Old Palace & Children's House Federation

Attendance Policy

Adopted: Autumn 2025

School Attendance Aims

Children's House Nursery and Old Palace Primary School recognise that positive behaviour and good attendance are essential in order to raise standards of pupil attainment, to support emotional and social development and to give every child/young person the best educational experience possible.

A 90% attendance level is the equivalent of missing 4 weeks of school in an academic year, or a whole year of education if this continues throughout a child's primary and secondary education. Statistics show a direct link between underperformance and poor attendance. Below 90% attendance, children are likely to underachieve; whereas students with attendance above 90% achieve higher standards in their SATs tests.

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 parents 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 policy aims to raise and maintain levels of attendance by:

- Promoting a positive and welcoming atmosphere in which pupils feel safe, secure and valued.
- Working closely with families and our partner agencies, including community organisations, to overcome any barriers to good attendance and provide support where required.
- Raising awareness of the importance of good attendance and punctuality and the relationship that poor attendance may have to safeguarding concerns.
- Ensuring that attendance is monitored effectively and reasons for absences are recorded promptly and consistently.

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 an expectation of this school that pupils must attend every day, unless there are exceptional circumstances and it is the *headteacher/ head of school*, not the parent, who can authorise the absence.

Roles, Responsibilities and Procedures

It should be clear that attendance is regarded as the responsibility of pupils, parents and all staff, who will work in partnership to ensure regular attendance so that pupils can reach their potential.

Pupils should:

- Take some responsibility for their own learning;
- Make sure they arrive at school between 8:50am and 9:00am and come prepared for the school day;
- Take full advantage of all opportunities offered in school;
- Bring any worries or difficulties to the attention of a trusted adult.

Parents should:

- Help your child develop good habits from an early age by taking responsibility for them arriving at school between 8:50am- 9:00am and achieving good levels of attendance
- Arrange dental and doctor's appointments out of school hours or during school breaks whenever possible- providing sufficient evidence, such as an appointment text/letter.
- Not keep children off school for minor ailments.
- Email or telephone the school, no later than 9.30am on the first morning of an absence, to let us know the reason for the absence and when the child is likely to return to school.
- At Children's House, send full time pupils in at 12.30 if they miss the morning session
- At Old Palace, send children in for afternoon sessions, if they are feeling better. In KS1 and LKS2 they should be brought in at 1pm and in UKS2 at 1.30pm
- If the absence is likely to continue for more than three days, on the third day provide medical evidence. This could include bringing in prescribed medication in the original packing or providing copies of original medical documentation. Where original documentation is not available, the name and contact details of the professional seen by the child should be provided so the school can verify the information provided by the parent. The original documents can then be provided once received.
- Follow school procedure by not allowing pupils who have vomited or who have diarrhoea to return to school until 48 hours after the last episode to prevent infection.
- Ensure that pupils do not take any unnecessary time off school (see unauthorised absence below) including not requesting leave for pupils during term time, other than in exceptional circumstances
- Talk to your child about any issues that may be making them want to miss school
- Do not allow your child to persuade you to into making excuses for him/her
- Accept the support offered by the school and the Attendance Welfare Adviser to work together on resolving any attendance issue, including attending any meetings that have been arranged.

The school will support good attendance by:

Promoting Regular Attendance

The Old Palace & Children's House Federation believes in developing good patterns of attendance and we set high expectations for the attendance and punctuality for all our pupils from the outset. It is a central part of both school's 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 parents, pupils and all members of school staff.

To help us all to focus on this we will:
- Give parents/carers details on attendance on our website, in person and in writing, for example in school newsletters
- Celebrate excellent attendance, for example by displaying class achievement and reporting on individual successes
- Reward good or improving attendance
- Report to parents/carers regularly on their child's attendance
- Contact parents/carers should their child's attendance fall below 95% at Old Palace and 90% at Children's House
- Offer support when required from external agencies, such as the local authority Behaviour & Attendance Team, the School Nurse or Early help
- Operating a first day calling policy to contact parents who have not called the school to inform us of their child's absence. This is to ensure the child is safe.
- Carrying out a home visit policy, where we have been unable to contact the parents by the end of the second day of a child's absence

- Call parents on the third consecutive day of their child's progress to gain an update and to request medical evidence
- Safeguard pupils by following up unsubstantiated and unauthorised absences with parents
- Implementing a return to school plan where a child has been absent from school for a long period of time (for example as the result of an operation or serious illness)
- Providing preventative actions such as AWA drop in sessions and health workshops.
- Analysing attendance data termly to identify patterns, set targets and inform policy and practice.

