



# HARBINGER PRIMARY SCHOOL

## Attendance Policy

Last reviewed  
on:

October 2024

Next review  
date:

October 2025

## **Introduction and Background**

Harbinger Primary School recognises that positive behaviour and good attendance are essential in order to raise standards of pupil attainment and to give every child/young person the best educational experience possible.

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.

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.

The DfE has produced guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools, and local authorities: [Working together to improve school attendance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-improve-school-attendance)

Our Attendance Policy reflects the key principles of that guidance.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-improve-school-attendance>

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

- Promote children's welfare and safeguarding
- Ensure every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled
- Ensure that pupils succeed whilst at school
- Ensure that pupils have access to the widest possible range of opportunities at school, and when they leave school

## **Safeguarding**

Absence from school is recognised as a Safeguarding issue as it places children at risk. 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, promoting the welfare and life opportunities for your child encompasses: Attendance, Behaviour Management, Health and Safety, access to the curriculum and Anti-bullying.

In cases where failing to attend school on a regular basis has been identified as a safeguarding matter, the school's child protection policy and procedures will be applied.

## **Aims and Objectives**

This attendance policy ensures that all staff and governors in our school are fully aware of and clear about the actions necessary to promote good attendance.

Through this Policy we aim to:

- Improve pupils' achievement by ensuring high levels of attendance and punctuality.
- Achieve a minimum of 96% attendance for all children, apart from those with chronic health issues.
- Create an ethos in which good attendance and punctuality are recognised as the norm and seen to be valued by the school.
- Raise awareness of parents, carers and pupils of the importance of uninterrupted attendance and punctuality at every stage of a child's education.
- Ensure that our policy applies to Nursery and Reception aged children in order to promote good habits at an early age.
- Work in partnership with pupils, parents, staff and the Education Welfare Service so that all pupils realise their potential, unhindered by unnecessary absence.
- Promote a positive and welcoming atmosphere in which pupils feel safe, secure, and valued, and encourage in pupils a sense of their own responsibility.
- Establish a pattern of monitoring attendance and ensure consistency in recognising achievement and dealing with difficulties.
- Recognise the key role of all staff, but especially class teachers, in promoting good attendance.
- Ensure children are kept safe and protected from harm.

## **Promoting good attendance and punctuality**

### **In school**

In order to promote the importance of regular attendance at school we use a range of approaches to celebrate and raise attendance. These include:

#### **Incentives and rewards**

The school recognises good and improved attendance through:

- Recognition of classes achieving 100% attendance each week is shared in assembly and parent newsletter;
- Attendance trophy for highest class attendance of the week;
- All classes attendance percentage shared in sharing assembly and weekly parent newsletter;
- Letters and emails sent home for 100% attendance half-termly;

- Community litter-picking event for 100% or most improved attenders half-termly;
- individual certificates for 100% annual attendance;

### Working with parents

The school will work closely with parents and pupils to ensure regular attendance through:

- initial home visits;
- home-school agreements;
- governors report to parents;
- home-school liaison work;
- school newsletters.

- In addition, Staff regularly talk about the importance of attending school every day and being on time
- Children are encouraged to think about how each day of learning builds on the previous day
- Raising awareness of attendance and punctuality issues among all staff, parents and pupils. Every week we inform parents and children of the weekly attendance percentage per class. We also celebrate the highest attending class by awarding them the school trophy for the week. As an inclusive school, we ensure that no group or individual misses out on any attendance-related rewards because of disability, special educational needs or other extenuating circumstances
- Ensuring that parents have an understanding of the responsibility placed on them for making sure their child attends regularly and punctually.
- Equipping children with the life skills needed to take responsibility for good school attendance and punctuality appropriate to the child's age and development.
- Maintaining effective means of communication with parents, pupils, staff and governors on school attendance matters.
- Developing and implementing procedures for identifying, reporting and reviewing cases of poor attendance and persistent lateness.
- Supporting pupils who have been experiencing any difficulties at home or at school which are preventing good attendance.
- Understanding the role of Emotional ly Based School Avoidance (EBSA) on attendance and strategies to support families affected
- Developing and implementing procedures to follow up non-attendance at school.

