Cayley Primary



Attendance Policy

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Introduction and background

Cayley Primary School recognises that positive behaviour and good attendance are essential in order to raise standards of pupil attainment and to give every child/young person the best educational experience possible.

The law entitles every child of compulsory school age to an efficient, full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude, and any special educational need they may have. It is the legal responsibility of every parent to make sure their child receives that education either by attendance at a school or by education otherwise than at a school.

Where parent/carers decide to have their child registered at school, they have an additional legal duty to ensure their child attends that school regularly. This means their child 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.

The DfE updated its statutory guidance, Working Together to Improve School Attendance in August 2024 and our policy reflects this guidance. (https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/66bf300da44f1c4c23e5bd1b/Working_together_to_improve_school_attendance_-_August_2024.pdf).

Cayley Primary School is committed to the continuous raising of achievement of all our pupils. Regular attendance is critical if our pupils are to be successful and benefit from the opportunities presented to them. The Governors, Headteacher and Staff in partnership with parent/carers have a duty to promote full attendance at Cayley Primary School.

Our school aims to meet its obligations with regards to school attendance by:

- Promoting good attendance and reducing absence, including persistent absence
- Maintaining close relationships and contact with families and understanding the barriers that some face and work in partnership to overcome them
- Ensuring every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled
- Acting early to address patterns of absence
- Appointing a senior leader to act as Attendance Champion (Tom Foster) and closely track trends in attendance data and act upon them

We will also support parent/carers to perform their legal duty to ensure their children of compulsory school age attend regularly and will promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the

reason for the absence is unavoidable. **It is a rule of this school that pupils must attend every day, unless there are exceptional circumstances and it is the *headteacher*, not the parent, who can authorise the absence.**

Promoting regular attendance

At Cayley Primary School, we believe in developing good patterns of attendance and set high expectations for the attendance and punctuality for all our pupils from the outset. It is a central part of our school's vision, values, ethos, and day to day life. We recognise the connections between attendance, attainment, safeguarding and wellbeing.

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is the responsibility of parent/carers, pupils and all members of school staff.

To help us all to focus on this we will:

- Give parent/carers details on attendance on our website, on displays around the school, in person and in written communication
- Celebrate excellent attendance by displaying and reporting individual and class achievements
- Reward good or improving attendance
- Report to parent/carers regularly on their child's attendance
- Contact parent/carers should their child's attendance fall below the school's target **(96%)** for attendance or if any concerns emerge.

Understanding types of absence

Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any pupil's absence or late arrival disrupts teaching routines and so may affect the learning of others in the same class. Ensuring a child's regular attendance at school is a parental responsibility and allowing absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by the parent), as either authorised or unauthorised. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required. Each half-day is known as a 'session'.

Authorised absences are morning or afternoon sessions away from school for a genuine reason such as illness (although you may be asked to provide medical evidence for your child before this can be authorised), medical or dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable cause.

Illness and medical appointments

When a child is unwell, parent/carers are expected to contact the school before 08.30 on the first day of absence informing the school of the reason for absence either by phone or email to office@cayley.towerhamlets.sch.uk .

Every effort should be made to arrange medical appointments outside school hours.

- An appointment card or verification by the doctors/dentist/hospital is required for medical appointments
- If it is necessary for a child to be out of school for this reason, the child should be returned to school directly after the appointment.
- If a child is absent due to vomiting and/or diarrhoea, then they should not return to school for the next 48 hours after the last time that the child is sick. This is to reduce the risk of infection to other children and adults at the school.
- For more than three days of absence or where there is repeated absence due to illness, the school will request medical evidence (this can take the form of an appointment card or a copy of a prescription)
- Where there are concerns about a child's attendance (particularly when it drops below 90%) the school will request medical evidence for any absence.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no 'leave' has been granted. This type of absence can lead to the school referring to the Local Authority for penalty notices and/or legal proceedings.

Unauthorised absence includes, however is not exhaustive:

- Parent/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily e.g. because they had a late night or for non-infectious illness or injury that would not affect their ability to learn
- Absences which have never been properly explained
- Shopping trips
- Looking after other children or children accompanying siblings or parent/carers to medical appointments
- Their own or family birthdays
- Holidays taken during term time without leave, not deemed 'for exceptional purposes' by the headteacher
- Day trips
- Other leave of absence in term time which has not been agreed

Persistent and severe absenteeism (PA and SA)

A pupil is defined by the Government as a **'persistently absent'** when their attendance is 90% or below and **'severely absent'** when attendance is 50% or below, this can be authorised or unauthorised absence.

