

PUPIL ATTENDANCE POLICY

Reviewed and amended: October 2018
Status: Statutory

Introduction:

Harlington is a successful school and pupils play their part in making it so. We aim for an environment which enables and encourages all members of the community to reach out for excellence. For our pupils to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly. Pupils should be at school, on time, every day the school is open, unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

It is very important therefore that you make sure that your child attends regularly and this policy sets out how together we will achieve this.

Why regular attendance is so important:

Any absence affects the pattern of a pupil's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any pupil's absence also disrupts teaching routines so may affect the learning of others in the same class.

Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is your legal responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

Parents/ Carers/ Guardians:

For ease of reading, the word parent is taken to be the person who has parental responsibility, either as a parent, carer or legal guardian.

Promoting regular attendance:

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility - parents, pupils and all members of school staff.

To help us all to focus on this we will:

- Report to you at least termly on how your child is performing in school, what their attendance and punctuality rate is, along with their progress, effort and attainment;
- Celebrate good attendance by displaying individual and class achievements;
- Reward good or improving attendance through class competitions, certificates and outings/events.
- Run promotional events when Parents/ Carers/ Guardians, pupils and staff can work together on raising attendance levels across the school.

- Employ the attendance diamond initiative to ensure all pupils are aware of their attendance on a weekly basis
- Insist pupils complete a 'return to school' form following every period of unexplained absence

Understanding types of absence:

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by the Parents/ Carers/ Guardians), as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required in writing. Our legal registration periods occur at the beginning of registration period for the morning session, and Period 5 or 6 for the afternoon session.

- 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 type of absence can lead to the Local Authority Participation Team using sanctions and/or legal proceedings.

Unauthorised absences include:

- Parents/ Carers/ Guardians keeping pupils off school unnecessarily
- Truancy before or during the school day
- Absences which have never been properly explained
- Pupils who arrive at school too late to get a mark
- Shopping, looking after other pupils/ younger siblings or birthdays
- Day trips and holidays in term time which have not been agreed
- Excessive illness without medical evidence

Whilst any pupil may be off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best resolved between the school, the Parents/ Carers/ Guardians and the pupil. If your child is reluctant to attend, it does not help your child to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and may sometimes make things worse.

You can support your child by:

- Ensuring regular and early bed times
- Helping with homework
- Having uniform and equipment prepared the night before
- Providing a healthy breakfast
- Reporting any academic or social concerns promptly
- Retaining open & honest communication with us
- Being positive about school (even if your own experience was less than positive)
- Encouraging your child to invite school friends home so they can form secure friendships

Persistent Absenteeism (PA):

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason. Absence at this level causes considerable damage to any pupil's educational prospects and we need Parents/ Carers/ Guardian's fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

We monitor all absence thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority and you will be informed of this immediately.

PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully through our pastoral system and we also combine this with academic mentoring where absence affects attainment.

All our PA pupils and their Parents/ Carers/ Guardians are subject to an Action Plan which may include: allocation of additional support through a Mentor or an LSA; individual incentive programmes; participation in group activities around raising attendance; in-house attendance panels. All PA cases are also automatically made known to the Participation Officer.

Absence Procedures:

If your child is absent you must:

- Contact us as soon as possible on the first day of absence. The attendance direct line is 0208 587 3505. Alternatively you can contact our attendance officer Mrs Beech at sbeech@harlingtonschool.org
- Send a note in on the first day they return with an explanation of the absence – you must do this even if you have already telephoned us;
- Or, you can call into school and report to reception, who will arrange for a member of staff to speak with you.

If your child is absent we will take a number of steps which may include:

- Telephone or text you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you, using Truancy Call
- In some instances on day 2 of any absence the School inclusion team may undertake a home visit.
- If there has been no contact from the home/family after 5 school days, School inclusion team member(s) will make a home visit.
- After 10 days, with still no contact from the home/ family, the Attendance officer will complete the referral form and request the Participation Officer makes a home visit.
- Invite you in to discuss the situation with our Attendance Officer and/or Pastoral Leaders, Assistant Head teacher or Head teacher if absences persist;
- Organise a meeting with your child or a member of the pastoral team if attendance drops below 85%
- Refer the matter to our Participation Officer if attendance drops below 80%.