It seeks to ensure that all parties involved in the practicalities of school attendance are aware and informed of attendance matters in school and to outline the school's commitment to attendance matters. It details the responsibilities of individuals and groups involved and the procedures in place to promote and monitor pupil attendance.

### **Understanding Types of Absence**

Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any pupil's absence or late arrival disrupts teaching routines and so may affect the learning of others in the same class. Ensuring a child's regular attendance at school is a parental responsibility and allowing absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by the parent), as either authorised or unauthorised. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required. Each half-day is known as a 'session'.

**Authorised absences** are morning or afternoon sessions away from school for a genuine reason such as illness (although you may be asked to provide medical evidence for your child before this can be authorised), medical or 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 granted. This type of absence can lead to the school referring to the Local Authority for penalty notices and/or legal proceedings.

Unauthorised absence includes, however is not exhaustive:

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily e.g. because they had a late night or for non-infectious illness or injury that would not affect their ability to learn
- Absences which have never been properly explained
- Children who arrive at school after the close of registration are marked using a 'U'. This indicates that they are in school for safeguarding purposes, however is counted as an absence for the session
- Shopping trips
- Looking after other children or children accompanying siblings or parents to medical appointments
- Their own or family birthdays
- Holidays taken during term time without leave, not deemed 'for exceptional purposes' by the headteacher
- Day trips
- Other leave of absence in term time which has not been agreed

### **Persistent and Severe Absenteeism (PA and SA)**

A pupil is defined by the Government as a '**persistently absent**' when their attendance is 90% or below and '**severely absent**' when attendance is 50% or below, this can be authorised or unauthorised absence.

Absence at these levels will cause considerable damage to any pupil's education and we need the full support and co-operation of parents to resolve this. For children who are **severely absent** we are likely to involve outside agencies to support the school and family to overcome barriers to attendance and each child will have an individual support plan.

## **Absence Procedures**

### **First Day Contact**

Where a child is absent from school and we have not received any verbal or written communication from the parent, then we initiate a first day contact process. The Attendance administrator checks all of the registers from 9.10am to 9.45am on a daily basis, to identify those pupils who are absent. There are occasions when we are unaware why the child is absent and we will contact the parent to check the reasons for the child's absence.

### **Absence protocol**

- Attendance administrator to monitor Arbor and generate list of children who are absent. All reasons to be recorded on Arbor
- Stage 1: children who are absent on day 1 and reason is known to be recorded on Arbor. If reason unknown, contact to be made with parents.
- Stage 2: On day 2 of absence, if no contact has still been made, SLT to be informed and child's emergency contact numbers to be contacted
- Stage 3: Day 3, if still no contact. A home visit to be undertaken by 2 members of staff (Deputy Headteacher / DSL plus 1) the visit will be made to ascertain the safety and well-being of the child and the reason for absence from school.

### **Illness**

When children have an illness that means they will be away from school long term, the school will do all it can to send material home, so that they can keep up with their school work.

If the absence is likely to continue for an extended period, or be a repetitive absence, the school will contact the support services to see if arrangements can be made for the child to be given some home tuition outside school.

Where over the course of an academic year, a child has repeated periods of illness, the school will write to parents to ask them to provide medical evidence for each future period of illness related absence. This evidence could be a doctor's note, appointment card or copy of a prescription.

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

- Telephone you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you however it is your responsibility to contact us
- Write to you if your child's attendance is below 95%
- Invite you in to school to discuss the situation with our Attendance Officer or Deputy Headteacher if absences persist
- Refer the matter to the Local Authority if attendance does not improve.

We monitor all absence, and the reasons that are given, thoroughly.

**If absence continues we will:**

- Write to you if your child's attendance is below 95%, or where punctuality is a concern
- Invite you into school to discuss the situation with Headteacher if absences persist
- Create a personalised action/support plan to address any barriers to attendance
- Offer signposting support to other agencies or services if appropriate
- Refer the matter to the Local Authority if attendance does not improve.

**Lateness**

Poor punctuality is not acceptable and can contribute to further absence. Good time-keeping is a vital life skill which will help children as they progress through their school life and out into the wider world.

Pupils who arrive late disrupt lessons and, if a child misses the start of the day, they can feel unsettled and embarrassed, miss vital work and important messages from their class teacher.