Absence at these levels will cause considerable damage to any pupil's education and we need the full support and co-operation of parent/carers to resolve this. For children who are **severely absent** we are likely to involve outside agencies to support the school and family to overcome barriers to attendance and each child will have an individual support plan.

Reporting absences

If a child is absent from school the parent/carer must follow the following procedures:

- Contact the school before 8.30am on the first day of absence, or as soon as possible thereafter, by telephone or via email to office@cayley.towerhamlets.sch.uk
- Contact the school on every further day of absence.
- Ensure that your child returns to school as soon as possible and you provide any medical evidence, if requested, to support the absence.

If your child is absent, we will:

- Telephone or text you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you and then telephone other emergency contacts for your child. This is to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all our pupils.
- If it has not been possible to contact either the parent/carer or emergency contacts the school will give due consideration to making a home visit based on their knowledge of the child.
- If no contact has been made after 3 days, then a home visit will definitely be made.

If absence continues, we will:

- Write to you if your child's attendance is below 95%, or where punctuality is a concern
- Invite you into school to discuss the situation if absences persist
- Create a personalised action/support plan to address any barriers to attendance
- Offer signposting support to other agencies or services if appropriate
- Refer the matter to the Local Authority if attendance does not improve, which may result in the issuing of a Fixed Penalty Notice (fine).

Support from the school

The school understands that from time to time situations may arise which make it difficult for parent/carers to ensure their child is in school. For example:

- Housing issues
- Health issues
- Children's behavioural issues
- Financial issues

Please contact the school on office@cayley.towerhamlets.sch.uk if there are issues which are affecting your child's attendance.

Celebrating good attendance

We know that there is a link between improving overall attendance and school culture. In addition to working closely to support our families and community to overcome barriers to attendance, children receive certificates and recognition for excellent attendance, including prizes for 100% attendance in a term. We also celebrate classes who have outstanding attendance or have shown significant improvements, with an attendance 'Class of the Week' in each phase. Once a term we organise an 'Attendance Celebration Week' when we publicly promote and celebrate excellent behaviour, aim to beat records and hand out prizes. Thank you for working with us to improve the overall attendance at Cayley and to help ensure that your child reaches their full potential.

Informing parent/carers of attendance levels

At Cayley we believe it is really important that parent/carers understand what their child's attendance levels and the impact this may have so that they can support their child in coming to school and receiving the attendance they deserve.
End of Half term communication:
At the end of each half term, each family will receive one of the following letters informing them of their current attendance levels:

- Green Letter – attendance is **over 97% -** this means the child has been at school almost every day and this is giving them the best start to their education
- Amber Letter – attendance is **between 95% and 97%.** Whilst this attendance is above the school target of 95%, there is some room for improvement and if this continues a child could miss between 7 and 10 days in a year.
- Red Letter – attendance is between **90% and 94.9%.** This falls below the whole school target of 95% and if it continues, a child could miss between 10 and 19 days in a year.
- Below 90% letter - attendance being below **90%. This means the child is termed persistently absent.** If it continues, a child will miss more than 20 days in a year.

In addition, when a child falls below 90%, the family will immediately receive an email from the school informing them of this situation. Likewise, when it goes above 90%, families are informed to celebrate this fact.

Lateness

Poor punctuality is not acceptable and can contribute to further absence. Good timekeeping is a vital life skill which will help children as they progress through their school life and out into the wider world.

Pupils who arrive late disrupt lessons and, if a child misses the start of the day, they can feel unsettled and embarrassed, miss vital work and important messages from their class teacher.

Lateness is monitored closely and reasons for absence are recorded. Unauthorised lateness could result in the school referring to the Local Authority for sanctions and/or legal proceedings. This may mean that you could face the possibility of being issued with a Penalty Notice if the problem persists.

Understanding barriers to attendance

Whilst any child may occasionally have time off school because they are too unwell to attend, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any barriers preventing regular attendance are best resolved between the school, the parent/carers and the child. If a parent thinks their child is reluctant to attend school, then we will work with that family to understand the root problem and provide any necessary support.

Some pupils face greater barriers to attendance than their peers. These can include pupils who suffer from long-term medical conditions or who have specific special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), or other vulnerabilities which may impact attendance. High expectations of attendance remain, however we will work with families and pupils to support improved attendance whilst being mindful of the additional barriers faced.

