

# School Attendance

## 9th February 2022



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# Welcome



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# Objectives

- To identify the responsibilities of the whole school community in respect of pupil attendance.
- To understand attendance and absence data and what constitutes “good” attendance, with reference to the Ofsted framework.
- Strategies to reduce persistent absence and improve whole school attendance.
- When intervention is necessary, and the process



# Section 7 of the Education Act 1996

States that:

*“The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him to receive efficient full-time education suitable ... to his age, ability and aptitude, and ... to any special educational needs he may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.”*

Therefore, regular and punctual attendance at school or alternative provision is a legal requirement, as well as being essential to enable children to maximise their educational attainments and opportunities.



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# Governor's Role



There is the expectation that governors should play an active role in developing policies and procedures which support high levels of attendance. Like any other element of school improvement, managing attendance requires effective planning, taking into consideration the educational and wider needs of pupils. It also requires an understanding of the school's attendance data and governors should have the knowledge and skills to be able to review and analyse this.



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# Headline facts and figures for pupil absence in the autumn term, 2019/20

- Overall absence rate national 4.6% **Hillingdon 4.9%**
- Authorised absence national 3.3% **Hillingdon 3.6%**
- Unauthorised absence national 1.4% **Hillingdon 1.4%**
- Persistent absentees national 12.8 % **Hillingdon 13.9% an increase of nearly 2% from Oct 2021**

Note: Our figures against national present a gap, one of the reasons was due to covid and the X code not being in use



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# Headline facts and figures for pupil attendance week ending 22 April 2021

- Schools submitting data to DfE portal national 58% **Hillingdon 52.2%**
- Pupils attending national 89.9% **Hillingdon 91%**
- Pupils attending with an EHCP national 84.9% **Hillingdon 90%**
- Pupils attending with a social worker national 83.8% **Hillingdon 85.8%**

Please continue to submit the DfE Educational Setting Status form weekly.



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# Persistent Absence

- The government classes any pupil with attendance below 90% as a 'persistent absentee' (PA)
- Schools report their PA Rate to the DfE
- Schools report their PA data to the LA via monthly returns
- Schools should have systems in place to track PA pupils and prevent pupils becoming PA
- What is parental perception of 90%?

Schools have a safeguarding duty, under [section 175 Education Act 2002](#), to investigate any unexplained absences.





In order for children to realise their academic potential, it is highly recommended they have attendance of at least 95%.

| Attendance | Missing out on      | Which means.....  | Over 13yrs of schooling is..... |
|------------|---------------------|-------------------|---------------------------------|
| 90%        | 1 day per fortnight | 4 weeks per year  | Nearly 1.5 years missed         |
| 80%        | 1 day per week      | 8 weeks per year  | Over 2.5 years missed           |
| 60%        | 2 days per week     | 16 weeks per year | Over 5 years missed             |
| 40%        | 3 days per week     | 24 weeks per year | Nearly 8 years missed           |



# Punctuality



- Children should be supported to have 100% punctuality at school.
- Missing the start of the school day can cause confusion and anxiety.
- When a child is late before the register closes they will be marked in the school register as being late.
- If a child arrives after the register closes, the child will be marked as absent.
- The register is taken in the morning and afternoon, each mark counts as half a day.
- Lateness can impact an overall attendance figure, as each absence will count.



# Why do pupils not attend school?

- Generational dis-engagement
- Lack of parental support
- Negative experiences of school
- Friendship issues & bullying
- Health needs - chronic and acute conditions
- Family situation i.e., young carer/divorce/bereavement
- Exploitation i.e., drugs/gangs



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# Unacceptable reasons for absence

- Going on holiday or travelling abroad. Headteachers will only authorise holiday during term-time in exceptional circumstances. It's up to the headteacher how many days a child can be away from school if leave is granted.
- Days off for birthdays, shopping trips
- Feeling tired
- Bad weather
- Non urgent appointment - Medical, dental and therapy appointments should be made for out-of-school hours.
- Parent unwell to bring them to school

School should request evidence of the need for the pupil to be absent in all circumstances even if the absence will remain unauthorised.



# Breaking Barriers to Attendance



- Ensure you have clear and effective policies and practises that balance sanctions and rewards and which are intended to change behaviour: not just punish.
- Intervene early: Parents need to understand the importance of attendance from early years. Develop early interventions that educate parents.
- Form positive relationships with parents who may have had negative education experiences themselves.
- Support access to health (including mental health) via school nurses & targeted support programmes
- Create incentives to reward good attendance
- Ensure effective reporting, recording and monitoring processes are in place. Identify issues related to cause and effect, and then collaboratively develop strategies
- set expectations about attendance from the outset – from Nursery onwards
- explain to parents and pupils why good attendance is important and how it helps pupils to achieve



# What sanctions can be put in place for non-attendance?

- The Headteacher decides if they wish to fine unauthorised absences from school by requesting a Penalty Notice. The headteacher then requests by a referral to the Local Authority to issue a Penalty Notice on their behalf.
- Parents can be issued a **Penalty Notice** by the Local Authority. The penalty is £60 per parent per child and can rise to £120 if paid late.
- If this is not paid, the Local Authority can proceed to prosecution or withdraw the notice.
- Hillingdon will only issue 1 Penalty Notice per academic year. If unauthorised leave is repeated within an academic year or a family has a history of poor attendance the LA will prosecute at Magistrate Court without a Penalty Notice being issued first.
- If a registered pupil of compulsory school age fails to attend school regularly, the parent could be guilty of an offence under [section 444 Education Act 1996](#).



