

## Attendance and Punctuality Policy

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## Introduction

The parent/carer of a child of compulsory school age registered at a school and failing to attend regularly is guilty of an offence punishable in law. In the event of regular unauthorised absences, a penalty notice may be issued by the Local Authority. An offence is not, however, committed if it can be demonstrated that:

- The student was absent with agreement of the school;
- The student was ill or prevented from attending by any unavoidable cause;
- The absence occurred on a day exclusively set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the student's parent belongs.

Only the school, within the context of the law, can approve absence, not parents/carers. The fact that a parent has offered a note (or phone call, or personal contact) in explanation does not in itself oblige the school to accept it as a valid reason for absence. **If, after investigation, doubt remains then the absence must be treated as unauthorised.**

## Reporting Absences

It is the responsibility of parents/carers to inform the school of the reason for a child's absence as soon as possible – this should be done via a telephone call to the school office. Parental contact on the first day of absence should be the normal expectation. If the school has not been notified of the absence by 9.30am then a text or phone call requesting an explanation will be made.

## Registration

All schools must keep an attendance register on which, at the beginning of each morning and afternoon session, students are marked present or absent. Registers must show whether an absence of a student is **authorised** or **unauthorised**.

Accurate registration and the preservation of security of registers are the responsibility of the Headteacher. Registers may be needed as evidence in court where parents/carers are being prosecuted for school attendance offences and inappropriate authorisation of absences could compromise proceedings.

Registers will usually be maintained and completed in the school MIS. These should be completed within ten minutes of the beginning of morning or afternoon sessions. Should manuscript registers be necessary they must be kept in ink and any corrections made in a way that the original entry, and the correction, are clearly distinguishable.

In the event of the need for paper registers, please use the following guidance:

- Class lists will be printed and sent to classrooms;

- Children present should be shown with a forward slash for the morning and a back slash for the afternoon in ink;
- Children absent should be shown with a circle;
- Children who arrive late should be shown by writing an L within the circle.

## **Lateness**

It is important for children to arrive at school on time as lateness is detrimental to their learning and the learning of others. Register will be taken at 8.50am each day. Children arriving between 8.50am and 9.30am will be marked as late. Children who arrive at school after 9.30am will not be marked as late, but as an unauthorised absence.

Likewise, afternoon registration takes place at 1.15pm so any child arriving after this time will be marked as late, or as an unauthorised absence if arriving after 1.45pm. Lateness is monitored closely and persistent lateness is followed up with parents/carers.

## **Illness, Medical and Dental Appointments**

If a school is satisfied that a student is absent as a result of illness, the absence must be treated as authorised. If a child is off for 5 or more days due to illness, then medical evidence must be provided. Without evidence the absence will be unauthorised.

A parent/carer should phone the school to inform the school office on the first day of absence for illness. A note should be supplied upon return. If no note is received, one reminder will be sent. If no note is forthcoming within a week following the reminder, the absence is likely to be categorised as unauthorised.

All letters explaining absence should be passed to the office. These will be entered onto the system. In the event of no reason for absence being given or received on the first day of absence, a telephone call will be made to the family. If this should be unsuccessful, it will be followed by a letter.

Advance notice of medical/dental appointments should be given wherever possible, preferably in writing. Students leaving/returning to the premises in session time must report to the school office where such movements are recorded for safety reasons. Where possible medical appointments should be made out of school time.

## **Educational Welfare Service**

Local Authorities are charged in law with enforcing school attendance where students of compulsory school age are concerned. It is important that LAs are informed of attendance

problems. Education Welfare Officers (EWO) should be consulted where schools are experiencing difficulty in determining whether absences are justified, and in cases of persistent absence in children of compulsory school age.

## **Children Missing in education (CME)**

All children of compulsory school age, regardless of their circumstances, are entitled to an efficient, full time education which is suitable to their age, aptitude and any special educational needs they may have. 'Children missing in education' are those who are not registered at a school, not receiving a suitable education otherwise (i.e. Elective Home Education or alternative provision), are not regularly attending the school where they are a registered pupil, or cease attending and/or their whereabouts or destination school is unknown. These children can be at significant risk of underachieving, being victims of harm, exploitation or radicalisation and in later life becoming NEET (not in education, employment or training).

## **Tracking and Monitoring**

Information sharing between parents, schools, the community and the local authority is therefore crucial to ensure that these children are kept safe and are receiving the education they are entitled to. In accordance with DfE Statutory guidance, Children Missing Education (Sept 2016) the Local Authority has effective tracking and enquiry systems in place and an appointed named person to whom schools, other agencies and the public can make referrals regarding children who they believe are missing from education. Joint reasonable enquiries can then be made as quickly as possible by schools and the LA. Joint working arrangements are also in place with agencies and services such as, Housing, Health, the Police, and other local authorities.

## **Other LA Responsibilities**

The Local Authority also has other duties and powers to support their work on CME which include:

- making arrangements to establish (wherever possible) the identities of children in the area who are not registered pupils at a school and who are not receiving a suitable education otherwise (e.g. Elective Home Education - EHE)
- arranging education for permanently excluded pupils from the sixth day
- safeguarding children's welfare and the duty to protect them from harm and neglect
- serving Notices and issuing School Attendance Orders to parent/carer(s) who fail to evidence that their child is receiving a suitable education by registering at a school or otherwise. Pursuing a prosecution or an Education Supervision Order for those who do not comply with the Order
- issuing a Penalty Notice, pursue an Education Supervision Order or prosecution of parent/carer(s) who fail to ensure that their child(ren) attend regularly at the school or alternative educational provision where they are a registered pupil.

## Who should be notified of a child missing in education?

Kerry Gallagher (Attendance, Behaviour and Traveller Support Services)

Telephone: 01708 431624

Email: [kerry.gallagher@havering.gov.uk](mailto:kerry.gallagher@havering.gov.uk)

## Penalty Notices

Penalty Notices for absence from school can be issued by the Local Authority. The following circumstances are considered as appropriate reasons for the issuing of Penalty Notices:

- Truancy, including truancy sweeps;
- Parentally-condoned absences;
- Unauthorised leave in term time;
- Delayed return from extended leave
- Failure to return on the date specified by the parent

Where a Penalty Notice is issued, each parent/carer is required to pay a fine to the Local Authority.

## Leave During Term Time and Exceptional Circumstances

The school **cannot authorise** any leave of absence during term time. If a student is absent prior to or does not return after school a school holiday (half term, Christmas, Easter or Summer) the parent/carer will need to provide medical evidence to cover the absence. Failure to provide this evidence will result in the absence being marked as unauthorised and as such this will be referred to the Local Authority who may issue a Formal Caution or Fixed Penalty Fine.

**The school defines the term “exceptional” as an occasion that cannot be planned for**, so anything that can be planned e.g. all family holidays, weddings, family birthday parties or surprise trips booked by relatives, etc. **will not be authorised**.

## Religious observance

Schools must treat absence as authorised when it is due to religious observance. The day must be exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the parents belong. Where necessary, schools should seek advice from the parents' religious body about whether it has set the day apart for religious observance.

To have a week's winter or summer holiday in school time, because the cost is cheaper during term time, **does not** constitute an exceptional circumstance.

**All requests for leave during term time should be made in writing and addressed to the Headteacher.** The Headteacher will consider the request, and respond in writing, either refusing or granting authorised leave.