

<b>POLICY TITLE</b>	<b>Attendance Policy</b>
<b>Policy Area</b>	General
<b>Author</b>	DS
<b>Relevant Statutory Regulations</b>	Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 Section 436A of the Education Act 1996 and Safeguarding legislation
<b>Senior Team Lead</b>	Head of School
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<b>Ratified by</b>	Catherine Howett

## **Introduction**

For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend school regularly and punctually and this policy sets out how we, together, will achieve this. In order for any attendance and punctuality policy to be effective it must be consistently applied throughout the whole school, by its staff, pupils and parents.

## **Why regular attendance is so important**

Any absence affects the pattern of your child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any pupils' absence disrupts teaching routines which may affect the learning of others in the same class. Our teaching methods also makes it difficult to catch up with learning and work missed, or for it to be done at home.

Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is your legal and parental responsibility, permitting absence from school without good reason is an offence in law and may result in a Penalty Notice being issued or Court action/prosecution. Research has shown that regular attendance and good punctuality are key factors in children achieving their full potential at school.

## **Attendance and Punctuality in the Early Years**

Establishing good habits from the start will help your child to settle more quickly and build good habits for later life. Coming to school on time, every day helps to develop confidence.

Research has shown that, even at the earliest age, children with poor attendance and punctuality are at a disadvantage later in life. They generally find it harder to make and maintain friendships, they achieve less and they often suffer from poor self-esteem.

The school keeps a register of attendance for every child. This is a legal document and record and classifies every half-day attendance and/or absence. Absences are classified as either authorised or unauthorised. For this reason, the school will ask parents/carers for the reason for each absence.

## **Promoting regular attendance**

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility – parent, pupils and all members of school staff.

Children and families want to attend our school and our website and digital newsletter promotes the active engagement of all our community.

## **Safeguarding**

Effective attendance procedures are integral to ensuring all children are kept safe. Your child may be at risk of harm if they do not attend school regularly. Safeguarding the interest 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.

Failing to attend school on a regular basis will be considered as 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
- b) To any special educational needs, they may have either by regular attendance to school or otherwise.

If you wish to find out more information about the legislation around attendance, please visit: [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/564599/school\\_attendance.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/564599/school_attendance.pdf)

The school has been guided by the Government guidance document "**Working together to improve school attendance: Guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools, and local authorities** Published: **September 2022** in formulating the policies and procedures in place at school.

## 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 cannot be made outside of school time or unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies, or other unavoidable causes.

To enable the school to authorise an absence due to illness, parents/carers are requested to:

- provide medical evidence to the school. This can be in the form of GP / Hospital / Medical / Dental Appointment letters / cards, Copies of prescriptions/antibiotics issued (providing the child's name is indicated there on).

To enable the school to authorise an absence due to an emergency or unavoidable cause, parents/carers are requested to:

- speak to the Attendance Officer (Tamara Chaplin)/Head Teacher (Deborah Speakman), advise them of the issue and request the absence be authorised.

- write to the Attendance Officer/Head Teacher and request the absence be authorised.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no “authorised leave of absence” has been given. This type of absence can lead to the use of sanctions and/or referring to the Local Authority for legal intervention. Unauthorised absences are:

- parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily
- parents/carers not communicating the reason for absence the school
- absences which have never been properly explained or evidenced
- parents should provide medical evidence to the school to support the absence as being due to ill health if the absence is longer than 2 days or the absence will be unauthorised.
- child who arrive at school after the Registration period has ended
- truancy before or during the school day
- shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- day trips, holidays, or overseas trips 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 and the child. If your child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or to give into pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and usually make things worse.

## Absence in Term Time

Holidays or overseas trip absences 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 students away in school time.

Remember that any savings you think you may make by taking a holiday/overseas trip in school time are offset by the cost to your child’s education. Because of the damage to your child’s learning caused by this, we do not authorise any holidays/overseas trips in term time.

Government guidance is very clear that **“Only exceptional circumstances warrant a leave of absence”**. And that **“Headteachers should grant leaves of absence only in exceptional circumstances. This would not include a family holiday during term time.”**

## Persistent Absenteeism (PA)

A child becomes a ‘persistent absentee’ when they miss 10% (26 sessions or 13 days) or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason (this includes authorised and unauthorised absences). Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child’s educational prospects and we need parent’s 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.

Children are tracked and monitored carefully through our attendance system. Where the school is concerned regarding attendance levels the Headteacher will meet with the family and an intervention programme to support attendance will put in place. To support family’s advice from Camhs or the Educational psychologist will be sought or other relevant multiagency.

When a situation does not resolve, this could lead to a Fixed Penalty Notice or Pre-Court Conference where a discussion may be made to prosecute if a child’s attendance is of a continuing concern.

## Absence Procedure

If your child is absent, you must:

- Contact the school as soon as possible on the first day of absence, advising of the reason and likely length of absence, either by calling the school office or emailing the Attendance Officer, Tamara Chaplin, [tamara@thelondonacornschoo.co.uk](mailto:tamara@thelondonacornschoo.co.uk). (A phone call will be made to parents each time the child has been marked with an unauthorised code and no reason has been given for absence).
- Contact the school on the subsequent days of absence as necessary.