The Governors will support good attendance by:

- Ensuring that the school meets its legal responsibility to take an attendance register at the start of the morning and afternoon session and uses the statutory registration codes when coding pupil absences.
- Setting annual attendance targets
- Tracking attendance levels and holding senior leaders to account for meeting the targets set
- Adopting the Tower Hamlets Policy on Leave during Term Time

Types of Absence

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.

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:

- Parents/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
- Children who arrive at school after the close of registration are marked using a L This indicates that they are in school for safeguarding purposes and time of arrival is noted and reason for lateness.
- To translate for family or friends;
- To visit relatives;
- To go shopping;
- To go to the airport;
- To look after siblings.
- To accompany relatives to appointments
- To sleep in after a late night
- To celebrate their own or family birthday
- Parent is unwell and cannot bring them to school.
- Holidays taken during term time without leave, not deemed 'for exceptional purposes' by the headteacher
- 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 parents 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.

Appendix 1 provides guidance provided by the Health Protection Agency (2013) on common illnesses.
Appendix 2 is the letter for PA that highlights the impact and identifies support.

Missing Children

Where the school has been unable to contact parents by the end of the second day of absence, the school will contact the child's emergency contacts to seek information.

On fifth day of absence (10 sessions) the school will makes a formal referral to the local authority's Attendance and Welfare team. The Attendance and Welfare Advisor (AWA) will then follow up on this concern to ascertain the child's location and safety.

Following the AWA investigation, if unsuccessful, the AWA will make a Missing Child Referral and the Missing Children Referral Office will continue the investigation, updating the school.

On the 21st consecutive day, the child will be taken off roll.

Absence Procedures

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

- Contact the school by email before 9.30am on the first day of absence.
  Old Palace: attendance@oldpalace.towerhamlets.sch.uk
  Children's House attendance@childrenshouse.towerhamlets.sch.uk
  If unable to email, then please call the appropriate school
- Telephone the school on the morning of day three of the absence to provide an update, if the child will not be returning to school.
- 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 however it is your responsibility to contact us.
- Call you on the third day of absence to request an update

If absence continues we will:

- At Old Palace, a Parent Support Worker will invite you for a meeting if your child's attendance is below 95%
  At Children's House, your child's Key Worker will invite you for a meeting if your child's attendance is below 90%
- Invite you in to school to discuss the situation with our Attendance Welfare Officer if absences persist
- Offer signposting support to other agencies or services if appropriate.
- Offer a Team Around the Child/Family if appropriate.
- Refer the matter to the Local Authority if attendance does not improve.

Arrival

Poor punctuality is not acceptable and can contribute to further absence. Good time-keeping 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.

At Children's House morning sessions start at 9.00am Afternoon sessions begin at 12.30am
At Old Palace School, pupils can start to arrive from 8.50am
The school day officially starts at 9am

Your child will receive a late mark 'L' if they are not in by that time. Children arriving after the school gate has closed must be taken to the school office by their parent/carer, where the lateness will be recorded.

Lateness is monitored closely and reasons for absence are recorded.

In a case where a child arrives 5 times during a term, the Parent Support Worker or Key Worker will do a courtesy call to check in with the family and identify any concerns and offer support.

In cases where a child has arrived late 10 or more times in a term, a letter is sent to parents (Appendix 3), explaining that the child's punctuality needs to improve and offering support to address this.

If parents are having problems getting their child to school on time, they are encouraged to discuss this with the school. We expect parents and staff to encourage good punctuality by being good role models to our children and celebrate good class and individual punctuality.

Continued unauthorised lateness could result in the school referring to the Local Authority for sanctions and/or legal proceedings. For primary school aged pupils, this may mean that you could face the possibility of being issued with a Penalty Notice if the problem persists.

Situations may arise that make it difficult for parents to bring their children to school on time, in such circumstances these should be discussed with the school. To support good attendance and punctuality, Old Palace school offers a breakfast club from 8am daily.

Collection

Bringing your child to school on time, and collecting them on time, is as important as regular daily attendance. Late arrival or collection can cause distress for a child. If you are unavoidably held up and will be late collecting your child you must inform the school. Unless the school knows the reason for the lateness they are required to contact Social Services if a child is left at the school for more than thirty minutes after their normal collection time.

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 parents 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. We can use outside agencies to help with this, such as the School Nurse, Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing support services, a Child and Family Support Worker or the relevant Local Authority team/s. Where outside agencies are supporting the family, you may be invited to attend a Team Around the Family meeting (TAF) to consider what is working well and what needs to improve.

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, and we will work with families and pupils to support improved attendance, whilst being mindful of the additional barriers faced. We can discuss reasonable adjustments and additional support from external partners where appropriate.

Attendance Welfare Advisor

The school's Attendance Welfare Advisor is independent of the school and provides impartial advice. They carry out statutory duties on behalf of the Local authority to ensure that parents/ carers fulfil their legal responsibilities in relation to school attendance.

