

# Attendance policy

Wapping High School



Policy Reviewed	Ratified	Ratified By	Next Compulsory Date
New policy	8th December 2022	GNE and FGB (Full Governing Body)	September 2023

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## 1. Aims

We are committed to meeting our obligation with regards to school attendance through our whole-school culture and ethos that values good attendance, including:

- Promoting good attendance
- Reducing absence, including persistent and severe absence
- Ensuring every student has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled
- Acting early to address patterns of absence
- Building strong relationships with families to ensure students have the support in place to attend school

We will also promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

## 2. Legislation and guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the [working together to improve school attendance](#) from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on [school attendance parental responsibility measures](#). These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting 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 \(student Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006 \(and 2010, 2011, 2013, 2016 amendments\)](#)
- [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)

This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the school census, which explains the persistent absence threshold.

## 3. Roles and responsibilities

### 3.1 The governing board

The governing board is responsible for:

- Promoting the importance of school attendance across the school's policies and ethos
- Making sure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties
- Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data
- Monitoring attendance figures for the whole school
- Making sure staff receive adequate training on attendance
- Holding the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy

The link governor for attendance is Marie McMahon.

### **3.2 The headteacher**

The Executive Headteacher is responsible for:

- Implementation of this policy at the school
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual students
- Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies
- Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary

### **3.3 The designated senior leader responsible for attendance**

The designated senior leader is responsible for:

- Leading attendance across the school
- Offering a clear vision for attendance improvement
- Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes
- Having an oversight of data analysis
- Devising specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data
- Arranging calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues
- Delivering targeted intervention and support to students and families

The designated senior leader responsible for attendance is Will Overill and can be contacted via [willoverill@wappinghigh.org](mailto:willoverill@wappinghigh.org) and 0203 597 3670

### **3.4 The Attendance and Welfare Officer**

The school Attendance and Welfare Officer (AWO) is responsible for:

- Monitoring and analysing attendance data (see section 7)
- 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 Executive Headteacher and Head of School when to issue fixed-penalty notices

The attendance officer is Blossom Amaning and can be contacted via [blossomamaning@wappinghigh.org](mailto:blossomamaning@wappinghigh.org) and 0203 597 3670

### **3.5 Class teachers/form tutors**

Form tutors are responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the school office by no later than 8:45 every day via epraise.

Class teachers are responsible for recording lesson by lesson attendance via epraise.

### **3.6 The Recording of school absence**

The AWO will:

- Take calls from parents about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the school system
- Transfer calls from parents to the Heads of House in order to provide them with more detailed support on attendance
- Send our Non-contact letters to inform a parent when they have not contacted school regarding their child's absence and/or not responded to school communication to enquire about an absence. Copies of letters are kept by the AWO for trend analysis with the DSL and Heads of House.

### **3.7 Parents/carers**

Parents/carers are expected to:

- Make sure their child attends every day on time
- Call the school to report their child's absence before 8:30am on the day of the absence and each subsequent day of absence, and advise when they are expected to return
- Provide the school with more than 1 emergency contact number for their child
- Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day

### **3.8 students**

students are expected to:

- Arrive at school no later than 8:25am - school is open to students from 8:00am
- Attend every timetabled session on time

## **4. Recording attendance**

### **4.1 Attendance register**

We will keep an attendance register, and place all students 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 whether every student 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

See appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes.

We will also record:

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

We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

students must arrive in school by 8:25am on each school day.

The register for the first session will be taken at 8:30am and will be kept open until 8:45am. The register for the second session will be taken at 12:00pm and will be kept open until 12:30pm.

## 4.2 Unplanned absence

The student's parent/carer must notify the school of the reason for the absence on the first day of an unplanned absence by 8:30am or as soon as practically possible by calling the Attendance and Welfare Officer or via [studentabsence@wappinghigh.org](mailto:studentabsence@wappinghigh.org) (see also section 7).

We will mark absence due to illness as authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may ask the student's parent/carer to provide 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/carers will be notified of this in advance.

## 4.3 Planned absence

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the student's parent/carer notifies the school in advance of the appointment.

