



Lady Margaret School

Attendance Policy

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1. Aims

This policy aims to show our commitment to meeting our obligations regarding school attendance. This includes obligations laid out in the Department for Education's (DfE's) statutory guidance on working together to improve school attendance (applies from 19 August 2024).

Good attendance at school is linked to educational outcomes and student wellbeing. Even small amounts of missed schooling can have a detrimental effect on progress and attainment, as well as making students feel less connected to their school environment and the people around them.

Our whole-school culture and ethos values good attendance by:

- setting high expectations for the attendance and punctuality of all students. The school expects every student to have **attendance of at least 97%**.
- promoting the benefits of good attendance;
- reducing absence, including persistent and severe absence;
- ensuring every student has access to full-time education;
- taking early action to address patterns of absence;
- building strong relationships with families to make sure students have the support in place to attend school;
- promoting and supporting punctuality to school/lessons.

The policy contains links to a number of information leaflets provided by the Hammersmith and Fulham ACE team. (ACE = Attendance (statutory), child employment and children in entertainment, elective home education, children missing education and permanent exclusions).

2. Legislation and guidance

This policy is based on the DfE's statutory guidance on [working together to improve school attendance \(applies from 19 August 2024\)](#) and [school attendance parental responsibility measures](#). The guidance is based on the following pieces of legislation, which set out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- Part 6 of the [Education Act 1996](#)
- Part 3 of the Education Act 2002
- Part 7 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (and 205, 2011, 2013, and 2016 amendments)
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013

It also refers to:

- School census guidance
- Keeping Children Safe in Education
- Mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance: guidance for schools

3. Roles and responsibilities

3.1 The Governing Body

The Governing Board is responsible for:

- making sure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties, including:
 - recording attendance accurately in the register, and sharing the required information with the DfE and local authority;

- working effectively with local partners to help remove barriers to attendance, and keeping them informed regarding specific students, where appropriate;
- making sure the school has high aspirations for all students in terms of attendance, but adapts processes and support to students' individual needs;
- regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data and helping school leaders focus improvement efforts on individual students or cohorts who need it most;
- making sure all staff receive adequate training on attendance as part of the regular continued professional development offer;
- making sure dedicated training is provided to staff with a specific attendance function in their role, including in interpreting and analysing attendance data.

3.2 The Headteacher

The Headteacher is responsible for:

- the implementation of this policy at the school;
- monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors;
- monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies;
- issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary or authorising the senior attendance champion to do so;
- working with the parents of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) to develop specific support approaches for attendance, including where students face in-school barriers;
- communicating with the local authority when a student with an education, health and care plan (EHCP) has falling attendance, or where there are barriers to attendance that relate to the student's needs;
- communicating the school's high expectations for attendance and punctuality regularly to students and parents through all available channels.

3.3 The designated Senior Attendance Champion and Heads of Year

The designated Senior Attendance Champion is responsible for:

- leading, championing and improving attendance across the school;
- setting a clear vision for improving and maintaining good attendance;
- having a strong grasp of absence data and oversight of absence data analysis;
- regularly monitoring and evaluating progress in attendance rates;

The designated Senior Attendance Officer, in liaison with Heads of Year, is responsible for:

- establishing and maintaining effective systems for tackling absence, and making sure they are followed by all staff;
- liaising with students, parents/carers and external agencies, where needed;
- building close and productive relationships with parents to discuss and tackle attendance issues;
- creating intervention or reintegration plans in partnership with students and their parents/carers;
- delivering targeted support to students and families.

The designated Senior Leader responsible for attendance is Nicola Lupton, Deputy Headteacher who can be contacted via the school email (admin@ladymargaret.lbhf.sch.uk).

3.4 The Attendance Officer

The school Attendance Officer is responsible for:

- monitoring and analysing attendance data (see section 7);

- sending half-termly letters to parents where attendance falls below 92% in half-term 1 and 95% for the remainder of the school year.
- providing regular attendance reports to form tutors and Heads of Year, and reporting concerns about attendance to the designated senior attendance champion and Heads of Year;
- advising the headteacher or senior attendance champion (authorised by the headteacher) when to issue fixed-penalty notices;

The Attendance Officer is Lynn Scrivener and she can be contacted via Edulink or the school absence line (020 7736 7138 - option 2).

3.5 Class teachers and Form Tutors

Form Tutors are responsible for:

- recording attendance for both morning and afternoon sessions using the correct codes (see Appendix 1). Registers should be taken electronically by 8.45am and 3.30pm;
- having follow up conversations with their tutees where there are unauthorised absences, including discussions of the impact of missed school time on educational outcomes.

