

LONDON BOROUGH OF HAVERING



LA SALETTE CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

ATTENDANCE AND PUNCTUALITY POLICY

AUTUMN 2025

Mission Statement

“Loved by Jesus and our Lady of La Salette, we learn and grow together, in joy and friendship.”

Regular school attendance is extremely important. Pupils need to attend school regularly if they are to take full advantage of the education opportunities available to them. Children should only be absent from school if the reason is ‘unavoidable’. Allowing a child to be absent from school without such a reason is against the law and parents and carers can be fined by the Local Authority.

Roles and Responsibilities

The parent/carer of a child of compulsory school age (between 5 years old and 16 years old) registered at a school and failing to attend is guilty of an offence and punishable by law. In the event of unauthorised absences, a Penalty Notice may be issued by the Education Welfare Service. An offence is not, however committed if it can be evidenced that:

The pupil was absent with agreement of the school.

The pupil was ill or prevented from attending school by an unavoidable cause – this must be evidenced by a medical report or other suitable documentation.

The absence occurred on a day exclusively set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil’s parents belong.

Only the school, within the context of law, can approve the absence, not the parents. The fact that a parent has offered a note (or phone call/email/text) in explanation does not in itself oblige the school to accept it as a valid reason for absence. If after investigation, doubt remains regarding the absence or no reason is provided for the absence it must be treated as unauthorised.

Parents are expected to:

- Ensure their child attends every day the school is open except when a statutory reason applies.
- Notify the school as soon as possible when their child has to be unexpectedly absent (e.g. sickness).
- Only request leave of absence in exceptional circumstances and do so in advance
- Book any medical appointments around the school day where possible

Schools are expected to:

- Share data and information electronically with the local authority, using schools MIS to ensure pupils who are not attending are monitored and tracked for safeguarding purposes.
- Have a clear school attendance policy which all staff, pupils and parents understand.
- Develop and maintain a whole school culture that promotes the benefits of high attendance in line with the school's attendance policy.
- Accurately complete admission and attendance registers and have effective day to day processes in place to follow-up absence in line with DfE legal guidance.
- Have robust daily processes to follow up absence including safeguarding visits when a child has not been seen and parental contact has been unsuccessful.
- Regularly monitor and analyse attendance and absence data to identify pupils or cohorts that require support with their attendance and put effective strategies in place.
- Build strong relationships with families, listen to and understand barriers to attendance and work with families to remove them.
- Work collaboratively with other schools in the area, sharing good practice and strategies and involve the local authority, and other partners when absence is at risk of becoming persistent or severe.

Local Authorities Education Welfare Officers are expected to:

- Senior Education Welfare Officers will arrange regular meetings offering support, advice and guidance. Officers will work with schools using data to identify any barriers to learning.
- The local authority will rigorously collect, analyse and track local attendance data from schools to devise a strategic approach to improving attendance and set out an attendance plan of action for schools based on:
 - Analysis of whole school attendance
 - Targeting those schools who are most vulnerable
- All Havering head teachers will be contacted annually where the local authority will share data analysis findings that fall within the key themes outlined below:

a. Local area themes (identify barriers)

- Staff Training
- Attendance Network
- School to school collaboration

b. Multiagency work

- Education (Inclusions Gateway Referral Form - IGRF)
- Virtual School
- Adolescent Safeguarding Service
- Health (CAMHS)
- Early Help (MARF)
- Social Care (MARF)
- Police
- Youth Justice Service

c. Attendance legal Interventions

- Parent Contracts
- Education Supervision Orders
- Attendance Prosecution
- Parenting Orders
- Fixed Penalty Notices

d. Contribute to other multi agency legal plans

- Personal Education Plan (PEP's for LAC)
- Education Health Care Plan (EHCP) Annual Review
- Early Help (Outcome Star & Plan)
- Child in Need (CIN)
- Child Protection (CP)
- Youth Justice Service (Court Order)

e. Attendance support for groups to address wider poor attendance

- Identifying themes to deliver interventions across Havering

- Parent Contracts
- Education Supervision Orders
- Attendance Prosecution
- Parenting Orders
- Fixed Penalty Notices

d. Contribute to other multi agency legal plans

- Personal Education Plan (PEP's for LAC)
- Education Health Care Plan (EHCP) Annual Review
- Early Help (Outcome Star & Plan)
- Child in Need (CIN)
- Child Protection (CP)
- Youth Justice Service (Court Order)

e. Attendance support for groups to address wider poor attendance

- Identifying themes to deliver interventions across Havering

What does the law say?

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.

Reporting Absences

It is the parent's responsibility to inform the school of the reason for their child's absence as soon as possible. This communication should ideally be made before the morning registration is taken.

Parents should contact the school office to report absence on the first day, either in person or by telephone before 9.30am.

If the school have not been notified by 9.30am of a child's absence a telephone call will be made to the parent requesting a reason. This is known as 'first-day calling'.

Parents who have not notified the school of a reason for the absence and fail to answer when the school conducts 'First Day Calling', should be aware that the absence will be marked as unauthorised.

Illness, Medical and Dental Appointments

If a school is satisfied that a pupil is absent as a result of illness, the absence must be treated as authorised. If a child is off for 5 days or more due to illness then medical evidence must be provided. Without medical evidence the absences will be unauthorised. A parent/carer must phone the school on the first day of the child's absence to inform them of the reason.

