

Attendance and Punctuality Policy



Victoria Junior School

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Attendance and Punctuality Policy

1. Introduction

We recognise that positive behaviour and good attendance are central to raising standards and pupil attainment.

This policy is written with the above statement in mind and underpins our school ethos to:

- promote pupils' welfare and safeguarding
- ensure every pupil has access to the full time education to which they are entitled
- ensure that pupils succeed and achieve their potential whilst at school
- ensure that pupils have access to the widest possible range of opportunities when they leave school

For our pupils to gain the greatest benefit from their education, it is vital that they attend regularly and are at school on time every day the school is open, unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. Any absence affects the pattern of a pupil's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning and confidence. It also disrupts teaching routines and so may affect the learning of others in the same class. Ensuring a pupil's regular attendance at school is a parental responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

2. Definitions

The Education Act 1996 states that:

S.576: "Meaning of "parent". In this Act, unless the context otherwise requires, "parent", in relation to a child or young person, includes any person— (a) who is not a parent of his but who has parental responsibility for him, or (b) who has care of him."

S.7: "Duty of parents to secure education of children of compulsory school age. The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him to receive efficient full-time education suitable— (a) to his age, ability and aptitude, and (b) to any special educational needs he may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise."

S.444: "Offence: failure to secure regular attendance at school of registered pupil. If a child of compulsory school age who is a registered pupil at a school fails to attend regularly at the school, his parent is guilty of an offence."

3. Promoting Regular Attendance

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility - parents, pupils and all members of school staff. Our aim is for all pupils to achieve at least 96% attendance. We have a dedicated welfare officer at school who is responsible for monitoring attendance, following up on concerns and liaising with the Educational Welfare Service.

To help us all to focus on promoting good attendance we will:

- Give parents / carers details on attendance regularly in our newsletters
- Encourage parents / carers to take an active interest in the work of the School and build and support their children's enthusiasm for attending school
- Report to parents / carers termly on their pupil's attendance and punctuality during Parents' Consultations and in the summer term with the annual school report

- Contact parents / carers should their pupil's attendance fall below 90% where there is a concern
- All staff will make children aware of the importance of good attendance and children are praised.
- Reward 100% attendance through certificates termly and at the Annual Awards Ceremony for 100% attendance for the whole year

4. 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 an unavoidable reason, such as illness, medical / dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies, religious observance or other exceptional causes.

Parents should only keep their pupil away from school in the event of a significant illness (not minor ailments such as colds, coughs, stomach or headaches) and try wherever possible to make medical appointments outside the school day or at the beginning or end of the day to minimise disruption.

The school may ask parents / carers to provide appointment cards or verification from the hospital / dentist / GP to the Welfare Officer.

We expect parents / carers to make alternative arrangements for the collection of their child(ren) in the event of any other unexpected events, in order to minimise disruption to their child's learning.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been granted. This type of absence can lead to the Local Authority using sanctions and / or legal proceedings.

These include:

- Parents / carers keeping pupils off school unnecessarily, for example, shopping, looking after other children, birthdays or day trips, including visits to friends or family
- Truancy during the school day
- Absences which have never been properly explained
- Holidays in term time which have not been agreed.

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 resolved between the school, the parents and the pupil. If a parent thinks child is reluctant to attend school then we will work with that family to understand the root problem.

The school can use outside agencies to help with this such as the Education Welfare Service and Family Support Services.

5. 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 is doing considerable damage to any pupil's education and we need parents' 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.

PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully and we also combine this with academic tracking where absence affects attainment. All our PA pupils and their parents are subject to a home / school agreement which includes individual targets to raise attendance.

6. Absence Procedures

If a pupil is absent the parent / carer must follow these procedures:

Contact us as soon as possible on the first day of absence before 9.30am. The school has an answer phone available to leave a message if nobody is available to take the call or they can call into school and report to reception.

If a pupil is absent without notification we will:

- Telephone parents / carers on the first day of absence if we have not heard from them. We will send a member of staff to the pupil's home when contact cannot be made by phone with the parent or other named adults of an unexpectedly absent pupil, dependant on previously known circumstances. If we feel it is necessary we will ring the police if no contact can be made.
- Invite parents / carers in to discuss the situation with our Welfare Officer and / or member of the Leadership Team if absences persist.
- Refer the matter to the Education Welfare Officer if attendance falls below 91%, if considered appropriate, who may carry out a home contact safeguarding visit and / or invite parents to an Attendance Panel meeting.

7. The Education Welfare Officer (EWO)

Parents / carers 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 resolved in this way, the school may refer the pupil to the Education Welfare Officer from the Local Authority. He / she will also 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. Full details of the options open to enforce attendance at school are available from the Local Authority.

Alternatively, parents / carers may wish to contact the EWO themselves to ask for help or information. They are independent of the school and will give impartial advice. Their telephone number is 020 8583 4190.

8. Lateness

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If a pupil misses the start of the day they can miss work and valuable settling in time. Late arriving pupils also disrupt lessons, can be embarrassing for the pupil and can also encourage absence. Good time keeping is a vital life skill which will help our pupils as they progress through their school life and out into the wider world. The school offers a Breakfast Club free of charge to help parents and carers settle their pupils in to school at the beginning of each day.

How we manage lateness:

7:45am	Breakfast club opens, where children can have breakfast and play outside, weather permitting.	Children are allowed to arrive at school during any of these times.
8.40am	The main school gates opens to enable pupils to have the time to put away their bags, coats and settle down.	
8.55am	The main school gates are closed. The school day starts and the morning registers are marked.	
9.00am	Morning registers are closed.	In accordance with the Regulations, if a pupil arrives after this time they will receive a mark that shows them to be on site, but not count as a present mark, meaning that they have an unauthorised absence.
1.15pm	The afternoon register is taken.	

