



WOHL ILFORD JEWISH PRIMARY SCHOOL

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Signature of Headteacher

Signature of Chair of Governors

Reviewed: September 2016

Next review: September 2017



Wohl Ilford Jewish Primary School Attendance Policy 2016 - 2017

Principles

Wohl Ilford Jewish Primary School (WIJPS) recognises the importance of high attendance by every pupil. The school has set an attendance target of 96.5% (2016-17). 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 (LA).

The Law

- A child of compulsory school age who is registered at school must, by law, attend regularly and punctually.
- Only schools can authorise the absence of a registered pupil.
- Legislation used in the Education Act 1996 section 7, 19, 436A, 437-39, 443-444; Education and Inspection Act 2006; Children Act 1999 section 36 and Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003.
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007

Policy on Leave

'Leave' in relation to a school means leave granted by any person authorised to do so by the Headteacher of the school.

The school has adopted Government guidance to not authorise leave of absence for the purpose of a holiday. If leave is taken without the permission of the Headteacher, the parent/carer may receive a penalty notice and risk losing their child's school place. Regulations do not allow schools to give retrospective approval.

With LA agreement, schools may delete from roll a pupil who fails to return on the agreed return date. This means that your child can lose their place at WIJPS.

Reasons for absence

Every half-day absence from school legally 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, preferably in writing.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason, such as illness or another unavoidable reason.

Unauthorised absences are those that the staff at school do not consider reasonable and for which no leave has been given. These are an offence by the parent and a penalty notice may be issued. It will be issued by the Education Welfare Service following discussions with the Headteacher.

Resolving problems

Parents are expected to contact school staff and to work with them in resolving any problems. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be resolved in this way, the school may offer parents a formal Parenting Contract/Agreement or refer the child to the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) from the LA.

Wherever possible, the EWO will try to resolve the situation by agreement. However, if attempts to improve the child's attendance have failed, EWOs can use legal proceedings, if required, including Penalty Notice fines or prosecution in the Magistrates Court. Alternatively, parents or pupils may themselves wish to contact the EWO to ask for help or information; EWOs are independent of the school and will give impartial advice. Their telephone number is available from the school office or website, or by contacting the LA.

Procedures

The school has a responsibility to reduce the number of children whose attendance is below 95% over the school year. This level of absence adds up to missing almost half a term out of the whole school year. Pupils who miss this much school are called 'persistent absentees' by the government, whatever the reason for their absence. Procedures are in place which can be applied to children who are at risk of falling into this category.

The following procedures and considerations are in place in relation to attendance, lateness and absence:

- **Registration**
Registration takes place 8.40 am - 8.50 am.
- **Lateness**
If a child arrives after 8.50 am, they must sign in on a sheet kept at the foyer desk, at the entrance to the school. A reason for the lateness must also be written. Parents may accompany their child to sign in. Persistent lateness does not constitute as full school attendance (S444 Education Act 1996). If there is persistent lateness then parents may be contacted to resolve the issue. (Please also see "Unauthorised absences and penalty notices" on page 3.)
- **Parents' responsibilities when children are absent**
It is the parents' responsibility to notify the school as early as possible as to why their child will be absent. The school's answerphone has the facility to leave a message for pupil absence. **The message must specify the child's name, class and the reason for absence.** Additionally, if a child will be arriving later in the morning (for example, after a GP appointment), then parents should inform the school as to what their child is eating for lunch. This can be done as part of the same answerphone message.

Parents should phone the school on the first day of their child's absence and every subsequent day. If a child is absent for more than two days, it is recommended that parents seek medical advice. The school will require evidence relating to the absence, eg a copy of a prescription or a photo/ photocopy of the label of the prescribed medicine. Parents are asked not to be offended if the school asks for this evidence as we adhere to local authority protocols.

When a child returns to school from any period of absence, a letter must be sent to the class teacher stating the reason for absence.

If a child has regular absences due to ill health, the school holds a copy of a letter which can be used, with signed parental permission, to contact the GP on a parent's behalf. This permission needs to be given on an annual basis.

The school has a nominated member of staff, the Deputy Headteacher, who liaises fortnightly with the Education Welfare Officer (EWO). At these meetings, attendance is monitored and concerns formally recorded and logged by the EWO and the school's nominated member of staff.

- **Arrangements for requesting exceptional leave of absence**

All requests for absence must be made by parents/guardians using the school's Absence Request Form.

Authorised absences will be granted in exceptional circumstances only. All authorised absences are at the discretion of the Headteacher only. Leave may be granted on compassionate grounds in an emergency (eg following the death of a close relative).

The Headteacher may make this discretionary decision based on family circumstances, a pupil's previous attendance figures and illness in a family. This is not an exhaustive list and other factors may influence the Headteacher's decision.

- **Unauthorised absences and penalty notices**

Penalty Notice fines may be issued for the following reasons:

- Unauthorised holidays - when a child is absent for 3 or more days in succession, without prior authorisation by the school (please also see '**Term-time holidays**' section below)
- Persistent lateness of 7 times within a half-term (pupils arriving at school after registration closes at 9.10 am). This particular lateness is an unauthorised lateness unless a valid reason is given. NB The school will warn parents through the use of text messages and formal letters home if their child has a serious problem with punctuality, prior to the stage of a Fixed Penalty Notice Fine.

In such circumstances and in line with the local authority attendance guidance, the school will request that the London Borough of Redbridge issue a Penalty Notice (PN) fine of £120 (£60 if paid within 28 days). This fine might be issued per parent, per child. Even after a fine has been issued, the school will continue to monitor absence and punctuality and will refer persistent concerns to the Education Welfare Service.

- **Term-time holidays**

It should be noted that a request for a term-time holiday is NOT a parental right. Leave may be granted in exceptional circumstances, but arrangements should not be made without the school's agreement in advance. Taking leave without permission will be classed as an 'unauthorised' absence and can be subject to a Penalty Notice or other legal proceedings by the LA.

- **Medical and dental appointments**

Wherever possible, parents are asked to make routine medical and dental appointments outside school time. Where such appointments in school time are unavoidable, staff should ideally be informed in advance. A 'present' mark may 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.

- **Examples of unacceptable reasons for absence**

It is not possible for the school to authorise absences for reasons such as:

- Shopping
- Looking after children
- Minding the house
- Birthdays etc

The above details are examples only and do not constitute an exhaustive list.

Strategies to promote high attendance

During the school's weekly Achievement Assembly, the class with the highest % attendance stands to be recognised and their efforts are applauded by all.

From 2016, a display in the hall will celebrate the KS1 and KS2 classes with the highest weekly % attendance, and whole class certificates will be awarded.

At various times throughout the school year, the EWO and a senior member of staff will stand at the school gates to monitor late arrivals. This is called a "Late Gate" duty.

Summary

The school has a legal duty to promote good attendance. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend regularly. All of the staff at Wohl Ilford Jewish Primary School is committed to working closely with parents as the best way to ensure the highest possible levels of attendance.