

IMPROVING PUPIL ATTENDANCE IN ISLINGTON

A Borough-Wide Agreement for all Schools and Academies

The aim of this agreement is to enable Islington's Community of Schools to provide consistent practice that encourages and facilitates the regular attendance of all pupils.

Regular attendance at school is crucial to increase pupil progress and enjoyment of learning, and for this reason Islington's Community of Schools agree to the following principles:

Roles & Responsibilities

- It is the responsibility of parents/carers to get their child to school on time every day. They need to be aware that daily attendance is compulsory and that there is an expectation for families to minimise all types of term-time absence.
- Headteachers are ultimately responsible for the monitoring and tracking of attendance for all pupils in their schools, although promoting positive school attendance is everyone's responsibility.
- All schools should identify a member of staff as the Attendance Lead.

Promoting Attendance

- Good practice around attendance means that information should be displayed around the school (in classrooms and/or on a designated notice board) and shared with and discussed regularly with parents/carers and pupils.
- Discussions should happen both during and outside the regular school day, through lessons, tutor time, assemblies, newsletters, meetings and parents' evenings.

Statutory Action/Penalty Notices

- Any poor attendance is contrary to each school's attendance policy and therefore the school should be a 'visible' part of any steps put in place to support families. At times this may be in partnership with other agencies.
- The key consideration in deciding whether to issue a penalty notice will be whether it can be effective in helping improve school attendance.
- Make parents/carers aware that penalty notices can be issued if a pupil has more than 15 sessions of unauthorised absence in a ten week period.

Term-Time Absence

Amendments to the 2006 regulations, which took effect from September 2013, make clear that Headteachers may NOT grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are 'exceptional circumstances'.

Most absences for acceptable reasons will be authorised by schools:

- Illness.
- Unavoidable medical or dental appointments (although parents/carers should be instructed to arrange these for after school or during school holidays).
- Day of religious observance.
- Exceptional family circumstances, such as bereavement.
- An interview with a prospective employer or college.

When determining any 'exceptional circumstances' for authorising term-time absence:

- The child's attendance record over a period of three years should be assessed to determine the rate of previous absence.
- Where there are siblings in other Islington schools, attempts should be made via the Attendance Lead in partnership with other agencies to contact the Headteacher to discuss a possible coordinated response and outcome.
- If the Headteacher considers that the child's attendance has previously been excellent, the Headteacher of any siblings has been consulted with and the circumstances for the request are exceptional, then they can decide to authorise the absence and not to issue a penalty notice.

Reasons that might constitute 'exceptional circumstances' include:

- Service personnel returning from a tour of duty abroad where it is evidenced the individual will not be in receipt of any leave in the near future that coincides with school holidays.
- Visiting a parent/carer who is imprisoned.
- Where an absence is recommended by a health professional as part of a parent or child's rehabilitation from a medical or emotional issue.
- The death or terminal illness of a person close to the family.

Suitable supporting evidence would be required in each case.

Schools should ensure parents/carers are clear that Government guidance states that a school can remove a child's name from the school roll if they do not return following a term-time absence of ten school days (unless the child is sick or for any unavoidable cause).

Good attendance means...

