

# Attendance & Punctuality Policy



**September 2024**

To be reviewed 2025 or as required

## Rationale

The law entitles every child of compulsory school age to an efficient, full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude, and any special educational need they may have. It is the legal responsibility of every parent to make sure their child receives that education either by attendance at a school or by education otherwise than at a school.

We aim for an environment which enables and encourages all members of the community to achieve their best. For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and your child should be at school, on time and every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

## The Law relating to attendance

Where parents decide to have their child registered at school, they have an additional legal duty to ensure their child attends that school regularly. This means their child must attend every day that the school is open, except in a small number of allowable circumstances such as being too ill to attend or being given permission for an absence in advance from the school.

## Why regular attendance is so important

### Learning:

Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any child's absence 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.

### Safeguarding:

A child may be at risk of harm if they do not attend school regularly. Safeguarding the interests of each child is everyone's responsibility and within the context of this school, promoting the welfare and life opportunities for your child encompasses:

- Attendance
- Behaviour Management
- Health and Safety
- Access to the Curriculum
- Anti-Bullying
- Child Protection

Failing to attend school on a regular basis will be considered as a safeguarding matter.

The school has targets to improve attendance. The **minimum** level of attendance for our school is 97% attendance and we will keep you updated regularly about progress to this level and how your child's attendance compares. Our target is to achieve better than this because we know that good attendance is the key to successful schooling and we believe our children can be amongst the best.

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents and to promote attendance. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend.

All school staff are committed to working with parents and children as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible and that every child's welfare and life opportunities are promoted

## Promoting a culture of regular attendance

All schools have a continuing responsibility to proactively manage and improve attendance across their school community. Attendance is the essential foundation to positive outcomes for all children including their safeguarding and welfare and should therefore be seen as everyone's responsibility in school. That starts with the Designated Attendance Lead on the school's leadership team, but includes all school staff.

### The Designated Attendance Leads are:

	<b>EYFS and KS1</b>	<b>KS2</b>	<b>Administration</b>
Orchard School	Erin Gillham	Zammedin Siddique	Cameal Campbell
Hoxton Garden School	Lauren Dagg	Jessie De Veer	Salma Begum
Southwold School	Linda Hanley	Keisha Nelson	Maymuna Lunat

To build a culture of regular attendance the school:

- Recognise the importance of good attendance and, alongside good behaviour, make it a central part of the school's vision, values, ethos, and day to day life.
- Recognise that absence is a symptom and that improving children's attendance is part of improving the children's overall welfare.
- Recognise improving attendance is a school leadership issue and have a designated senior leader with overall responsibility for championing and improving attendance in school and liaising with children, parents and external agencies where needed.
- Make sure all teaching and non-teaching staff know the importance of good attendance, are consistent in their communication with children and parents, and receive the training and professional development they need.
- Make sure attendance support and improvement is appropriately resourced, including where applicable through effective use of pupil premium funding.
- Set high expectations for the attendance and punctuality of all children and communicate these regularly to children and parents through all available channels.
- Recognise that attendance is never 'solved' and is a continuous process by regularly reviewing and updating messages, processes, and strategies.
- Recognise children missing education can act as a vital warning sign to a range of safeguarding issues including neglect, sexual abuse and child sexual and criminal exploitation.

## Promoting regular attendance

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

### To help us all to focus on this we will:

- Give details on attendance in our regular newsletter / Celebrate good attendance by displaying individual and class achievements.
- Provide 'first day' calling to ensure we record reasons for absence.
- Reward good or improving attendance through class competitions, certificates and

outings/events.

- Celebrate attendance successes through our weekly assemblies.
- Reward 100% attendance with certificates and annual prizes.
- Run promotional events when parents, children and staff can work together on raising attendance levels across the school.
- Work alongside LA Attendance Officer to minimise absence.

## Understanding 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**. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required, preferably in writing.

**Authorised absences** are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason such as serious illness, **emergency** medical / dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time 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 Hackney Education using sanctions and / or legal proceedings. This includes:

- Parents / carers keeping children off school unnecessarily
- Truancy before or during the school day
- Absences which have never been properly explained
- Children who arrive at school too late to get a mark
- Shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- Day trips and holidays in term time

Where absence is recorded as unexplained in the attendance register, the correct code should be inputted as soon as the reason is ascertained, but no later than 5 working days after the session. The school will undertake follow up telephone calls to establish unexplained absence reasons.