Telephone numbers:

There are times when we need to contact Parents/ Carers/ Guardians about a range of things, including absence, so we need to have your contact numbers at all times. Please ensure that we have 2 accurate and up to date telephone contact numbers. There will be regular checks on telephone numbers throughout the year.

The Participation Officer:

Parents/ Carers/ Guardians 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 will record any unauthorised leave and will refer the pupil to the Participation Team from the Local Authority. They will try to resolve the situation by agreement but, if other ways of trying to improve the pupil's attendance have failed and unauthorised absences persist, these Officers can use sanctions such as Penalty Notices or prosecutions in the Magistrates Court. (This is a penalty notice of £60 per parent, per child payable within 21 Days, which increases to £120 per parent if not paid within 28 Days. Failure to pay may result in a prosecution at Uxbridge Magistrates Court. In some instances a court summons will be issued instead of a penalty notice.)

"If any pupil of compulsory school age who is a registered pupil at a school fails to attend regularly at the school, his/her Parents/ Carers/ Guardian is guilty of an offence."

Alternatively, Parents/ Carers/ Guardians or pupils may wish to contact the Education Welfare Service themselves to ask for help or information. They are independent of the school and will give impartial advice. Their telephone number is 01895 250858 or participationteam@hillington.gov.uk

Our Participation Officer is Mr Antoine Julien-Charles.

Lateness:

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If your child misses the start of the day they miss out on their education as lessons commence at 8:10am. Late arriving pupils also disrupt lessons, can be embarrassing for the pupil and can also encourage absence.

How we manage lateness:

The school day starts at **8:10am** and we expect pupils to be in class and ready to learn at that time. Pupil planners indicate that we expect pupils to be in school by 8.05am so they are in school before the first lesson starts.

At **8.45am** the registers will be closed. In accordance with regulations, if pupils arrive 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 they have an unauthorised absence. This may mean that you could face the possibility of a Penalty Notice if the problem persists.

If a pupil has a persistent late record you will be asked to meet with a member of the pastoral team and/or Attendance Officer to resolve the problem, but you can approach us at any time if you are having problems getting your child to school on time.

Exceptional Leave:

Taking holidays in term time will affect your child's schooling as much as any other absence. ***We do not authorise any holiday requests during term time.***

Remember that any savings you think you may make by taking a holiday in school time are offset by the cost to your child's education.

There is **no** automatic entitlement in law to time off in school time to go on holiday. Head teachers are not permitted to authorise any holidays during term time, and may only authorise absence in **exceptional** circumstances.

1. It is widely known that the link between a pupil's attendance and attainment is irrefutable.

2. Early poor attendance habits follow through secondary school and into employment.
3. Graduates earn an average of £15.01p.h. Young people that leave school with no qualifications earn an average of £7.44p.h
4. All Hillingdon schools are encouraged to adopt a policy of not authorising Exceptional Leave. Outstanding cases remain in the personal gift of the Head Teacher both to authorise and determine the duration
5. The Head Teacher or one of the Deputy Head teachers may want to meet personally with every family applying for Exceptional Leave to stress the importance of good school attendance habits and links between attendance & attainment.
6. Exceptional Leave will always be refused in Years 9 and 11.
7. Exceptional leave will always be refused when a pupil's attendance is less than 95%.
8. Exceptional leave should always be refused when school is aware of any truancy.
9. Exceptional leave should always be refused when requests are regular (annual) or when patterns become identifiable.
10. Reasons for Exceptional Leave should be logged on the pupil's record and shared as part of the transfer/transition process.
11. The Participation Services can issue Fixed Penalty Notices for any unauthorised absence. A second occurrence may lead to a court summons
12. We receive countless requests for emergency leave, citing an unwell family member abroad, and they often occur in the lead up to the school holidays. Please be aware that we may request evidence of when flights are booked, or evidence of the illness described. Please accept our apologies in advance of us requesting this information, but it is necessary, to ensure that genuine emergencies can be verified.

