

AVENUE PRIMARY SCHOOL



ATTENDANCE POLICY

Autumn 2022

Attendance Policy

Mission Statement

‘Expect the Best ...To be the Best’

School Aims:

- To ensure that all pupils whatever their race, gender, age or ability feel valued and supported to achieve their best.
- To promote positive learning attitudes and behaviour and create safe and effective learning environments where all children and staff show mutual respect for one another.
- To provide effective and strategic leadership at all levels.
- To deliver high standards of teaching that enable children to make progress and reach high standards of attainment.

Introduction:

This Policy has been agreed by the Governors of Avenue Primary School and represents the School's commitment to striving for 100% attendance by all our children. 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.

Policy Rationale:

- Regular patterns of attendance and punctuality from nursery onwards are key factors in raising achievement and attainment of pupils.
- All children and young people aged between 5 and 16 have the right to full time education. Schools and Local Authorities have a duty to ensure they take up this right.
- Positive attitudes to attendance enable pupils to optimise opportunities both at school and in later life.
- Regular attendance is crucial to ensure equal access to the curriculum for all pupils.
- Irregular attendance may lead to disadvantage and inequality, place pupils at risk, isolate them from their peers and result in unsettled behaviour.

Guiding Principles:

- Receiving a full-time, suitable education is a child's legal right and entitlement. It is the legal responsibility of parents / carers to ensure this is provided.
- Attending school regularly aids intellectual, social and emotional development.
- Attending school regularly safeguards the welfare of children.
- All children whose attendance is poor will be treated as potentially 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 as near full-time as possible, in order to maximise their educational achievement and social development.
- To discharge the school's duty to safeguard the welfare of its pupils to the best of its ability.
- 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 work with families to identify reasons for their child/children's poor attendance and resolve these wherever possible.
- To improve the life chances of children who attend Avenue Primary School and prepare them to be fully contributing citizens when they reach adulthood.

Policy Objectives:

- To safeguard the welfare, health, social and emotional development of children.
- To improve pupils' achievement and attainment by ensuring high levels of attendance and punctuality.
- To achieve a minimum of 97% attendance for all children (apart from those with chronic health conditions)
- To create an ethos in which good attendance and punctuality are recognised as the norm and valued by the school from Nursery through to Year 6
- To reduce levels of persistent absence.
- To eliminate term time holidays/leave of absence.

Promoting Attendance:

The Governors, Headteacher and staff will use all possible opportunities to promote the importance of good attendance and punctuality. These will include the home/school agreement, newsletters, parent workshops, the school's website, rewards and incentives for significantly improving attendance. All stakeholders recognise that children should be in school every day and should arrive and leave school on time.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF PARENTS/CARERS

The Governors and staff acknowledge that there must be an effective partnership with parents and carers 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.

It is the task of every parent/carer to keep the school informed each and every day their child will be absent from school or is going to be late arriving or late being collected. The easiest way to do this is for parents/carers to use the school's attendance app as it sends messages directly to school staff.

<https://studybugs.com/>  ..

Understanding types of absence coding:

Every half-day absence from school is classified by the school as **AUTHORISED** or **UNAUTHORISED**. 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 or GP note.

Types of absence that are likely to be authorised are sickness (with sufficient proof), medical or dental emergencies which unavoidably fall in school time. Parents are asked to inform the school office on the first day of the child's absence and each consecutive day of the absence before the start of the school day.

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

Emotional based school avoidance:

Parents/carers should do everything possible to encourage their child to attend school on a daily basis. If the reason for their reluctance appears to be school-based, such as difficulty with work or disputes with peers, parents should discuss this with the school at the earliest opportunity. The school will do everything possible to resolve the issue. Colluding with your child's reluctance to attend will not resolve the matter but may worsen it. There are a number of agencies the school can work with and refer to in the most extreme cases.

Emotional based school avoidance / school refusal is a psychological condition that is medically diagnosed, and in these cases other arrangements may be made for the child's education or involvement of other agencies such as Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) and Educational Psychology services (EP). Keeping children off school for this reason may still be unauthorised and may still result in the consequences of low attendance laid out below.

Requests for leave during term-time:

Any request for leave during term time must be made in writing to the school and submitted to the

school's Attendance Officer. This will be looked at in conjunction with the school's Attendance Lead on behalf of the Headteacher. A meeting will then be arranged and held with the parent about the request and the decision made.

Each request is looked at on a case by case basis. The Headteacher will only grant leave of absence during term-time only in the **most exceptional** circumstances. In these cases, the number of school days a child can be away from school will be stated and a return date specified. Leave is not granted in most cases due to the detrimental effect of absence and persistent absences for pupils.

If a child is taken on holiday during term-time, without obtaining the school's agreement, a Penalty Notice is issued. Parents may also receive a fine if return from an extended term-time holiday, without school agreement, is delayed. A Penalty Notice requires each parent to pay £60 per child, 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.