Whilst any child may be off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents and the child. If your child is reluctant to attend, it is never better 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 usually make things worse.

## Absence Procedures

**If a child is absent parents/carers are expected to:**

- Contact the school office as soon as possible on the first day of absence with a clear explanation as to the reason for absence.
- Provide any supporting evidence to the school office on the first day of return.

**If a child is absent we will:**

- Telephone on the first day of absence if we have not heard from the parent/carer.
- Call the second available contact number to establish a child's whereabouts

and/or undertake a home visit if we have not heard from you by the second day of absence.

## Telephone Numbers

There are times when we need to contact parents about lots of things, including absence, so we need to have contact numbers at all times. It is also important that we hold a second emergency contact number for a child in the event that we are unable to reach the parent/carer using the first given number.

## Persistent Absenteeism (PA)

A child 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 educational prospects and we need 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 the parent/carer will be informed of this immediately.**

## Absence in Term Time (including holidays)

A special leave request form should be completed in advance to request leave of absence during term time and provide evidence to the school so the whereabouts of the child is known.

All applications for leave must be made in advance, at the discretion of the school and will only be considered if there are **exceptional circumstances**. In making a decision the school will consider the circumstances of each application individually, including any previous pattern of leave in term time.

Taking holidays in term time will affect a child's schooling as much as any other absence and we expect parents to help us by not to take children away in school time. There is **no** automatic entitlement in law to time off in school time to go on holiday. Parents are expected to ensure personal holidays are taken within the 13 weeks allocated to this across the year.

Leave in term time will **not** be agreed by us when:

- The reason is stated as a holiday or travelling abroad.
- A pupil is just starting the school - this is very important as your child needs to settle into their new environment as quickly as possible.
- Immediately before and during assessment periods (SATS), or end of term assessments.
- When a child's attendance record already includes any level of unauthorised absence.
- Where a child's attendance rate is already below (90%) or will fall to or below that level as a result of taking leave.

Any period of leave taken without the agreement of the school, or in excess of that agreed, will be classed as unauthorised and will attract sanctions such as a Fixed Penalty Notice fine.

## Lateness

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If a child misses the start of the day they can miss work and do not spend time with their class teacher getting vital information and news for the day. Late arriving children also disrupt lessons, can be unsettling for the child and can also encourage absence. All children need to be at school on time.

### How we manage lateness:

The school day starts at **8:55 am** and we expect your child to be ready to line up in the playground at that time.

Registers are marked by **9:05 am** and your child will receive a late mark if they are not in by that time.

From **9:05 am – 9.15 am** an identified member of staff tracks child arrival noting their name and class. Patterns are analysed and repeated lateness will result in the parent / carer invited to a meeting to discuss this and what support can be put in place to stop late arrival occurring.

At **9.15 am** the registers will be closed. In accordance with the regulations, if your 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 they have an **unauthorised absence**. We record the number of minutes absent each day.

If a child has a persistent late record parents/carers will be invited to a meeting to ensure a collaborative approach to resolving the problem through collaborative working, intervention and target setting.

## Monitoring Attendance

We monitor and analyse attendance patterns and trends and. We track individual children, cohorts, year groups and whole school data weekly.

We use data to:

- Identify where preventative support might be needed .
- Provide targeted intervention and support way where absence has reached a persistent or severe level.
- Monitor in the data the impact of school wide attendance efforts, including any specific strategies implemented.
- Benchmark attendance data (at whole school, year group and cohort level) against local, regional, and national levels to identify areas of focus for improvement.

Analysis is used to provide regular attendance reports, reviewed by school leaders, to identify patterns and trends. Attendance reports are produced daily for monitoring, half termly for depth analysis and yearly for benchmarking.

## Overcoming barriers to attendance / process of support

The school adopts the DFE process to successfully treating the root causes of absence and removing barriers to attendance, at home, in school or more broadly requires schools and local partners to work collaboratively with, not against families (see Appendix 1).