Those people responsible for attendance matters in Harlington School are:

Ms S Beech, Attendance Officer
 Ms L Gabriel, Sixth form Study Manager
 Mrs A Maidment, Associate Headteacher
 Ms E Horrigan, Headteacher
 Mr T Little, Governor with responsibility for attendance

Statutory Government Guidance:

The school has a legal responsibility to publish attendance data to the local authority.

Harlington is proud of its multi-cultural community and makes every reasonable effort to meet the needs of all our pupils. DfE guidance states that only days officially set apart for religious observance by the relevant religious body can be granted as authorised absence for this purpose. Approval for any additional leave requests are at the discretion of the school. Requests of this kind should be processed in the same way as any ordinary absence request, and should not be recorded as absence for religious observance.

Parents/ Carers/ Guardians:

Parents/ Carers/ Guardians are under a legal duty to ensure that their child (aged 5-19) receives a suitable full time education either at a school or by making other suitable arrangements.

Where a pupil is not a registered pupil and other suitable arrangements are not made, the Parents/ Carers/ Guardian may receive a school attendance order from the local authority requiring them to register their child at a school.

For school registered pupils or those attending Pupil Referral Units (PRU's) Parents/ Carers/ Guardians must ensure that their child attends punctually and regularly. If they do not, the school or local authority may ask them to sign a parenting contract or may issue a financial penalty

sanction. The local authority may also prosecute a Parents/ Carers/ Guardian who fails to ensure their child's regular attendance or apply to the courts for an education supervision order in respect of the pupil.

Please note that if new statutory guidance is published by the Department for Education before the next annual ratification of this policy, the most current legislation will apply.

PUPIL ATTENDANCE AND ABSENCE- Further guidance

This policy should be read with reference to the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 SI 2006/1751(as amended 2010, 2011, 2013, 2016), the Education Act 1996 and DFE guidance publication 'School attendance' (November 2016) www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-attendance. DFE statutory guidance for local authorities 'Children missing education' September 2016 will also be helpful.

Background

The Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006 SI 2006/1751 and amendments thereto make provision for admission registers and attendance registers of pupils. Regulations on the granting of leave of absence for pupils were tightened with effect from September 2013, particularly in relation to parental requests for leave of absence in term time for family holidays. Parents may not authorise absence; only headteachers or those authorised by the headteacher can do this. Schools may authorise absence but inappropriate use can be just as damaging to a child's education as unauthorised absence. Since all absences are to be treated as unauthorised unless and until schools agree on a satisfactory explanation, it is clearly important that schools have procedures, consistently applied, for chasing up explanations and amending registers. (See accompanying Pupils Attendance policy June 2017)

Further regulations introduced in 2016 require schools to notify their local authority (LA) when they remove or add a pupil's name to the admissions register at non-standard transition times and both parties are required to liaise and make reasonable enquiries where a child has not returned to school within 10 school days after an authorised absence or where a pupil is absent without authorisation for at least 20 school days. These measures are to try to prevent children from becoming missing from education and better safeguard them. Harlington is fully compliant with these regulations.

The Education Act 1996 requires parents or guardians to ensure their children receive efficient, full-time education, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise. The 'otherwise' includes home education; (the right of parents to do this was established in a famous legal battle between Norfolk LA and two parents who wanted to educate their child at home).

Requirements for school sessions

The law regulating the school day and school year applies only to schools maintained by an LA and special schools not maintained by an LA. It does not apply to academies and free schools.

Every school day must have two sessions divided by a break. The length of each session, break and the school day is determined by the school's governing board which now has the power to revise the length of the school day as it sees fit. There is no requirement to consult parents on revisions to the school day but it would be advisable.

