

Cardinal Primary School Attendance Policy

Date of implementation: November 2024

Date of review:

INTRODUCTION AND AIMS

At Cardinal Primary School, we recognise that good attendance and punctuality is central in maximising opportunities for all pupils and supporting their academic progress and achievement, personal development and overall well-being.

This Attendance Policy aims to foster a school environment where attendance is a shared priority among pupils, parents/carers and staff at school. Through this collective ownership and an understanding that it is vital to attend school regularly, on time, every day the school is open (unless the reason for absence is unavoidable), our pupils can gain the greatest benefit from their education.

Our school is committed to meeting expectations with regard to school attendance, as stated by the Local Authority and outlined in the Department for Education's (DfE) statutory guidance on 'Working together to improve school attendance' (effective from August 2024). We do this through a whole school ethos and approach that:

- sets high expectations for the attendance and punctuality of all pupils
- promotes pupils' welfare and safeguarding
- ensures every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled
- promotes the benefits of good attendance
- ensures pupils have access to the widest possible range of opportunities when they leave school

THE IMPORTANCE OF REGULAR ATTENDANCE

The foundation for good attendance is a strong partnership between pupils, parents and the school. Our Attendance Officer (supported by Senior Leaders) is responsible for monitoring attendance, following up on concerns and liaising with the School Attendance Support Service (SASS).

Any absence affects the pattern of a pupil's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning and progress. Any pupil's absence or later arrival disrupts teaching routines so may affect the learning of others in the same class.

As stated by the Department for Education, it is the legal responsibility of every parent to ensure their child receives their entitlement to full-time education. Parents have a legal duty to ensure their child attends school regularly. This means pupils must attend every day that the school is open, except in a small number of allowable circumstances such as being too ill to attend or being given permission for an absence in advance from the school. This is essential for pupils to get the most out of their school experience, including their attainment, wellbeing and wider life chances.

We promote good, regular attendance because:

- Regular attendance leads to better progress, both socially and academically
- Regular attendance allows pupils to manage school routines, school work and peer relationships with greater ease, which can contribute to better mental health and wellbeing
- Pupils with good attendance settle into secondary school with greater ease
- Evidence suggests that pupils with the highest attendance throughout their time in school gain the best outcomes in exams, including GCSE and A Level results
- Regular attendance prepares young people for successful transition into adult life, by adopting desirable work attitudes for future employment as well as supporting their long term economic and social participation in society

Non-attendance at school is likely to leave pupils vulnerable to:

- Literacy and numeracy difficulties
- Underachievement at school
- Disaffection and reduced opportunities in life
- Unemployment and social exclusion
- Anti-social behaviour
- Youth crime

ATTENDANCE AND PUNCTUALITY EXPECTATIONS

To promote good attendance, the school shall:

- Make contact with families by following up any unexplained absences by phone calls and letters as necessary
- Remind parents and pupils of the importance of regular attendance and punctuality in our letters, parent consultation meetings and pupil annual reports
- Strive to continually raise attendance and improve punctuality
- Publish our attendance and punctuality rates
- Acknowledge and reward good attendance and punctuality through the newsletter and other information sharing opportunities
- Publish your child's attendance rate on their annual school report
- Let you know if we have concerns regarding your child's attendance and punctuality by letter and face to face meetings
- If we continue to have concerns, we will make a referral to the Local Authority School Attendance Support Service (SASS)
- Safeguard pupils by monitoring attendance patterns and reasons for absence

As a parent/carers, you can help by:

- Ensuring your child attends every day the school is open except when your child is significantly unwell and therefore unfit to attend school, or another statutory reason.
- Telephone the school on the morning of any absence, before 9:30am, to give us the reason and tell us when the child is likely to return to school.
- Arrange any medical or dental appointments out of school hours or during school holidays, where possible.
- Where medical appointments have to take place during school hours, bring your child to school before and after the appointment.
- Provide medical proof for any absences, where possible.
- Frequent or prolonged periods of absence must be supported by medical evidence. Communicate with us and keep the school updated by telephone or email.
- Making sure we always have your current contact numbers; this includes all home, mobile and work telephone numbers, as well as emergency contact details.
- Only requesting leave of absence in exceptional circumstances, notifying the school in writing of any planned absence in advance, with supporting documentation.

