

Attendance policy

Fairlawn and Haseltine Federation



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Aims

This policy aims to show our commitment to meeting our obligations with regards to school attendance, including those laid out in the Department for Education's (DfE's) statutory guidance on [working together to improve school attendance \(applies from 19 August 2024\)](#), through our whole-school culture and ethos that values good attendance, including:

- Setting high expectations for the attendance and punctuality of all children
- Promoting the benefits of good attendance
- Reducing absence, including persistent and severe absence
- Acting early to address patterns of absence
- Building strong relationships with families to make sure children have the support in place to attend school

Legislation and guidance

This policy is based on the Department for Education's (DfE's) statutory guidance on [working together to improve school attendance \(applies from 19 August 2024\)](#) and [school attendance parental responsibility measures](#). The guidance is based on the following pieces of legislation, which set out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- Part 6 of the [Education Act 1996](#)
- Part 3 of the [Education Act 2002](#)
- Part 7 of the [Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006 \(and 2010, 2011, 2013, and 2016 amendments\)](#)
- [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)
- It also refers to:
 - [School census guidance](#)
 - [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#)
 - [Mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance: guidance for schools](#)

Roles and responsibilities

The governing board

The governing board is responsible for:

- Setting high expectations of all school leaders, staff, children and parents
- Making sure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties, including:
 - Making sure the school records attendance accurately in the register, and shares the required information with the DfE and local authority
 - Making sure the school works effectively with local partners to help remove barriers to attendance, and keeps them informed regarding specific children, where appropriate
- Making sure the school's attendance management processes are delivered effectively, and that consistent support is provided for children who need it most by prioritising staff and resources

- Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data and helping school leaders focus improvement efforts on individual pupils or cohorts who need it most
- Making sure dedicated training is provided for staff with a specific attendance function in their role, including in interpreting and analysing attendance data

The headteacher

The headteacher is responsible for:

- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual children
- Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies
- Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary
- Communicating the school's high expectations for attendance and punctuality regularly to children and parents through all available channels

The designated senior leader responsible for attendance

The designated senior leader is responsible for: in this instance the headteacher with Francesca Marbaix (Attendance officer @ Fairlawn) and Kathy-Anne Odle (Attendance officer @ Haseltine)

- Leading, championing and improving attendance across the school
- Setting a clear vision for improving and maintaining good attendance
- Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes
- Having a strong grasp of absence data and an oversight of absence data analysis
- Regularly monitoring and evaluating progress in attendance
- Establishing and maintaining effective systems for tackling absence, and making sure they are followed by all staff
- Liaising with children, families and external agencies, where needed
- Building close and productive relationships with parents to discuss and tackle attendance issues

The attendance officer

The school attendance officer is responsible for:

- Monitoring and analysing attendance data
- Benchmarking attendance data to identify areas of focus for improvement
- Providing regular attendance reports to school staff and reporting concerns about attendance to the designated senior leader responsible for attendance, and the headteacher
- Working with education welfare officers to tackle persistent absence
- Advising the headteacher when to issue fixed-penalty notices

Class teachers

Class teachers are responsible for recording attendance for both morning and afternoon sessions on a daily basis. This is a legal requirement, and class teachers must submit this information to the school office by 9:10 in the morning and 1:40 in the afternoon at **Fairlawn** and by 9.25 in the morning and 1.05 (EYFS & KS1) and 1.35 (KS2) in the afternoon at **Haseltine**.

Office staff

Office staff are expected to:

- Take calls from families about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the school system and check the answering machine
- Chase all parents to ensure we know where every child is every day

Families

Families are expected to:

- Make sure their child attends school everyday and on time
- Call the school to report their child's absence before 8:30 on the day of the absence, or leave a message on the school's absence line or email Fran f.marabix@fairlawn.lewisham.sch.uk at **Fairlawn** and Kathy-Anne k.odle@haseltine.lewisham.sch.uk at **Haseltine**, and each subsequent day of absence, and advise when they are expected to return
- Provide the school with more than two emergency contact numbers for their child
- Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day
- Keep to any attendance contracts that they make with the school and/or local authority

Recording attendance

Attendance register

We will keep an electronic attendance register, and place all children onto this register.