Parents are advised to contact the AWO directly to inform the school of any known forthcoming absence, so that the register can be updated.

However, we encourage parents/carers to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the student should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

The student's parent/carer must also apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence. Go to section 5 to find out which term-time absences the school can authorise.

## 4.4 Lateness and punctuality

A student who arrives late:

- Any student arriving after 8:25 am is deemed to be late to school and will be recorded as late for further action to be considered, including the sitting of a late detention on the same day.
- Before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code
- After the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code
- If a student is later after 8:45 then their time of arrival is noted in the register.
- If a student is late they are to be marked in the register with the appropriate symbol, with a letter sent out to parents/carers.
- The AWO, or member of the school administrative team, will phone parents/carers and obtain a reason as to why the student was late and inform them that a detention will be set. If a parent or carer is unavailable then a text will be sent to inform them of their child's detention.

The AWO will keep a database on all lateness to inform 'late' detentions which are held every day.

The duration of the detention is 30 minutes for one lateness to school.

If a student is late more than once to school, they will then be set an SLT detention for 1 hour on a Friday.

If a student is persistently late, the Attendance Officer will arrange a meeting with a parent/carer. Notification of meeting is to be sent to a form tutor and the appropriate Head of House. At the meeting the Attendance and Punctuality policy is revisited and a contract for Attendance and Punctuality will be signed by the student, a parent/carer and a representative on behalf of the school, detailing support and strategies to be followed.

If after the signing of an Attendance and Punctuality contract, the student is continuously late, then a decision will be taken whether to issue a Fixed Penalty Notice under the guidelines laid out by Tower Hamlets.

## 4.5 Following up unexplained absence

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

- Call the student's parent/carer on the morning of the first day of unexplained absence to ascertain the reason. If the school cannot reach any of the student's emergency contacts, the school will send out a Non-contact letter, a copy of which will be retained for school records.
- Consider whether to contact a child's social worker or the police where there may be a genuine concern over safety.
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not
- Identify the correct attendance code to use and input it as soon as the reason for absence is ascertained – this will be no later than 5 working days after the session
- Call the parent/carer on each day that the absence continues without explanation to ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary. If absence continues, the school will consider involving an education welfare officer

## 4.6 Reporting to parents/carers

The school will regularly inform parents about their child's attendance and absence levels via termly written academic reports .

# 5. Authorised and unauthorised absence

## 5.1 Approval for term-time absence

The headteacher will only grant a leave of absence to a student during term time if they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'. A leave of absence is granted at the headteacher's discretion, including the length of time the student is authorised to be absent for.

We define 'exceptional circumstances' as **as significant or unavoidable, which means the event could not reasonably be scheduled at another time**

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request.

Any request should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated and, where possible, at least 3 weeks before the absence. Parents must request a leave of absence in writing, addressing Tom Raw, the Head of School in such correspondence. This request must be made using a Leave of Absence Request Form which is available at reception or via the school's website. The Head of School may require evidence to support any request for leave of absence.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments (see sections 4.2 and 4.3 for more detail)
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the student's parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart
- Traveller students 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 student is attending educational provision
  
- Other possible 'exceptional circumstances' where the Head of School may grant term-time holiday

## 5.2 Legal sanctions

The school or local authority can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age.

If issued with a fine, or penalty notice, each parent must pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the local authority.

Penalty notices can be issued by a headteacher, local authority officer or the police.

The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice may take into account:

- The number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year
- One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission
- Where an excluded student is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason

If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute or withdraw the notice.

Wapping High School follows the Tower Hamlets protocols for the issuing of Fixed Penalty Notices and will inform parents in writing with a leaflet from the local authority detailing the above procedures where attendance has led to a persistent concern, despite school intervention.

## 6. Strategies for promoting attendance

At Wapping High School we recognise and value progress in improving attendance and punctuality. The following is a list of some of the strategies we use:

- letter home celebrating improved attendance
- tutor slides celebrating students attendance
- weekly discussions
- end of term certificates for improved and exemplar attendance
- termly reward trips for exemplar attendance
- regular displays for exemplar attendance

## 7. Attendance monitoring

## 7.1 Monitoring attendance

The school will:

- Monitor attendance and absence data half-termly, termly and yearly across the school and at an individual student level
- Identify whether or not there are particular groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern

Student-level absence 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 compare attendance data to the national average, and share this with the governing board.

