



## Attendance and Punctuality Policy

September 2020

### Legal Framework Education Act 1996

***If a child of compulsory school age who is a registered pupil at a school fails to attend regularly at the school, his/her parent is guilty of an offence.***

- If a parent fails to register a child of compulsory school age at a school and does not intend to educate the child otherwise than at school, the LA will serve the parent with an Attendance Order under Sections 437-439 of the Education Act 1996.
- If a pupil who is registered at a school fails to attend that school regularly without a legitimate reason, and attempts by the EWS and school fail to secure that pupil's return to regular attendance, the EWS will, unless there is statutory defence, take legal action against the parents before the Magistrates Court under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 or by applying for an Education Supervision order relating to the pupil under Section 36 of the Children's Act 1989.
- If, after taking legal action, the child still fails to attend school regularly, the EWS will keep the case open and will, if deemed appropriate, take further legal action at a subsequent date.
- In cases where the parents withhold a pupil from school, or persistently refuse to co-operate with efforts aimed at affecting a return to satisfactory school attendance, the EWS will promptly begin legal proceedings on the grounds that no further course of action is available.
- The school, Local Authority or Police can issue parents with a Penalty Notice if their child does not attend school. The fine is a fixed fee of £60 per adult, per child if paid within 21 days and £120 if paid after that but within 28 days. Both

parents can be fined for the same period of non-attendance. Failure to pay can lead to prosecution for non-attendance.

## **Introduction**

### **Principles**

Education is important. Missing school means missing out. Children should be at school, on time and ready to learn, every day the school is open, unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. Permitting absence from school without a good reason is an offence by the parent that can result in legal action by the Local Authority.

We understand that children are sometimes ill or unhappy about attending school. Families can be going through unsettled times that can make regular school attendance difficult. Any problems with regular attendance, especially any concerns about possible bullying or learning difficulties, are best sorted out between the school, the parents and the child at an early stage. It is never better to cover up children's absences or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending without good reason. This gives the impression that school attendance does not matter and may make things worse.

Every half-day absence from school has to be recorded by staff at the school as either **AUTHORISED** or **UNAUTHORISED**. This is why information about the cause of each absence is always required, preferably in writing.

**Authorised absences** are mornings or afternoons away from school for a reason like genuine illness or other unavoidable causes, or when permission has been given. Only the school can authorise an absence.

**Unauthorised absences** are those which the staff at school do not consider reasonable and for which no permission has been given. These are an offence by the parent and include:

- Keeping children off school without a good reason
- Children leaving school before the am/pm register has been marked
- Absences which have never been properly explained
- Children who arrive at school too late to get a mark
- Taking holidays that have not been approved by the school in advance

## **Aims**

- To improve the overall attendance of pupils at school to at least 96%
- To encourage prompt arrival at school and reduce habitual lateness
- To encourage regular attendance
- To ensure that routines are in place for monitoring attendance for early identification of any difficulties
- To promote effective partnership with the Education Welfare Service and other agencies

## **Responsibilities**

Everyone needs to be clear about their own role and how they work with their colleagues, in the school and the local authority, to ensure pupils attend school.

### **Headteacher**

- Overall responsibility to ensure that all pupils attend school regularly
- Ensure senior member of staff has overall day to day responsibility
- Ensure registers are completed correctly and kept for the required statutory period (Headteachers may be called upon to give evidence in court)
- Ultimate responsibility for authorising absence, but may delegate this to member of staff.
- Ensure all statutory requirements are met e.g. reporting to parents on attendance
- Ensure targets are set and data shared with the relevant agencies such as the LA and DfE
- Ensure the Attendance Policy is regularly reviewed
- Authorise the issue of Fixed Penalty Notices and support the Education Welfare Service with the Prosecution
- Ensure staff are aware of and monitor closely the attendance and punctuality of vulnerable children
- Ensure that staff are trained to recognise possible signs or incidents of FGM and how concerns must be reported.

