Attendance policy

Sir John Heron Primary School

Version & Date of Issue: 6, 11/2025	**Last approved by Governors (Date)** : 11/11/2025
Authorised by: N Ishaq	
Review Date: 11/2026	

This document is not considered to be controlled by the quality system once printed

Contents

1 Introduction: 3
2 Why Regular Attendance is so important: 3
3 Definition of Good Attendance 3
4 Promoting Regular Attendance 4
5 Understanding Types of Absence: 4
6 Persistent Absenteeism (PA) and Severe Absenteeism (SA): 5
7 Procedures: 5
i) Registration 5
ii) Lateness 5
iii) Absence Procedures: 6
iv) Contact Details and Collection of Children: 7
8 Religious Observations: 8
9 The Newham Attendance Management Service 8
10 Penalty Notice Scheme: 8
i) First Offence 9
ii) Second Offence 9
iii) Third and further offences 9
11 Notices to Improve 9
12 Approval for Term Time Absence 10
13 Key Contacts 10
Summary: 10
Appendix – Attendance Register and Codes 11

1 Introduction:

Sir John Heron recognises that good school attendance is key to maximize pupils' educational experience, wellbeing and future opportunities. Legally, every child of compulsory school age is entitled to a full-time education that meets their age and needs, including Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). It is the legal responsibility of parent/carers to ensure their child receives this education, whether through attending a school or by other means. If a child is registered at a school, parent/carers must ensure their child attends regularly and on time, with exceptions for illness or pre-approved absences.

The Department for Education (DfE) has produced statutory guidance for schools and local authorities (Working together to improve school attendance) and it includes a National Framework in relation to absence and the use of legal sanctions. Our school attendance policy sets out the requirements of this statutory guidance and aims to ensure that everyone involved in school attendance understands its importance.

Additionally, the school adheres to the DfE's statutory safeguarding guidance, "Keeping Children Safe in Education (September 2025)". This guidance highlights the significance of recognising the vulnerabilities of children who are missing or absent from education. It underscores the need for schools to be proactive in safeguarding these children and ensuring their wellbeing, as consistent attendance is crucial for their safety and development.

2 Why Regular Attendance is so important:

Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any absence or late arrival disrupts teaching routines and may therefore also affect the learning of others in the same teaching group.

Ensuring a child's regular attendance at school is a parent/carer's legal responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

3 Definition of Good Attendance:

The minimum level of attendance for this school is **95%** attendance. Pupils who maintain an attendance of 95% or above will be classed as good attendance. This percentage criteria falls in line with the current national expected level of attendance.

The school already has targets to improve attendance, and we aim to achieve better than 95% because we know that good attendance is the key to successful schooling and we believe that our pupils can be amongst the best in the country.

Through the school year we monitor absences and punctuality to show us where improvements need to be made.

4 Promoting Regular Attendance:

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

To help us all to focus on this we will:

- Accurately complete attendance registers and have effective day-to-day processes in place to follow-up absence, as required by law.

- Report to parent/carers at least termly, on how their child is performing in school, what their attendance and punctuality rate is and how this relates to their progress;

- Celebrate good or improving attendance through certificates and other reward incentives.

- Support parent/carers and pupils by working with them to raise attendance levels for their children.

5 Understanding Types of Absence:

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

- **Authorised** absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a genuine reason like illness, medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable cause. Evidence must be provided for appointments.

- **Unauthorised** absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been given. This type of absence can lead to school referring to the Local Authority for Fixed Penalty Notices and/or legal proceedings. This includes, but is not limited to:

    - 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;
    - Truancy before or during the school day;
    - Absences which have not been properly explained;
    - Children who arrive at school late, after the close of registration. This is marked using a 'U' which indicates that the child is in school for safeguarding purposes, but the session is counted as an absence.
    - Day trips, shopping, or birthdays;
    - Looking after other children or accompanying siblings or parent/carers to appointments.

- Holidays taken during term time;
- Other leave of absence in term time which has not been agreed.

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 parent/carers and the child. If your child is reluctant to attend, it is not advisable to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and usually make things worse.

6 Persistent Absenteeism (PA) and Severe Absenteeism (SA):

Persistent Absenteeism is defined by a pupil missing 10% or more schooling across the school year for any reason; this includes authorised and unauthorised absences. Absence at this level causes considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we need the fullest support and co-operation from the parent/carers to tackle this.

Severe Absenteeism (SA) is defined as a pupil who has missed 50% or more schooling. SA pupils may face wide barriers to their attendance and may require intensive support.

PA and SA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully through our pastoral system and we also combine this with support from the Learning Mentor or Family Support Worker. In specific cases, it may be necessary for our staff to complete a home visit (please refer to our Home Visits policy).

All cases are also automatically made known to the Attendance Targeted Support Service, Newham Council.

