



RAINE'S FOUNDATION SCHOOL

A Voluntary Aided Church of England School

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“Achieving Excellence by Unlocking Potential”

Pupil Attendance Policy

Change History

Date	What occurred	Date approved by Policy Development Committee
19/03/2015	Full revision of policy to include FPN provisions	19 March 2015
06/06/2018	Full revision of policy	

Introduction

Central to raising standards in education and ensuring all pupils can fulfil their potential is an assumption so widely understood that it is insufficiently stated – pupils need to attend school regularly to benefit from their education. Missing out on lessons leaves children vulnerable to falling behind. Children with poor attendance tend to achieve less in both primary and secondary school.

Tower Hamlets Council points out that a child who misses school is less likely to do well academically and is more prone to social exclusion. They are more likely to become involved in crime and to be a victim of crime.

The government expects:

Schools and local authorities to:

- Promote good attendance and reduce absence, including persistent absence;
- Ensure every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled; and,
- Act early to address patterns of absence.
- Parents to perform their legal duty by ensuring their children of compulsory school age who are registered at school attend regularly.
- All pupils to be punctual to their lessons.

At Raine's Foundation School pupils are expected to arrive at school properly attired and ready to learn. We firmly believe that regular attendance (not less than 95%) is essential for success at school and anything less is likely to impact negatively on performance at school.

Why Regular Attendance is so important

Learning: Any absence disrupts the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will have a detrimental impact on their learning. Any student's absence disrupts teaching routines so may affect the learning of others in the same class. Ensuring a child's regular attendance at school is a parent's legal responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence and may result in prosecution or a penalty notice for poor attendance (2011 Education Act).

Safeguarding: Any child may be at risk of harm if they do not attend school regularly. Safeguarding the interests of each child is everyone's responsibility and within the context of this school, promoting the welfare and life opportunities for any child encompasses:

- Attendance
- Behaviour Management
- Health and Safety
- Access to the Curriculum
- Anti- bullying

Failing to attend this school on a regular basis will be considered as a safeguarding matter.

At Raine's excellent attendance is to be promoted positively and celebrated. We will make a commitment to:

- Report to parents regularly on how their child is performing in the school, what their attendance and punctuality rate is and how this relates to their attainments;
- Celebrate excellent attendance by displaying individual and class achievements
- Reward good or improving attendance

School Procedures and Systems

Recording attendance and lateness

The school takes a register at the start of the first session of each school day and once for each lesson thereafter. On each occasion the school records whether every pupil is:

- Present;
- Attending an approved educational activity;
- Absent; or
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

The school will follow up any absences to:

- Ascertain the reason;
- Ensure the proper safeguarding action is taken;
- Identify whether absence is approved or not; and
- Identify the correct Department for Education (DfE) code letter to use before entering it on to the school's electronic register or management information system which is used to download data to the School Census.

At Raine's Foundation School the morning session begins at 08.35 hours and the afternoon session at 13.25 hours. Pupils who are not in the room at the beginning of the register are late. The register at Raine's closes at 09.05 hours and 13.55 hours respectively.

Pupils who arrive after the closure of the register without an explanation for their lateness may be deemed absent for the whole session and will require a note of explanation from parents. Pupils who are late will serve a late detention on the day they are late. Failure to attend will result in a longer detention.

Authorised and unauthorised absences

'Authorised absence' means that the school has either given approval in advance for a pupil of compulsory school age to be away, or has accepted an explanation offered afterwards as justification for absence. It is for the school to approve an absence, not parents or carers.

Only **exceptional circumstances** warrant an authorised leave of absence. Each request will be considered individually on its merits, taking into account the circumstances, such as, the nature of the event for which leave is sought; the frequency of the request; whether a parent gives advance notice; and the pupil's ability to catch up on missed schooling.

Illness – Parents and carers should normally notify the school on the first day a child is unable to attend due to illness and should do so promptly. The school operates a first day absence home contact procedure. Parents/carers will therefore be telephoned after 09.30 if the school has not been contacted before that time. The school will authorise absences due to illness unless there is a genuine cause for concern about the legitimacy of an illness. If the authenticity of an illness is in doubt, parents and carers may be requested to provide medical evidence to support illness. The school can record the absence as unauthorised if not satisfied of the authenticity of the illness, but will advise parents or carers of an intention to do so. The DfE advises schools not to request medical evidence unnecessarily and the evidence can take the form of prescriptions, appointment cards and the like, rather than a doctor's notes. For extended periods of absence due to ill health, however, this school **will** require a medical certificate.

Medical, dental or optician appointments – Missing registration for a medical, dental or optician appointment is counted as an authorised absence. Parents and carers are encouraged, however, to make such appointments out of school hours. Where this is not possible, the pupil should only be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary for the appointment. Appointment cards should be shown to form tutors in advance. A pupil will not be allowed to leave the school premises without evidence of such an appointment.

Religious observance – An absence will be authorised when it is due to religious observance. The day must be exclusively set apart by the religious body to which the parents/carers belong. Where necessary, the school may seek advice from the relevant religious body as to whether it has set the day apart for religious observance.