ATTENDANCE REGISTER

We will keep an electronic attendance register, and place all pupils 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

PUNCTUALITY

At Cardinal Primary School, we recognise the importance of punctuality as an essential part of maintaining a positive learning environment. Arriving on time not only ensures that pupils are ready to engage fully with the school day, but also helps minimise disruptions for both pupils and teachers. Regular punctuality fosters a sense of responsibility and discipline, which are valuable skills throughout life.

The playground gates are opened at 8:45am on the KS2 site and 8.40am on the KS1 site and pupils are able to go straight into the classroom. Morning registration is at 8:55am on the KS2 site, and at 8.50am on the KS1 site. This is the time your child must be in the classroom. Vital information is given at the start of the school day and the child's learning may be affected if she/he is not present for the full session.

A pupil who arrives after the playground gates have been closed must be brought to the school office and be registered on arrival, with a reason provided for the lateness.

If a pupil arrives after registration has closed (9:20am on the KS1 site and 9.25am on the KS2 site), they will receive a mark that shows they have arrived after the register is closed. This equates to an absence although we are aware that the pupil is on the school premises in accordance with health and safety requirements.

Parents/carers must collect their children on time at the end of each school day. This avoids pupils becoming distressed if they are waiting to be collected.

ABSENCE PROCEDURES

If a pupil is absent, parents/carers must follow these procedures:

Telephone the school office on 0208 890 6306, or leave a message, or send an email to office@cardinalprimary.hounslow.sch.uk by 9:30am if your child is not attending school, explaining the reason for the absence.

Parents will sometimes need to show proof of illness for absence to be authorised. This could be: notification of an appointment, note from a GP/pharmacy visit, picture of medicine. It is very important for all absences to be authorised.

If a pupil is absent without notification, we will:

- Contact parents/carers on the first day of absence if we have not heard from them
- In accordance with our safeguarding procedures, we will contact 2 nominated contacts to ascertain the reason for absence
- Refer the matter to the School Attendance Support Service (SASS) if we have not had notification from a parent/carer for more than 3 days, which will lead to a child missing in education (CME) referral, as part of our safeguarding procedures

Regular analysis of absenteeism will be carried out. Where attendance falls below expected levels, we will:

- Invite parents/carers in to discuss the situation with our Attendance Officer and/or members of the Senior Leadership Team if absences persist
- Set attendance targets where appropriate
- Refer the matter to the School Attendance Support Service (SASS) where there are continued concerns

UNDERSTANDING TYPES OF ABSENCE

There are two main categories of absence: **authorised** and **unauthorised**. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required.

Authorised absence is when the school has accepted the explanation offered as satisfactory justification of the absence, or given approval in advance for the absence. These are mornings or afternoons away from school for an unavoidable reason like illness, medical appointments which fall during the school day, emergencies, or other exceptional cases. As

per NHS advice, parents/carers should only keep their child away from school in the event of a significant illness, not minor ailments such as coughs and colds. Wherever possible, medical appointments should be made outside the school day.

Where a child is to attend a grammar school test, the parent must provide the school with a copy of the invite letter, stating the date and time of the exam. Your child should attend school before or after the exam. Additional sessions for preparation or revision will not be authorised.

If you have a medical / dental appointment which cannot be arranged outside of school hours, please provide a medical card / letter so the absence can be authorised. If an emergency appointment is made, please ask the surgery to give you a note with the date and time of the appointment. Where possible, your child should be in school before and after the appointment.

Please be aware that when a parent/carer contacts the school with information that their child is unable to attend due to illness or other circumstances, this may not be automatically authorised. Your child's current and previous school attendance will be taken into consideration and as a result the absence may not be authorised.

