

# Berger Primary School

We respect each other's



Celebrating who we are

## **ATTENDANCE POLICY**

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We aim for an environment which enables and encourages all members of the school community to strive for excellence and enjoyment in education. For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and punctually.

At Berger Primary School our objectives are to develop an ethos which demonstrates to children, parents/carers and the wider community the importance of good attendance and punctuality.

Regular and punctual attendance is essential for effective learning and children should be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

### **Why Regular Attendance is important:**

#### **1. Learning**

We know from experience and from studies that regular absence and poor punctuality can have a detrimental effect on a child's learning. When a pupil is absent or arrives late it disrupts teaching routines so may affect the learning not only of that pupil but also that of others in the same class.

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

#### **2. Safeguarding**

At Berger Primary school, we believe every pupil should be able learn in an enjoyable and safe environment and be protected from harm. We respect and value all children and are committed to providing a caring, friendly and safe environment for all our pupils so they can learn and participate in all school activities in a relaxed and secure atmosphere.

Attending school regularly promotes the welfare and safety of children whilst they are not in the care of their parents/carers. Safeguarding is about offering early help and support to children and families and difficulties with attendance and lateness may be signs that something is worrying the child or that there are difficulties within the family. Poor or irregular attendance, persistent lateness, or children missing from education may be considered a safeguarding matter if this places your child at risk of harm.

Safeguarding the interests of each child is everyone's responsibility and within the context of this school; safeguarding and promoting the welfare and life opportunities for children encompasses:

Attendance, Behaviour Management, Health and Safety, Access to the Curriculum and Anti-bullying, protecting children from abuse and neglect, online safety, radicalisation and extremism, FGM and CSE.

More information on safeguarding and the protection of children can be found in the schools Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

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In order to allow us to safeguard the children in our care it is important that parents and carers provide the school with their current contact details and provide at least three other contact numbers in case of emergency.

It is also important for parents to let school know of any specific vulnerability in relation to their child or home circumstances. If you are uncertain about what would be considered a vulnerability please speak with your child's Phase Leader or member of the Safeguarding Team.

### **Promoting Regular Attendance**

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

#### **To help us all to focus on this we will:**

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- Report to parents at least termly on how their child is performing in school, what their attendance and punctuality rate is and how this relates to their attainments;
- Celebrate good attendance by displaying individual and class achievements;
- Reward good or improving attendance through class competitions, certificates and outings/events;

### **The Law Relating to attendance and safeguarding**

Section 7 of the Education act 1996 states that:

*the parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him / her to receive efficient full time education suitable:*

*(a) to age, ability and aptitude and*

*(b) to any special educational needs he/ she may have either at school or otherwise*

Compulsory School Age: A child is compulsory school age after their 5<sup>th</sup> birthday until the last Friday of June in the academic year of their 16<sup>th</sup> birthday.

Section 175 of the Education Act 2002 places a duty on local authorities and governing bodies to have regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State with regard to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and students under the age of 18.

### **Types of Absence**

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by the parents), as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required, preferably in writing.

### **Authorised Absence**

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An authorised absence is where the school has either given permission in advance for the child to be absent or where an explanation offered is accepted as satisfactory justification for absence.

Absence may generally be authorised for the following reasons:

- Illness, medical appointments (appointments should be made outside school times where possible)
- Unavoidable cause (which is expected to be an emergency and unavoidable)
- Days of religious observance

### **Unauthorised Absences**

An unauthorised absence is where either no explanation has been given for the child's absence or where the explanation offered is not considered acceptable by the school.

This includes:

- Absences which have never been properly explained
- Reluctance to come to school
- A sibling or other family member's illness
- Children who arrive at school late after the register has closed
- Shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- Day trips and holidays in term time.

If an absence is recorded as unauthorised the school may refer this to the Local Authority's Education Service, in Hackney this is Hackney Learning Trust. The Local Authority can use various sanctions to promote regular attendance such as issuing a Penalty Notice Fine or initiate court proceedings.

Whilst any child may be off school because they are ill, sometimes it can be that they are reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents/carers and the child. If your child is reluctant to attend, it is never better 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 makes things worse.

### **Persistent Absenteeism (PA)**

A pupil is considered to be a 'persistent absentee' if they miss 10% or more of their schooling across the school year for whatever reason. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we need parent's fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

We monitor all absence thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA threshold or is at risk of moving towards that level is given priority and you will be informed of this immediately.

PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully and we also combine this with academic mentoring where absence affects attainment.

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All our PA pupils and their parents/carers are subject to an Action Plan and the plan may include: allocation of additional support through a buddy, individual incentive programmes and participation in activities around raising attendance. All PA cases are also automatically made known to the Hackney Learning Trust's School Attendance Officer.

