



**Sir Thomas Abney**  
PRIMARY SCHOOL

# Attendance Policy

**Approved by:** Sir Thomas Abney Governing Body      **Date:** January 2018

**Last reviewed on:** January 2018

**Next review due by:** January 2019

## Introduction

We at Sir Thomas Abney pride ourselves on being an inclusive school, where we celebrate diversity and difference and acknowledge the richness that this brings to our school community. We aim to provide opportunities for all children to access a broad, balanced and creative curriculum, regardless of age, attainment, ethnicity, language or background that is personalised to meet children's individual needs.

This is a successful school and your child plays their part in making it so. We aim for an environment which enables and encourages all members of the community to reach out for excellence. 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.

## 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

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
- Anti-bullying

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

### 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 regular 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.

### **Attendance of Looked After Children**

The school has a designated teacher responsible for overseeing the education of children in public care. This role will include the monitoring of attendance rates which are reported to the Education Attendance Service. Any concerns should be notified as soon as possible to the carer, social worker and School Attendance Officer for vulnerable children.

### **Change of Address**

If a family are moving to a new address, parents/carers must provide school with their new address and contact numbers. If the family are moving overseas, parents/carers must provide travel documents and a forwarding address. Failure to do this will result in a referral to the 'Children Missing Education' officer at the Hackney Learning Trust.

### **Telephone Numbers**

There are times when we need to contact parents/carers. You must provide the school with up to date numbers – if you don't then something important may be missed. We require at least 3 additional contacts over and above the primary parent/carer in case we cannot get through to the primary contact. There will be termly checks on telephone numbers, contacts and addresses throughout the year. There is also a reminder in the school newsletter.

### **Moving to another school**

Parents/carers must notify the school immediately if they are removing their child to start at another school. The parents/carers must provide the name of the new school. If a family are moving to a new address, which requires the child to attend a new school but the child is not yet registered then parents/carers must provide school with their new address. Occasionally children may move away from the school without notifying us. We make every reasonable effort to locate the child and their family. Removal from roll may be backdated if we subsequently receive proof of dates of attendance at the new school. If we are unable to make communication with the family, the child is kept on roll for 20 days and then the Educational Welfare Officer and Children Missing Education Service are notified.

### **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 you details on attendance in newsletters;
- Report to you how your child is performing in school, what their attendance and punctuality rate is and how this relates to their attainment;
- Celebrate good attendance by displaying individual and class achievements;
- Reward good or improving attendance through class competitions, certificates and outings/events.
- Promote with parents/carers, children and staff raising attendance levels across the school.

## Understanding types of Absences

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by the parents/carers), 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 like illness. Medical/dental/optician appointments should be made outside of school time when possible. The appointment letter should be shown to the school office in advance.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable. This type of absence can lead to the Hackney Learning Trust 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

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/carers and the child. If a 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.

### 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 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 parents/carers will be informed of this immediately.

PA children are tracked and monitored carefully through our pastoral system and we also combine this with academic mentoring where absence affects attainment.

All PA cases are also automatically made known to the school's Educational Welfare Officer.

### Absence Procedures

If your child is absent you must:

- Contact us as soon as possible on every day of absence;
- Or, you can come into school and report to reception, who will arrange for a member of staff to speak with you.
- If your child is due to have a planned medical procedure/operation, you must notify the school in advance and provide documentary evidence.

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

- Telephone or text you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you;
- Invite you in to discuss the situation with our Attendance Officer and/or Deputy Headteacher if absences persist;
- Ask you to provide medical evidence, for example, a doctor's letter or prescription medication if attendance falls below 96%
- Refer the matter to the school's Educational Welfare Service if attendance moves below 90%.

### **The School Education Welfare Service (Synergy)**

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 sorted out in this way, the school may refer the child to the school's Education Welfare Officer. They 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, Fines (£60, rising to £120 if not paid within 28 days (Anti-social Behaviour Act 2004) or prosecutions in the Magistrates Court. Full details of the options open to enforce attendance at school are available from the school or Hackney Learning Trust.

Alternatively, parents/carers or children may wish to contact the Welfare Officer themselves to ask for help or information. They are independent of the school and will give impartial advice. Their telephone number is available from the school office.

### **Lateness**

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If your child misses the start of the day they can miss work and start the day unsettled. Late arriving children also disrupt lessons and this can be embarrassing for the child. Poor punctuality can also encourage absence.

