

# VICARAGE PRIMARY SCHOOL



## Attendance Policy

Person responsible for the policy	Early Help/Attendance Lead - Karen Dennett
Date shared with staff	January 2019
Date to be next reviewed by staff	February 2020
Date ratified by the governing body	January 2019

Signed by Chair of Governors:	Signed by Head Teacher:

## **Introduction**

This policy represents our commitment to striving for every child at our school to achieve 100% attendance, this is achievable, and many children at Vicarage Primary School come to school every day. It sets out the principles, procedures and practice the school will undertake including strategies, sanctions and possible legal consequences of poor attendance and punctuality as well as rewards for, and benefits of good attendance. This policy will be reviewed, amended as necessary and published annually in accordance with current legislation and guidance.

## **Principles**

- Receiving a full-time, suitable education is a child's legal entitlement.
- It is the legal responsibility of each parent/carer to ensure this happens.
- Attending school aids intellectual, social and emotional development.
- Attending school safeguards the welfare of children whilst they are not in the care of their parents.
- All children whose attendance is poor will be treated as vulnerable.

These principles are enshrined in British law, within the Education Act 1996, the Children Act 1989 and other associated pieces of legislation.

## **Aims and objectives of this Policy**

- To ensure that all children attend Vicarage Primary School as near full-time as possible, in order to maximise their educational achievement and social development.
- To discharge Vicarage Primary School's duty to safeguard its pupils to the best of its ability.
- To ensure that all those responsible for a child's education, including parents, carers, staff and governors, understand and accept their responsibilities with respect to attendance.
- To minimise unauthorised absence from school, including term time leave for the purpose of holidays and travel thereby reducing levels of persistent absence.
- To improve the life chances and maximise the potential of our children and young people and prepare them to be fully contributing citizens when they reach adulthood.

## **Promoting Attendance:**

The Governors, Head Teacher and staff use all possible opportunities to promote the importance of good attendance and punctuality at Vicarage Primary School. This includes pupil diaries, newsletters, parents evenings, a weekly attendance trophy for the class with the highest attendance in each phase, and certificates for 100% attendance every term and for the whole academic year.

The Head Teacher has the discretion to authorise up to ten days leave of absence in term-time. However, at Vicarage Primary School that discretion will only be exercised in the **MOST EXCEPTIONAL** circumstances. Applications for leave during term time must be submitted to school leaving adequate time for the application to be considered and responded to. If term time leave is taken without seeking permission this will result in a penalty notice being issued by the Local Authority.

## **RESPONSIBILITIES OF PARENTS/CARERS**

### **Understanding types of absence coding**

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school as AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required. There are a number of ways you can inform us if your child is not able to attend school:

- Leave a message on our dedicated attendance line.
- Via Parent mail or email at [info@vicarage.newham.sch.uk](mailto:info@vicarage.newham.sch.uk)
- In person at the main school office.

Medical evidence may also be required in the form of a copy of a prescription, GP note, etc. Types of absence that is likely to be authorised is illness or a medical appointment.

Examples of types of absence that are not considered reasonable and which will not be authorised under any circumstances are:

- Going shopping with parents, birthdays etc.
- Minding other younger children in the family.
- Staying at home because other members in the family are unwell.
- Day trips and holidays in term time that have not been agreed.
- Arriving at school late to get a present mark. That is more than 30minutes after the start of either the morning or afternoon session.
- Truancy.

## **Understanding absence percentages**

You may wonder why a school would be concerned if your child's attendance is below 96%. This may make it easier for you to understand:

95% equates to half a day off every two weeks

90% equates to a day off every two weeks

85% equates to one and a half days off every two weeks

80% equates to one whole day off every week

**A secondary age child whose attendance is 80% will have missed ONE WHOLE YEAR of education by the time they leave school**

## **Reluctant attenders/school refusal**

You should do everything possible to encourage your child to attend. However, if the reason for their reluctance appears to be school-based, such as difficulty with work, or bullying, please discuss this with the school at the earliest opportunity and we will do everything possible to sort the problem out. Colluding with your child's reluctance to attend is likely to make the matter worse.

