



Attendance Policy

To be reviewed annually by governing body – Summer Term Pupil Parent and Curriculum Meeting

Related policies:

- Children Missing Education Policy and Procedures
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy

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1. Aims

We are committed to meeting our obligation with regards to school attendance through our whole-school culture and ethos that values good attendance, including:

- › Promoting good attendance
- › Reducing absence, including persistent and severe absence
- › Ensuring every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled
- › Acting early to address patterns of absence
- › Building strong relationships with families to ensure pupils have the support in place to attend school

We will also promote and support punctuality in arriving to school.

2. Context

Attendance is challenged by the significant proportion of pupils with medical needs and underlying health conditions, significantly higher even when compared to the special school sector. Therefore the school's approach needs to be strategic, as set out in this policy, and will also be highly personalised and context-based. There also needs to be an understanding that full attendance may always be the aim, because we want all pupils to attend as many school days as possible, it will not be achievable in all cases.

A further complicating factor in attendance is that all of our pupils are highly or fully dependent on familial support to attend school regularly, and our families may be managing multiple challenges in supporting their child to school. Therefore, our approach needs to balance clear expectations with a sympathetic and supportive approach.

3. Legislation and guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the [working together to improve school attendance](#) from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on [school attendance parental responsibility measures](#). These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- › Part 6 of [The Education Act 1996](#)
- › Part 3 of [The Education Act 2002](#)
- › Part 7 of [The Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)
- › [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006 \(and 2010, 2011, 2013, 2016 amendments\)](#)
- › [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)

This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the school census, which explains the persistent absence threshold.

4. Roles and responsibilities

4.1 The governing board

The governing board is responsible for:

- › Promoting the importance of school attendance across the school's policies and ethos
- › Making sure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties
- › Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data through the Pupil, Parent, Curriculum Committee, reporting to the Full Governing Body meeting
- › Holding the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy

4.2 The Headteacher

The headteacher is responsible for:

- › Implementation of this policy at the school

- › Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors
- › Supporting the Attendance Team (see below) with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils
- › Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies
- › Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary

4.3 The Attendance Team

The attendance team consists of the Senior Admin and Data Officer, Family Liaison Officer, and Safeguarding Officer and has responsibility for:

- › Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes
- › Having an oversight of data analysis
- › Devising specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data
- › Arranging calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues
- › Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families
- › Liaising with the Attendance Officer (see below)

The attendance team will meet monthly to coordinate the above duties.

4.4 The Attendance Officer

The school is supported by an Attendance Officer from the local authority who visits the school frequently to provide assistance and guidance with reducing persistent absence, issuing fixed penalty notices and undertaking casework.

4.5 Class teachers

Class teachers are responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the school office between 9.00am and 9.30am for the morning session and 1.00pm and 1.30pm for the afternoon session.

4.6 School office staff

School office staff will:

- › Take calls from parents/carers about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the school system.
- › Call parents/carers in the event of a pupil being absent without explanation to clarify
- › Organise for follow-up for parents/carers in order to provide them with more detailed support on attendance, from the Headteacher (who will delegate as appropriate).

4.7 Parents/carers

Parents/carers are expected to:

- › Make sure their child attends every day on time
- › Call the school to report their child's absence before 9am on the day of the absence (and each subsequent day of absence unless agreed otherwise), and advise when they are expected to return
- › Provide the school with at least one additional emergency contact number for their child
- › Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day

4.8 Pupils

Pupils are expected to:

- › Attend school every day on time, recognising that in all cases, pupils at Ickburgh School are dependent on family support to achieve this.

5. Recording attendance

5.1 Attendance register

We will keep an attendance register, and place all pupils onto this register.

We will take our attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. It will mark whether every pupil is:

- Present
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity
- Absent
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

- The original entry
- The amended entry
- The reason for the amendment
- The date on which the amendment was made
- The name and position of the person who made the amendment

See appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes.

We will also record:

- For pupils of compulsory school age whether the absence is authorised or not
- The nature of the activity if a pupil is attending an approved educational activity
- The nature of circumstances where a pupil is unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

The school runs two timings to support effective and safe transition onto site. Some classes (predominately Early Years and Primary) must arrive at 9am, all other classes (predominately Secondary and Sixth Form) must arrive at 9.15am.