Any families worried about attendance may wish to make an appointment with the Attendance Welfare Advisor to discuss their concerns and to request support. An appointment can be made by telephoning the school or contacting the school office.

In most instances, by working together the school, parents and Attendance Welfare Advisor can successfully resolve any problems together. However, 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). Parents have a legal duty to ensure their child attends school regularly at the school at which they are registered.

Parents 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. This may include issuing each parent with a Penalty Notice for £160, reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days or referring the matter to the Magistrates Court whereby each parent may receive a fine up to £1000. 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.

Holidays in Term time

There is no entitlement in law for pupils to take time off during the term to go on holiday. In addition, the Supreme Court has ruled that the definition of regular school attendance is "in accordance with the rules prescribed by the school".

Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are "exceptional circumstances"

At Children's House and Old Palace School, exceptional circumstances' will be interpreted as:

The fundamental principles for defining ‘exceptional’ are events that are “rare, significant, unavoidable and short”. By 'unavoidable' we mean an event that could not reasonably be scheduled at another time, outside of school term time.

Only the headteacher/ head of school (**not the local authority**) may authorise such a request. All applications for a leave of absence must be made in writing on the prescribed ‘extended leave form’ (available from the school office), in advance of the leave being taken.

Where a parent removes a child of compulsory school age, when the application for leave was refused, or where no application was made to the school, a penalty notice may be requested by the school to the Local Authority. A Penalty Notice may also be issued where there have been at least 10 consecutive sessions (5 full days) of unauthorised absence for the purpose of a holiday.

If leave of absence is authorised, the school will not provide work for children to do during their absence. Parents are however advised to read with their children and encourage them to write a diary while they are away.

Deletion from Roll

Parents of pupils leaving Tower Hamlets Primary School 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 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 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.

It is crucial that parents keep school updated with current addresses and contact details for key family members in case of emergency.

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 achieving well

Where there is a fall in a child’s attendance, or this falls below 95% at Old Palace or 90% at Children’s House, initial support is provided by the school’s Parent Support Workers or the child’s Key Person.

At Old Palace, should attendance fall to 90%, this will trigger a referral to the AWA, who will arrange a formal meeting with the child’s parents. When appropriate, the school’s Designated Safeguarding Lead, the school nurse and the school social worker may also attend these meetings. Details of the reasons provided for the absence and any agreed actions will be recorded.

At Children’s House should attendance fall to 85% this will trigger a meeting with the headteacher/ head of school. Details of the reasons provided for the absence and any agreed actions will be recorded.

Following this meeting the child’s attendance will continue to be monitored and further meetings may be arranged if necessary. Should attendance not improve this may result in a referral for court action

Attendance levels are reported termly to the Governing Body as part of the Headteachers' report. The AWA also prepares an annual attendance report for the school.

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

Schools have a legal duty to publish their absence figures to parents and to promote attendance. Equally, parents have a 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 parents and pupils to promote good attendance as this is the best way to ensure the best outcomes for all our pupils.

The name and contact details of the senior leaders responsible for the strategic approach to attendance in our school are:

Mr Palmer- Executive Headteacher
Mrs Bowley- Old Palace Deputy Head and DSL
Mrs Khan – Children's Hose Deputy Head and DSL

The name and contact details of the school staff members pupils and parents should contact about attendance on a day-to-day basis are:

Old Palace
Shelly Rahman- Parent Support Worker
Forida Rahman- Parent Support Worker
Dobbir Khandokar- Senior Administrator

Children's House
Sabiya Khanum – Admin Officer

APPENDIX 1 – NHS GUIDANCE

Chicken Pox	Stay off school until blisters have all crusted over or skin has healed – usually 5-7 days from the onset of the rash.
Conjunctivitis / Ringworm	Seek medical advice.
Diarrhoea and/or Vomiting	Stay off school for 48 hours (24 hours after last bout & 24 hours for recovery). Ensure your child understands why they must wash their hands frequently.
German Measles / Rubella	Return to school 6 days after the rash appears, but advise the school immediately as pregnant staff need to be informed.
Head Lice	Please refer to Head Lice Policy.
Impetigo	Stay off school until the sores have crusted over and healed, or 48 hours after commencing antibiotic treatment.
Measles	Stay off school for 4 days after the rash appears.
Mumps	Stay off school for 5 days after the swelling appears.
Scabies	Your child can return to school once they have been given their first treatment, although itchiness may continue for 3-4 weeks. All members of the household and those in close contact should receive treatment.
Scarlet Fever	Return to school 24 hours after starting the appropriate antibiotic treatment.
Slapped Cheek	No need to stay off school (infectious before rash), but advise the school immediately as pregnant staff members need to be informed.
Whooping Cough	Stay off school until 5 days of antibiotic treatment has been given or 21 days from onset of the illness if no antibiotic treatment has been prescribed.
Shingles	Stay off school only if the rash is weeping and cannot be covered. Advise the school immediately as pregnant staff members need to be informed.

