



## **ST GEORGE'S HANOVER SQUARE CE PRIMARY SCHOOL**

### **ATTENDANCE AND PUNCTUALITY POLICY**

#### **WHY WE HAVE AN ATTENDANCE POLICY**

We want to ensure that all pupils receive a full-time education to maximise opportunities for everybody to realise their potential. Experience and research both locally and nationally demonstrates a clear link between good attainment and good attendance. The school believes that setting a clear policy for attendance and punctuality is an excellent preparation for later school years and future employment.

The school strives to be welcoming and caring, so that everybody in the school community feels wanted and secure.

All school staff work with pupils and their families to ensure everybody attends school punctually on every day of each term.

The school intends to build on a system of incentives and rewards which acknowledges the efforts of pupils to improve their attendance and timekeeping and will challenge the behaviour of those pupils and parents who do not.

To meet these objectives St George's Hanover Square School will continue to foster good communication with pupils, parents, carers and appropriate agencies to provide mutual information, advice and support.

#### **THE TARGET**

St George's Hanover Square School intends to maintain its high levels of attendance each year. Our current target for 2015-16 is 96%.

#### **OUR STATUTORY DUTIES**

This policy is written in relation to the following acts of Parliament and guidance relating to attendance:

- Education Act 1996;
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006;
- Anti Social Behaviour Act 2003;
- We will also take account of new legislation and initiatives.

#### **THE KEY ELEMENTS OF THE ATTENDANCE POLICY**

Exceptional Leave should not be taken during term time except in exceptional circumstances, when authority should be requested from the Headteacher. There is no automatic right to a request being agreed. Where unauthorised absence is taken the school will take relevant action and this may result in a referral to the Education Welfare Service and a Penalty Notice may be issued to parents if a child is taken out of school during term time without written permission from the Headteacher. Penalty Notices are used as an alternative to taking legal action through the courts, but court action may also be used. Payment is £60, each child, to be paid within 21 days. If the fine is not paid within 21 days, the amount will increase to £120 between days 21 - 28. If the fine remains unpaid the LA may then take the matter to court.

**The fine will apply to each parent for each child.** We will adopt a focused approach aimed at returning the pupil to full attendance at all times.

1. Parents and carers are asked to sign up to this policy in the signing of the home school agreement. This makes clear to them that unauthorised absences do not only damage their own child's education, but also others. This is because teachers need to help those children who have been absent catch up with work they have missed, which reduces the time available to give to the remaining children in the class. This is one of the crucial reasons for a firm attendance policy, because when parents withdraw their children from school, it is not only their children who are affected.
2. This policy also seeks to encourage punctuality. Children can arrive at school from 8.30 am if accompanied by a known adult and should be ready to assemble by 8.55 am. Children arriving after 9.00 am are recorded as being late, and where children repeatedly arrive late the school tries to put this right. If a pupil arrives at school after 9.15 am they will be recorded as having an unauthorised absence. If a pupil has eight or more unauthorised lates within a eight week period a referral may be made to the Education Welfare Service to issue a Penalty Notice. Payment is £60, to be paid within 21 days. If the fine is not paid within 21 days, the amount will increase to £120. **The fine will also apply per parent per child.**
3. The same applies to punctual collection of children after school. The school day ends at 3.30 pm (unless arrangements have been made for extended services). Where parents continually fail to make arrangements to pick up their children at the end of the school day the school may have to consider making a referral to Family Support and Social Work or fine the parent for every 15 mins late they are past 3:45pm

### **Communicating with parents and carers**

1. The school gives high priority to conveying to parents, carers and pupils the importance of regular and punctual attendance. We recognise that parents have a vital role and there is a need to establish strong home-school links and communication systems, not least because these are very helpful when there is a problem about attendance.

Measures we take include:

- Holding induction sessions for all new parents and pupils;
- Including attendance performance in the weekly school newsletter;
- Producing statistics of whole school attendance performance to be displayed in the weekly newsletter and the annual school profile. Termly attendance performance reports are also sent to all parents and governors;
- All staff are made aware of the values and standards expected for school attendance and taught how to encourage school attendance;
- A reward system for pupils is in place to reinforce good attendance and make those who are punctual proud of their punctuality;
- Term dates are published in advance and are communicated in the weekly newsletter and in a separate letter to every parent. Any changes in the term date schedule are communicated more than one month in advance and communicated in a letter to the parent of every child.

### **Telling the children about the importance of attendance and punctuality**

Children receive guidance from teachers on an individual, class and school level about the importance of good attendance and punctuality. If a child has concerns about their attendance or punctuality they are encouraged to speak to their class teacher.