The register for the first session will be taken by 9.30am and will be kept open until 9.45am. The register for the second session will be taken at by 1.30pm and will be kept open until 1.45pm.

5.2 Unplanned absence

The pupil's parent/carer must notify the school of the reason for the absence on the first day of an unplanned absence by 9am or as soon as practically possible by calling the school office staff (see also section 7).

We will mark absence due to illness as authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may ask the pupil's parent/carer to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents/carers will be notified of this in advance.

5.3 Planned absence

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the pupil's parent/carer notifies the school in advance of the appointment by calling the office team.

However, we encourage parents/carers to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

The pupil's parent/carer must also apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence. Go to section 5 to find out which term-time absences the school can authorise.

5.4 Lateness and punctuality

A pupil who arrives late:

- Before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code
- After the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code

The significant majority of pupils and students are brought to school by Hackney SEND Transport, but some are brought to school by a parent/carer or family member.

Primary pupils are collected from 9am and so therefore any Primary pupil entering reception or arriving at the car park gate after 9.05am is late.

Secondary students are collected from 9.15am and so any Secondary/Sixth Form student entering reception or arriving at the car park gate after 9.20am is late. If a pupil is regularly late, this will be addressed by the Attendance Team.

5.5 Following up unexplained absence

Where any pupil we expect to attend school does not attend, or stops attending, without reason, the school will:

- Call the pupil's parent/carer on the morning of the first day of unexplained absence to ascertain the reason. If the office team cannot reach any of the pupil's emergency contacts, they will notify the Safeguarding Officer who will consider an appropriate next step which will involve a home visit after 3 days and could include calling the police
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not
- Identify the correct attendance code to use and input it as soon as the reason for absence is ascertained – this will be no later than 5 working days after the session
- Call the parent/carer on each day that the absence continues without explanation to ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary. If absence continues beyond three days without contact, the office team will refer the situation to the school Safeguarding Team, who will refer to Hackney's Child Missing Education Policy and Procedures as required

5.6 Reporting to parents/carers

The school will regularly inform parents about their child's attendance and absence levels through:

- The Annual Review
- The Annual Report
- By letter if attendance has fallen below 90%, from the autumn half-term onwards – see appendix 2

6. Authorised and unauthorised absence

6.1 Approval for term-time absence

The headteacher will only grant a leave of absence to a pupil during term time if they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'. A leave of absence is granted at the headteacher's discretion, including the length of time the pupil is authorised to be absent for.

We define 'exceptional circumstances' as an unavoidable circumstance where there is no alternative but for the pupil to be out of school.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request.

Any request should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated and, where possible, at least two weeks before the absence, in the form of a letter or email addressed to the Headteacher setting out:

- The dates of requested leave of absence
- The reason for the requested leave of absence

-How school can maintain contact during the leave of absence

The headteacher may require evidence to support any request for leave of absence. If the absence requires travel abroad, evidence of travel including booked tickets for return will be sought.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments (see sections 4.2 and 4.3 for more detail)
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart
- Traveller pupils travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh gypsies, Irish and Scottish travellers, showmen (fairground people) and circus people, bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and new travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school, but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision

6.2 Legal sanctions

The school or local authority can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age.

If issued with a fine, or penalty notice, each parent must pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the local authority.

Penalty notices can be issued by a headteacher, local authority Attendance Officer or the police.

The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice may take into account:

- The number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year
- One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission
- Where an excluded pupil is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason

If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute or withdraw the notice.

7. Strategies for promoting attendance

A significant proportion of the school population have complex underlying medical conditions which mean that absence from school is unavoidable. Pupils are also more dependent on family support to attend regularly and on-time than the general school population. Consequently, the school feel it would be discriminatory to:

- celebrate one pupil's attendance whilst another pupil cannot meaningfully achieve such high levels
- celebrate one pupil's improvement in attendance whilst another pupil's attendance is declining because their health is deteriorating

Instead, the school ensures that there is a discussion of attendance during the annual review, with comments recorded, and high attendance, improvements in attendance, or high attendance relative to a pupil's health needs, can be celebrated/affirmed by the class teacher.

8. Attendance monitoring

8.1 Monitoring attendance

The school will:

- Monitor attendance and absence data half-termly, termly and yearly across the school and at an individual pupil level
- Identify whether or not there are particular groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern

Pupil-level absence data will be collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. The school will compare attendance data to the national average, and share this with the governing board.

