



# **ATTENDANCE POLICY**

# Old Palace Primary School Attendance Policy

## **School Attendance Aims**

At Old Palace we value good attendance, recognising the potential effect absences can have on a child's welfare and their academic, social and emotional progress. We expect all children to attend every day when the school is open, as long as they are fit and healthy enough to do so. We do all we can to encourage and support good attendance, including making school a happy and rewarding experience for our pupils. As part of our safeguarding duties, we closely monitor absences.

A 90% attendance level is the equivalent of missing 4 weeks of school in an academic year or a whole year of education if this continues throughout a child's primary and secondary education.

Statistics show a direct link between underperformance and poor attendance. Below 90% attendance, children are likely to underachieve; whereas students with attendance above 90% achieve higher standards in their SATs tests.

## **Roles, Responsibilities and Procedures**

It should be clear that attendance is regarded as the responsibility of pupils, parents and all staff, who will work in partnership to ensure regular attendance so that pupils can reach their potential.

### **Pupils should:**

- Take some responsibility for their own learning;
- Make sure they arrive at school by 8.55am and come prepared for the school day;
- Take full advantage of all opportunities offered in school;
- Bring any worries or difficulties to the attention of an adult.

### **Parents should:**

- Help your child develop good habits from an early age by taking responsibility for them arriving at school by 8.55am and achieving good levels of attendance
- Arrange dental and doctor's appointments out of school hours or during school breaks whenever possible.
- Not keep children off school for minor ailments
- Ring the school before 9.15am on the first morning of an absence to let us know the reason for the absence and when the child is likely to return to school.
- Send children in for afternoon sessions, if they are feeling better. In KS1 they should be brought in at 1pm and in KS2 at 1.30pm
- If the absence is likely to continue for more than three days, on the third day provide medical evidence. This could include bringing in prescribed medication in the original packing or providing copies of original medical documentation. Where original documentation is not available, the name and contact details of the professional seen by the child should be provided so the school can verify the information provided by the parent. The original documents can then be provided once received.
- Follow school procedure by not allowing pupils who have vomited or who have diarrhoea to return to school until 48 hours after the last episode to prevent infection.

- Ensure that pupils do not take time off school for any of the following reasons:
  - To translate for family or friends;
  - To visit relatives;
  - To go shopping;
  - To go to the airport;
  - To look after siblings.
  - To sleep in after a late night

Such absences will be recorded as unauthorised.

- Talk to your child about any issues that may be making them want to miss school
- Do not allow your child to persuade you into making excuses for him/her
- Accept the support offered by the school and the Attendance Welfare Adviser to work together on resolving any attendance issue, including attending any meetings that have been arranged.
- Refrain from requesting leave for pupils during term time, other than in exceptional circumstances

### **The school will support good attendance by:**

- Communicating the importance of good attendance through:
  - The Home School agreement and pupil admission interviews;
  - Weekly Friday whole school assemblies.
  - Parents' newsletters
  - Pupils' end of year reports and parent consultations
- Acknowledging and rewarding good attendance
- Operating a first day calling policy to contact parents who have not called the school to inform us of their child's absence. This is to ensure the child is safe.
- Operating a second day home visit policy, where we have been unable to contact the parents by the second day of a child's absence
- Call parents on the third consecutive day of their child's progress to gain an update and to request medical evidence
- Safeguard pupils by following up unsubstantiated and unauthorised absences with parents
- Implementing a return to school plan where a child has been absent from school for a long period of time (for example as the result of an operation or serious illness)
- Providing preventative actions such as AWA drop in sessions and health workshops.
- Monitoring each child's attendance and contacting parents should concerns arise.
- Analysing attendance data termly to identify patterns, set targets and inform policy and practice.
- Providing excellent levels of care and guidance for pupils and parents, including access to the Parent Support Workers, Attendance Welfare Advisor (AWA), School Social Worker and the School Nurse to support families experiencing difficulties.

### **The Governors will support good attendance by:**

- Ensuring that the school meets its legal responsibility to take an attendance register at the start of the morning and afternoon session and uses the statutory registration codes when coding pupil absences.
- Setting annual attendance targets
- Tracking attendance levels and holding senior leaders to account for meeting the targets set
- Adopting the Tower Hamlets Policy on Leave during Term Time

### **Types of Absence**

Every half day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by the parents), as either authorised or unauthorised:

### Authorised Absence

An absence is classified as authorised when a child has been away from school for a legitimate reason and the school has received notification and the necessary evidence from a parent or guardian.

Examples of authorised absence include:

- Illness
- Emergency medical/ dental appointment
- Bereavement of close family
- Attendance at secondary school interviews

Pupils are also allowed authorised leave for religious observance. As the vast majority of pupils are followers of Islam, the school closes for Eid celebrations. The school follows the advice of the East London Mosque when deciding, at the beginning of the school year, on which days to close. It is very important that pupils return to school on the day following an Eid closure, when lessons will resume as normal.

### Unauthorised Absence

These are absences 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 considering the use of legal sanctions.

### Persistent Absenteeism

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's education and we need parent's fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

We monitor all absence and the reasons given 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 we will inform the parents/carers immediately.

Appendix 1 provides guidance provided by the Health Protection Agency (2013) on common illnesses.

Ensuring that your child knows how to wash his/her hands thoroughly will reduce the risk of cross-infection. School attendance could be improved for all if children and families wash and dry their hands well five or more times a day.