## Prevention

**All Pupils:** The development of strong and consistent attendance patterns through an effective whole school approach to attendance (including leadership, ethos and systems and processes).

**Pupils at risk of poor attendance:** We use attendance and absence data rigorously to support pupils with increasing levels of absence, arriving at school late or taking leave in term time without permission before it becomes a regular pattern.

## Early Intervention

**Pupils with poor attendance:** We intervene as early as possible and agree an action plan for pupils with high levels of absence.

## Targeted Support

**Persistently and severely absent pupils:** We put additional targeted support in place, where necessary working with partners, and agree a joint approach with local authorities for all severely absent pupils.

Supportive approaches are most effective when they are put in place as early as possible and therefore it is essential all partners work together in a timely manner, including external agencies, where appropriate.

In all cases, the school will monitor the impact of any intervention(s) and make adjustments where necessary in discussion with the child, parents and any other partners involved as part of any whole family plan or team around the family.

Where interventions are failing, all parties should work together to identify the reasons why and either adjust, change the approach or escalate to the next stage of support, (see Appendix 3).

## **Children absent from school due to mental or physical ill health or their special educational needs and/or disabilities**

A small number of children may experience normal but difficult emotions that make them nervous about attending school, such as worries about friendships, schoolwork, examinations or variable moods. It is important to note that these children are still expected to attend school regularly - in many instances, attendance at school may serve to help with the underlying issue as being away from school might exacerbate it, and a prolonged period of absence may heighten anxious feelings about attending in future. School staff work alongside families to ensure that such circumstances do not act as a barrier to regular attendance.

Some children face more complex barriers to attendance. This can include children who have long term physical or mental health conditions or who have special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). Their right to an education is the same as any other child and therefore the attendance ambition for these children is the same as it is for any other child but additional support may need to be provided. In developing this support, the usual processes relevant to any attendance case apply:

- Understanding the individual needs of the child and family.
- Working in partnership with the child and family to put in-school support in place and working with other the local authority and other agencies where external support is needed (and available).
- Regularly reviewing and updating the support approach to make sure it continues to meet

individual needs.

## **Commitment to collaborative working**

Ensuring that attendance improvement is prioritised and strategies and action plans are put in place for children with persistent and severe absence is crucial to safeguarding and improving overall welfare in both the short and long term. We are committed to improving attendance through the sharing of effective practice between Federation and Hackney Schools.

## **Training**

Improving attendance requires knowledge of guidance and regulations but also expertise in working with families to remove barriers to attendance and safeguard children. We ensure that:

Training on attendance is included in the continued professional development offer for all staff

- The importance of good attendance and that absence is almost always a symptom of wider circumstances.
- The law and requirements of schools including on the keeping of registers.
- The strategies and procedures for tracking, following up and improving attendance.
- The processes for working with other partners to provide more intensive support to children who need it.

Dedicated attendance training is provided to any staff with a specified attendance function in their role, including administrative, pastoral staff and senior leaders. In addition, this includes:

- The necessary skills to interpret and analyse attendance data.
- Effectively working with families.

## **The role of the Governing Body**

The governing body is expected to provide support and challenge to their schools around current trends on attendance in the school community, by regularly reviewing attendance data at board meetings. This includes examination of recent and historic trends at a school level as well as benchmarking to comparator schools within the Federation, local authority area, region and nationwide.

Paying particular attention to attendance of pupil cohorts within their school(s) that have historically had poor attendance or that face entrenched barriers to attendance. This should be specific to the school's context, but may include children who have a social worker, are from a background or ethnicity where attendance has historically been low, have a long-term medical condition, special educational needs or a disability, or are eligible for free school meals.