We will take our attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. It will mark, using the appropriate national attendance and absence codes from the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024, whether every pupil is:

- Present
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity
- Absent
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

- The original entry
- The amended entry
- The reason for the amendment
- The date on which the amendment was made
- The name and position of the person who made the amendment

We will also record:

- Whether the absence is authorised or not
- The nature of the activity, where a pupil is attending an approved educational activity
- The nature of circumstances, where a pupil is unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 6 years after the date on which the entry was made.

At Fairlawn, the school day starts at 8:45 and ends at 3:15 (Reception to Yr.3) 3:20 (Years 4 and 5) and 3:25 for Year 6.

At Haseltine, the school day starts at 8.55am and ends at 3.25pm for everyone.

Unplanned absence

Where the absence is longer than e.g. 5 days, or there are doubts about the authenticity of the illness, the school will ask for medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents will be notified of this in advance.

Planned absence

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the child's parent notifies the school in advance of the appointment. However, we encourage parents to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary. The pupil's parent must also apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence.

Lateness and punctuality

A pupil who arrives late:

- Before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code (L code)
- After the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code (U code)

At Fairlawn, we currently take our morning register from 8:45am – 8:55am. Children arriving 10 minutes after their start time receive a late mark (L code); however, children who arrive after 9:15am receive an unauthorised absence mark (U code). The DfE has informed all schools that we can only keep our register open for a maximum of 30 minutes.

At Haseltine, we currently take our morning register from 8:55am – 9.05am. Children arriving 10 minutes after their start time receive a late mark (L code); however, children who arrive after 9:25am receive an unauthorised absence mark (U code). They will therefore be classed as absent for that whole morning session. The DfE has informed all schools that we can only keep our registers open for a maximum of 30 minutes.

Following up unexplained absence

Where any child we expect to attend school does not attend, or stops attending, without reason, the school will:

- Call the child's parent on the morning of the first day of unexplained absence to ascertain the reason. If the school cannot reach any of the child's emergency contacts, the school may visit the family home or contact the police for a welfare check
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not
- Call the parent on each day that the absence continues without explanation, to make sure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary. If absence continues, the school will consider involving an education welfare officer

Reporting to parents

The school will regularly inform parents about their child's attendance and absence levels at parents' evenings and via the end of year report.

Authorised and unauthorised absence

Approval for term-time absence

The headteacher will allow pupils to be absent from the school site for certain educational activities, or to attend other schools or settings.

The headteacher will only grant a **leave of absence** to a pupil during term time if the request meets the specific circumstances set out in the [2024 school attendance regulations](#). These circumstances are:

- Taking part in a regulated performance, or regulated employment abroad
- Attending an interview
- A temporary, time-limited part-time timetable
- Exceptional circumstances

Leave of absence will not be granted for a pupil to take part in protest activity during school hours.

As a leave of absence is only granted in exceptional circumstances, it is unlikely a leave of absence will be granted for the purposes of a family holiday. The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant background context behind the request. Any request should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated. The headteacher may require evidence to support any request for leave of absence.

Other valid reasons for **authorised absence** include (but are not limited to):

- Illness (including mental-health illness) and medical/dental appointments
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parent(s) belong(s). If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parent's religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart
- Parent(s) travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh gypsies, Irish and Scottish travellers, showmen (fairground people) and circus people, bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and new travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school, but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision
- If the child is currently suspended or excluded from school (and no alternative provision has been made)

Other reasons the school may allow a child to be absent from the school site, which are not classified as absences, include (but are not limited to):

- Attending an offsite approved educational activity, sporting activity or visit or trip arranged by the school
- Attending another school at which the pupil is also registered (dual registration)
- Attending provision arranged by the local authority
- If there is any other unavoidable cause for the pupil not to attend school, such as disruption to travel caused by an emergency, a lack of access arrangements, or because the school premises are closed

Headteachers were able to authorise holidays in term time for exceptional circumstances but the DfE has withdrawn the 'H code' in the register. Therefore, from September 2024, we will no longer be able to authorise any holidays in term time. Any holidays that are taken will be recorded with 'G code' – unauthorised holiday in term and you will be liable for a penalty notice.