Class teachers are responsible for:

- recording attendance for lessons, using the correct codes (see Appendix 1). Registers should be taken electronically within 5 minutes of the lesson starting;
- sanctioning students who arrive late to lessons.

On any occasion where it is not possible to take a register electronically, form tutors or class teachers should take a manual register and this should be delivered to the attendance officer as soon as possible after the start of the lesson.

3.6 Admin staff

Admin staff will:

- take calls from parents/carers about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the school system;
- transfer calls from parents/carers to the Head of Year where appropriate, in order to provide them with more detailed support on attendance.

3.7 Parents

Where this policy refers to a parent, it refers to the adult the school and/or local authority decides is most appropriate to work with, including:

- all natural parents, whether they are married or not;
- all those who have parental responsibility for a child or young person;
- those who have day-to-day responsibility for the child (i.e. lives with and looks after them).

Parents are expected to:

- make sure their child attends every day on time;
- call the school to report their child's absence before 8.30am on the day of the absence (and each subsequent day of absence), and advise when they expect their child to return to school;
- provide the school with two emergency contact numbers for their child where possible;
- ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day. Where this is not possible, appointments should be booked to allow the child to either return to lessons during the day or

to leave school at 3pm at the earliest. Any absences for appointments must be accompanied by relevant documents such as an appointment card or letter;

- ensure that if their daughter is working with an outside agency they liaise with her Head of Year.
- keep to any attendance contracts made with the school and/or local authority;
- seek support, where necessary, for maintaining good attendance, by contacting their Head of Year via admin@ladymargaret.lbhf.sch.uk

The school will notify parents in writing each half-term when the following conditions are met:

- under 95% - parents are notified by the welfare officer or form tutor regarding attendance. All further absence is marked as unauthorised;
- under 90% - a meeting with the Head of Year. All further absence is marked as unauthorised.

The leaflet **School attendance- what parent and carers need to know- information and advice for parents and carers** can be found [here](#)

3.8 Students

Students are expected to:

- attend every timetabled session, on time;
- allow sufficient travel time to ensure that they are in school no later than 8.35am.

3.9 Young Carers

The health and development of young carers aged five to 19 may be affected because of caring responsibilities at home.

Young carers may not get the chance to go out with their friends or may struggle to complete their homework. They may be absent from school and might worry about their home situation.

Definition of 'young carer'

Caring may include helping to feed, bathe, clothe or giving medication to someone in the family or person living at the home residence. This can include: parent, sibling and grandparent.

Young carers have the same rights as other carers. For a young carer looking after a family member who has a physical illness or disability, mental health difficulties, or difficulty with drugs or alcohol, help is available.

To ensure students have the correct Young Carers status, a referral for identified young carers will be made to Hammersmith & Fulham Family Support Services.

They can help with:

- support in identifying and using services;
- one-to-one support, advice and guidance, including home visits;
- free activities and events to provide a break from the caring role, and a chance to meet other young carers. These include regular term-time groups and activities during school holidays;
- specialist training workshops on health, wellbeing and caring.

Lady Margaret School will **not authorise absence** for students who have not been assessed as young carers. Any absence concerns about a young carer will be discussed with the family, and if necessary further support sought from the borough.

4. Recording attendance

4.1 Attendance register

The school keeps an electronic attendance register, and places all students onto this register.

The attendance register is taken during morning and afternoon registration, and at the start of every lesson. The register marks, using the appropriate national attendance and absence codes from the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024, whether every student is:

- present;
- attending an approved off-site educational activity;
- absent;
- unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

- the original entry;
- the amended entry;
- the reason for the amendment;
- the date on which the amendment was made;
- the name and position of the person who made the amendment.

(See Appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes)

We also record:

- whether the absence is authorised or not;
- the nature of the activity, where a student is attending an approved educational activity;
- the nature of circumstances, where a student is unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 6 years after the date on which the entry was made.

The school day starts at 8.35am and ends at 3.30pm (registration) or 4.30pm (detentions).

Students must arrive in school by 8.35am on each school day.

The register for morning registration will be taken at 8.40am and will be kept open until 9.05am. The register for each lesson will be taken within 5 minutes of the lesson start time. The register for afternoon registration will be taken at 3.20pm and will be kept open until 3.30pm.

4.2 Unplanned absence

The student's parent must notify the school of the reason for the absence on the first day of an unplanned absence by 8.30am or as soon as practically possible, by calling the admin staff who can be contacted via Edulink or on 020 77 020 7736 7138 - option 2.