Schools must meet for at least 380 sessions or 190 days during any school year to educate their pupils. If Harlington is prevented from meeting for one or more sessions because of an unavoidable event,

the school will endeavour to find a practical way of holding extra sessions. If it cannot find a practical way of doing this, then it is not required to make up the lost sessions.

The Education Act 1996 also states through regulations that parents must be informed of the days, and the hours of those days, that the school their children are attending is in session. This information can be found on our website and is published at regular intervals.

Admission and attendance registers

All schools are required to maintain two registers:

An admission register (known as the school roll).

An attendance register

The admission register will contain a list of all pupils at the school and is used for such purposes as parent governor elections.

Headteachers are required to ensure that an attendance register for all pupils on the school roll is taken twice a day: once at the start of the morning session and once during the afternoon session. Schools must differentiate between authorised and unauthorised absence and code entries on the attendance register according to nationally used codes. Harlington is fully compliant with these regulations.

Approved educational activities off-site

The absence of pupils taking part in supervised educational activities outside the school is recorded as 'approved educational activity'. This is equivalent to 'present' for performance table purposes. To avoid confusion in an emergency, eg the evacuation of the school because of a bomb-scare, schools should not record pupils who are off-site as present.

The following activities show when the approved educational activity category can be used:

Field trips and educational visits, in this country and overseas.

Participation in, or attendance at, approved sporting activities.

Interviews with prospective employers or for a place at a further or higher education establishment (year 11 only).

Link courses, whereby pupils attend an FE college for part of the time.

Franchised pupils receiving part of their tuition off-site at another location while remaining under overall supervision of the home school (ie a flexible arrangement short of formal dual registration). This can include special tuition for dyslexic children and sick children being taught at home but remaining on roll.

Where a school has to close due to severe weather conditions, fire or other structural damage or for in-service training, no attendance registers are needed. Schools, must notify the LA if a pupil attends irregularly or is absent continuously without authorisation for ten or more school days. Harlington is fully compliant with these regulations.

Authorised absence

The following table gives a list of acceptable absences that would be authorised absences whether the school is informed before or after the event.

Authorised absences

Illness, medical and dental appointments	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Missing registration for a medical or dental appointment.• Pupils should be encouraged to make appointments out of school hours. Sight of an appointment card is advisable if a pupil is an irregular attendee.• If a pupil is present for registration but has a medical appointment later, or returns home because of illness, no absence need be recorded for that session.• Schools should keep a record of pupils leaving or returning to site in case of an emergency.• If the authenticity of illness is in doubt, schools and EWOs can consult the school health service, or the pupil's GP.• A pupil receiving medical treatment on site should be marked 'present'.
Days of religious observance	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Absence to take part in any day set aside exclusively for religious observance by the religious body to which the parents belong, including religious festivals.• Parents should be encouraged to give advance notice.
Interviews with prospective employers, or for a place at another school (including entrance examinations)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• If the interview takes place during year 11 and the school is satisfied it is linked to future education or employment prospects, absence can be recorded as 'approved educational activity'.• School staff should normally ask for advance notice and proof of the appointment eg a letter of invitation.
Study leave	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Study leave should be used sparingly and only for year 11 pupils during mock and public examinations.• Regard should be paid to the individual pupil's ability to manage study leave and benefit from it. Schools should make arrangements for pupils wanting to take study leave in school. .
Dual registration involving pupil referral units (PRUs or special schools)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Where a pupil is dually registered at institution X and Y, institution X marks the pupil authorised absent while they are attending institution Y and vice-versa. Both institutions share responsibility for the child.