## 7.2 Analysing attendance

The school will:

- Analyse attendance and absence data weekly at meetings involving the AWO and Heads of House, to identify students or cohorts that need additional support with their attendance, and use this analysis to provide targeted support to these students and their families
- Look at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence, and then develop strategies to address these patterns

## 7.3 Using data to improve attendance

The school will:

- Provide weekly attendance reports to form tutors, and other school leaders, to facilitate discussions with students and families
- Use data to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place in order to modify them and inform future strategies

## 7.4 Reducing persistent and severe absence

Persistent absence is where a student misses 10% or more of school, and severe absence is where a student misses 50% or more of school.

The school will:

- Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence
- Hold regular meetings with the parents of students who the school (and/or local authority) considers to be vulnerable, or are persistently or severely absent, to discuss attendance and engagement at school
- Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance
- Consider when to create an Early Help Assessment to request input from universal services
- The AWO updates weekly a spreadsheet detailing trends for absence alongside actions to promote improved attendance
- Parents are notified in writing when attendance concerns becomes a significant issue under 90% and a Fixed Penalty Notice is a likely consequence of unauthorised absence from school

## 8. Monitoring arrangements



This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the local authority or DfE is updated, and as a minimum annually by Will Overill (Assistant Headteacher). At every review, the policy will be approved by the full governing board.

## 9. Links with other policies

This policy links to the following policies:

- Child protection and safeguarding policy
- Behaviour for Learning policy

## Appendix 1: attendance codes

The following codes are taken from the DfE's guidance on school attendance.

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	student is present at morning registration
\	Present (pm)	student is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	student arrives late before register has closed
B	Off-site educational activity	student is at a supervised off-site educational activity approved by the school
D	Dual registered	student is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
J	Interview	student has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
P	Sporting activity	student is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
V	Educational trip or visit	student is on an educational visit/trip organised, or approved, by the school
W	Work experience	student is on a work experience placement

Code	Definition	Scenario
<b>Authorised absence</b>		
<b>C</b>	Authorised leave of absence	student has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
<b>E</b>	Excluded	student has been excluded but no alternative provision has been made
<b>H</b>	Authorised holiday	student has been allowed to go on holiday due to exceptional circumstances
<b>I</b>	Illness	School has been notified that a student will be absent due to illness
<b>M</b>	Medical/dental appointment	student is at a medical or dental appointment
<b>R</b>	Religious observance	student is taking part in a day of religious observance
<b>S</b>	Study leave	Year 11 student is on study leave during their public examinations
<b>T</b>	Gypsy, Roma and traveller absence	student from a traveller community is travelling, as agreed with the school
<b>Unauthorised absence</b>		
<b>G</b>	Unauthorised holiday	student is on a holiday that was not approved by the school
<b>N</b>	Reason not provided	student is absent for an unknown reason (this code should be amended when the reason emerges, or replaced with code O if no reason for absence has been provided after a reasonable amount of time)
<b>O</b>	Unauthorised absence	School is not satisfied with reason for student's absence
<b>U</b>	Arrival after registration	student arrived at school after the register closed

<b>Code</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Scenario</b>
<b>X</b>	Not required to be in school	student of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
<b>Y</b>	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances	School site is closed, there is disruption to travel as a result of a local/national emergency, or student is in custody
<b>Z</b>	student not on admission register	Register set up but student has not yet joined the school
<b>#</b>	Planned school closure	Whole or partial school closure due to half-term/bank holiday/INSET day

## **Appendix 2: Tower Hamlets Fixed Penalty Notice Scheme**

- **What happens if I do not pay?**

You have up to 28 days from receipt to pay the Penalty Notice in full, after which the LA is required to commence proceedings in the Magistrates Court for the original offence related to the poor attendance of your child. If proven, this can attract a range of fines up to £2,500 and/or a range of disposals such as Parenting Orders or Community Sentences depending on the circumstances, as well as a criminal conviction and a criminal record which may affect future opportunities for employment

- **Can I be prosecuted if I pay the Penalty Notice but my child is still missing school?**

Not for the period included in the Penalty Notice – payment discharges your liability in this respect. However, it may be the case that a prosecution might be considered for further periods of poor attendance not covered by the Notice, depending upon the circumstances. If this is an issue, it is vital that you work closely with your child's school and the school's Attendance & Welfare Advisor.