7 Procedures:

i) Registration

The school day starts at **8.45am** and we expect your child to be in class at that time.

Registers are marked by **8.55am** and your child will receive a late mark if they are not in by that time.

ii) Lateness

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If your child misses the start of the day they can miss work and do not spend time with their class teacher getting vital information and news for the day. Late arriving pupils also disrupt lessons, it can be embarrassing for the child and can also encourage absence.

How we manage lateness:

At **9.25am** the registers will be closed. In accordance with the Regulations, if your child arrives after that time they will receive a mark that shows them to be on site,

but this will **not** count as a present mark and it will mean they have an unauthorised absence. This may mean that you could face the possibility of a Penalty Notice if the problem persists.

If your child has a persistent late record you will be asked to meet with the Attendance Officer and/or the Attendance Management and Welfare Adviser to resolve the problem, but you can approach us at any time if you are having problems getting your child to school on time so that the matter can be resolved.

iii) Absence Procedures:

If a child is absent from school, parent/carers must:

- Contact us **before 9am** on the first day of absence. You can call the school office on **020 8514 9860** or email **absence@sirjohnheron.newham.sch.uk** and report the reason for absence so that it is recorded. The school has an answer phone available to leave a message if nobody is available to take your call, or you may call into school personally and speak to the office staff. Please be aware that, if you leave a voicemail to report your child's absence, you may receive a call from the school so that we may discuss the absence before making a decision as to whether the absence is to be recorded as authorised.;

- Contact the school on **the fourth day** of absence, again before 9am.

- If your child is absent due to an appointment, an appointment letter or card must be brought into the school office on return to school for the absence to be authorised. We will also need to see medical evidence (medication, prescription, GP card) if a child is absent due to illness for 4 school days or more.

If your child is absent, we will:

- Telephone or text you on the first, and every subsequent day of absence, if we have not heard from you;

- If we are unable to make contact with parent/carers by telephone, we will telephone emergency contact numbers, send other communications and if necessary, a home visit may be made for safeguarding reasons (please refer to our Home Visiting Policy).

- A referral will be made to Local Authority if no contact has been made with parent/carers by the 10th day of absence (or sooner if deemed appropriate), at which point your child will be considered to be "missing from education."

If absence continues, we will:

- Invite you in to discuss the situation with our Attendance Officer and/or Pastoral Leaders or Learning Mentor if absences persist;

- Any child who is absent without explanation for 12 consecutive or cumulative sessions (6 school days) (90% attendance), or who has a pattern of erratic attendance or persistent lateness after registers close may be referred to the Attendance Targeted Support Service of LBN, in order that further investigations can be made. Such cases may result in a visit to the home by an Attendance Management and Welfare Adviser.

- Targets will be set for improvement, sources of support will be signposted if needed.

- If there is no improvement, court action or a Penalty Notice may ensue.

iv) Contact Details and Collection of Children:

Contact Details:

Parent/carers of children starting at Sir John Heron school are asked to provide specific information including:

- Home address and home telephone number or mobile telephone number
- Work telephone number (if applicable)
- Names and telephone numbers of adults who are authorised by the parent/carers to collect their child from school, for example a childminder or grandparent;
- Information about any person who does not have legal access to the child.

PLEASE ADVISE THE SCHOOL OF ANY CHANGE OF INFORMATION IMMEDIATELY.

The school will complete an annual check with parent/carers to ensure that contact details are up-to-date.

Collection of Children:

In the event that a child is not going to be collected by a named authorised adult, the parent/carers must inform the school of the name of the person collecting the child before 2.30pm to allow enough time for the office staff to get the message to the class teachers.

Please note that it is not school policy to allow children under 18 to collect younger children. If you do wish to allow someone under 18 to collect your child then the school must be informed of your decision in writing.

In the event that a child is not collected by an authorised adult we will make every effort to contact you or the emergency contacts you have provided us. If, however, we cannot contact you and the staff can no longer supervise the child, the child will be taken to the local Police station and Social Services will be informed.

Children should be collected on time and persistent lateness times will be noted in a register.

Parent/carers who want their children to go home on their own must inform the school in writing. **Children will not be allowed to go home alone without written permission from a parent or carer. In exceptional circumstances, authorised on a case by case basis by the Headteacher or Deputy Headteacher, verbal consent may be accepted.**

8 Religious Observations:

The decision of the Headteacher is that Sir John Heron Primary School does not close for the religious observation days allocated by the borough. Pupils who observe these days are allocated (R) religious authorised days off for 1 day.

9 The Attendance Targeted Support Service

Parent/carers are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any problems together. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, the school may refer the child to the Attendance Targeted Support Service from the Local Authority. He/she will also try to resolve the situation by agreement but, if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed and unauthorised absences persist, these Officers can use sanctions such as Penalty Notices or prosecutions in the Magistrates Court. Full details of the options open to enforce attendance at school are available from the school or the Local Authority.