We realise that there are rare occasions when there might be a particular problem that causes a child to be absent. Parents need to let us know and we shall try to deal with it sympathetically.

Unauthorised absence is when the school has not received a reason for absence or has not approved a child's absence after a parent's request. These are absences that the school does not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been given and which are not permitted by law. This type of absence can lead to the Local Authority using sanctions and/or legal proceedings. This includes:

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily
- Absences which have not been properly explained
- Holidays in term time, which have not been agreed
- Parents' or siblings' illness
- Preparation for grammar school tests
- Other reasons including birthdays, looking after other children, waiting for a delivery, taking or collecting a relative from the airport, sleeping in after a late night, shopping, day trips, including visits to family or friends

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 a parent thinks their child is reluctant to attend school,

the School Attendance Officer, Senior Leaders (including the Senior Attendance Champion) and the SENDCO will work in partnership with the family to understand the root cause of the problem. We work with external agencies to help with this such as the School Attendance Support Service and Family Support Services.

Where there is no explanation for an absence or where the explanation or reason for the absence is considered unsatisfactory, the absence will be recorded as 'unauthorised'. Unauthorised absences have to be reported to the Local Authority. The School Attendance Support Service may contact parents/carers where unauthorised absence continues to be a problem.

Unauthorised absence could result in a Fixed Penalty Fine or other legal action.

Persistent Absenteeism (PA)

In line with DfE guidance, a pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason. This amounts to 19 days or nearly 4 weeks of absence.

Reducing both persistent and severe absenteeism is a central focus of the school's strategy to improve attendance and ensure all pupils have full access to their education. Absence at this level causes considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we need parents'/carers' full support and cooperation to tackle this.

If a pupil's attendance falls below 95%, parents / carers will receive an initial concern letter, which shows the current attendance. Parents will be able to discuss any issues or support needed with the Attendance Officer. Where there are continued concerns, we will invite families into school for a target setting meeting with our Attendance Officer, where a 4 week attendance target will be set. After 4 weeks, this target will be reviewed. If this target has not been met, we may meet with families again and offer support to improve their child's attendance, we may extend the target to give parents/carers more time to improve their child's attendance or we may make a referral to Hounslow School Attendance Support Service (SASS).

We monitor all absences and the reasons given. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority, and parents/carers will be informed of this immediately. All PA cases are also automatically made known to the School Attendance Support Officer (SASO).

Holidays and Term Time Leave of Absence

At Cardinal Primary School, we believe term time absences should be actively discouraged. Our purpose is to ensure that pupils achieve their full potential, and there is a clear link between poor attendance and under achievement.

Parents must advise of the term time leave as far in advance as possible, giving at least 2 weeks' notice. The advice must be given in writing using the "Notification of term time absence" form available from the school office. Please note, completing the form provides the school with a reason for absence, it is not a request for the leave to be authorised.

The notification must include the reason why it is felt necessary to take leave during term time (the "exceptional" circumstances).

On receipt, the Headteacher of the school, or such person as duly authorised by the Headteacher to do so on their behalf, will consider the submitted notification and will take into account the reason as given by the parent for the leave ahead of deciding whether or not such given reasons are, in their view, "exceptional" to merit the authorising of the absence.

The parent who submitted the notification will be notified by letter from the school within seven days of the school's decision in response to the notification whether the leave will be recorded as authorised or unauthorised.

Term time leave taken without authorisation will be referred by the School to the School Attendance Support Service.

Examples for which term time leave will not be authorised:

- Availability or cost
- Extended holiday at the beginning or end of the term
- Family event or celebration abroad
- A term-time booking made in error by the parent or another person

Any absence that has not been authorised will be referred to the School Attendance Support Service and, where the criteria for doing so is met, may result in prosecution proceedings or a Fixed Penalty Notice being issued per parent per child.

There are 190 school days (380 sessions) a year which every child is expected to attend. There are also approximately 71 days (142 sessions) of school holidays. Parents should ensure that family holidays are taken during school holiday periods only.