We are unable to accept medical evidence provided from overseas. If a child has been unwell whilst abroad, medical evidence from the child's GP or Hospital in the UK is required upon return to School.

SCHOOL PROCEDURES

All staff will follow the below procedures carefully and class teachers must ensure that they complete the register daily with accuracy.

Registration and punctuality procedures:

Registers are taken twice a day. For Nursery this is at the start of each session at 8.50am and 12.20pm. For Reception to Year 6, this is once at the start of the school day at 9am, and once at the start of the afternoon session. The registers will remain open for 30 minutes. 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. In accordance with the DFE regulations, if any child arrives after that time they will receive a mark that shows them to be on site, but this will not count as a present mark and it will mean that they have an unauthorised absence. This is a **U** code which means arrival after registers have closed.

For Nursery, the morning session starts at 8:50am and a **U** code is received from 9.20am and the afternoon session starts at 12:20pm and a **U** code is received from 12.50pm. For Reception to Year 6, a **U** code is received from 9.30am.

Only the Headteacher or designated member(s) of staff acting on their behalf can authorise an absence. If there is no known reason for the absence at registration, then the absence will be recorded as **N** (Not known), until a satisfactory reason is provided. If the reason given is not satisfactory in the school's view and 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.

First Day Absence Contact:

Parents are expected to notify the school on the first day of the child's absence if their child is unable to attend for any unavoidable reason, such as illness. We encourage and recommend that all parents use the



school's attendance app for this <https://studybugs.com/>. This is the easiest way for parents and carers to send a direct message without having to call. By alternatives, an email, phone call or verbal explanation to the School Office can be made. Explanations by the child or siblings are not accepted. If the school does not receive notification, the parent/carer will receive a text/telephone call, to ascertain the reason for absence. If the child is absent due to illness, medical evidence will be requested to support the absence. This can be a copy of a prescription, doctor's certificate or the label from prescribed medicine.

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.

Class teachers and administration staff will be attentive for patterns of absences e.g. mostly Mondays or Fridays. If such a pattern is spotted, it will be brought to the attention of the school's Attendance Officer.

Second Day Absence Contact:

If the child remains absent for a second day without contact from the family, a text message/telephone call will be received to again attempt to ascertain a reason for absence. Emergency contact numbers for the pupil may be used to try and reach the family.

Third Day Absence Contact:

If a text to the family has been sent on the first and second day of the child's absence and there has been no reply, the school will make telephone calls to the family on the third day of absence. In the event of an absence of three or more days without contact from the family, the school will decide whether a home visit is needed. Emergency contact numbers for the pupil may be used to try and reach the family.

Attendance monitoring procedures:

The school's Attendance Officer monitors daily attendance and punctuality of pupils alongside the school's Attendance Lead. Regular formal monitoring of the registers takes place to identify pupils with a pattern of absences that may lead to Persistent Absence (PA). The Attendance Officer is responsible for identification of any emerging concerns, and putting in place actions for each pupil of concern. This is always a supportive process with the aim of improving attendance. Actions taken by the School Attendance Officer in relation to the absence or punctuality of an individual pupil are recorded and kept by the Attendance Officer and may be recorded on the school's safeguarding system. Initially the school will try to resolve the issues with parents/carers; if the pattern continues a referral to an appropriate source may take place. This may include the school SENDCo, the School health system, CAMHS or where there appears to be issues requiring more specialist outside intervention to support the family and the child, a referral may be made to Newham's Early Help Hub or to Social Care.

Children's attendance will be monitored according a traffic light system:

Above 97%: Less than 6 days absence a year – Less than 30 Hours of Learning Lost

Excellent attendance! These young people will almost certainly get the best levels/grades they can, leading to better prospects for the future. Pupils will also get into a habit of attending school which will help in the future.

95%: 10 days absence a year – 50 Hours of Learning Lost

These pupils are less likely to achieve their target levels/grades and will start to find it difficult to maintain a habit of attending school regularly. Pupils who take a 2-week holiday can only achieve 95% attendance.

90%: 19 days absence a year – 95 Hours of Learning Lost

The Government classes pupils in this group as “Persistent Absentees”, and it will be almost impossible to keep up with work and achieve their target levels/grades. Parents of young people in this group could also face the possibility of legal action being taken by Newham Council, including the issuing of Penalty Notices and Fines.

Above table taken from Newham Connect (Autumn 2018)

Green = 96% - 100%: Children are meeting national and school expectations.

Amber = 92% - 95%: Parents are invited for a parent’s meeting with the Attendance Officer or Attendance Lead and attendance is monitored for an agreed period of time. Children and families are brought to the attention of the Attendance Management Service (AMS).