We will mark absence due to physical or mental illness as authorised, unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

Where the absence is longer (e.g. 5 days), or there are doubts about the authenticity of the illness, the school will ask for medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents will be notified of this.

4.3 Planned absence

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the student's parent notifies the school in advance of the appointment and provides evidence, e.g. an appointment card or letter.

However, we encourage parents to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the student should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

The student's parent must also apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence. Go to section 5 to find out which term-time absences the school can authorise.

4.4 Lateness and punctuality

A student who arrives late:

- before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code;
- after the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code;
- students who are late to school will receive a lunchtime detention on the same day.

Persistent lateness

Students who are late to school more than **5 times in any one half-term** will be put on a punctuality report. A letter will be sent to parents informing them of their daughter's persistent lateness. If a student does not address their persistent lateness to school we will treat this behaviour as defiance and sanction accordingly, up to and including the use of a behaviour panel. Persistent, severe or unexplained lateness can be classed as unauthorised absence and may be referred to the local authority.

The leaflet **Lateness- it does you no favours - information and advice for children** can be found [here](#)

4.5 Following up unexplained absence

Where any student we expect to attend school does not attend, or stops attending, without reason, the school will:

- call the student's parent on the morning of the first day of unexplained absence to ascertain the reason;
- identify whether the absence is approved or not;
- identify the correct attendance code to use and input it as soon as the reason for absence is ascertained;
- call the parent on each day that the absence continues without explanation, to make sure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary;
- where relevant, report the unexplained absence to the student's youth offending team officer;
- where appropriate, offer support to the student and/or their parents to improve attendance;
- identify whether the student needs support from wider partners, as quickly as possible, and make the necessary referrals;
- where support is not appropriate, not successful, or not engaged with. See section 5:2 for possible next steps where support is unsuccessful.

4.6 Reporting to parents

The school will inform parents about their child's attendance and absence levels via termly written reports.

See section 3.7 for actions the school will take where attendance falls below acceptable levels.

5. Authorised and unauthorised absence

5.1 Unauthorised absence

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no permission has been given. This type of absence can lead to the local authority using sanctions and/or legal proceedings. Unauthorised absence includes:

- parents/carers keeping students off school unnecessarily;
- truancy before or during the school day;
- absences which have never been properly explained;
- students who arrive at school too late to be registered as present for the session in question;

- shopping, looking after other children or birthdays;
- day trips and holidays in term time which have not been agreed with the school;
- excessive illness without medical evidence;
- students acting as carers;
- any absence from a student with attendance under 90% without a medical note.

Parents are advised to read the leaflet **Minor sickness and school attendance - a guide for parents/carers** which can be found [here](#).

5.2 Approval for term-time absence

The headteacher will allow students to be absent from the school site for certain educational activities, or to attend other schools or settings.

The headteacher will only grant a **leave of absence** to a student during term time if the request meets the specific circumstances set out in the [2024 school attendance regulations](#). These circumstances are:

- taking part in a regulated performance, or regulated employment abroad;
- attending an interview;
- study leave;
- a temporary, time-limited part-time timetable;
- exceptional circumstances (requests will be considered on a case by case basis).

A leave of absence is granted at the headteacher's discretion, including the length of time the student is authorised to be absent for.

Leave of absence will not be granted for a student to take part in protest activity during school hours.

As a leave of absence will only be granted in exceptional circumstances, it is highly unlikely a leave of absence will be granted for the purposes of a family holiday.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant background context behind the request.

Any request should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated and, where possible, at least 4 weeks before the absence, and emailed to the headteacher at admin@ladymargaret.lbhf.sch.uk. The headteacher may require evidence to support any request for leave of absence.

Other valid reasons for **authorised absence** include (but are not limited to):

- illness (including mental-health illness) and medical/dental appointments (see sections 4.2 and 4.3 for more detail);
- religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the student's parent(s) belong(s). If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parent's religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart
- parent(s) travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh gypsies, Irish and Scottish travellers, showmen (fairground people) and circus people, bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and new travellers;
- if the student is currently suspended or excluded from school (and no alternative provision has been made).

Other reasons the school may allow a student to be absent from the school site, which are not classified as absences, include:

- attending an offsite approved educational activity, sporting activity or visit or trip arranged by the school;
- attending another school at which the student is also registered (dual registration);

- attending provision arranged by the local authority;
- attending work experience (year 12 students);
- if there is any other unavoidable cause for the student not to attend school, such as disruption to travel caused by an emergency, a lack of access arrangements, or because the school premises are closed.