8.2 Analysing attendance

The school will:

- Analyse attendance and absence data regularly to identify pupils or cohorts that need additional support with their attendance, and use this analysis to provide targeted support to these pupils and their families. The Attendance Team will meet monthly to review attendance data and agree interventions as required and identify cases where support from the Attendance Officer is relevant
- Look at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence, and then develop strategies to address these patterns

8.3 Using data to improve attendance

The school will use data to:

- Arrange follow-up through the Family Liaison Officer or Safeguarding Officer as appropriate to attempt to tackle attendance issues
- Monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place in order to modify them and inform future strategies. This will be partly achieved through the use of case studies

8.4 Reducing persistent and severe absence

Persistent absence is where a pupil misses 10% or more of school, and severe absence is where a pupil misses 50% or more of school.

The school will:

- Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence
- Hold regular meetings with the parents of pupils who the school (and/or local authority) considers to be vulnerable, or are persistently or severely absent, to discuss attendance and engagement at school
- Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance

9. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the local authority or DfE is updated, and as a minimum annually by the Headteacher. Following review, the policy will be scrutinised by the Pupil Parent Curriculum committee meeting and approved by the full governing board.

10. Links with other policies

This policy links to the following policies:

- Children Missing Education Policy (Hackney)
- Pupil Wellbeing and Behaviour policy (Ickburgh School)

Appendix 1: attendance codes

The following codes are taken from the DfE's guidance on school attendance.

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	Pupil is present at morning registration
\	Present (pm)	Pupil is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Pupil arrives late before register has closed
B	Off-site educational activity	Pupil is at a supervised off-site educational activity approved by the school
D	Dual registered	Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
J	Interview	Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
P	Sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
V	Educational trip or visit	Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised, or approved, by the school
W	Work experience	Pupil is on a work experience placement

Code	Definition	Scenario
Authorised absence		
C	Authorised leave of absence	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
E	Excluded	Pupil has been excluded but no alternative provision has been made

H	Authorised holiday	Pupil has been allowed to go on holiday due to exceptional circumstances
I	Illness	School has been notified that a pupil will be absent due to illness
M	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment
R	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance
S	Study leave	Year 11 pupil is on study leave during their public examinations
T	Gypsy, Roma and traveller absence	Pupil from a traveller community is travelling, as agreed with the school
Unauthorised absence		
G	Unauthorised holiday	Pupil is on a holiday that was not approved by the school
N	Reason not provided	Pupil is absent for an unknown reason (this code should be amended when the reason emerges, or replaced with code O if no reason for absence has been provided after a reasonable amount of time)
O	Unauthorised absence	School is not satisfied with reason for pupil's absence
U	Arrival after registration	Pupil arrived at school after the register closed

Code	Definition	Scenario
X	Not required to be in school	Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
Y	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances	School site is closed, there is disruption to travel as a result of a local/national emergency, or pupil is in custody
Z	Pupil not on admission register	Register set up but pupil has not yet joined the school

#	Planned school closure	Whole or partial school closure due to half-term/bank holiday/INSET day
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Appendix 2: letter for parent/carer when a pupil's attendance falls below 90%



Ickburgh School
Kenworthy Road
Hackney
E9 5RB
020 8806 4638

Dear (.....)

I hope this letter finds you and your family well.

As a school we are in agreement with the high priority placed on pupil attendance by the Department for Education. Targets are set for attendance nationally and as a school we are committed to ensuring our pupils do not miss out on vital time in school.

The average attendance for special schools like ours nationally is **90.3%**.

The target set for pupils by the Department for Education is **95%** attendance.

Your (son/daughter)'s current attendance is (.....).

Whilst we appreciate that absence is sometimes unavoidable, when your (son/daughter) is very unwell for example, we'd ask you to reflect if there are any changes you could make to support your (son/daughter) to attend school more often. If there is anything with which we could support, please do get in touch with Jenny Hatch, our Family Liaison Officer at jhatch@ickburgh.hackney.sch.uk or by calling 02088064638 and asking to speak to Jenny.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "J. Sieber". The signature is written in a cursive style with a prominent initial "J".

Joe Sieber
Headteacher