## What School will do if Attendance is a Concern

- Letters will be sent to parents to alert them to the concerns school has about their child's attendance and/or punctuality.
- Invite you into the school to discuss the situation with the Attendance Officer/Head Teacher.
- Use London Borough of Merton's Guide to Effectively Manage Attendance and Punctuality.
- Home visits.
- Pre referral meetings and where appropriate, the offer of an early help assessment.
- Referral to Attendance Advisory Service if your child's [attendance is 90% and below] unauthorised absence reaches 10% or more.

## The Attendance Advisory Officer

Parents are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the school staff in resolving any problems related to attendance together. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be resolved this way, and unauthorised absences continue, the school may refer to the Attendance Advisory Service. The Attendance Advisory Officer will try to resolve the situation by agreement but, if other ways of trying to improve your child's attendance have failed and unauthorised absence persist the Attendance Advisory Service can use sanction such as Penalty Notices or prosecutions in the Magistrates Court.

Alternatively, parents may wish to contact the Attendance Advisory Service themselves to ask for help or information. They are independent of the school and will give impartial advice their telephone number is 020 8921 8510.

## Lateness

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If your child misses the start of the day they can miss spending time with their class teacher, getting vital information and news for the day. Late arrival of children also disrupt lessons, can be embarrassing for your child and can also encourage absence

## How we manage lateness

The school day starts at 8.40am for the Kindergarten and 8.30am for the Lower School.

Registers in the Kindergarten will be marked at 9.00am and your child will receive a late mark if they are not in on time, and a very late mark if they arrive thirty minutes later after their start time.

Registers in the Lower School will be marked at 8.45am and your child will receive a late mark if they are not in on time, and a very late mark if they arrive thirty minutes after their start time.

Poor punctuality is classified as 'irregular school attendance' and action will be undertaken to address it, following the same procedure. If your child has a persistent late record, you will be asked to meet with the Head Teacher to resolve the problem, but you can approach us at any time if you are having problems getting your child to school on time.

- Fill out a "Leave Request Form", which will be provided by the office on demand, if your child is going to be absent for an entire day or more. Once completed please return the form to the office. Following this the Headteacher will complete her part of the form stating whether she authorizes the absence or not. A letter will be sent to parents which will explain to parents why the absence has been authorised or unauthorised and it will also warn of the potential triggers to receiving a fixed penalty notice.

The school abides by DFE regulations and also by Merton guidelines with regard to reporting persistence non-attendance. This could result in a fixed penalty being issued by the authority. This could be triggered by the following events.

- Where a child's attendance falls below 85% in a given period (5 weeks) of which 50% are without reasonable justification;
- A holiday/leave of absence to be 5 days or more unauthorised absence (concurrent or separate absences within a 4 month period);
- Where a child's attendance falls below 90% in a given period (8 weeks is proposed) without reasonable justification and a specific issue is involved e.g. unauthorised term-time holiday;

## **School Targets**

The school has targets to improve attendance and punctuality and your child has an important part to play in meeting targets.

The minimum level of attendance and punctuality for this school is 96% attendance and we will keep you updated regularly about progress to this level and how your child's attendance and punctuality compares. Our target is to achieve better than this because we know that good attendance is the key to successful schooling.

Through the school year we monitor absences and punctuality to show us where improvements need to be made.

## **Child Missing Education (CME)**

Any child who ceases to attend school, without notification as to their new address and/or the school they are transferring to, becomes a 'Child Missing in Education'. Any child in this category is reported to the Child Missing in Education Officer at the Local Authority, who will follow up the matter under section 436A of the Education Act 1996 and Safeguarding legislation, as necessary.

The attendance procedures are crucial to ensuring the safety of all children. If a child has been absent from school for 20 consecutive days without good reason and their whereabouts are unknown, the school has a legal obligation to report the child as missing education to the relevant local authority. In accordance with DFE regulations the child may be removed from the school roll.

## Communication

**Telephone Numbers:** there are times when we need to contact parents about lots of things, including absence, so we need to always have your contact numbers. Help us to help you and your child by making sure we have always got up-to-date phone numbers.

**Home Address:** let us know when you move address.

**Removing a Pupil from Our School:** if you make the decision to transfer your child to another school, for whatever reason and have given the relevant notice period to the school, as a matter of priority you need to provide the school with all the necessary details.

We will email you to ask if you can provide us, your new address (if relevant) and the school your child is transferring to. If we do not receive this information and your child ceases to attend our school, they become a 'Child Missing in Education'.

**Elective Home Education:** if you make the decision to educate your child at home and have given the relevant notice period, you are required to advise us of this in writing.

Once the letter is received, we will remove your child from the school roll and advise the Elective Home Education Officer of the Local Authority, who will contact you regarding this matter.

If a letter is not received, your child remains on the roll of the school and their absence is treated as unauthorized and action as detailed above.

## Points of Contact for Attendance at school

Deborah Speakman – Head Teacher

Tamara Chaplin – Attendance Officer

## Summary

The school has a legal duty to ensure procedures are in place to support good attendance and punctuality. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend school. 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.

## Related Policies

- TLAS Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- TLAS Confidentiality Policy