5.2 Sanctions

We reserve the right to refer families to the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham where attendance is low or where families have taken leave during term time without authorisation. Hammersmith and Fulham may, in turn, serve a fixed penalty notice.

The leaflet **Penalty Notices - fines for your child's non-attendance at school - information and advice for parents and carers** can be found [here](#).

Penalty notices

The headteacher (or someone authorised by them), local authority or the police can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age, by issuing a penalty notice. If the school issues a penalty notice, it will check with the local authority before doing so, and send it a copy of any penalty notice issued.

Before issuing a penalty notice, the school will consider the individual case, including:

- whether the national threshold for considering a penalty notice has been met (5 sessions of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 5 school weeks);
- whether a penalty notice is the best available tool to improve attendance for that student;
- whether further support, a notice to improve or another legal intervention would be a more appropriate solution;
- whether any obligations that the school has under the Equality Act 205 make issuing a penalty notice inappropriate.

A penalty notice may also be issued where parents allow their child to be present in a public place during school hours without reasonable justification, during the first 5 days of a suspension or exclusion.

Each parent who is liable for the student's offence(s) can be issued with a penalty notice, but this will usually only be the parent/parents who allowed the absence.

The payment must be made directly to the local authority, regardless of who issues the notice. If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute or withdraw the notice.

If issued with a **first** penalty notice, the parent must pay £80 within 21 days, or £160 within 28 days.

If a **second** penalty notice is issued to the same parent in respect of the same student, the parent must pay £160 if paid within 28 days.

A **third** penalty notice cannot be issued to the same parent in respect of the same child within 3 years of the date of the issue of the first penalty notice. In a case where the national threshold is met for a third time within those 3 years, alternative action will be taken instead.

Notices to improve

If the national threshold has been met and support is appropriate, but parents do not engage with offers of support, the school may offer a notice to improve to give parents a final chance to engage with support.

Notices to improve will be issued in line with processes set out in the local code of conduct for the local authority area in which the student attends school.

They will include:

- details of the student's attendance record and of the offences;

- the benefits of regular attendance and the duty of parents under section 7 of the Education Act 1996;
- details of the support provided so far;
- opportunities for further support, or to access previously provided support that was not engaged with;
- a clear warning that a penalty notice may be issued if attendance doesn't improve within the improvement period, along with details of what sufficient improvement looks like, which will be decided on a case-by-case basis;
- a clear timeframe of between 3 and 6 weeks for the improvement period;
- the grounds on which a penalty notice may be issued before the end of the improvement period.

6. Strategies for promoting attendance

To support students with improving attendance the school uses several initiatives including:

- attendance displays which show the tutor groups with the best attendance;
- Attendance Matters posters;
- attendance information included on student progress reviews;
- regular pastoral time and discussions focused on attendance.

7. Supporting students who are absent or returning to school

7.1 Student absent due to complex barriers to attendance

Where students have complex barriers to attendance the school will work with students, parents and external partners to seek to remove barriers and to promote good school attendance.

7.2 Students absent due to mental or physical ill health or SEND

Where students are absent due to mental or physical health or SEND, the school will work with students, parents and external partners to support students to access an education either within the school or through suitable alternative provision. Where a student has an education health and care plan (EHCP) and their attendance falls, or the school becomes aware of barriers to attendance that relate to the student's needs, the school will inform the local authority.

7.3 Students returning to school after a lengthy or unavoidable period of absence

Where students are returning to school after a lengthy or unavoidable period of absence, Heads of Year, form tutors and class teachers will support the child with reintegration into the school community and accessing academic work.

8. Attendance monitoring

8.1 Monitoring attendance

The school monitors attendance and absence data (including punctuality) half-termly across the school and at an individual student, year group and cohort level.

Data will be collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics.

The school will benchmark its attendance data at whole school, year group and cohort level against local, regional, and national levels to identify areas of focus for improvement, and share this with the governing board.

8.2 Analysing attendance and using data to improve attendance

The school will:

- analyse attendance and absence data regularly to identify students, groups or cohorts that need additional support with their attendance and develop targeted actions to address patterns of absence;
- use data to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place in order to modify them and inform future strategies;
- provide regular attendance reports to Heads of Year and form tutors, to facilitate discussions with students and families, and to the governing board and school leaders.
- share information and work collaboratively with other schools in the area, local authorities and other partners where a student's absence is at risk of becoming persistent or severe, including keeping them informed regarding specific students, where appropriate.