## **Relevant legislation**

The Education Acts 1996 and 2002

The Children Act 1989

The Crime and Disorder Act 1998

The Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003

The Education and Inspections Act 2006

The Sentencing Act 2020

The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024

The Education (Parenting Contracts and Parenting Orders) (England) Regulations 2007 The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007, as amended

The Education (Information about Individual Pupils) (England) Regulations 2013

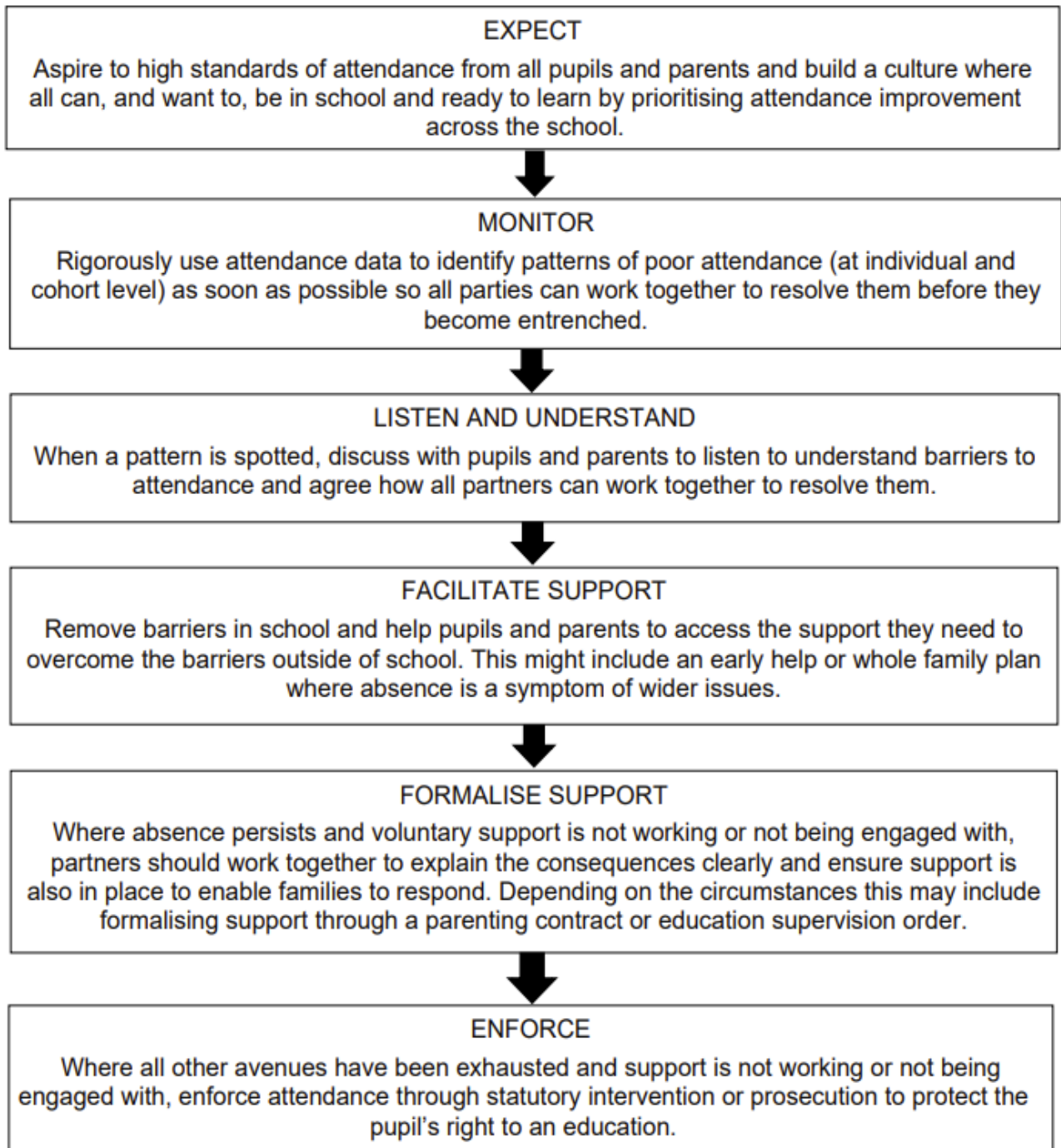
The Children and Young Persons Acts 1933 and 1963