If a child of statutory school age is absent for more than 20 school days, the school will notify Hounslow Council and remove the child's name from the school roll. A returning pupil would have to re-apply for a Hounslow school place when they return to the Borough, with no guarantee of a place still being available.

Holidays of any length taken without notification will not be authorised.

THE SCHOOL ATTENDANCE SUPPORT SERVICE (SASS)

The school has an assigned School Attendance Support Officer (SASO): Tony Pattar.

In line with guidance from the DfE, the SASO meets regularly with the school's Attendance Officer to discuss and reduce persistent absence (PA) and severe absence (SA). In addition, they will meet with parents/carers to provide support to help our pupils attend school regularly.

GOVERNING BODY

Governors have overall responsibility for agreeing this policy and taking an active role in attendance improvement by working together with school leaders to prioritise attendance. The school's attendance figures are presented to the Governing Body on a termly basis.

Appendix 1: Attendance Codes

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

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	Pupil is present at morning registration
\	Present (pm)	Pupil is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Pupil arrives late before register has closed
Attending a place other than the school		
K	Attending education provision arranged by the local authority	Pupil is attending a place other than a school at which they are registered, for educational provision arranged by the local authority
V	Attending an educational visit or trip	Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised or approved by the school
P	Participating in a sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
W	Attending work experience	Pupil is on an approved work experience placement
B	Attending any other approved educational activity	Pupil is attending a place for an approved educational activity that is not a sporting activity or work experience
D	Dual registered	Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
Absent – leave of absence		

C1	Participating in a regulated performance or undertaking regulated employment abroad	Pupil is undertaking employment (paid or unpaid) during school hours, approved by the school
M	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment
J1	Interview	Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
S	Study leave	Pupil has been granted leave of absence to study for a public examination
X	Not required to be in school	Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
C2	Part-time timetable	Pupil is not in school due to having a part-time timetable
C	Exceptional circumstances	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
Absent – other authorised reasons		
T	Parent travelling for occupational purposes	Pupil is a 'mobile child' who is travelling with their parent(s) who are travelling for occupational purposes
R	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance
I	Illness (not medical or dental appointment)	Pupil is unable to attend due to illness (either related to physical or mental health)

E	Suspended or excluded	Pupil has been suspended or excluded from school and no alternative provision has been made
Absent – unable to attend school because of unavoidable cause		
Q	Lack of access arrangements	Pupil is unable to attend school because the local authority has failed to make access arrangements to enable attendance at school
Y1	Transport not available	Pupil is unable to attend because school is not within walking distance of their home and the transport normally provided is not available
Y2	Widespread disruption to travel	Pupil is unable to attend because of widespread disruption to travel caused by a local, national or international emergency
Y3	Part of school premises closed	Pupil is unable to attend because they cannot practicably be accommodated in the part of the premises that remains open
Y4	Whole school site unexpectedly closed	Every pupil absent as the school is closed unexpectedly (e.g. due to adverse weather)
Y5	Criminal justice detention	Pupil is unable to attend as they are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● In police detention ● Remanded to youth detention, awaiting trial or sentencing, or ● Detained under a sentence of detention
Y6	Public health guidance or law	Pupil's travel to or attendance at the school would be prohibited under public health guidance or law
Y7	Any other unavoidable cause	To be used where an unavoidable cause is not covered by the other codes

Absent – unauthorised absence		
G	Holiday not granted by the school	Pupil is absent for the purpose of a holiday, not approved by the school
N	Reason for absence not yet established	Reason for absence has not been established before the register closes
O	Absent in other or unknown circumstances	No reason for absence has been established, or the school isn't satisfied that the reason given would be recorded using one of the codes for authorised absence
U	Arrived in school after registration closed	Pupil has arrived late, after the register has closed but before the end of session
Administrative codes		
Z	Prospective pupil not on admission register	Pupil has not joined school yet but has been registered
#	Planned whole-school closure	Whole-school closures that are known and planned in advance, including school holidays