Sanctions

Our schools will make use of the full range of potential sanctions – including, but not limited to, those listed below – to tackle poor attendance. Decisions will be made on an individual, case-by-case basis.

Penalty notices

The headteacher (or someone authorised by them), local authority or the police can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age, by issuing a penalty notice.

If the school issues a penalty notice, it will check with the local authority before doing so, and send it a copy of any penalty notice issued.

Before issuing a penalty notice, the school will consider the individual case, including:

- Whether the national threshold for considering a penalty notice has been met (10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks)
- Whether further support, a notice to improve or another legal intervention would be a more appropriate solution
- Whether any obligations that the school has under the Equality Act 2010 make issuing a penalty notice inappropriate

A penalty notice may also be issued where families allow their child to be present in a public place during school hours without reasonable justification, during the first 5 days of a suspension or exclusion (where the school has notified the parents that the pupil must not be present in a public place on that day).

Each parent who is liable for the child's offence(s) can be issued with a penalty notice.

The payment must be made directly to the local authority, regardless of who issues the notice. If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute or withdraw the notice.

If issued with a **first** penalty notice, the parent must pay £80 within 21 days, or £160 within 28 days.

If a **second** penalty notice is issued to the same parent in respect of the same pupil, the parent must pay £160 if paid within 28 days.

A **third** penalty notice cannot be issued to the same parent in respect of the same child within 3 years of the date of the issue of the first penalty notice. In a case where the national threshold is met for a third time within those 3 years, alternative action will be taken instead.

Notices to improve

If the national threshold has been met and support is appropriate, but families do not engage with offers of support, the school may offer a notice to improve to give families a final chance to engage with support.

Notices to improve will be issued in line with processes set out in the local code of conduct for the local authority area in which the pupil attends school.

They will include:

- Details of the pupil's attendance record and of the offences
- The benefits of regular attendance and the duty of parents under [section 7 of the Education Act 1996](#)
- Details of the support provided so far
- Opportunities for further support, or to access previously provided support that was not engaged with
- A clear warning that a penalty notice may be issued if attendance doesn't improve within the improvement period, along with details of what sufficient improvement looks like, which will be decided on a case-by-case basis
- A clear timeframe of between 3 and 6 weeks for the improvement period
- The grounds on which a penalty notice may be issued before the end of the improvement period

Attendance monitoring

Monitoring attendance

The school will monitor attendance and absence data (including punctuality) half-termly, termly and yearly across the school and at an individual pupil cohort level. Specific pupil information will be shared with the DfE on request. Data will be collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. The school will benchmark its attendance data at whole school and year group against local, regional, and national levels to identify areas of focus for improvement, and share this with the governing board.

Using data to improve attendance

- Provide targeted support to the children it has identified whose absences may be a cause for concern, especially those who demonstrate patterns of persistent or severed absence, and their families
- Use data to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place in order to modify them and inform future strategies

Reducing persistent and severe absence

Persistent absence is where a child misses 10% or more of school, and severe absence is where a child misses 50% or more of school. Reducing persistent and severe absence is central to the school's strategy for improving attendance.

The school will:

- Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence
- Consider potential safeguarding issues and, where suspected or present, address them in line with Keeping Children Safe in Education
- Hold regular meetings with the parents of children who the school (and/or local authority) considers to be vulnerable or at risk of persistent or severe absence, or who are persistently or severely absent, to:
 - Discuss attendance and engagement at school
 - Listen to and understand barriers to attendance
 - Explain the help that is available
 - Explain the potential consequences of, and sanctions for, persistent and severe absence
 - Review any existing actions or interventions
- Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance, in conjunction with the local authority, where relevant
- Consider alternative support that could be put in place to remove any barriers to attendance and re-engage these pupils. In doing so, the school will sensitively consider some of the reasons for absence
- Implement sanctions, where necessary