

# STANBURN PRIMARY SCHOOL



## Attendance Policy

Head Teacher: Ms E D'Souza

Reviewed: September 2022

Date for Review: September 2023

## Principles

Education is important. Missing school means missing out. Children should be at school, on time and ready to learn, every day the school is open, unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. Permitting absence from school without a good reason is an offence by the parent that can result in legal action by the Local Authority.

Every half-day absence from school has to be recorded by staff at the school as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of each absence is always required in writing.

**Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason like illness or other unavoidable exceptional causes.**

**Unauthorised absences are those which the staff at school do not consider as exceptional/reasonable or for which no “leave” has been given. These are an offence by the parent and include:**

- Keeping children off school without an unavoidable reason
- Absences which have never been properly explained
- Taking unauthorised holidays

Parents are expected to contact school office and to work with them in resolving any problems together. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, the school may refer the child to the Education Welfare Service (EWS) from the Local Authority.

He/she will also try to resolve the situation by agreement wherever possible but, if other ways of trying to improve the child’s attendance have failed, these Officers can use legal proceedings against parents if required, including Educational Penalty Notices (fines) or prosecution in the Magistrates Court.

Alternatively, parents or pupils may wish to contact the EWS themselves to ask for help or information. They are independent of the school and will give impartial advice. Their telephone number is available from the school office or by contacting the Local Authority.

## Procedures

The school has a special responsibility to reduce the number of children whose attendance is below 90% over the school year. These are called “persistent absentees” by the Government, whatever the reason for their absence. Special procedures may be applied to children at risk of falling into this category. The school applies the following procedures in deciding how to deal with individual absences:

- If a child is unexpectedly absent from school (e.g. in the case of illness), a parent is required to inform the office and leave a message on the absence line or send an email to [office@stanburn.harrow.sch.uk](mailto:office@stanburn.harrow.sch.uk) each day of the absence, preferably by 9.30am stating the reason. Where parents have not been able to make contact with the school to explain the absence, a written note or email notification can be sent on the child’s return. On receipt of this note, the school will decide whether to authorise

the absence. If no note is received, or the reason offered is unacceptable, the absence is recorded as unauthorised.

- If a child is absent on a particular day and no contact has been made, the school will attempt to contact the parent by telephone. If contact cannot be made, an e-mail is sent to the home address on the 2<sup>nd</sup> day of the unexplained absence requesting a written response as to why the child has been absent and reminding the parent that they must contact the school by 9.30am every day of any absence. If there is still no contact, then a home visit is made by a member of staff. If a child is absent longer than 10 days, then EWS will be informed and the school will follow local authority guidance.

### **Leave of absence in term time**

At Stanburn School we do not grant leave during term time, as it has a detrimental effect on pupil progress, pupil attainment and their attendance. It is a popular misconception that parents have the right to take their children out of school for a family holiday of up to 10 days during term time. This is not the case. By law, there is no right for parents to demand leave of absence for a child for the purpose of going on holiday or other social reason. The legal position is that only the school has the (discretionary) power to authorise any leave during term time in 'exceptional' circumstances only. The request must be made in writing, in advance (except in an emergency) and no travel arrangements should be made until the absence has been authorised.

Parents are asked to make routine medical and dental appointments outside school time wherever possible. Where such appointments in school time are unavoidable, staff should be informed in advance. Appointment cards should be shown to the school office or emailed. A "present" mark can still be awarded if the child attends for as much of the session as they can. It is always better to attend for some of the time, rather than missing the whole day.

In cases where a potential short-term absence is known in advance, such as for observance of a major religious festival as agreed by SACRE or an unavoidable dentist appointment, we would ask that the school is made aware in writing as soon as is practically possible in advance of the date, stating the reason for the likely absence. As noted above, such absence can only be authorised by the school, not the parent. Nonetheless in all circumstances, our approach is that reasonable requests will be looked on sympathetically.

### **Legal Enforcement by Harrow Local Authority**

As part of promoting good attendance and punctuality Harrow Local Authority will use its legal powers to enforce school attendance where this becomes problematic, including powers to prosecute parents who fail to comply with a school attendance order (Section 443 of the Education Act 1996) or failure to ensure their child's regular attendance at school (Section 444 of the Education Act 1996).

In addition, the Local Authority will impose Penalty Notices as an alternative to prosecution on parents for unauthorised absence and may also be issued where parents allow their children to be present in a public place during school hours without reasonable justification.

The Education (Penalty Notices) Regulations 2007 sets out the details of how the penalty notice scheme must operate. Harrow Code of Conduct for issuing penalty notices will be made available for schools, parents/carers and other interested parties.

Harrow Council will also be conducting Pre Court Panel meetings in accordance with the Police and Criminal Evidence (PACE) Act 1984.

The Harrow Attendance Guidance and Resources (pack) provides a clear outline of the process for escalating cases for legal action which is called Attendance Intervention Model (AIM).

### **Lateness**

Pupils who are consistently late are disrupting not only their own education but also that of others.

- The school operates a 'soft start policy' whereby pupils can arrive at 8.25am and start to go into their classrooms from 8.35am, so that they are ready for the start of the school day. School begins promptly at **8.45am** and all pupils are expected to be in school for registration at this time. Any child arriving after 8.45am are late and should enter via the main entrance and report to the school office. They must be accompanied by their parent to sign the child in and provide a reason for their lateness, which may be recorded in the register.
- Pupils arriving after 8.45am will be registered as unauthorised late.
- Children arriving for part of the morning session will be marked accordingly. Any child arriving after 12.30pm will be recorded as absent for the morning session and an absence note will be required.
- The parents of children who are persistently late may be asked to meet with the Attendance lead.
- Persistent lateness is reported to the Education Welfare Officer ('EWO') and may be subject to an EPN (Educational Penalty Notice).
- Reason for EPN (Educational Penalty Notice) to the local authority are as follows:
  - 10 Consecutive unauthorised sessions (5 days)
  - 20 unauthorised sessions in 12 week period
  - Persistent unauthorised late (8 U marks in 10 week period) - *U mark is given if the pupil arrives after the register is closed.*

### **Information about individual school targets, projects and special initiatives and strategies**

The school has adopted the following attendance targets:

Overall attendance - 97%

Persistent Absentees target – 10%

The people responsible for attendance matters in this school are:

Mrs Malik

Ms Joshi

Governing Body

The school has a legal duty to promote good attendance. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend regularly. School staff are committed to working closely with parents as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible.