

Dulwich Hamlet Educational Trust

The Belham Primary School

Attendance and Punctuality Policy



Approved by Senior Leadership Team: Spring 2018

Next Review date: Summer 2020

The Belham Primary School -Attendance and Punctuality Policy

Our Vision: Outstanding learning within a Glittering Curriculum where Everyone Matters, at the Heart of the Community.

We have set a Whole School Attendance Target of 97%

Attendance

The expectation is that all pupils will attend school daily, and arrive on time, prepared for their school day.

Why regular attendance is so important

Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence from school will seriously affect their learning. Developing and maintaining regular patterns of attendance and punctuality is a necessary lifelong skill. Any pupil's absence disrupts teaching routines and may affect the learning of others in the same class. Ensuring regular attendance at school is a parent's **legal responsibility**, and permitting absence from school without a good reason, creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

Understanding types of absence

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school, as either **AUTHORISED** or **UNAUTHORISED**. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required. Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason like illness, medical/dental appointments, which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable cause. Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been given. This includes: parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily, absences which have never been properly explained, children who arrive at school too late to get a late mark, shopping, looking after other children or birthdays, day trips and holidays in term time.

These types of absence can lead to the school contacting the Southwark Educational Welfare team who could use sanctions and/or legal proceedings.

Persistent Absenteeism 'P.A.'

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss a total of **10%** of the school year, for whatever reason. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's educational prospects, and we need parent's fullest support and co-operation to tackle this. We monitor all absence thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the P.A. mark, or is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority and parents will be informed of this by letter immediately, with the possibility of a follow up meeting with a member of the school's senior leadership team. P.A. pupils are tracked and monitored carefully through our online registers and pastoral system and we also combine this with academic mentoring,

where absence affects attainment. In such instances the school will require medical evidence for any absence.

Absence Procedures

If a child is absent:

- Parents can email the school office the day before, providing the reason for absence
- Parents can call from 8.30am onwards on the day of absence providing the reason, and by 9:30am at the very latest, explaining why the child is absent
- If the school has not heard from parents the school will begin telephoning parents, on the first day of absence from 9:30am
- If there is no response from the first listed contact, office staff will ring all listed numbers related to that child
- If all attempts to contact family and/or friends to establish the whereabouts of the pupil are unsuccessful the school will, where practical, send two members of school staff to visit the child's home and/or advise the local Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH Team) and possibly ask the local police to make a welfare visit.
- If a child's attendance falls below 95% the school will email parents to inform you of your child's attendance percentage
- If a child's attendance falls below 90% the school will liaise with parents to discuss the situation (and how best the school can support you)
- Attendance falling between 90% and 85% will be noted, termly, by the Southwark Early Help Team may be referred to the Educational Welfare Team
- If attendance moves below 85%, for a term, the school will refer the matter to the Local Authority Educational Welfare team for advice and/or input
- At any time, the school may ask parents to provide a doctor's certificate/letter to show reasons for a child's absence.

Holidays in Term Time

Taking holidays in term time will affect your child's schooling as much as any other absence and we expect parents to help us by not taking children away in school time. There is no automatic entitlement in law to time off in school time to go on holiday. All requests for holiday should be received, **by email to the Head of School**, at the school not less than three weeks before the intended period of leave. The Head of School (on behalf of the Governing Body), will only authorise leave, in exceptional circumstances which will be interpreted as: "being of unique and significant emotional, educational or spiritual value to the child which outweighs the loss of teaching time". Decisions will be made on a case by case basis with reference to the child's current level of attendance and punctuality and their academic progress.

<https://www.gov.uk/school-attendance-absence>

As a school, we must follow guidelines set by the Department for Education (DfE), and therefore should not authorise absence requests for the sole purpose of going on holiday.

We are able to authorise absences in exceptional circumstances, for example:

- a funeral of a grandparent, parent or sibling
- sudden loss of housing
- religious observance
- the wedding of a parent or sibling
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Missing a few days of school for a holiday might not seem like very much, but it can have a big effect on your child's education. Even if the absence is for just one or two days, the school needs to treat each holiday request in the same way unless, of course, there are exceptional circumstances for the request.