Red = 92% and below: Parents will be invited to a meeting with the service and a formal referral may be made in order that further investigations can be made. Less than 90% means that the child is classed as a persistent absentee (PA) from school. All Persistently Absent pupils and their parents will be subject to a Parenting Contract with an action plan which will be agreed at an attendance parents surgery. Such a plan or contract may include allocation of additional in-school or external support.

Any child who is absent for 12 consecutive or cumulative sessions (6 school days), have an overall attendance percentage under 90% or has a pattern of erratic attendance or persistent lateness after registers close may be referred to the Attendance Management Service of the London Borough of Newham. This is in order that further investigations can be made. Such cases may result in a meeting or meetings with or 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.

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:

- 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 they do not pay within 21 days, but pay within 28 days, the fine rises to £120 per parent per child.
- 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.
- In some cases, action may be taken under the Children Act 1989 to protect the welfare and development of the child. This will result in a referral to Newham Early Help Hub or Social Care.

The above may also apply where leave during term time has been taken without school’s permission.

Children who Cease to Attend without Prior Notification (Child Missing in Education) procedures:

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

Non starters:

Pupils who are allocated places but fail to start are also treated as Children Missing in Education. If the school has been unable to make contact with the family for a ten-day period after their expected arrival, the pupil’s details will be referred to the Local Authority CME team for further checks.

Reporting attendance and punctuality:

It is a legal responsibility to include attendance on a child's annual report. This information includes the number of authorised and unauthorised absences out of the maximum number of possible attendance, together with the number of late marks. This information is also reported at parent consultation events. It is of vital importance that this information is accurate. This is the responsibility of all staff.

NURSERY PUPILS

Children's attendance in Nursery will be monitored in the same way as the rest of the school. The school has the direct right to take a child off roll if the child has been continuously absent for 21 days or more or if the child's attendance has fallen below 85%. CME procedures are not needed in this case.

VULNERABLE CHILDREN

Children Looked After (CLA) status, Children who were previously Looked After, children subject to a Child Protection Plan (CP) or a Child in Need plan (CIN), or pupils with a current Social Care assessment taking place will be treated with the highest priority. Any unexplained absence will be followed up immediately by a telephone call. The Designated Lead for Safeguarding or the assigned member of the Safeguarding Team for that pupil will be alerted of every day of absence for these pupils so any allocated Social Worker or Early Help Worker can be informed. Conversations with the Attendance Officer and Designated Lead for Safeguarding take place daily to make risk assessment judgements and decide appropriate actions.

Children with significant Special Educational Needs or disabilities (SEND) will be treated with similar priority and the school Inclusion Team are informed of their absence.

Children as classified above are only taken off role with permission of the Designated Lead for Safeguarding.

PUNCTUALITY

Punctuality to school is essential for pupils to do well and is encouraged and promoted as equally as high levels of attendance. If pupils regularly miss the start of the day, they miss vital information about the day and key parts of their learning. In our school all classes carry out Reading lessons first thing in the morning so this is missed.



Pupils arriving late can disrupt lessons, be embarrassed by their lateness and therefore further absence may be encouraged. We recognise that lateness is rarely the fault of the child and seek to integrate them into the classroom as soon as possible and as positively as possible.

Punctuality is monitored alongside attendance. As with concerns with attendance, we seek to work effectively with parents and carers to establish the reasons for poor punctuality and eliminate these together. As indicated in Keeping Children Safe in Education 2022, children who have persistence absences for part of the school day may benefit from appropriate Early Help.

If any child has a persistent late record parents/carers will be sent a warning letter. If poor punctuality continues, parents will be asked to meet with the School Attendance Officer or the School's Attendance

Lead to resolve the problem. Parents and carers can approach the school for support at any time if they are experiencing difficulty in getting their child to school.

RECOGNITION OF ACHIEVEMENT

The school believes that high levels of attendance are an expectation to all. We also recognise that many factors affect attendance that are beyond a child's control. We therefore believe that the best way to recognise and reward good and improving attendance is targeting this to individual children rather than to classes or year groups.

- Parents and classes are notified regularly of classes attendance levels and whole school attendance via the school website, parent signage screens and newsletters
- Individual pupils will receive rewards and incentives as part of a individual attendance contracts
- Children obtaining 100% attendance over the year are awarded in assembly in July.
- Communication with parents via the school's praise app, Marvellous Me



RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE GOVERNING BODY

The Governing Body receives a termly attendance report from the School Attendance Officer. This is incorporated within the Head Teacher's termly written report. The Governors will comment on the report, and if possible, make suggestions as to how overall attendance might be improved. The Link Governor for Safeguarding has within their role attendance responsibility.

REVIEW AND MONITORING

The Headteacher, Governors and staff of the school will monitor the effectiveness and quality of the Attendance Policy on an annual basis, in collaboration with the Local Authority and Attendance Management Officer. It will be reviewed on each occasion.

Approved Date: Autumn 2022

Review Date: Autumn 2023