APPENDIX 2- PA LETTER

OLD PALACE PRIMARY SCHOOL
St Leonard's Street, Bow, London, E3 3BT • Tel: 020 8980 3020
•Email: admin@oldpalace.towerhamlets.sch.uk • Website: www.oldpalaceprimary.co.uk

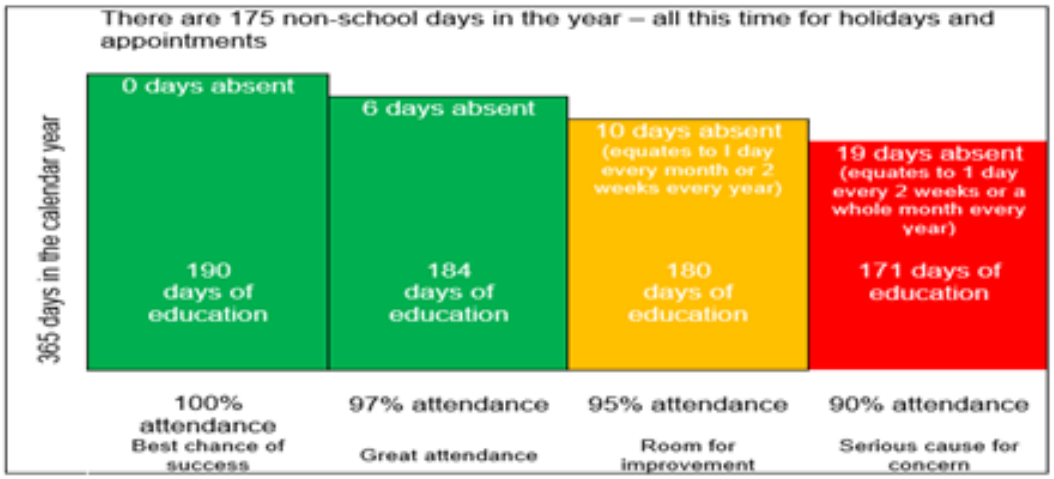
Dear Parents/Carers

Re: Attendance below 90%
You have received this letter as your child's attendance is either 90% or below and they are now referred to as a Persistent Absentee (PA). The school and borough monitor attendance and we aim for all children to have at least 97% attendance.

There may be a good reason for your child's attendance however, as your child is PA, the school will need to receive evidence for any future absences from school before the leave can be authorised. For any absences related to illnesses, we will need to see sufficient evidence such as: appointment letters/telephone consultations, prescriptions, medication, thermometer readings for temperatures etc. These can be emailed to the office at admin@oldpalace.towerhamlets.sch.uk before 9am on the days of your child's absence.

Please note that unauthorised leave is monitored by the school and local authority and the Attendance Welfare Advisor will be involved and can issue a penalty warning letter if attendance does not improve. Again, we aim to work with you to improve this to prevent a penalty notice being issued at a later date.

As you know children who attend school every day, make better progress. The table below shows the impact attendance can have:



We want to work together to improve your child's current attendance and we are able to offer support in different areas that may be an issue- so please do contact the school if you would like to discuss the matter further.

Kind regards,

Mrs Bowley
Deputy Head

APPENDIX 3- LATE LETTER

OLD PALACE PRIMARY SCHOOL
St Leonard's Street, Bow, London, E3 3BT • Tel: 020 8980 3020
•Email: admin@oldpalace.towerhamlets.sch.uk • Website: www.oldpalaceprimary.co.uk

Dear Parent

Since term _____your child, _____, has arrived late for school 10 times.

Pupils who arrive late for school are given a late mark, and the time of their arrival is noted in the register

It is very important that children arrive at school on time. Being 10 minutes late every day is the same as missing over a week of school over the course of an academic year.

Arriving late often leaves the child feeling flustered or even embarrassed; negative emotions which can prevent the brain from learning. Entering the lesson late also disrupts the learning of the class. To avoid this, it is important that your children arrives at school on time. This will allow them time to settle and feel ready to learn.

We will continue to monitor your child's punctuality and hope to see an improvement next term. If you need support with getting your child to school on time, please speak to one of the school's Parent Support Workers, Farida or Shelly. If they are unable to help, they can arrange an appointment with the school's Attendance Welfare Adviser.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs Bowley
Deputy Head and DSL

Please return the slip with your child in an envelope marked: Shelly Rahman. Thank you.

Pupil name: _____ Class: _____

☐ I have read and understood my child has poor punctuality and I will ensure s/he arrives to school on time.

Parent name: _____

Parent signature: _____ Date: _____