# There are 2 offences:



1. [Section 444\(1\) Education Act 1996](#) - If the child is absent without authorisation then the parent is guilty of an offence. This is a strict liability offence i.e. all that needs to be shown is a lack of regular attendance. Sanctions can include a fine of up to £1,000.
2. [Section 444\(1A\) Education Act 1996](#) - an aggravated offence. If the child is absent without authorisation and the parent knew about the child's absence and failed to act then the parent is guilty of an offence. Sanctions can include a fine of up to £2,500 and a prison sentence of up to 3 months.



# Children Missing Education

- A child of compulsory school age who is not on roll of a school and is not receiving suitable education otherwise
- When the whereabouts of children are unknown and the school has made every effort to find them
- Once schools/LA have obtained information that the child will return, schools cannot remove a child from roll.





# Children Missing Education

- Government acknowledge children 'fall through the gaps'
- Schools act as a protective factor. Children not attending can become 'invisible'
- Correlation between children already being more vulnerable prior to missing education - not accessing safe environment increases their vulnerability
- Increased risk of poorer outcomes, NEET, criminal and sexual exploitation, radicalisation, gang involvement/serious youth violence
- **This impacts on the whole of society**



# What is a School Attendance Order?

- If the Local Authority is not satisfied that the parents are providing a suitable education to a child of compulsory school age and it is appropriate for the child to attend school, they can apply for a School Attendance Order under [section 437\(3\) Education Act 1996](#).
- The order will require the child's parents to register the child at a named school. Failure to comply with a School Attendance Order amounts to an offence which the parent can be prosecuted for.
- If the parents do not register the child at a school after the School Attendance Order has been issued, the Local Authority may choose to prosecute. The case will then go to the Magistrates Court and the parent(s) will be given the opportunity to show that a suitable education is being provided.
- If the Court find that the education provided is not suitable, parents can face a fine of up to £1000. If the parent(s) are acquitted, the Court can direct that the School Attendance Order be discharged and no longer in force.



# Covid-19 impact!

- Changing education landscape
- Long term impact on education is unknown
- Ongoing parental and child anxieties surrounding Covid-19.
- Many families still abroad
- Pupils isolating
- Parental uncertainty surrounding other illnesses - ‘Is my child too ill for school?’



# Attendance Coding



Schools should return to using the attendance and absence codes in use before the outbreak (set out on page 9 of the [school attendance: guidance for schools](#)), in addition to the new category of 'not attending in circumstances related to coronavirus (COVID-19)':

- pupils not attending a session who meet the criteria for 'not attending in circumstances related to coronavirus (COVID-19)' should be recorded using **code X**.
- schools should continue to use **code X** for non-compulsory school aged pupils who are not expected to attend a session, as they did before the outbreak.
- From 8 March 2021 onward, if a family refuse to send their children to school this should be marked a 'U' - **Unauthorised code**.



# Ofsted

Attendance is included in the *Behaviour and attitudes* judgement. Inspectors will:

*‘evaluate the impact of schools’ high expectations, the consistent, fair implementation of policies, and their impact on the demonstrable improvement of the attendance and behaviour of these pupils.’*

- They will want to see that a school has clear and effective behaviour and attendance policies in place with evidence that they are being applied consistently and fairly by all staff.
- Positive trends will be recognised and schools with low attendance will not be unfairly criticised if - attendance is improving over time; there is a clear understanding of the reason for low attendance in the past, and a clear strategy in place for tackling absences.
- Conversations with Ofsted are more likely to praise a school for keeping a child on roll rather than their attendance if the school are putting in support and interventions to improve attendance.
- This year the DfE are not publishing school level performance data.
- These are difficult cases in difficult times!



# What support can the Local Authority offer?

- The Council's Participation Team offers a model Attendance Policy that you can adapt for your setting.
- Through the Service Level Agreement, the team provides advice and training to help school develop policy and practice in managing attendance effectively.
- Access to support and advice via a dedicated duty officer.
- Section 23 of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 amends the Education Act 1996 to empower authorised officers of the local authority to issue Penalty Notices to the parents of children who have unauthorised absence from school.
- The team are developing a survey for schools to help shape the Participation team function to better support the changing needs of schools and their families.



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# Questions to ask your Senior Leadership Team

- Is the School Attendance Policy up to date and in line with latest DfE guidance and Hillingdon's Code of Conduct?
- Is there effective communication with parents?
- How is good attendance promoted and poor attendance addressed?
- Are sufficient time/resources given to attendance?



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# Questions



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# Useful Contacts

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