If your child has or is at risk of reaching the threshold for Persistent Absence you will be asked to provide evidence for any future absence. This may be medical evidence for illness which can be in the form of prescription, medicine packaging or hospital letter.

### **Absence Procedures**

#### **If your child is absent you must:**

- Contact us as soon as possible on the first day of absence and give an expected return date. You need to call at least every 2<sup>nd</sup> day thereafter to advise school of your child's progress.
- Send a note in on the first day they return with an explanation of the absence – you must do this even if you have already telephoned us;
- Or, you can call into school and report to reception, who may arrange for a member of staff to speak with you.

#### **If your child is absent we will:**

- Telephone, text or email you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you.
- Carry out a home visit if an absence is unexplained for three days.
- Invite you in to discuss the situation with our Attendance Officer if absences persist.
- Refer the matter to the Hackney Learning Trust's Education Attendance Service if attendance moves below 94%.

### **6. Family Contact Details**

There are times when we need to contact parents about lots of things, including absence, so we need to have your contact numbers at all times. So help us to help you and your child by making sure we always have current telephone number / email contact – if we don't then something important may be missed. This is especially important for your child's health and safety. There will be regular checks on telephone numbers throughout the year. You are also asked to provide two other contacts in case of emergency where we are unable to contact you.

#### **The School Attendance Officer (SAO)**

Parents are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any problems affecting or likely to affect attendance together. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be resolved in this way, the school may refer the child to the School Attendance Officer from Hackney Learning Trust. 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. They may also apply for an Education Supervision Order through the Family Court. Full details of the options open to enforce attendance at school are available from the school or Hackney Learning Trust.

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Alternatively, parents or children may wish to contact the SAO 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 Hackney Learning Trust.

### **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 / instructions and news for the day. Late arriving pupils also disrupt lessons and it can be embarrassing for the child. This can encourage absence.

### **How we manage lateness**

The school day starts at **8.45am** and we expect your child to be in class at that time. They should be in the playground by **8.40am**.

Registers are marked by **8.50am** and your child will receive a 'late' mark if they are not in by that time.

At **9.15am** the registers will be closed. If your child arrives after that time, they will receive an unauthorised absence mark that shows them to be on site but **not** counted as a present for statistical / legal purposes. This means 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 to resolve the problem, but you can approach us at any time if you are having problems getting your child to school on time.

### **Leave in Term Time**

There is no entitlement in law for any leave of absence from school in term time. Taking leave in term time will affect your child's schooling as much as any other absence and we expect parents to help us by not taking children away in school time.

Remember that any monetary savings you may make by taking a holiday in school time are offset by the cost to your child's education.

All applications for a leave of absence must be made in advance to the Headteacher and will only be considered if there are exceptional circumstances. In making a decision the school will consider the circumstances of each application individually, including any previous pattern of leave in term time.

Any period of leave taken without the agreement of the school, or in excess of that agreed, will be classed as unauthorised and may attract sanctions such as a Penalty Notice. Your child's school place may also be at risk.

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### **School Targets and Initiatives**

The school has targets to improve attendance and your child has an important part to play in meeting these targets.

Targets for the school and for classes are displayed in the school and you should take time to study them.

We have set a whole school attendance target of **96.5%** attendance and we will keep you updated regularly about progress to this level and how your child's attendance compares. Our target is to achieve better than this because we know that good attendance is the key to successful schooling and we believe our pupils can be amongst the best in the country.

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

#### **Those people responsible for attendance matters in this school are:**

Deputy Headteacher .....

Attendance Officer.....

Governor .....

#### **Summary:**

All school staff are committed to working with parents and pupils as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible and that every child's welfare and life opportunities are promoted.

#### **Date of Policy /Review:**

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### **Attendance expectations 2021/2022 relating to covid 19**

Attendance is mandatory and the expectations set out in our policy remain.

#### **In relation to covid 19 absences the following apply:**

- Pupils who have symptoms of covid 19 or have a positive lateral flow test should self isolate and get a PCR test
- If a pupil tests negative and they feel well they can return to school.
- If a pupil tests positive they should continue to self isolate in line with public health guidance.

#### **Pupils who are a close contact of someone who has symptoms or confirmed covid 19:**

- Pupils who are a close contact of someone who has tested positive for covid 19 do not need to self isolate.
- They should get a PCR test and isolate only if that is positive.

#### **Pupils who are clinically extremely vulnerable:**

- Clinically extremely vulnerable people are no longer advised to shield.
  - **All** clinically vulnerable pupils should attend school. (The only exception is a very small number of pupils who are under paediatric care who have been advised by their clinician not to attend school) Where this is the case the school will ask for evidence.
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