### **Attendance Officer**

- Day to day management of absence
- Ensure appropriate systems are in place
- Lead training for staff on attendance monitoring and recording
- Ensure first day calling takes place
- Make referrals to Education Welfare Service
- Liaise with Education Welfare Service/class teacher and other agencies
- Ensure school is represented in meetings with parents
- Report to Headteacher and/or Management Team on attendance issues
- Check/ensure accurate data is submitted and measured over the appropriate timescale and submitted on time

- Notify EWS of the need for a Fixed Penalty Notice and provide support with Prosecution
- Generate warning letters to parents
- Discuss attendance issues with parents including strategies to improve attendance and punctuality
- Keep records of actions take to improve attendance of Persistent Absentees
- Print out reports as and when required
- Report to Governors
- Liaise with class teacher/parents/ Education Welfare Service

### **Attendance Governor/Governing Body**

- Fulfil statutory responsibilities including setting and agreeing attendance targets as required in the target setting arrangements
- Appoint Lead Governors for attendance
- Make regular reports on attendance to Governing Body
- Hold the school to account for attendance by providing challenge and ensure there is accountability for attendance
- Approve the Attendance Policy

### **Parents and Carers**

- Bringing their children to school every day and on time
- Impressing upon their children the importance of attending school regularly
- Working in partnership with the school to resolve issues which may lead to poor attendance
- Ensuring they are aware of the attendance policy of the school
- Notifying the school regarding absence, preferably on the first day of absence
- Where possible arranging dental and medical appointments outside school hours
- Ensuring that holidays are not taken during term time

### **Education Welfare Service**

- Deal with referrals in accordance with agreed procedures
- Fulfil duty for safeguarding children in line with statutory regulation
- Liaise with family, school and other agencies to ensure pupils attend school regularly
- Advise and support schools on implementing strategies to improve pupil attendance
- Support Schools with early intervention in order to improve attendance
- Support attendance officers, through training and support, on the accurate use of attendance codes and running attendance reports
- Comment on the data sent to Research and Information from schools, identify any issues/trends/inaccuracies and raise them with schools
- Provide advice and guidance on target setting

If any problems with attendance cannot be resolved, the school may refer the child to the Education Welfare Officer from the Local Authority. He/she will also try to resolve the situation by agreement wherever possible. But, if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed and unauthorised absences continue, these Officers can use legal proceedings if required, including Penalty Notices (fines) or prosecution in the Magistrates Court).

Parents or pupils may wish to contact the EWO themselves to ask for help or information. They are independent of the school and will give impartial and helpful advice. Their telephone number is available from the school office or by contacting the Local Authority.

### **Registration and Attendance Procedures**

The school has a special responsibility to reduce the number of children whose attendance is below 90% over the school year. This adds up to missing almost half a term. These are called 'persistent absentees' by the Government, whatever the reason for their absence, including authorised absences. Special procedures may be applied to children at risk of falling into this category.

The school applies the following procedures in deciding how to deal with individual absences.

Parents must ensure that the school has at least TWO up-to-date contact numbers so we can get in touch with someone if, for example your child does not arrive when expected. This is part of our duty to keep children safe.

Please note that a request for a term-time holiday is NOT a parental right. Leave may be granted in exceptional circumstances but arrangements should not be made without the school's agreement in advance. Taking leave without permission is an unauthorised absence and may be subject to a Penalty Notice fine or other legal proceedings by the Local Authority.

All requests for absence/holidays during term time must be put in writing to the Headteacher giving details reasons why the absence is needed. The Headteacher will liaise with the Attendance Officer and look at each case individually before reaching a decision. Holidays during term time are very rarely authorised.

Parents will be informed by form or letter whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised.

Only the Headteacher, not parents, decides on how to classify any absence.

Parents are asked to make routine medical and dental appointments outside school time wherever possible. Where such appointments in school time are unavoidable, the Attendance Officer should be informed in advance if at all possible. A 'present'

mark may still be awarded if the child attends for as much of the session as they can. It is always better to attend for some of the time, rather than missing the whole day.

In order to prevent children from becoming Missing from Education, the school is legally required to notify the Local Authority of all children removed from our registers outside normal transfer times, whatever the reason. Parents are requested to provide the school with all the necessary information about future addresses, new schools etc. in the event of planned changes of address etc. Any information the school holds will be passed to the relevant local authorities as required.

## **Lateness**

- Punctuality is taken seriously at Tottenhall and by the Education Welfare Service. We regularly monitor lateness and will address the issue with the parent/carer either by phone or letter, offering advice and support.
- Class teachers will also inform the Attendance officer of any pupils who are continually late so a letter can be sent to parents and any issues resolved.
- The Attendance Officer is at the gate every morning and locks the gate at 8.55am. All pupils who arrive after the gate is closed should report to the school office before being taken to their class.
- Registration closes at 9.15am. Pupils who are late **BEFORE** 9.15am (i.e. between 8.45am and 9.15am) will be marked as an authorised late. Pupils who are late **AFTER** 9.15am will be marked absent (this indicates an unauthorised late).
- Unauthorised lateness will lower the child's attendance level. The Education Welfare Officer routinely monitors our registers and is authorised to check any pupil's attendance at any time. In cases of continued lateness, they may contact the parent/carer directly.
- Reminders are put in newsletters about start and finish times of the school day and about term time absence