The school must ensure every child is recorded in case of emergency evacuation.

***Children arriving late for school MUST go directly to the school office to be recorded on the electronic register. They will be given a dated late pass and must hand this to the class teacher before joining the rest of the class.***

### **How we Manage Lateness**

The school day starts at **8.55am** and we expect your child to be in class at that time.

If your child arrives **after 8.55am** they are **late** and need to go directly to the school office to be recorded on the electronic register.

Children who arrive after **8:55** but before **9:10** are coded "**L**" (late) in the register. Those children who arrive after **9:10** are coded "**U**" which is an unauthorised absence. **10 sessions of unauthorised** absences may result in a **Penalty Notice Warning** being issued by the Hackney Learning Trust. A session is equal to a half day absence.

If your child has a persistent late record you will be asked to meet with the Deputy Headteacher and/or Educational Welfare Officer to resolve the problem, but you can approach us at any time if you are having problems getting your child to school on time.

### **Children picked up late after school**

Such incidents can cause distress to children who are keen to see their parents/carers at the end of the school day and should be avoided at all cost.

Parents/carers must telephone the school office if they are running late and inform them as to the time of their arrival in school. On arrival, the school office will ask parents/carers to fill in a brief form detailing the reason for late collection.

### **Children not picked up after school**

The school will make all reasonable effort to contact parents/carers who fail to collect their child after school. From 4.15pm the school must contact the Emergency Duty Team at Social Services who will take over the care of the child.

### **Special Leave in Term Time**

Taking leave in term time will affect your child's schooling as much as any other absence. All applications for leave must be made in advance.

Any period of leave taken without the agreement of the school, will be classed as unauthorised and may attract sanctions such as a Penalty Notice.

If special leave is granted, parents/carers must give a return date and notify the school as soon as possible if this changes.

If a child fails to return on the agreed date, the school will refer the case to the Educational Welfare Officer. The child will remain on roll whilst an investigation is carried out. If the child does not return to school the school will then contact the 'Children Missing Education' Officer and will liaise regarding the correct common transfer file. If the child is subject to child protection plans social services will be immediately notified.

The Governors will not authorise any leave at times when children are scheduled to take public examinations. Parents/carers will be notified as soon as these dates are known.

If children are on leave without authorisation Hackney Learning Trust has the power to issue Fixed Penalty Notices of £60, rising to £120 if not paid within 28 days (Anti-social Behaviour Act 2004).

### **What is the Role of the Parent?**

Parents and carers are responsible for ensuring their children attend school every day and on time.

Any absence must be reported **before 8.45am** to the **school office only** in one of the following ways:

- Text to the school's dedicated text service (preferable option)
- Email to [parents@sirthomasabney.hackney.sch.uk](mailto:parents@sirthomasabney.hackney.sch.uk)
- Telephone call or voicemail message to 020 8800 1411
- In person at the school office

(Absence notifications must NOT be left with classroom staff to pass on to the office)

If a parent/carer receives a text from the school requesting a reason for their child's absence, where the parent/carer has forgotten to inform the office, they must respond immediately. They must ensure that any changes to their contact information is given to the school office.

Parents/carers should make all non-emergency appointments outside school hours, where possible. If not possible, then their child needs to attend their appointment and attend school for the remainder of the school day. They must not have a whole day of absence from school. Parents/carers are responsible for providing proof of these appointments to the school office when collecting their child early or dropping their child off late due to an appointment.

### **What is the Role of the Child?**

Children are expected to attend school regularly, punctually and appropriately prepared for lessons. The target attendance for all children is a minimum **96%**.

As children get older they become increasingly responsible for their own attendance and punctuality, particularly when they come to school by themselves. All children must be in school and lined up by 8.55am for morning registration and 1.15pm for afternoon registration. We aim to make children aware of these responsibilities and ensure that they want to come to school by offering a safe and stimulating experience when they are here.

### **What is the Role of Class Teachers?**

The class teacher will ensure that the registration period is orderly and calm and the registers are called promptly and accurately every morning. Registration should be taken at the same time to ensure consistency in identifying late comers. Class registers are legal records and must be treated accordingly.

Class teachers will raise issues of attendance and punctuality with parents if these are having a negative impact on the child's learning.

### **What is the Role of the School Office?**

The school office is the first point of contact for parents/carers in connection with attendance. They have a crucial role in communicating reasons for children's absence given by parents/carers. They will note any reasons for absence given in a phone message, text, email or in person to them and record these on the school's management information system, SIMs.