Tower Hamlets Attendance Welfare service

Local Authority Attendance Welfare Advisors (AWAs) work strategically by offering support to schools, families, and other professionals to reduce persistent and severe absence and improve overall attendance for all pupils.

Parent/carer are expected to work with the school and Local Authority to address any attendance concerns. Parent/carer should proactively engage with the support offered, aiming to resolve any problems together. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be resolved in this way, the school may consider more formal support and/or refer the child to the Local Authority. If attendance does not improve, legal action may be taken in the form of a Penalty Notice or prosecution in the Magistrates Court. Legal proceedings are designed to strengthen parental responsibilities and ensure improved attendance.

School attendance and the law

By law all children of compulsory school age must receive an appropriate full-time education (Education Act 1996). Parent/carer have a legal duty to ensure their child attends school regularly at the school at which they are registered.

Parent/carers may be recognised differently under education law, than under family law. Section 576 of the Education Act 1996 states that a 'parent', in relation to a child or young person, includes any person who is not a parent (from which can be inferred 'biological parent') but who has parental responsibility, or who has care of the child.

A person typically has care of a child or young person if they are the person with whom the child lives, either full or part time and who looks after the child, irrespective of what their biological or legal relationship is with the child.

Unauthorised absence may result in the school referring to the Local Authority for sanctions and/or legal proceedings. New statutory guidance was published in August 2024 states that parent/carers may receive a fixed penalty notice of £160 if their child misses the equivalent of five days of school in a ten-week rolling period.

- The first penalty notice issued to a parent in respect of a particular pupil will be charged at £160 if paid within 28 days. This will be reduced to £80 if paid within 21days.
- A second penalty notice issued to the same parent in respect of the same pupil is charged at a flat rate of £160 if paid within 28 days.
- A third penalty notice cannot be issued to the same parent in respect of the same child within 3 years of the date of issue of the first. In a case where the national threshold is met for a third time (or subsequent times) within those 3 years, alternative action should be taken instead. This will often include considering prosecution but may include other tools such as one of the other attendance legal interventions. Repeated or 'aggravated offences' could result in a fine of £2500 or up to 3 months in prison. If a parent is found guilty in court, they will receive a criminal conviction.

Children Missing in Education (CME)

Children are considered as Children Missing in Education, sometimes known as Children Out Of School, where children and families have gone missing from local schools, alternative provision centres and education settings without a suitable explanation. Where the school thinks this may be the case we work with the LBTH CME Team, following the CME Guidance.

Holidays in term time

There is no entitlement in law for pupils to take time off during the term to go on holiday. Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are "exceptional circumstances". It is a rule of this school that a leave of absence shall not be granted in term time unless there are reasons considered to be exceptional by the headteacher, irrespective of the child's overall attendance. Only the headteacher or their designate (not the local authority) may authorise such a request. All applications for a leave of absence must be made in writing on the prescribed form provided by the school. Where a parent removes a child when the application for leave was refused or where no application was made to the school, a penalty notice may be requested by this school to the Local Authority. A Penalty Notice may be issued where there have been at least 5 days of unauthorised absence for the purpose of a holiday.

Deletion from roll

Parent/carers of pupils leaving Cayley Primary School or other than at the end of Year 6 are required to complete a 'In-year Admission/School transfer' form which can be obtained from the school office or from Pupil Services. This provides school and the LA with the following information: Child's name, class, current address, date of leaving, new home address, name of new school, address of new school. The school will need to complete a 'School History' section and sign the form before this can be submitted to the Local Authority. This information is essential to ensure that we know the whereabouts and appropriately safeguard all of our pupils, even those who leave us. Every removal from the school register must be notified to the Local Authority, as soon as the ground for removal has been met in relation to that pupil, and in any event no later than the time at which the pupil's name is removed from the register.

Absence data

We use data to monitor, identify and support individual pupils or groups of pupils when their attendance needs to improve. Persistently and severely absent pupils are tracked and monitored carefully. We combine this with attainment data as good attendance leads to good attainment. We share information and work collaboratively with other schools in the area, local authorities, and other partners when absence is at risk of becoming persistent or severe.

Summary

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parent/carers and to promote attendance.

Parent/carers have a legal duty to make sure that their children attend school, on time, every day.

All school staff and the Governing Body are committed to working with parent/carers and pupils to promote good attendance as this is the best way to ensure the best outcomes for all our pupils.