Family holidays during term time – The Head teacher *may not grant leave* of absence for family holidays during term time ***unless in exceptional circumstances***. An application for such leave ***must be made in advance*** and the Head teacher must be satisfied that there are exceptional circumstances which warrant the leave. Where a leave of absence is granted, the Head teacher will determine the number of days a pupil can be away from school. Such a leave of absence is granted entirely at the Head teacher's discretion. Current regulations do not allow schools to give retrospective approval for holiday leave. If parents/carers do not apply for leave of absence in advance, the child's absence will be recorded as unauthorised.

Where leave is granted and then a pupil fails to return to school on the agreed date, the additional days will be treated as unauthorised absence. If pupils have not returned to school 10 days after the agreed date, and there is no known unavoidable cause, they will be removed from the school roll. Some examples of unavoidable cause are:

- Illness of the pupil (documentation will be needed as proof of illness)
- Severe weather conditions
- War or civil unrest
- Airline strike

Note that difficulty in obtaining return flights that have not been pre-booked will **NOT** be regarded as an unavoidable delay.

Holding Open a School Place

The school must consider very carefully requests to hold open a school place because of illness. A medical certificate must be provided (and can be faxed or emailed). It should give specific details of the illness.

Removal from the School Roll

If a pupil is absent on holiday and fails to return within 20 school days their name will be removed from the roll on the 21st day.

Explanations which are not normally acceptable as reasons for absence include:

- Minding the house
- Looking after children
- Birthday celebrations
- Lack of school uniform

Absence notes

Absence notes should contain the following information:

- The pupil's full name and form.
- The reasons for the pupil's absence.
- The dates of absence
- A clear signature by the parent or carer.

Tower Hamlets Council's Attendance and Welfare Service (AWS):

Tower Hamlets Council's Attendance and Welfare Service (AWS) monitors school attendance within the borough.

The school can refer cases of non-school attendance to the AWS in certain circumstances.

Raine's works in partnership with Tower Hamlets Council implementing Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs) to help improve attendance and punctuality. This is in line with Department for Education Guidance.

An FPN may only be issued in cases of unauthorised absence or lateness, or where parents/carers fail to ensure that their child is not in a public place during the first five days of exclusion from school.

FPNs apply on an individual child per parent basis. Therefore a parent with three children who meet the criteria may receive three FPNs. In a family with two parents/carers with three children who meet the criteria, each parent/carer may receive three FPNs – meaning that a total of **six** FPNs may be received.

The issue of an FPN may be considered appropriate in any of the following circumstances:

- In instances of a pupil having **six sessions (three days) of unauthorised leave/holidays in term time**. A 'session' is a half-day and 'unauthorised' means without the consent/authorisation of the school.
- **Where parents/carers fail to attend without reasonable cause local authority led In-School Attendance Panels**, to which they have been invited to discuss their child's unauthorised absences and/or leaves.
- In cases of pupils identified as having **persistent absence** (i.e. where the attendance of pupils falls below 85% in a period of a school term) **with 20 or more sessions of unauthorised absence** (i.e. not authorised by the school) **and with substantial evidence of failure on the part of the parent/carer to work in co-operation and partnership to address and improve the situation**.
- In cases of **frequent late arrival at school** (10 minutes after the register has closed) **with 20 or more avoidable late marks** occurring over a period of a school term. The journey involved and particular issues such as adverse weather conditions or disruptions to transport will be taken into account as necessary.
- **Where there is a combination of unauthorised absence and avoidable lateness amounting to 20 sessions or more** over the period of a school term.
- In cases where a pupil has been **stopped by a truancy patrol on more than one occasion** within the period of a school term **with no valid reason for not being in school**. This would include pupils accompanied by parents/ carers, guardians or other adults.
- Where parents/carers **fail to ensure that their child is not in a public place during the first five days of exclusion from school** without reasonable justification.

The school **will refer** pupils to the AWS **where there is cause for concern about unauthorised absence and/or lateness**. In most circumstances each liable parent/carer shall receive a formal warning of the possibility of an FPN being issued.

If following the issue of a warning notice the pupil has further unauthorised absence and/or avoidable late marks, the parents/carers of the pupil may each receive an FPN for £60 which must be paid within 21 days or it will increase to £120 each which

must be paid within a further 7 days. Failure to pay the FPN will lead to prosecution in the Magistrates' Court for the original non-attendance and a possible criminal conviction. In some circumstances conviction can result in a community order or custodial sentence.

In those specific circumstances related to:

- 1. The taking of six sessions (three days) or more of unauthorised leave/holidays in term time where it can be clearly demonstrated that the parent/carer understood that permission had not/would not be given**
- 2. Where parents fail to ensure that their child is not in a public place during the first five days of exclusion from school without reasonable justification**
- 3. The pupil will be referred immediately to the AWS for the issue of an FPN.**

The school and Tower Hamlets Council's AWS will work closely together on this as it is essential that pupils attend regularly and punctually at school to obtain the full benefit of their education.

If you are experiencing any difficulties regarding your child's school attendance or punctuality, please inform your child's tutor, so that the school may work with you to assist in whatever ways are possible.

Further information on Tower Hamlet's Council's Penalty Notices to Address poor Attendance at School can be obtained from the Council's Education, Social Care and Wellbeing Directorate.