Alternatively, parent/carers or children may wish to contact the Attendance Targeted Support Service themselves to ask for help or information. They are independent of the school and will give impartial advice. Their telephone number is available from the school office or by contacting the Local Education Authority.

Unauthorised leave of absence in term time is likely to result in the issue of a Penalty Notice. If you fail to pay you are at risk of prosecution under S.144(1) of the Education Act 1996. Please refer to section 10 regarding the details of the Penalty Notice scheme.

10 Penalty Notice Scheme:

National Framework threshold

There is a single consistent national threshold for when a Penalty Notice must be considered by all schools in England.

Penalty notices can be issued for a range of reasons, including persistent absence, persistent lateness and term time holidays. **There is no entitlement in law for pupils to take time off during the term to go on holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure or recreation, or to take part in protest activity in school hours.**

A Penalty Notice must be considered by all schools in England for:
Unauthorised absence during a 10 school week period.

- 5 consecutive days (10 sessions) – one after the other.
- 10 non-consecutive sessions – not one after the other.

The 10 school week period can go across different school terms of school years.

i) First Offence

For the first offence, a Penalty Notice means a fine of **£160 (per parent/carer, per child)** if paid within 28 days. This **can be discounted** to **£80** per parent/carer, per child if paid within 21 calendar days.
Non-payment will result in prosecution under Section 444(1) of the Education Act 1996.

ii) Second Offence

The second time a Penalty Notice is issued for an unauthorised absence, the fine is **£160 per parent/carer, per child** if paid within 28 calendar days. There will be **no discount** for paying within 21 calendar days.

iii) Third and further offences

The third time offence committed, a Penalty Notice will not be issued. Instead:

- The case will be presented straight to the Magistrate's Court.
- Prosecution can result in a criminal record and a fine of up to £2,500.
- Cases where the defendant is found guilty in Magistrate's Court can show on the parent/carer's future DBS certificate as being due to 'failure to safeguard a child's education'.

11 Notices to Improve

If the national threshold has been met and support is appropriate, but parent/carers do not engage with offers of support, the school may offer a notice to improve to give parent/carers a final chance to engage with support. Notices to improve will be issued in line with processes set out in the local code of conduct for the Local Authority area in which the pupil attends school.

They will include:

- Details of the pupil's attendance record and of the offences.
- The benefits of regular attendance and the duty of parent/carers under section 7 of the Education Act 1996.
- Details of the support provided so far.
- Opportunities for further support, or to access previously provided support that was not engaged with.
- A clear warning that a Penalty Notice may be issued if attendance doesn't improve within the improvement period, along with details of what sufficient improvement looks like, which will be decided on a case-by-case basis.

- A clear timeframe of between 3 and 6 weeks for the improvement period. The grounds on which a Penalty Notice may be issued before the end of the improvement period.

12 Approval for Term Time Absence

The Headteacher will allow pupils to be absent from the school site for certain educational activities, or to attend other schools or settings. The Headteacher will only grant a leave of absence to a pupil during term time if the request meets the specific circumstances set out in the 2024 school attendance regulations. These circumstances are:

Taking part in a regulated performance.

- Attending an interview.
- A temporary, time-limited part-time timetable.
- Exceptional circumstances.

A leave of absence is granted at the Headteacher's discretion, including the length of time the pupil is authorised to be absent for. Leave of absence will not be granted for a pupil to take part in protest activity during school hours. As a leave of absence will only be granted in exceptional circumstances, it is unlikely a leave of absence will be granted for the purposes of a family holiday. The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant background context behind the request.

13 Key Contacts

The key people responsible for attendance matters in this school are:

Reporting School Absence / Attendance Officer *The member of staff parent/carers should contact about attendance on a day to day basis or to contact for support with attendance.*	Name: **Mrs T. Davis** absence@sirjohnheron.newham.sch.uk or info@sirjohnheron.newham.sch.uk Telephone: 020 8514 9860
Newham's Attendance Targeted Support Service	**Ms M Epstein**

The Headteacher and Senior Leadership Team, Safeguarding and Outreach Officer and Learning Mentor are also key contacts for attendance matters in the school.

Summary:

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parent/carers and to promote attendance. Equally, parent/carers have a duty to make sure that their children attend.

All school staff are committed to working with parent/carers and pupils as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible.

Appendix – Attendance Register and Codes

Within our school, we keep an electronic attendance register, and place all pupils onto this register. We take the attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. Teachers 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

The DfE attendance codes are as follows:

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/carer travelling for occupational purposes	Pupil is a 'mobile child' who is travelling with their parent/carer(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: · 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