## **Every Day Contact**

- Parents should call the office before 9.30am every day the pupil is absent (except on a long term medical absence with written medical evidence) explaining the reason for the absence. Parents should also produce a written note if possible, giving dates and reasons for absence. Should medical evidence not be provided the absence will be recorded as unauthorised. Medical evidence includes Doctor's note, prescription and prescribed medicine bottle.
- Absence for shopping trips, birthdays, appointments for parents/siblings, weddings or helping out at home will not be authorised.
- When a pupil is absent without a message the Attendance Officer will phone the parent/carer **every** day of the child's absence to establish the reason for the absence (except in the case of the aforementioned long term medical absences).

- Children suffering from vomiting and diarrhoea will be requested to keep the child off school for a period of 48 hours since the last episode to prevent other children contracting the illness.
- The school produces reports every term and should your child's attendance drop to below 90% parents/carers will be invited to meet with the Headteacher and Attendance Officer to discuss any family/medical issues that are affecting attendance and to explore strategies to improve attendance.

### **Deletion from Roll**

- When a registered pupil fails to attend school for a period of four weeks and all efforts by the Education Welfare Office and School have been unsuccessful in tracing the child, they will be deleted from roll and will have to re-apply for a place. If the school is full it is more than likely the pupil will be placed on a waiting list.

### **Pupils not collected at the end of the School day**

It is important that pupils are collected promptly at 3.15pm as teachers regularly have meetings to attend after school and cannot supervise pupils who have not been collected. It can also be distressing for young pupils when they are not collected on time.

The London Borough of Enfield has very clear guidelines on how to deal with children not collected at the end of the school day.

Parents should call the school in advance if they know they are going to be late and inform the school what time they will be arriving to collect their child.

If the school has not been contacted by 3.25pm the Attendance Officer will contact the parent on the emergency contact numbers provided. Details of the conversation will be recorded. If the parent has not responded to the school's call and one hour has elapsed since the end of the school day, the school will make a referral to Children's Services. This contact will alert the Service that a child may need to be accommodated to await collection by their parent.

The school keeps records of children collected late. If parents persistently collect their children late from school, we will send a letter to them explaining our concerns and copy it to Children's Services and Police Youth and Community Section.

If the child is to be collected by someone else then parents should call the school office before 3pm and advise who is collecting their child. If the school does not receive a message the child will not be allowed to go with the adult until the school can contact the Parent.

We hope that parents will work with us to ensure that all pupils are collected on time at 3.15pm

## How Parents Can Help

- Bring your child/ren to school every day in plenty of time for morning registration at 8.45am.
- Ensure your child/ren are collected promptly at 3.15pm.
- Ensure you contact the school office if you are going to be late collecting your child at the end of the school day.
- Ensure you contact the school office before 9.30am **every day** your child is absent explaining why they are not at school.
- Ensure you contact the school office before 3pm to advise who is collecting your child if you are running late or cannot collect.
- Provide medical evidence, where necessary.
- Arrange medical appointments outside of school hours as much as possible.
- Do not keep children off school or birthdays, shopping/family days out, weddings, appointments for parents/siblings etc.
- Do not take holidays during term time.
- Meet with the Attendance Officer to discuss any concerns about your child's attendance as soon as possible.

## **Strategies and Rewards**

It is our target at Tottenham Infant School to achieve an Attendance level throughout the school of 95% and to reduce Persistent Absentees.

At Tottenham we have clear strategies and rewards to promote and celebrate good attendance:

- We encourage open communication with parents through every day contact, telephone calls and letters. We encourage parents to meet with us to enable us to clearly understand and support their concerns about family/health issues, which may affect their child's attendance.
- We meet with parents of new pupils to discuss our attendance policies
- We focus on the Early Years pupils through home visits and open evenings we discuss and emphasise the importance of good attendance.
- Every week 3 Bumblebees are awarded to the best class attendance in Year 1, Year 2 and Reception together with a Certificate for the highest class attendance in each year group.
- Yearly attendance awards also include a prize. Children with ongoing medical conditions/complex needs may never reach 100% because of absences that can't be avoided. This is taken into consideration to make the children feel included and reward them accordingly.

The people responsible for attendance matters in this school are:

Sian Mainwaring – Headteacher

Zaheen Younis – Deputy Headteacher

Colette Edwards – Attendance Officer

**The school has a legal duty to promote good attendance. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend regularly. School staff are committed to working closely with parents as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible.**

**Please work with us.**