## **Links to Related Policies**

- Safeguarding Policy
- Parent Partnership Policy
- Behaviour & Bullying Policy

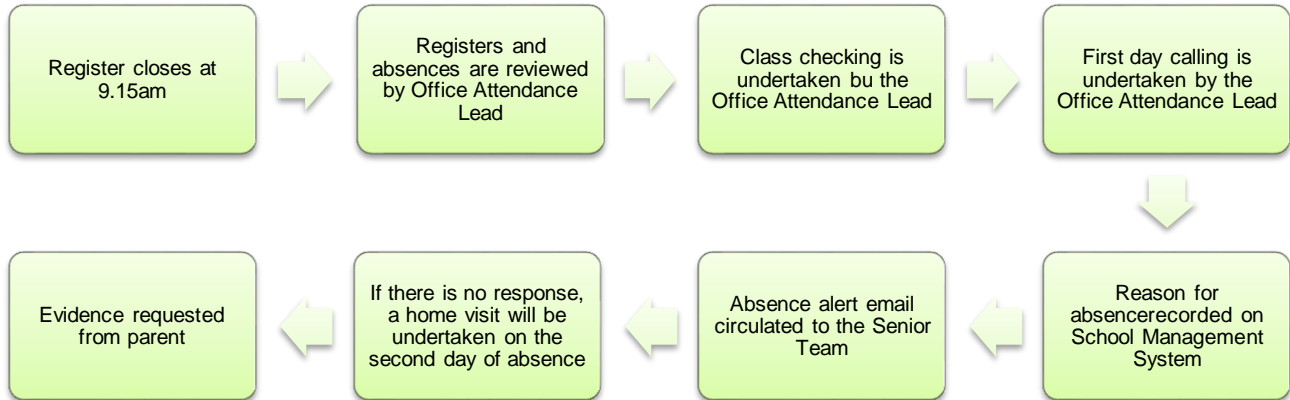
# APPENDIX 1

## DFE approach to managing attendance



## APPENDIX 2

### Daily absence process



## Appendix 3

### Stages of Intervention / Support

Stage	Process	Action
Prevention	Attendance data is analysed and monitored within the daily and half termly cycle. Children with increasing levels of absence, arriving late or taking leave in term time will be identified through data monitoring by the Office Attendance Lead.	<b>Office Attendance Lead</b> call to parent/carer to establish any underlying reasons for absence as part of first day calling.
Early Intervention STAGE 1	Pupil attendance at 97% for general absence.	Weekly check of data by <b>Office Attendance Lead</b> .  <b>Office Attendance Lead</b> call to parent/carer to establish any underlying reasons for absence and support initiated if required.  Attendance Letter 1 sent out by <b>Office Attendance Lead</b> .  Pupil added to Stage 1 monitoring list by <b>Office Attendance Lead</b> .
Early Intervention STAGE 2	Pupil attendance falls to 95% for general absence.	Attendance Letter 2 sent out by <b>Office Attendance Lead</b> .  Parent invited to a meeting with the <b>Learning Mentor and Office Attendance Lead</b> .  Yellow form completed detailing barriers to attendance and support to be offered.  Three week review date set for follow up meeting.  Pupil added to Stage 2 monitoring list.
Targeted Intervention STAGE 3	Pupil absence falls between 90% and 95%.	<b>Office Attendance Lead</b> makes referral to School Attendance Officer after discussion with <b>Designated Attendance Lead (DHT)</b> .  Case added to the LA Attendance Officer caseload.  Invitation to surgery with the <b>LA Attendance Officer and Office Attendance Lead</b> , non improvement discussed, actions and further support identified. <u>Attendance contract signed</u> . Letter outcome sent to school and parent from <b>Office Attendance Lead</b> .  Pupil added to Stage 3 monitoring list.
Targeted Intervention STAGE 4	Pupil absence falls between 85% and 90%.	<b>LA Attendance Officer</b> meeting with parent/carer. non improvement discussed and actions identified.  Timescale for improvement set.  <b>Designated Attendance Lead (DHT)</b> completes attendance support plan.  FPN warning letter sent by <b>LA Attendance Officer</b> .  Pupil added to Stage 4 monitoring list.
Targeted Intervention STAGE 5	Pupil absence below 85%.	FPN issued by <b>LA Attendance Officer</b> .  Review of support plan. Consideration of referral to MASH.
Targeted Intervention STAGE 6	Below 80%.	Further absence will result in the start of court proceedings process by <b>LA Attendance Officer</b> .