Children are encouraged to walk and cycle to school and to get to school on time before the bell goes.

Children are encouraged to go to bed at an appropriate time so that they are not tired the next day. They are encouraged to prepare for the school day on the night before as much as possible so they are not rushed in the mornings.

There are incentive schemes in place to promote good attendance and punctuality amongst the children.

The school council is consulted with to help develop initiatives to improve school attendance and punctuality.

Children who are regularly collected late at the end of the school day may be referred to Social Care after discussion with the Educational Welfare Officer (EWO).

### **What parents can do to help**

The school works with parents and carers to ensure excellent attendance and punctuality and recognises that parents have a crucial role. If a pupil does miss school, parents/carers should inform the school of their child's absence and provide an explanation as soon as possible. The nature of the explanation determines whether the school will authorise the absence or not.

Holidays during term-time and long weekends are not acceptable reasons for absence. As mentioned above, one of the key reasons for this is not just the education of the child taking the holiday, but the effect the absence has on other children in the class. This is often compounded by parents taking children on holiday in term time who then ask the teacher for extra homework, taking up more of their time and therefore cutting the time available for the rest of the class.

Those reasons for which authorisation for absence may be granted include the death or funeral of a close relative. In these circumstances, we may ask for proof. In addition emergency medical and dental appointments (although routine check-ups should be scheduled in the holidays) and other exceptional circumstances may be authorised at the Headteacher's discretion. We will also consider ethnic or religious requirements, for example, one day Religious Observance leave will be granted for all multi faith religions. We will also consider whether the leave is important for the well-being and cohesion of the family following serious or terminal illness or other traumatic events. Leave is not authorised because of availability of flights or accommodation.

Where a child returns back late then we will expect to see the date they had planned to return to the UK before the start of school and the revised date. If this evidence cannot be supplied then a penalty notice may be issued.

Parents are expected to adhere to the procedure for authorised school leave. All requests for school leave should be made in writing to the Headteacher and prior to the leave being arranged. An exceptional leave request form is available to request leave and can be obtained from the office.

If the school is not notified of absence then the school will initiate contact with the parent on first day of absence. The school will make contact by written correspondence if phone contact is not made.

If parents have any comments, concerns or complaints regarding the school attendance policy these can be addressed in writing to the Headteacher or an appointment can be arranged for discussion with the Headteacher. If any parents wish to work with the school in partnership to promote and implement good school attendance practice this is encouraged.

### **The Headteacher's Role**

The Headteacher will consider every request for leave. The parents will need to give the proposed dates of absence and return and cogent reasons for the absence. If the child fails to return on the agreed dates it is an unauthorised absence. If an extended absence is taken without authorisation or not being contactable by the school then a child may then lose their school place and may have to apply to Westminster Admission's Service for a new school place. Due to waiting lists this may not be at St George's Hanover Square.

The Assistant Headteacher responds to teachers' referrals and concerns and checks through the registers for problems with attendance and takes appropriate action. This information is shared consistently with class teachers so that strategies can be employed to improve attendance within each class year.

The Headteacher oversees the collection and reporting of attendance data and the publication of statistics and reports on attendance to parents, pupils, governors and the Local Authority.

An attendance audit is carried out every term.

## **The role of teachers**

All class teachers have a responsibility in keeping an attendance register. This is a legal document and must be completed accurately. The attendance register must be marked at the beginning of each morning and afternoon session. Absences are coded according to the information received from the parent of the child. The class teacher monitors the register daily and is sensitive to emerging patterns of absence and lateness.

Class teachers encourage patterns of punctuality and good attendance by praising those children who came to school each day and arrive on time.

The class teacher reports any concerns about a child's attendance or punctuality to the School Administration Officer.

## **The role of the administrative staff**

The administrative staff record late arrivals each day and take telephone calls from parents or carers concerning pupil absence.

Each week the Senior Administrative Officer will print weekly registers for each class and enter the attendance data on the database.

Individual pupil attendance reports are compiled on the request of the Headteacher or the EWO. The administrative staff will also prepare termly and annual returns to the local authority.