### **Missing Children**

- Where the school has been unable to contact parents by the end of the second day of absence, the school will contact the child's emergency contacts to seek information.
- On fifth day of absence (10 sessions) the school will make a formal referral to the local authority's Attendance and Welfare team.
- Following this the Attendance and Welfare Advisor (AWA) will conduct an initial investigation.
- If unsuccessful the AWA will make a 'Missing Children Referral' to Missing Children Referral Officer (MCR)
- If the child does not return to school, on the 21st day of absence school will request the child be taken off role, so that their place can be offered to another child.
- MCR Officer will continue to investigate.

### **Incentives and Rewards**

The school will recognise good and improved attendance through:

- Certificates awarded in the Friday assembly to the class in each key stage achieving the highest attendance percentage.
- Parents' newsletters, which report on trends in attendance and list the pupils achieving 100% attendance each term
- Pencils and certificates awarded at the end of each term to children achieving 99% or 100% attendance
- An annual attendance prize awarded to all pupils who have achieved 100% attendance over the whole school year
- In order not to penalise children with medical conditions, significant improvements in their attendance are rewarded through the use of well done certificates.

## **Lateness**

Children should be present in the school playground by 8.55am ready to enter the building at 9am. The school gates will be closed by 9am and children arriving after this time must be escorted to the school office.

Arriving late causes considerable interference to the child's and their classmates' education, disrupting routines and delaying the start of lessons. Lateness can also be classified as a form of unauthorised absence.

Levels of lateness are monitored through weekly register checks. In cases where a child has arrived late 10 or more times in a term, a letter is sent to parents, explaining that the child's punctuality needs to improve and offering support to address this. If the child's punctuality does not improve following this, a formal referral is made to the Attendance Welfare Advisor which may result in a fine being imposed.

Situations may arise that make it difficult for parents to bring their children to school on time, in such circumstances these should be discussed with the school. To support good attendance and punctuality the school offers a breakfast club from 8am daily.

## **Attendance Welfare Advisor**

The school's Attendance Welfare Advisor is independent of the school and provides impartial advice. They carry out statutory duties on behalf of the Local authority to ensure that parents/ carers fulfil their legal responsibilities in relation to school attendance.

Any families worried about attendance may wish to make an appointment with the Attendance Welfare Advisor to discuss their concerns and to request support. An appointment can be made by telephoning the school or contacting the school office.

In most instances, by working together the school, parents and Attendance Welfare Advisor can successfully resolve any problems together. However if attendance fails to improve, legal action may be taken against the parents/ carers, including prosecutions in the Magistrates Court.

## **Absence for Holidays or Visits Abroad**

The school follows the Tower Hamlets' Policy on leave during term time.

Holidays and visits to family must be taken in the 13 weeks of the year when schools are closed. Parents are advised that if children are taken out of school they may lose their school places and may not be able to return to the school. Parents are strongly advised not to risk this happening

Applications for leave during term time should be made prior to travel arrangements being made, using the form available from the School Office. Once the completed form is received, the office staff will arrange an appointment with the Attendance Welfare Advisor to discuss the reasons for the request. In all, but exceptional cases, requests for leave during term time will not be authorised by the headteacher and this will be confirmed in writing. It is very important that pupils do not return late to school following the summer holiday, as rules and expectations are set by class teachers during the first week of school.

If a parent chooses to take their child out of school for unauthorised leave, they must provide contact details for the family during their time away and details of the child's return date to school. If this information is not provided the child may be categorised as 'Missing in Education' and the procedures for Missing Children will apply.

More detailed information please refer to the school's policy on leave during term time, which is available on the school website

### **Monitoring and Support**

The Inclusion Co-ordinator, Parent Support Workers and the Attendance Welfare Advisor (AWA) meet weekly to monitor attendance and to co-ordinate on-going support.

Where there is a fall in a child's attendance, initial support is provided by the school's Parent Support Workers.

Should attendance fall to 90%, this will trigger a referral to the AWA, who will arrange a formal meeting with the child's parents. When appropriate, the school's Designated Safeguarding Lead, the school nurse and the school social worker may also attend these meetings. Details of the reasons provided for the absence and any agreed actions will be recorded.

Following this meeting the child's attendance will continue to be monitored and further meetings may be arranged if necessary. Should attendance not improve this may result in a referral for court action

Attendance levels are reported termly to the Governing Body as part of the Headteachers' report. The AWA also prepares an annual attendance report for the school.

## APPENDIX 1 – NHS GUIDANCE

Chicken Pox	Stay off school until blisters have all crusted over or skin has healed – usually 5-7 days from the onset of the rash.
Conjunctivitis / Ringworm	Seek medical advice.
Diarrhoea and/or Vomiting	Stay off school for 48 hours (24 hours after last bout & 24 hours for recovery). Ensure your child understands why they must wash their hands frequently.
German Measles / Rubella	Return to school 6 days after the rash appears, but advise the school immediately as pregnant staff need to be informed.
Head Lice	Please refer to Head Lice Policy.
Impetigo	Stay off school until the sores have crusted over and healed, or 48 hours after commencing antibiotic treatment.
Measles	Stay off school for 4 days after the rash appears.
Mumps	Stay off school for 5 days after the swelling appears.
Scabies	Your child can return to school once they have been given their first treatment, although itchiness may continue for 3-4 weeks. All members of the household and those in close contact should receive treatment.
Scarlet Fever	Return to school 24 hours after starting the appropriate antibiotic treatment.
Slapped Cheek	No need to stay off school (infectious before rash), but advise the school immediately as pregnant staff members need to be informed.
Whooping Cough	Stay off school until 5 days of antibiotic treatment has been given or 21 days from onset of the illness if no antibiotic treatment has been prescribed.
Shingles	Stay off school only if the rash is weeping and cannot be covered. Advise the school immediately as pregnant staff members need to be informed.