If a pupil has a persistent late record, parents / carers will be asked to meet with the Deputy Headteacher to resolve the problem, however parents/carers can approach the school at any time if they are having problems getting their pupil to school on time.

Multiple unauthorised absences mean that parents / carers could face the possibility of a Penalty Notice if the problem persists.

9. Holidays in Term Time

There is no entitlement in law for pupils to take term time holiday. Parents / carers must discuss any travel plans with the Headteacher and / or Welfare Officer. The school will not routinely authorise term time holidays or emergency travel abroad. In extremely exceptional circumstances the school may authorise term time leave, however this is very rare as the school is committed to treating all parents fairly and equally.

Any Application for Leave must establish that there are exceptional circumstances and the Headteacher must be satisfied that the circumstances warrant the granting of leave. The Headteacher will then determine how many school days a pupil may be absent.

The school can only consider applications for Leave of Absence made by the resident parent, ie. the parent with whom the child normally resides.

Each application for a Leave of Absence will be considered on a case by case basis and on its own merits.

Applications for Leave of Absence must be made in advance and failure to do so will result in the absence being recorded as "unauthorised". This is also the case for refused applications. This may result in legal action against the parent, by way of a Fixed Penalty Notice, if the child is absent from school during that period.

10. Why Attendance and Punctuality Matters

Across one school year:

- Less than 5 days absence = 97.3% attendance
- 14 days absence (approx.) = 92.6% attendance
- 20 days absence (approx.) = 89.4% attendance
- 30 days absence (approx.) = 84.2% attendance

If a child achieves 80% attendance, this means that they have missed approximately 39 days of education over the academic year, averaging 1 day per week.

11. Children Missing From Education

Where a pupil has three consecutive school days of unexplained absence and all reasonable steps have been taken by the school to establish their whereabouts without success, the school will make an immediate referral to Hounslow's Social Care.

These reasonable steps taken by the School include:

- Telephone calls to all known contacts (parents are asked to provide a minimum of two emergency contacts in the event of children not arriving at school without prior notification and also for other emergency purposes).
- Letters home (including recorded delivery)
- Contact with other schools where siblings may be registered
- Possible home visits
- Enquiries to friends, neighbours, etc. through school contacts
- Enquiries with any other Service known to be involved with the pupil / family

All contacts and outcomes are recorded on the pupil's file.

12. Role of the Co-ordinator

The Co-ordinator is responsible for:

- Monitoring and evaluating pupil attendance
- Taking the lead in policy development
- Chairing meetings between school, parent and pupil to support better attendance and punctuality
- Setting realistic targets to help improve a pupil's attendance and / or punctuality
- Liaising with the Educational Welfare Officer and other members of the local authority
- Providing attendance data for the headteacher, governing body and the local authority, when required.

13. Governing Body

Governors have the overall responsibility for agreeing this policy. Through the Curriculum Committee and full Governing Body, they are responsible for monitoring the attendance of all pupils, including key groups.

Appendix A

Staged Approach to the Management of Attendance

- Whole school attendance is monitored at a minimum of every half term, but more frequently as appropriate to the needs of the school.
- The whole school attendance target is based on meeting National Standards of 96%.
- Attendance is more closely evaluated of pupils whose attendance is below the whole school target.

Stage	Trigger	Outcome
1	Attendance falls below the whole school target and the pupil's attendance is of concern.	<p>Letter 1 will be sent to parents / carers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expressing concern about attendance • Informing of current attendance • Enclosing a registration certificate • Reminding them of their legal responsibilities and the nature of 'persistent absence' • Welcoming them to arrange contact with the school if they wish to discuss attendance further <p>Attendance is monitored for a fixed period.</p>
2	Parents / Carers have received a Stage 1 letter and attendance remains of concern.	<p>Letter 2 will be sent to parents / carers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informing of ongoing concern about attendance • Informing of current attendance • Enclosing a registration certificate • Reminding them of their legal responsibilities and the nature of 'persistent absence' • Notifying them that their child's attendance is being monitored and of the duration of the monitoring period. • Welcoming them to arrange contact with the school if they wish to discuss attendance further <p>Attendance is monitored for a fixed period.</p>
3	Parents / Carers have received a Stage 2 letter and attendance remains of concern.	<p>Letter 3 will be sent to parents / carers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informing of ongoing concern about attendance • Informing of current attendance • Enclosing a registration certificate • Reminding them of their legal responsibilities and the nature of 'persistent absence' • Requesting them to provide medical evidence of absence for illness, to enable to school to consider the authorisation of absence • Inviting them to an appointment with the Attendance Lead on a specific date, with the purpose of discussing attendance, agreeing an action plan of support, considering whether it may be appropriate to involve outside agencies, and setting an internal school attendance target • Notifying them that should they choose not to attend, the meeting may take place without them and a target set.

4	Parents / Carers have failed an internal school attendance target and attendance is below the level of Persistent Absence (90%).	<p>Letter 4 will be sent to parents / carers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informing of ongoing concern about attendance • Informing of attendance during the target period • Enclosing a registration certificate • Notifying them that the school intends to discuss their child's attendance with the Education Welfare Office, and may make a formal referral.
	During a monitoring period, attendance improves.	<p>A Letter of Praise will be sent to parents / carers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informing them of attendance during the monitoring period • Notifying them that the school will continue to monitor attendance to ensure sustained improvement.

Jo Lewis, 23rd September 2019