Care, to safeguard the welfare, development and educational potential of the child.

School Procedures

Registration and punctuality procedures

Registers are taken twice a day, once at the start of the school day at 8.55 a.m., and once during the afternoon session. The registers will remain open for 30 minutes.

The morning registration period will start at 8.55 a.m. and end at 9.25 a.m.
The afternoon registration period will start at 1 p.m. and end at 1.30 p.m.

Pupils arriving before the end of the Registration period will be coded L (late before registers close) which is a present mark. The number of minutes late will be recorded in the register.

Pupils arriving after the registers have closed will be coded U (late after registers close) which counts as an unauthorised absence.

Only the Headteacher or designated member(s) of staff acting on their behalf can authorise absence. If there is no known reason for the absence at registration, then the absence will be recorded as unauthorised, until a satisfactory reason is provided. If the reason given is not satisfactory in the school's view, and/or evidence of the reason cannot be provided, the absence will be coded as O (unauthorised absence). Absence notes received from parents/carers will be kept for the remainder of the academic year, or longer if there are concerns that require further investigation or legal action. If a pupil is persistently late, the Deputy Headteacher and the Attendance, Absence and Family Liaison Officer will arrange to meet with the family as soon as the pattern is identified.

First Day Absence Contact

Parents are expected to notify the school the first day their child is unable to attend for any unavoidable reason, such as illness. If the school does not receive notification it will text/telephone on the first day of absence, to try to ascertain the reason. First day contact will be carried out as early as possible in the school day, in order to notify parents whose children may have set off for school, but not arrived, as quickly as possible. This is important for safeguarding reasons. In certain circumstances we will continue to try to make contact all day. In certain circumstances, involving vulnerable children, a home visit might be required on the first day of absence by a relevant member of staff.

Second Day Absence Contact

If the child is still absent on the second day without contact from the family, a text or telephone call will be made to the home. The family may be asked to come to school for a meeting. In certain circumstances we may do a home visit on the second day.

Continuing Absence Procedures

In the event of an absence of three or more days without contact from the family, a home visit will be made. If there has been no contact or sighting of the child in three days we may call the police or social services.

Any child who is absent without explanation for 12 consecutive or cumulative sessions (6 school days) (90% attendance), or who has a pattern of erratic attendance or persistent lateness after registers close will be referred to the Attendance Management Service of LBN, in order that further investigations can be made. Such cases may result in a visit to the home by an Attendance Management Officer. Targets will be set for improvement; sources of support will be signposted if needed. If there is no improvement, court action or a Penalty Notice may ensue.

Frequent/Persistent Absence Procedures

Regular trawls of the registers will be made by the school to identify pupils with a pattern of absences that may lead to Persistent Absence (PA), that is to say absence of 10% or more in a half term. The school Attendance Officer will be responsible for identification of any emerging concerns, and ensuring that action plans are in place for each pupil of concern.

Initially the school will try to resolve the problem with parents/carers, but if the pattern continues the school will refer to the School Health Adviser if the problem appears to be a medical one. In cases where there appears to be issues requiring outside intervention to support the family and the child, referral may be made through the Triage system for external agency support. All PA pupils and their parents will be subject to an Action Plan or Parenting Contract. Such a plan or contract may include allocation of additional in-school or external support.

Consequences of Poor Attendance /Punctuality

For pupils whose attendance and/or punctuality fails to improve, after a range of interventions and support measures have been tried by the school, the ultimate consequences may be one of the following:

- 1) The school may ask the Council to issue a Penalty Notice on its behalf. A Penalty Notice carries a fine of £60, per parent, per child. If the fine is not paid within 20 days it rises to £120 per parent, per child, if paid within 28 days. If not paid at all, court action is likely to be initiated.
- 2) The school may ask the Council to initiate court action under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996, which could lead to fines of up to £2,500, or even up to 3 months imprisonment.
- 3) In some cases, action may be taken under the Children Act 1989 to protect the welfare and educational development of the child.

Children who Cease to Attend without Prior Notification (CME) procedures

Procedures for trying to trace children who cease to attend without prior notification are covered in detail in the CME Policy and Procedures. However, if, after ten days continuous absence school has been unable to ascertain the whereabouts of a pupil, they will refer the child's details to the Local Authority for it to perform further checks that are not available to school. If after 20 days continuous unauthorised absence, their whereabouts cannot be traced, they can be legally removed from the school roll. However this decision will be taken in concert with the local authority, depending on the vulnerability of the child/family.

Non starters

Pupils who are allocated places from statutory age but fail to start are also treated as Children Missing Education (CME). If the school has been unable to make contact with the family during a ten-day period after their expected arrival, they will refer the pupils to the local authority CME Officer for further checks.

Vulnerable Children

Children who are Looked After (LAC), subject to a Child Protection Plan (CP), Children in Need (CIN) will be treated with highest priority and will be known to the Attendance Officer. Any unexplained absence will be followed up immediately by a telephone call to the home, or a home visit. Children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) will be treated with similar priority in order that their time in school can be maximised, and their learning supported to the greatest extent possible.

Interventions

The school will systematically follow up absence according to this policy, which is reviewed annually, and systematic procedures. The illustration below shows how the follow-up of absence is prioritised:



90 – 85%

POOR

Responsibilities of Parents & Carers

Working in Partnership

The Governors and staff of this school want to work in partnership with parents to ensure that children are as successful as they can possibly be. This means being in school as near to 100 per cent of the time as possible.

It is parents' responsibility in law to ensure their child attends regularly and on time.

Understanding types of absence coding

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school as AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the reason for any absence is always required, preferably in writing. Medical evidence may also be required in the form of a copy of a prescription or hospital letter. Types of absence that are likely to be authorised are: illness, medical or dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, and emergencies. The school will ask for medical evidence after five days of illness.