The school office is responsible for ensuring all daily registers are complete and for monitoring individual attendance and punctuality on a daily basis, referring any concerns or queries to the Deputy Headteacher. They will contact parent/carers by text shortly after close of registers if no reason for an absence has been provided. The office will monitor the text has been delivered and check parental contact numbers if it has not. If the primary parent/carer cannot be contacted they will work through the other contacts on the system until the matter is resolved.

The office will inform the Deputy Headteacher of any unauthorised absences so that these can be followed up.

### **What is the Role of the Pastoral Manager?**

The Pastoral Manager is here to support parents/carers and will liaise closely with the senior leadership team and school office with regard to the punctuality of children. The pastoral

manager monitors late arrivals in the morning and ensures these are recorded accurately on the school's electronic system in the school office.

### **What is the Role of the Deputy Headteacher?**

The Deputy Headteacher has day-to-day responsibility for monitoring attendance and punctuality, co-ordinating responses to concerns about attendance and punctuality, and informing relevant agencies, including the parent/carer community, school governors and the school's Welfare Service (Synergy Education and Welfare Service) about attendance and punctuality issues.

### **Monitoring Attendance and Punctuality**

The senior leadership team works closely with class teachers, the school office and the Educational Welfare Officer. School registers are monitored weekly to identify class attendance and punctuality percentages. Individual attendance and punctuality is monitored on a daily basis.

Every week in the achievement assembly, the classes with the best punctuality and attendance for the previous week are given class certificates. At the end of every year, all children with 100% attendance receive a prize.

The Deputy Headteacher checks the registers weekly for outstanding unauthorised absences and discusses these with the school office. Only the school may authorise an absence if they are satisfied that a valid reason has been provided by the parent/carer.

Children's punctuality and attendance are discussed at weekly meetings with the Educational Welfare Officer. After determining whether there are any issues, parents/carers are written to or invited to an Attendance Surgery to discuss how to resolve these issues. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way and if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed, court proceedings to prosecute parents may be used.

### **What is the Role of the Headteacher?**

The Headteacher will ensure that parents/carers and children are aware of their responsibilities regarding punctuality and attendance at the point of admission. This will be supported in the signing of the Home School Agreement.

The Headteacher will ensure that the school meets all legal requirements, sets targets for attendance and publishes attendance figures.

The Headteacher has a duty under the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 1995 to make a return to Hackney Learning Trust where there is a poor pattern of attendance or a child has had an unauthorised absence for a continuous period of more than two weeks.

Details of attendance and any connected initiatives are reported to the governing body in each of the Headteacher's reports. Once a year, the Headteacher reports more fully to the governing body on progress in this area.

### **What is the Role of the School Governors?**

The governors have overall responsibility for monitoring attendance in school and should be familiar with the current legislation and the school's registration system. They can request

reports on attendance and procedures as necessary. They must ensure that the school is working above the government's benchmark attendance for primary schools.

One governor has particular responsibility for attendance and liaison with the Deputy Headteacher. The governors are informed of the attendance statistics in the Headteacher's reports and in the annual report from the Headteacher.

### **What is the Role of the School's Educational Welfare Officer?**

The Educational Welfare Officer meets weekly with the Deputy Headteacher. They advise the school and monitor performance in relation to attendance and punctuality. They also take referrals from the school for more focused interventions with particular families.

### **Intervening with Children who are Causing Concern Because of Punctuality or Attendance**

These interventions include home visits, interviews at school, support for families with particular problems which affect attendance and punctuality. Where necessary, appropriate, legal action against families who are not fulfilling their responsibilities under the Education Act will be taken. These include Penalty Notices, Fines (£60, rising to £120 if not paid within 28 days (Anti-social Behaviour Act 2004) or prosecutions in the Magistrates Court.

### **Under What Circumstances Do We Take a Child Off Roll?**

When a child leaves the school to move to another, we will contact the receiving school to confirm the child's place. We will only take a child off roll when the new school has confirmed that the child has started.

Children of non-statutory age may have their place withdrawn if their attendance continuously falls below the expected level.

Where a child has stopped attending and all efforts by the school and the Education Welfare Officer to contact the parents/carers have failed the child is referred to the Children Missing Education department of the Hackney Learning Trust. At which point the child is taken off roll.

### **Summary**

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

All school staff are committed to working with parents/carers 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.