We would strongly discourage parents from taking their children out of school during term time to go on holiday; however, if this does happen, this will be recorded as an unauthorised absence.

If leave is taken without authority then absence will be recorded as unauthorised and consideration will be given to issuing a Fixed Penalty Notice.

Penalty Notices

Where a pupil has missed a minimum of 10 sessions (5 school days) during the current school term and where these absences have been unauthorised absences a Penalty Notice will be considered.

A parent will be issued with a formal written warning of the intention to issue a Penalty Notice.

On receipt of this warning a parent will have 15 school days to improve the pupil's attendance, in that time the pupil must have no unauthorised absences from the school. If the pupil's attendance improves and there are no further unauthorised absences the parent will not receive a penalty notice

Punctuality

Why Punctuality is important

If a child misses the start of the day they can miss out on spending time with their class teacher getting vital information and news for the day. Late arriving pupils also disrupt lessons, miss the initial teaching points of a lesson and can find coming into a room late, embarrassing.

Punctuality Procedures

- Pupils can come into the playground from 8:50am. Staff are on duty in the playground from this time to supervise pupils. Up until the opening of the gates at 8:50 pupils are the responsibility of their parent/carer.
- The school day starts at 8:55am and we expect pupils to be entering the school at this time.
- Registers are marked by **9:05am** .Pupils will receive a late mark if they are not in by 9:05am.
- If pupils arrive after 9:00 they must sign in at the school office
- Pupils arriving between 9:05 and 9:30 will receive a late mark at the discretion of office staff and Senior Leadership Team (SLT), or may be subject to the procedure below
- After 9:30am pupils will receive a mark that shows them to be on site, but this will not count as a present mark and it will mean they have an unauthorised absence (discretion can be exercised by the member of SLT on duty).
- If a child has a persistent late record, parents will be asked to meet with a member of the SLT, or the school Attendance Officer, to resolve the problem and to discuss how best the school can support the family. A written record of this meeting will be held on the child's file.

End of the school day

At the end of the school day pupils should be collected by 3:25pm. Pupils not collected by 3:30pm will be sent to the school office to await parents/carers and their name logged in the late collection book. Parents of pupils who are regularly not collected at the end of the school day will be asked to meet with a member of SLT to discuss this.

How the school encourages and supports regular attendance and punctuality

The school supports and encourages regular attendance and punctuality in the following ways:

- by providing a caring and welcoming learning environment
- by responding promptly to a child's or parent's concerns about the school or other pupils
- by being approachable and supporting parents and pupils into regular attendance
- offering Early Help in cases of persistent absenteeism, aiming to get to the root cause and provide helpful, tailored, supportive response to the family
- keeping regular and accurate records of attendance for all pupils, at least twice daily
- contacting parents by phone from 9:30 am on the first day of absence for explanation

- by publishing and displaying attendance statistics in the news letters and on the school website
- by celebrating good and improved attendance through class and individual certificates
- following up all unexplained absences to obtain notes authorising the absence
- Giving consideration to supporting families with places at Breakfast and After School Club
- by monitoring all pupils, informing parents/carers in writing of irregular attendance, arranging meetings with them if necessary and referring the family to EWO if the irregular attendance continues.
- referring irregular or unjustified patterns of attendance to the Education Welfare Service (EWS).

Educational Welfare Support

Parents are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any problems together. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, the school may refer the child to Southwark's Education Welfare/Early Help Team. They will also try to resolve the situation by agreement but, if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed and unauthorized absences persist, these Officers can use sanctions such as Penalty Notices or prosecutions in the Magistrates Court. Full details of the options open to enforce attendance at school are available from the Local Authority.

Changing schools

It is important that if families decide to send the child/children in their care to a different school that they inform school as soon as possible. A pupil will not be removed from this school roll until the following information has been received and investigated:

- the date the pupil will be leaving this school and starting the next
- the address of the new school
- the new home address, if it is known
- The school has received confirmation that the child is on roll at their new school.

The pupil's school records will then be sent on to the new school as soon as possible. In the event that the new school has not been informed, or we have not been given the details of the new school, the family will be referred to the Education Welfare Service and registered as a child 'missing from education'.