If no reason is received, a telephone call will be made requesting the information, as detailed in the above paragraph 'reporting absences'. If no information is forthcoming within a week following this contact, the absence will be marked as unauthorised. Advance notice of medical/dental appointments should be given wherever possible, preferably in writing by the parents or by appointment letter from the medical practice.

Pupils leaving/returning to the premises in session time must report to the school office where such movements are recorded for safety reasons. Where possible, medical appointments should be made out of school time. If your child is absent due to vomiting/diarrhoea they must be absent for 48 hours following the last episode of sickness.

Leave of absence (including family holidays) during term time

The school takes a firm view on any absence during term time. All absences are shown in the child's annual report. Family holidays during term time will not be authorised.

There are rare occasions which may be deemed as 'exceptional circumstances' where the leave would be authorised by the Headteacher. These circumstances would usually be something which cannot be planned for in advance; such as a death in the family. If you believe your circumstances fit this description you must put this in writing using the school form and forward to the Headteacher and/or arrange a meeting with them at your earliest convenience. The decision of whether the leave is deemed as 'exceptional' is the Head teacher's, who takes advice directly from the Havering Education Welfare Officer on how to respond. If you are planning to take leave during term time you must complete a 'leave of absence' request form, which should be forwarded to the Headteacher at least 14 days before a period of absence. This is available from the school office.

'Exceptional circumstances: All schools can grant a leave of absence for other exceptional circumstances at their discretion. In the case of schools maintained by local authorities and special schools not maintained by local authorities, it must be requested in advance by a parent who the pupil normally lives with. Schools are then expected to consider each application individually taking into account the specific facts and circumstances and relevant background context behind the request. If a leave of absence is granted, it is for the school to determine the length of the time the pupil can be away from school.'

Generally, the DfE does not consider a need or desire for a holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure and recreation to be an exceptional circumstance. Leave of absence should not be granted for a pupil to take part in protest activity during school hours.

(Working together to improve School attendance 2024)

What happens if my request is denied?

If a request is refused and the parent/carer decides to take their child out of School the details will be passed onto the Havering Education Welfare Service and a Penalty Notice may be issued.

Fixed penalty fines effective 01 September 2024 will be issued per parent per child.

1st Offence: £80 fine – will be issued and would need to be paid within 21 days. If payment not received within 21 days, the fine will increase to £160 and must be paid within 7 days. Failure to pay the fine of £160 will result in prosecution in the magistrates' court.

2nd Offence within 3 years: £160 fine – will be issued and would need to be paid within 21 days. Failure to pay the fine of £160 within 21 days will result in prosecution in the magistrates' court.

3rd Offence within 3 years: Where a family is identified to be fined on a 3rd occasion within a 3-year period, these cases will be referred straight to the magistrates' court for prosecution.

Family Bereavement/ Trauma / End of life visits to family members

Absence due to family bereavement/trauma/ or for end-of-life visits will be dealt with sensitively by the head teacher, with guidance from the Havering Education Welfare Officer and may be authorised retrospectively. The school will respond sensitively to requests of absence for funerals or last rights events. The authorisation of such requests is at the head teacher's discretion, who will be guided by the advice of the Havering Education Welfare Officer.

Punctuality

It is important for your child to arrive at school on time as lateness is detrimental to their learning and the learning of others. It is important to note that persistent lateness constitutes irregular school attendance in law. Registers will be taken at 8.45am; pupils not in class for registration at this time will be marked as 'L' (Late before registers have closed). Figures of lateness will appear on their school reports.

Registration & the responsibility of the school

All schools must keep an attendance register on which, at the beginning of each morning and afternoon session, pupils marked as either present or absent. Registers must be completed by an allocated time on each morning and afternoon by law. Registers must also show whether an absence is authorised or unauthorised by the school.

Accurate registration and the preservation of security of registers are the responsibility of the Headteacher. Registers must be needed as evidence in court where parents are being prosecuted for school attendance offences and inappropriate authorisation of absences could compromise proceedings.

Unavoidable Closures

Unavoidable closures through bad weather, difficulties associated with the premises, elections, etc. should be indicated on the school registration system. Pupils will be marked as a 'Y' (unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances), this mark will not affect the child's attendance figure. Publication of School Dates These are published to parent in advance of each academic year and are available on the school website. The school's term dates also include 5 Training Days on which the school will be closed to pupils. Havering Schools' term dates can also be assessed on the 'Havering Schools' Website: www.havering.gov.uk.

The Local Authority and its education providers should work together to ensure the following:

MONITOR

Rigorously use attendance data to identify patterns of poor attendance (at individual and cohort level) as soon as possible so all parties can work together to resolve them before they become entrenched.

EXPECT

Aspire to high standards of attendance from all pupils and parents and build a culture where all can, and want to, be in school and ready to learn by prioritising attendance improvement across the school.

LISTEN AND UNDERSTAND

When a pattern is spotted, discuss with pupils and parents to listen to understand barriers to attendance and agree how all partners can work together to resolve them.

FACILITATE SUPPORT

Remove barriers in school and help pupils and parents to access the support they need to overcome the barriers outside of school. This might include an early help or whole family plan where absence is a symptom of wider issues.

FORMALISE SUPPORT

Where absence persists and voluntary support is not working or not being engaged with, partners should work together to explain the consequences clearly and ensure support is also in place to enable families to respond. Depending on the circumstances this may include formalising support through a parenting contract or education supervision order.

ENFORCE

Where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or not being engaged with, enforce attendance through statutory intervention or prosecution to protect the pupil's right to an education.