- **Can I get help if my child is not attending regularly?**

Yes, the LA and your child's school will give you advice and support if you need help to secure an improvement in your child's attendance.

It is very important that you speak with the school or with the Attendance & Welfare Service at the earliest opportunity if you have any worries at all about securing your child's attendance.

**li you have any queries or require any assistance with your child's attendance or other difficulties they may be experiencing at school contact:**

**Tower Hamlets Behaviour & Attendance Support Service  
Professional Development Centre  
229 Bethnal Green Road  
London E2 6AB  
Tel. 0207 364 3450**



**TOWER HAMLETS**

**Penalty Notices to Address Poor Attendance  
at School**

**Information for Parents and Carers**

**London Borough of Tower Hamlets  
Children's Services Directorate**

**November 2017**

- **What is a Penalty Notice?**

Parents/carers commit an offence if a child fails to attend school regularly and on time and the absences/ late arrivals are classed as unauthorised or avoidable (those for which the school cannot or has not given permission). The failure of a child to attend regularly can result in the parent(s)/carer(s) of that child being prosecuted in the Magistrates Court under section 444 of the Education Act 1996. If convicted the parents/carers will receive a criminal record as well as whatever penalty is imposed by the Magistrates.

A Penalty Notice is in some circumstances an alternative to prosecution. Parents/carers served with Penalty Notices will not be required to appear in Court, unless the Penalty Notice is not paid within the required time limit, or their child's attendance does not improve. Penalty Notices are issued to each individual parent/carer for each individual child who meets the criteria.

- **The Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003**

Section 23 of the Act gives powers to the Local Authority (LA) and other designated bodies to issue Penalty Notices where a parent/carer is considered capable of but unwilling to secure an improvement in their child's school attendance.

- **The Education and Inspections Act 2006**

Section 105 of this Act enables a Penalty Notice to be issued where parents/carers fail to fulfil the duty under section 103 to ensure that their child is not present during school hours in a public place without reasonable justification when they are excluded from school.

- **Why have they been introduced?**

Reducing absence from school is a key priority nationally and locally because missing school damages a pupil's attainment levels, disrupts school routines and the learning of others and can leave a pupil vulnerable to anti-social behaviour and youth crime. Above all, missing school seriously affects children's life opportunities.

- **What are the costs**

The cost of the Penalty Notice is £60 per child per parent/carer but increases to £120 if payment is not made within 21 days.

- **How are they issued?**

By post to your home address.

- **When are they issued?**

Penalty Notices may be used in a range of situations where unauthorised absence occurs including:

- Pupils found out of school by Truancy Patrols
- Persistent unauthorised absence and/or late arrival at school (after the Register has closed).
- Unauthorised holidays/leave in term time or excessive delayed return from an extended holiday without prior school permission.
- Failure by parent(s)/carer(s) to attend LA convened attendance panels in schools to discuss their child's attendance and/ or lateness.
- Where parents/carers fail to ensure that their child is not in a public place during the first five days of exclusion from school without reasonable justification.

- **Is a Warning Given?**

Yes, you will normally receive a written and verbal warning of the possibility of a Penalty Notice being issued.

In the specific circumstances related to (i) the taking of 6 sessions (3 days) or more of unauthorised leave/holidays in term time, and (ii) where parents/carers fail to ensure that their child is not in a public place during the first five days of exclusion from school without reasonable justification then the matter will be referred immediately to the Attendance & Welfare Service for issue of the Penalty Notice.

- **Is there an appeal process?**

There is no statutory right of appeal once a Penalty Notice has been issued.

- **How do I pay?**

Details of payment arrangements will be included on the Penalty Notice. You need to be aware that payment in part or by instalment is not an option with Penalty Notices.