8.3 Reducing persistent and severe absence

Persistent absence is where a student misses 5% or more of school, and severe absence is where a student misses 50% or more of school. Reducing persistent and severe absence is central to the school's strategy for improving attendance.

The school will:

- use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence;
- Issue half-termly attendance letters (see section 3.7)
- consider potential safeguarding issues and, where suspected or present, address them in line with Keeping Children Safe in Education;
- hold regular meetings with the parents of students who the school (and/or local authority) considers to be vulnerable or at risk of persistent or severe absence, or who are persistently or severely absent, to:
 - discuss attendance and engagement at school;
 - listen, and understand barriers to attendance;
 - explain the help that is available;
 - explain the potential consequences of, and sanctions for, persistent and severe absence;
 - review any existing actions or interventions.
- provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance, in conjunction with the local authority, where relevant
- consider alternative support that could be put in place to remove any barriers to attendance and re-engage these students. In doing so, the school will sensitively consider some of the reasons for absence;
- implement sanctions, where necessary (see section 5.2, above)

9. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the local authority and/or DfE is updated, and as a minimum every two years by the senior attendance champion. At every review, the policy will be approved by the full governing board.

10. Links with other policies

This policy links to the following policies:

- Child protection and safeguarding policy
- Behaviour policy

Appendix 1: Attendance Codes

The following codes are taken from the DfE's [guidance on school attendance](#).

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	Student is present at morning registration
\	Present (pm)	Student is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Student arrives late before register has closed
Attending a place other than the school		
K	Attending education provision arranged by the local authority	Student is attending a place other than a school at which they are registered, for educational provision arranged by the local authority
V	Attending an educational visit or trip	Student is on an educational visit/trip organised or approved by the school
P	Participating in a sporting activity	Student is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
W	Attending work experience	Student is on an approved work experience placement
B	Attending any other approved educational activity	Student is attending a place for an approved educational activity that is not a sporting activity or work experience
D	Dual registered	Student is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
Absent – leave of absence		
C1	Participating in a regulated performance or undertaking regulated employment abroad	Student is undertaking employment (paid or unpaid) during school hours, approved by the school
M	Medical/dental appointment	Student is at a medical or dental appointment
J1	Interview	Student has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
S	Study leave	Student has been granted leave of absence to study for a public examination
X	Not required to be in school	Student of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend

C2	Part-time timetable	Student is not in school due to having a part-time timetable
C	Exceptional circumstances	Student has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
Absent – other authorised reasons		
T	Parent travelling for occupational purposes	Student is a 'mobile child' who is travelling with their parent(s) who are travelling for occupational purposes
R	Religious observance	Student is taking part in a day of religious observance
I	Illness (not medical or dental appointment)	Student is unable to attend due to illness (either related to physical or mental health)
E	Suspended or excluded	Student has been suspended or excluded from school and no alternative provision has been made
Absent – unable to attend school because of unavoidable cause		
Q	Lack of access arrangements	Student is unable to attend school because the local authority has failed to make access arrangements to enable attendance at school
Y1	Transport not available	Student is unable to attend because school is not within walking distance of their home and the transport normally provided is not available
Y2	Widespread disruption to travel	Student is unable to attend because of widespread disruption to travel caused by a local, national or international emergency
Y3	Part of school premises closed	Student is unable to attend because they cannot practicably be accommodated in the part of the premises that remains open
Y4	Whole school site unexpectedly closed	Every student absent as the school is closed unexpectedly (e.g. due to adverse weather)
Y5	Criminal justice detention	Student is unable to attend as they are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● In police detention ● Remanded to youth detention, awaiting trial or sentencing, or ● Detained under a sentence of detention

Y6	Public health guidance or law	Student's travel to or attendance at the school would be prohibited under public health guidance or law
Y7	Any other unavoidable cause	To be used where an unavoidable cause is not covered by the other codes
Absent – unauthorised absence		
G	Holiday not granted by the school	Student is absent for the purpose of a holiday, not approved by the school
N	Reason for absence not yet established	Reason for absence has not been established before the register closes
O	Absent in other or unknown circumstances	No reason for absence has been established, or the school isn't satisfied that the reason given would be recorded using one of the codes for authorised absence
U	Arrived in school after registration closed	Student has arrived late, after the register has closed but before the end of session
Administrative codes		
Z	Prospective student not on admission register	Student has not joined school yet but has been registered
#	Planned whole-school closure	Whole-school closures that are known and planned in advance, including school holidays