Examples of types of absence that are not considered reasonable and which will not be authorised under any circumstances are: going shopping, birthdays, looking after other younger children in the family, staying at home because other members in the family are unwell, day trips and holidays in term time that have not been agreed, arriving at school too late to get a present mark, or truancy.

Supporting Reluctant Attenders

Parents/carers should do everything possible to encourage their child to attend. However if the reason for their reluctance appears to be school-based, such as difficulty with work, or bullying, it should be discussed with the school at the earliest opportunity and the school will do everything possible to sort the problem out. Colluding with your child's reluctance to attend is likely to make the matter worse.

School phobia is a psychological condition that is medically diagnosed, and in these cases other arrangements may be made for the child's education. However, refusal to attend school may result in parents being prosecuted.

Useful Information for Parents And Carers About School Attendance

Introduction

This is a successful school, and you and your child play a part in making it so. We aim to encourage all members of the school community to reach out for excellence. For children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly, and your child should be at school in good time for the start of the school day, every day the school is open, unless they are genuinely ill or there is some other unavoidable reason.

Some children are reluctant to go to school and say they do not feel well. It is for you as the adult, to judge whether they are genuinely unwell, or just unwilling. It will be better for them in the long run to go to school, rather than avoid it, as days off mean they will fall further behind and make them even more reluctant. Your job as a parent is to encourage them to attend.

Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is YOUR legal responsibility and permitting absence without good reason is an offence in law and may result in legal action being taken, or a Penalty Notice being issued (see below).

Learning

Any absence affects the child's learning, and the more they miss the harder it will be for them to catch up. Research has shown that for every percentage point of absence, attainment is significantly lower.

Safeguarding

There is extensive research linking poor school attendance and exclusion with crime and anti-social behaviour, and risk of exploitation by unsuitable adults. For this reason, failure to attend regularly will be regarded as a safeguarding issue.

Understanding Absence Percentages

You may wonder why a school would be concerned if your child's attendance is 95%. This may make it easier to understand:

95% equates to half a day off every two weeks
90% equates to a day off every two weeks
85% equates to one and a half days off every two weeks
80% equates to one whole day off every week

Even the brightest and most enthusiastic learner will find it hard to keep up with their work with these levels of absence. That is why we encourage the highest attendance possible.

Understanding Types of Absence Coding

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school as AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required, preferably in writing. Medical evidence may also be required in the form of a copy of a prescription, label from prescribed medication or GP note. Types of absence that are likely to be authorised are illness, medical or dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies.

Examples of types of absence that are not considered reasonable and which will be UNAUTHORISED under any circumstances are:

- Going shopping with parents, Birthdays;
- Minding other younger children in the family;
- Staying at home because other members in the family are unwell;
- Day trips and holidays in term time that have not been agreed;
- Arriving at school too late to get a present mark;
- Truancy.

Reluctant Attenders

You should do everything possible to encourage your child to attend. However if the reason for their reluctance appears to be school-based, such as difficulty with work, or bullying, please discuss this with the school at the earliest opportunity and the school will do everything possible to sort the problem out. Colluding with your child's reluctance to attend is likely to make the matter worse.

Persistent Absence

A pupil is classed as a persistent absentee when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year, **for whatever reason, whether it be authorised or unauthorised, or a mixture of both.** Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to a child's educational prospects and we need parents' full support and encouragement to tackle it. PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully through our pastoral system, and we combine this with tracking academic progress to assess the effect on the pupil's attainment. All our PA pupils and their parents are subject to an Action Plan, which may include allocation of some kind of support.

Parenting Contracts

You may be asked to participate in a Parenting Contract to support your child's attendance. These are initiated where school feels you may need help in influencing your child to attend properly. They have no force in law, and are entered into voluntarily. A meeting will be held to which you and your child will be invited. The problems will be discussed and agreement reached as to what the school will do, what the child will do and what you as parents/carers will do to try to improve the situation. You may be offered some form of support such as counselling or parenting classes to assist you in setting boundaries and enforcing expectations of your child.

Reporting Your Child's Absence

If your child is absent you must:

- Contact the school as early as possible on the first day of absence, either by telephone or in person, and
- Send a note in on the first day they return with an explanation of the absence
- If sickness absence is for three days or more the school will require medical evidence in the form of a doctor's note, copy prescription or label from prescribed medicine.

Applications for Leave of Absence in Term Time

Our policy is **not** to authorise leave of absence from school during term time. Any applications for leave in term time must be made in writing to the Headteacher at least 2 weeks in advance. There is no automatic right to term time leave of absence, and your request is likely to be declined except in the most exceptional circumstances. Each application will be considered on its own merit, and the attendance record(s) of the child/ren concerned will be taken into account when making a decision.

Penalty Notices

Penalty Notices can now be issued for a range of attendance-related offences, including unauthorised term-time holidays, poor attendance and poor punctuality, or being out in a public place without justification during the first five days of an exclusion. Further details are available on www.newham.gov.uk/schools/Attendance.

Your Contact Details

Please make sure that the contact details you have given to the school are correct and kept up to date, so that in the event of an accident, emergency or any other need to contact you we have the correct details.

Useful school contacts

Attendance Officer	Ms H Patel
Headteacher	Ms Sally Norris

Legal References

Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 states that *the 'parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him/her to receive efficient full time education suitable to his/her age, ability and aptitude, and to any special educational needs he/she may have, either by regular attendance at school, or otherwise.'*

Section 175 of the Education Act 2002 places a duty on local authorities and governing bodies to have regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State with regard to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and students under the age of 18.

The Children Act 1989 provides for a number of actions that can be taken to protect children's safety and welfare, on the premise that the welfare of the child is paramount.