## **The role of the Educational Welfare Officer (EWO)**

The EWO is responsible for monitoring, supporting and assisting good school attendance in all Westminster schools. The EWO monitors school attendance registers and holds consultation meetings with the Headteacher and obtains referrals from the school. The EWO may meet a parent/carer and child in school, write to parents/carers, arrange a home visit and refer to other professional agencies. The results of these interventions are reported to the school. Failure to comply with the interventions of the EWO can lead to a fine or magistrate court proceedings. This policy brings your attention to the right of the school to refer a child to the Education Welfare Services (EWS) for persistent unauthorised leave who can issue a Penalty Notice which is charged at £60 if paid within 21 days and £120 if paid within 28 days. If payment is not paid within 28 days the EWS may seek proceedings against the parent in the Magistrates Court. If the case is proven in Court this can attract a fine up to £2500 and or up to three months in prison, and a potential criminal record.

## **In what circumstances would the school bring in the Educational Welfare Officer?**

Before contacting the EWO the school will make every attempt to make contact with the parent or carer by telephone and in writing. In the first instance we would invite them to discuss the problem. If this is unsuccessful the school gives warning of referral to a EWO. A referral may be made to the EWO under the following circumstances:

- 10 days of continuous unauthorised absence;

- More than 10 days of authorised leave;
- A holiday taken without permission;
- A pupil who has been more than 15 minutes late on eight or more occasions within an eight week period;
- 90% or less attendance.

A fine is issued per parent per child based on the school contact details. If a parent moves out of the family home they will need to produce proof of their new address dated with the last 12 months or they may receive a Penalty Notice.

### **The role of Governors**

There is a School Governor with responsibility for monitoring attendance and procedures whose responsibility it is to be aware of general attendance issues and along with the whole Governing Board inform and oversee school attendance performance initiatives.

Reports and statistics and initiatives to improve school attendance will be shared and consulted on with the Governing Board and documented in Governors meeting minutes (made available to all parents) and the Governors Annual Report.

### **What happens after a long absence?**

The school is sensitive to the needs and circumstances of pupils returning after significant periods of absence and will support the smooth reintegration of pupils both academically and socially. In such circumstances the school works with parents, carers and pupil towards an agreed reintegration plan which may include opportunities for counselling and feedback, peer support and mentoring and an agreed review period.

### **The Timetable**

School starts at 8.55 am. Children can arrive at school from 8.30 am and are expected to assemble in the playground and form class lines when the bell rings at 8.55 am. They are led into the class rooms for 9.00 am. On rainy days children assemble in the Undercroft until 8.55 am when they are led to the classroom.

School ends at 3.30 pm. Parent and carers should meet children at 3.30 pm unless extended hours arrangements are in place.

Each parent/ carer must complete a form with contact telephone number details and address of anybody who is designated to pick up your child from school. Should parents wish to change this list of names the school will need written consent from the parent in advance.

Children in Year 5 and Year 6 are permitted to arrive and leave school unsupervised on the condition that the school has a permission letter from the parent.

A child cannot be picked up or brought to school by anyone under the age of 14. Children over the age of 14 who are themselves attending school which finishes at 3.30 pm should not be in charge of picking up children from St George's Hanover Square School if their school is further than 5 minutes travel time away from St George's Hanover Square School.

**Term dates**

School term dates are published in advance and can be found on the school website.

Staff training days (inset days) are included in the term dates schedule. Parents or carers will receive written notice of any changes in term dates. Those changes would also be published in the calendar on the weekly school newsletter.



## **ATTENDANCE AND PUNCTUALITY SUMMARY FOR PARENTS**

### **1. Punctuality:**

Children need to be ready to assemble at 8.55 am and must be collected at 3.30 pm. If those collecting children are not the primary parents or carers the school must be informed in writing. A pupil cannot be dropped or collected by anyone under 14. The registers close at 9.15 am and any absence after this time is treated as unauthorised.

### **2. Attendance:**

Full attendance is expected during term time, except in exceptional circumstances. Exceptional circumstances do not include holidays, long weekends, leaving for holidays one day before the end of term or visits to family or friends. Parents must understand this when they place their child in the school.

Exceptional absences should be requested in writing in advance from the Headteacher. Acceptable reasons generally include close family bereavements and funerals and emergency medical and dental appointments (although routine check ups should be scheduled outside school hours). The Headteacher may also consider ethnic or religious requirements or if the leave is important for the cohesion of the family following traumatic events.

### **3. Unauthorised absences:**

Unauthorised absences are treated seriously by the school and the local authority. Initially we try to resolve any such absences by contacting parents directly, but if there are persistent problems of either punctuality or attendance the local authority is informed. Although it is very much a last resort, ultimately, fines can be imposed on parents. Pupils may also lose their place at the school. Each pupil's punctuality and attendance record may also be passed on to any school they propose to attend after they leave St George's Hanover Square School.