**Harbinger Primary School**

**The school day starts at: 9am** we have a soft staggered start from 8.45-9am

Your child will receive a late mark 'L' if they are not in by that time. Children arriving after **9am** the parent/carer should:

- Come through main reception and sign the child in using the sign in App.

Lateness is monitored closely and reasons for absence are recorded.

If your child has a persistent late record, but you can approach us at any time if you are having problems getting your child to school on time. We expect parents and staff to encourage good punctuality by being good role models to our children and celebrate good class and individual punctuality. Unauthorised lateness could result in the school referring to the Local Authority for sanctions and/or legal proceedings. This may mean that you could face the possibility of being issued with a Penalty Notice if the problem persists.

### **Understanding barriers to attendance**

Whilst any child may occasionally have time off school because they are too unwell to attend, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any barriers preventing regular attendance are best resolved between the school, the parents and the child. If a parent thinks their child is reluctant to attend school, then we will work with that family to understand the root problem and provide any necessary support. We can use outside agencies to help with this, such as the School Nurse, Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing support services, a Child and Family Support Worker or the relevant Local Authority team/s. Where outside agencies are supporting the family, you may be invited to attend a Team Around the Family meeting (TAF) to consider what is working well and what needs to improve. An individualised attendance plan will be agreed and subsequently reviewed.

Some pupils face greater barriers to attendance than their peers. These can include pupils who suffer from long-term medical conditions or who have specific special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), or other vulnerabilities which may impact attendance. High expectations of attendance remain however, we will work with families and pupils to support improved attendance whilst being mindful of the additional barriers faced. We can discuss reasonable adjustments and additional support from external partners where appropriate.

See Annex A for summary tables of responsibilities for school attendance.

### **Tower Hamlets Behaviour & Attendance Support Service**

Local Authority Attendance Welfare Advisors (AWAs) work strategically by offering support to schools, families, and other professionals to reduce persistent and severe absence and improve overall attendance for all pupils.

Parents are expected to work with the school and Local Authority to address any attendance concerns. Parents should proactively engage with the support offered, aiming to resolve any problems together. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be resolved in this way, the school may consider more formal support and/or refer the child to the Local



Authority. If attendance does not improve, legal action may be taken in the form of a Penalty Notice (see Annex B for the Tower Hamlets Penalty Notice Scheme) prosecution in the Magistrates Court. Legal proceedings are designed to strengthen parental responsibilities and ensure improved attendance.

### **School Attendance and the Law**

By law all children of compulsory school age must receive an appropriate full-time education (Education Act 1996). Parents have a legal duty to ensure their child attends school regularly at the school at which they are registered.

Parents may be recognised differently under education law, than under family law. Section 576 of the Education Act 1996 states that a 'parent', in relation to a child or young person, includes any person who is not a parent (from which can be inferred 'biological parent') but who has parental responsibility, or who has care of the child.

A person typically has care of a child or young person if they are the person with whom the child lives, either full or part time and who looks after the child, irrespective of what their biological or legal relationship is with the child.

Unauthorised absence may result in the school referring to the Local Authority for sanctions and/or legal proceedings. This may include issuing each parent with a Penalty Notice for £160, reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days or referring the matter to the Magistrates Court whereby each parent may receive a fine up to £1000. Repeated or 'aggravated offences' could result in a fine of £2500 or up to 3 months in prison.

If a parent is found guilty in court, they will receive a criminal conviction.

### **Holidays in Term time**

**There is no entitlement in law for pupils to take time off during the term to go on holiday.** In addition, the Supreme Court has ruled that the definition of regular school attendance is "in accordance with the rules prescribed by the school".

In LBTH the LA considers 96% attendance or above as regular school attendance. Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are "exceptional circumstances".

It is a rule of this school that a leave of absence shall not be granted in term time unless there are reasons considered to be exceptional by the headteacher, irrespective of the child's overall attendance. Only the headteacher or his/her designate (**not the local authority**) may authorise such a request. All applications for a leave of absence must be made in writing on the prescribed form provided by the school. Where a parent removes a child when the application for leave was refused or where no application was made to the school, a penalty notice may be requested by this school to the Local Authority.

A Penalty Notice may be issued where there have been at least 6 consecutive sessions of unauthorised absence for the purpose of a holiday.

