



Sir William Burrough School

Attendance Policy

Introduction

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, 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

Learning: Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any pupil'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: Your 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, the policies for promoting the welfare and life opportunities for your child include Attendance alongside Behaviour Management, Health and Safety and Anti-Bullying. Failing to attend this school on a regular basis will be considered as a safeguarding matter.

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 celebrate good attendance by displaying individual and class achievements.

The law relating to attendance

Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 states that 'the parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him/her to receive efficient full time education suitable: a) to age, ability and aptitude and b) to any special educational needs he/she may have, either by attendance at school or otherwise.'

The law relating to safeguarding

Section 175 of the Education Act 2002 places a duty on local authorities and governing bodies to have regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State with regard to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and students under the age of 18.

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 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 Sir William Burrough School using sanctions and/or legal proceedings. This includes:

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily
- 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 which have not been agreed

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.

Persistent Absenteeism (PA)

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 15% 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 parents' 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 are subject to an Action Plan, which may include allocation of additional support through the Improving School Attendance Programme (ISAP).

Absence procedures

If your child is absent, you must:

- Contact us as soon as possible on every day of absence or
- 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:

- Telephone you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you.
- Refer the matter to ISAP, the Improving School Attendance team, if attendance moves below 85%

Telephone numbers

There are times when we need to contact parents about lots of things, including absence, so we need to have your contact numbers at all times. Please ensure that we always have an up-to-date number for you; if we don't, then something important may be missed. There will be regular checks on telephone numbers throughout the year.

The School Attendance Officer

Parents 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 may refer the child to the School Attendance Officer from the London Borough of Tower Hamlets. He/she will also try to resolve the situation by agreement but, if other ways of trying to improve the child'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 school.

Lateness

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If your 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 pupils also disrupt lessons, can be embarrassing for the child and can also encourage absence.

How we manage lateness

The school day starts at 9.00am and we expect your child to be in class at that time. Registers are marked by 9.10am and your child will receive a late mark if they are not in by that time. At 9.30am, 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. This may mean that you could face the possibility of a Penalty Notice if the problem persists. If your child has a persistent late record, you will be asked to meet with the Headteacher to resolve the problem, but you can approach us at any time if you are having problems getting your child to school on time.

Holidays in term time

Taking holidays in term time will affect your child's schooling as much as any other absence and we expect parents to help us by not taking children away in school 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. All applications for leave must be made in advance, and can only be agreed at the discretion of the school and in exceptional circumstances. In making a decision, the school will consider the exceptional circumstances of each application, including any previous pattern of leave in term time. Any period of leave taken without the agreement of the school, or in excess of that agreed, will be classed as unauthorised, and may attract a Penalty Notice.

School Targets

The school has targets to improve attendance and your child has an important part to play in meeting these targets. The minimum level of attendance for this school is 95%.

Summary

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 pupils 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.