



Attendance Policy

2023-2024

Person responsible for the policy	Early Help/Attendance Lead - Karen Dennett
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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, Keeping Children Safe in Education 2022 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
- In person at the main school office.

Types of absence that is likely to be authorised is illness or a medical appointment.

Illness: Medical evidence will be required to support absence due to illness of 3 days or more, in the form of a prescription, prescribed medication, Pharmacy First Advice Voucher etc.

Medical appointments: Please bring your appointment letter to the school office, this will be photocopied for our records. We ask that all medical appointments where possible are arranged toward the end of or after the school day.

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

- Going shopping with parents, birthdays etc.
- Minding younger children in the family.
- Day trips and holidays in term time that have not been agreed.
- Arriving at school more than 30 minutes 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 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 support your child and resolve any issues. Colluding with your child's reluctance to attend will 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 8:45am, and once during the afternoon session at 1.00pm or 1:15pm, depending on the year group. The registers will remain open for 30 minutes and close at 9.15am 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"). 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 reason. If Vicarage Primary School does not receive notification, the school will contact parents in order 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.

A home visit may also be carried out by two members of staff.

3. Continuing Absence Procedures

The parents of any child whose attendance is a cause for concern will be invited to attend a meeting with the schools Attendance Team and or Phase leader. The purpose of this meeting will be 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, you will be invited to attend a formal attendance improvement meeting.

4. 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.

5. 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:

- 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.
- The school may 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.
- In some cases, action may be taken by Vicarage Primary School and/or the Local authority inline with Keeping Children Safe in education 2020 and the schools Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy to protect the welfare and development of the child.

6. 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. Continuous unauthorised absence can result in children being removed from the school roll.

7. Non-Starters

Pupils who are allocated places at Vicarage Primary but fail to start are also treated as CME. If the school has been unable to contact 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 Attendance Officer Mrs Shahina Ali and the leadership team.

References:

The Childrens Act 1989 <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/contents>

The Education Act 1996 <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1996/56/contents>

Keeping children safe in education 2022

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1101454/Keeping_children_safe_in_education_2022.pdf