**At Harbinger School 'exceptional circumstances' will be interpreted as:**

- being of unique and significant emotional, educational or spiritual value to the child which outweighs the loss of teaching time (as determined by the headteacher).
- The fundamental principles for defining 'exceptional' are events that are "rare, significant, unavoidable and short". By 'unavoidable' we mean an event that could not reasonably be scheduled at another time, outside of school term time. The headteacher will take into account the child's overall attendance figure when making a decision regarding the application for leave of absence.
- If leave of absence is authorised, the school will not provide work for children to do during their absence. Parents are however advised to read with their children and encourage them to write a diary while they are away.

**Deletion from Roll**

Parents of pupils leaving Harbinger Primary School or other than at the end of Year 2/6 are required to complete a 'In-year Admission/School transfer' form which can be obtained from the school office or Pupil Services. This provides school and the LA with the following information: Child's name, class, current address, date of leaving, new home address, name of new school, address of new school. The school will need to complete a 'School History' section and sign the form before this can be submitted to Local Authority.

This information is essential to ensure that we know the whereabouts and appropriately safeguard all of our pupils, even those who leave us.

It is crucial that parents keep school updated with current addresses and contact details for key family members in case of emergency.

**Every removal** from the school register must be notified to the Local Authority, as soon as the ground for removal has been met in relation to that pupil, and in any event no later than the time at which the pupil's name is removed from the register.

**Absence data**

We use data to monitor, identify and support individual pupils or groups of pupils when their attendance needs to improve. Persistently and severely absent pupils are tracked and monitored carefully. We combine this with attainment data as good attendance leads to good attendance.

We share information and work collaboratively with other schools in the area, local authorities, and other partners when absence is at risk of becoming persistent or severe.

## **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 school, on time, every day.

All school staff and the Governing Body/Trust Board are committed to working with parents and pupils to promote good attendance as this is the best way to ensure the best outcomes for all our pupils.

The member of SLT who is responsible for attendance at Harbinger is: the Deputy Headteacher

The member of staff responsible for day to day attendance related matters is: Makda Mascio

## Appendix:



Department  
for Education

# Summary table of responsibilities for school attendance

Guidance for maintained schools,  
academies, independent schools, and  
local authorities

**Published: May 2022**

**Applies from: September 2022**

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# **Children and Culture Services Directorate**



## **BEHAVIOUR & ATTENDANCE SUPPORT SERVICE**

# **Penalty Notice Scheme Protocol**

**July 2023**

## **Part-Time/Reduced Timetables**

### **Guidance**

The primary and most recent guidance is from Working together to improve school attendance (May 2022). Schools **must** adhere to this guidance if putting in place a part-time timetable, which must only be in **very exceptional circumstances** and can only be **temporary** and **must be in the pupil's best interests** and schools

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- “All pupils of compulsory school age are entitled to a full-time education. In **very exceptional circumstances**, where it is in a pupil's best interests, there may be a need for a **temporary** part-time timetable to meet their individual needs. For example, where a medical condition prevents a pupil from attending full-time education and a part-time timetable is considered as part of a re-integration package. **A part-time timetable should not be used to manage a pupil's behaviour.**”
- “A part-time timetable must only be in place for the shortest time necessary and not be treated as a long-term solution. Any pastoral support programme or other agreement should have a time limit by which point the pupil is expected to attend full-time, either at school or alternative provision. There should also be formal arrangements in place for regularly reviewing it with the pupil and their parents. In agreeing to a part-time timetable, a school has agreed to a pupil being absent from school for part of the week or day and therefore must treat absence as authorised.”

### **Other Relevant Guidance and Law**

- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2022
- Equality Act 2010
- Suspensions and Permanent Exclusions Guidance 2022
- Behaviour in Schools Guidance 2022
- SEND Code of Practice 2014 (updated 2020)

### **Defining part-time timetables**

“Full-Time” is not defined in law but for recording purposes, is defined as the time that a pupil would normally have in their school. For a full-time KS4 pupil this would normally be expected to be 25 teaching hours.

- A pupil who spends part of their week in school and part in alternative provision is not on a part-time timetable
- A pupil who is attending individual tuition only (approved by the Social Inclusion Panel or Fair Access Panel) but dual registered with school is not on a part-time timetable