## **SCHOOL PROCEDURES**

### **1. Registration and punctuality procedures**

Registers are taken twice a day, once at the start of the school day at 8:55am, and once during the afternoon session at 1.00pm or 1:15pm, depending on the phase. The registers will remain open for 30 minutes and close at 9.25am and 1.30pm /1.45pm Pupils arriving before the end of the registration period will be coded "L" ("Late before registers close") which is a present mark. Pupils arriving after the registers have closed will be coded "U" ("Late after registers close") which counts as an unauthorised absence. Schools are required to record a reason for lateness and the time of arrival.

Only a senior member of staff can authorise an absence. If there is not a known reason for the absence at registration, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised until a satisfactory reason is provided. If the reason given is not satisfactory in the school's view, and/or evidence of the reason cannot be provided, the absence will be coded as "O" ("Unauthorised absence"). Absence notes received from parents/carers will be kept for the remainder of the academic year; or longer if there are concerns that require further investigation or legal action. If a pupil is persistently late, a member of staff will arrange to meet with the parent/carer.

### **2. First Day Absence Contact**

Parents are expected to notify Vicarage Primary School if their child is unable to attend for any unavoidable reason, such as illness. If Vicarage Primary School does not receive notification, the school will telephone on the first day

of absence to try to ascertain the reason. First day contact will be carried out as early as possible in the school day in order to notify parents as quickly as possible children who may have set off for school but not arrived.

### **3. Second day of Absence Contact**

If the child is still absent on the second day without contact from the family, a second telephone call will be made to the home. The family may be asked to come to school for a meeting. A home visit may also be carried out by two members of staff.

### **4. Continuing Absence Procedures**

In the event of a further absence without contact from the family another home visit will be made.

5. If a child's attendance falls below 96% at any time a letter will be sent home to set targets for improvement, signpost sources of support if needed, and ultimately recommend court action or a "Penalty Notice" if there is no improvement. If the child's attendance continually fails to improve, a second letter will be sent to arrange an attendance improvement meeting. Medical proof will be required to authorise any further absence. If the child's attendance drops below 90%, the "Local Authority Attendance Management Officer" Mrs Alison Williams, will begin an investigation.

### **6. Frequent/Persistent Absence Procedures**

Weekly checks of class registers will be made to identify pupils with a pattern of absences that may lead to persistent absence ("PA"), that is to say absence of 10% or more in a half term.

### **7. Consequence of Poor Attendance/Punctuality**

For pupils whose attendance and/or punctuality fails to improve, after a range of interventions and support measures have been tried by the school, and attendance is below 90%, the ultimate consequences will be one of the following:

- a. The school will ask the Local Authority to issue a Penalty Notice on its behalf. A Penalty Notice carries a fine of £60, per parent, per child. If the fine is not paid within 20 days it rises to £120 per parent, per child. If not paid at all, court action will be initiated by Vicarage Primary School and/or the Local Authority.

If a child's attendance is below 80% the consequence will be

- b. The school may also ask the Local Authority to initiate court action under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996, which could lead to fines up to £2,500, or even imprisonment.
- c. In some cases, action may be taken by Vicarage Primary School and/or the Local authority under the Children Act 1989 to protect the welfare and development of the child.

#### **8. Children who cease to attend without prior notification (CME) procedures**

Procedures for trying to trace children who cease to attend without prior notification are covered in detail in the "CME Policy and Procedures", which can be found on our school website. However, if after ten days continuous absence school has been unable to ascertain the whereabouts of a pupil, they will refer the child's details to the Local Authority for it to perform further checks that are not available to Vicarage Primary School. If after 20 days of continuous unauthorised absence, their whereabouts cannot be traced, they will be removed from the school roll.

#### **9. Non Starters**

Pupils who are allocated places but fail to start are also treated as CME. If the school has been unable to make contact with the family during a ten-day period after their expected arrival, they will refer the pupils to the Local Authority CME team for further checks.

#### **Vulnerable Children**

Children who are Looked After ("LAC"), subject to a Child Protection Plan ("CP"), and/or Children in Need ("CIN") will be treated with the highest priority and will be known to the Attendance Team at Vicarage Primary School. Any unexplained absence will be followed up immediately by a telephone call to the home, a home visit or a call to The Newham Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub ("MASH"), in order that a same-day visit can be made. Children with Special Educational Needs ("SEND") will be treated with similar priority in order that their time in school can be maximised, and their learning supported to the greatest extent possible.

**At Vicarage Primary School, the Attendance Lead is Mrs Karen Dennett. Mrs Dennett is supported in this role by the Family Support Worker (Mrs Shahina Ali) and the leadership team.**