- The law allows for dual registration of pupils at a PRU or a special school and another local school. This helps, for example, to ease a phased return to mainstream education.
 - Failure to attend either institution at the proper time without good reason is unauthorised absence.
- Family holidays during term-time
- Parents may not normally take pupils on holidays in term-time.
 - Schools should not consider a request for family holidays during term time to be an acceptable exceptional circumstance.
 - If a school does not agree absence and the pupil goes on holiday, absence is unauthorised.
 - If, having been granted exceptional circumstances by the headteacher, parents keep a child away from school for longer than was agreed, any extra time is recorded as unauthorised.
- Exclusion
- A pupil excluded for a fixed period remains on roll and the absence should be treated as authorised as it results from a decision taken by the school.
 - Similarly, the absence of a permanently excluded pupil is treated as authorised while any review or appeal is in progress.
 - If a permanent exclusion is confirmed, the pupil's name should be removed from the school roll on the school day either after the appeal committee's confirmation of permanent exclusion or on expiry of the time allowed for appeals to be made; or, if before that, the pupil takes up a place elsewhere. Meanwhile absence should be recorded as authorised.
 - Teachers are responsible for setting work for an excluded pupil who remains on the school roll.

Exceptional circumstances

Where a local or national emergency has resulted in widespread disruption to travel which has prevented the pupil from attending school, the absence should be recorded using the letter Y code. Harlington is fully compliant with these regulations.

Unauthorised absence

This includes 'holidays' taken by parents with their children during term time. It also includes truancy and other examples of absence such as staying at home to look after younger children, shopping, having hair cut, and any absence the school has not been informed about. The headteacher will need to keep the governing board informed of the level of unauthorised absence because the school will be required to publish this information and make yearly returns to the DFE.

Family holidays

Regulation 7 of the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) 2006 Regulations was amended in 2013 to prohibit headteachers or 'proprietors' at maintained schools from granting leave of absence to a pupil except where an application has been made in advance and the headteacher considers that there are exceptional circumstances relating to the application. Term-time holidays would not be considered to be exceptional. It is, however, for schools to determine whether or not they agree to a family holiday during term time.

Responsibilities of the LA, staff, pupils and parents

It is the responsibility of the LA to ensure that parents meet their responsibilities. Attendance enforcement is usually carried out by the LA education service which provides an important link between schools and families.

Headteachers in all maintained schools (including academies) are required to tell the LA if a pupil fails to attend regularly or has been absent for a continuous period of ten days and the absence is treated as unauthorised. Headteachers can, of course, notify the LA earlier if there are areas of concern. When it comes to the attention of an LA that a child is not receiving a suitable education either by regular attendance at school or otherwise than at a school, the LA has a duty under section 437 of the Education Act 1996 to serve a notice or a school attendance order to the parent. The notice requires the parent to satisfy the LA that the child is receiving a suitable education while the order requires the parent to register the child at a named school.

LAs also have powers under sections 444, 444A and 444ZA of the Education Act 1996 to bring legal action against parents in order to enforce attendance at school.

Staff members need to ensure that pupils are registered accurately and efficiently. Parents or guardians should be contacted when reasons for absence are unknown or unauthorised. Pupil attendance and lateness need to be monitored regularly. School attendance statistics need to be reported to the governing board regularly.

Pupils should be encouraged to attend school regularly and inform staff if there is a problem that may lead to absences. Similarly, parents or guardians should encourage good attendance and inform the school on the first day of non-attendance and discuss planned absences with the school in advance (eg family holidays, special occasions).

Parents have a prime responsibility to ensure that their children who are of compulsory school age attend school. If a child does not attend regularly, parents should work closely with the school and any assigned Participation officers to resolve the problem. Participation Officers have the following legal powers to enforce attendance:

- School attendance orders.
- Prosecution for irregular attendance. There are two offences relating to parental responsibility for ensuring regular school attendance:
 - One is a matter of simple fact – if the child is absent without authorisation (truancy) then the parent is guilty of an offence. Penalties can include a fine
 - The other – an aggravated offence – requires proof that the parent knew about the child's absence and failed to act. Penalties can include a fine and/or a custodial sentence of up to three months.

Other possible sentences (for both offences) include parenting orders, fines and community orders:

- Penalty notices for irregular attendance.
- Education supervision orders.

Under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, the police now have powers to remove truants found in public places and to return them either to their schools or a place designated by the LA. Harlington is fully compliant with these regulations.

Guidance material/resources:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/564599/school_attendance.pdf

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/561546/Participation-of-young-people-in-education-employment-or-training.pdf