



Attendance Policy

Sacks Morasha Jewish Primary School is a modern orthodox Jewish primary school that promotes educational excellence for all pupils, a commitment to orthodox Jewish practice, a love of and commitment to Israel and active involvement within the Jewish community, the British community and the wider world.

We strive to ensure that every child is able to reach his or her full potential and believe, in accordance with research and government policy, that regular and punctual attendance is an essential prerequisite to effective learning. We aim to develop an ethos that demonstrates to children, parents/carers and the wider community how much we value good attendance and punctuality.

Our school attendance target for 2017/18 and 2018/19 is 98%.

Definitions

Types of absence

The parent/carer of a child of compulsory school age is required by law to ensure that his/her child attends the school at which he/she is registered. Should a parent fail to ensure that his/her child attends that school without an appropriate reason, the parent is guilty of an offence (www.gov.uk/school-attendance-absence/overview). When a child of compulsory school age is absent from school, the attendance register must indicate whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised and the appropriate register code will be used.

'Authorised absence'

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

Absence may generally be authorised for the following reasons:

- urgent illness
- medical or dental appointments (non-urgent appointments should be made out of school hours)
- exclusion
- school examinations
- traveller child travelling for the purposes of parents' employment
- family bereavement or close family celebration
- involvement in a public performance
- 'exceptional' circumstances (the nature of such occasions will be determined by school on an individual basis). NB Holidays do not count as an exceptional circumstance.

'Unauthorised absence'

Unauthorised absence is where no explanation has been given for the child's absence or where the explanation offered is considered by the school to be unacceptable.

Absence will **not** be authorised when:

- no explanation is offered by the parent/carer
- the explanation offered is unsatisfactory (e.g. shopping, minding the house, having a rest, etc.).

Family holidays

Family holidays must be taken during the school holidays. A copy of the term dates, which have been approved by the Governing Body, can be found on the school website. The term dates specifically allow enough time for families to fly into and out of the country for the Shalosh Regalim (Pesach, Shavuot and Succot festivals) if they wish to do so. There should be therefore no need to families to miss any days of school. Family holidays do not count as an 'exceptional circumstance' and families will be fined should they take their children out of school during term time. For further clarification, the reasons below **do not** constitute an 'exceptional circumstance':

- expense of a holiday
- going to see elderly relatives abroad and not wishing to take time out of a holiday period to do so
- spending time with family members who live abroad
- in the instance of term ending on a Thursday, we will not give an authorised absence for families using that Thursday to travel, to ensure that they arrive at their destination before Shabbat
- tagging on extra days to a holiday to 'make it more worthwhile'
- the need to make preparations before a Chag (in this country or abroad)
- children needing to have a rest and needing a holiday.

Applying for leave of absence

There is no entitlement in law for any leave of absence from school in term time.

Any applications for leave of absence must be made in advance using a 'Leave Request' form, which are available from the School office. A request can only be authorised where school accepts there are 'exceptional circumstances'. Any parent/carer requesting leave of absence of more than 5 days will be asked to make an appointment to see the Headteacher to explain the circumstances.

Parents/carers risk losing their child's place on the School Roll if the pupil does not return to school on the agreed date of return and re-admission cannot be guaranteed as defined in legislation. The specific circumstances which outline when a pupil can be removed from the roll are laid out in Regulation 8 (1) (f) (i-iii) of the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (amended 2013).

Leave of absence in term-time will never be authorised in the following circumstances:

- during the first term when a pupil is just starting school, as it is very important for the child to settle into their new class
- during an assessment/test period, e.g. Key Stage 2 SATs
- when a pupil's attendance record already includes **any** level of unauthorised absence.

Penalty notices

Reducing absences from school is a key priority nationally and locally, because missing school can have a negative impact on a pupil's attainment levels, disrupts school routines and can be disruptive to the learning of others.

Parents/carers commit an offence if a child fails to attend school and those absences are classed as unauthorised. A fine is an alternative to prosecution, which does not require an appearance in court unless the fine is unpaid after 28 days.

Full payment of the penalty notice means that parents/carers can avoid being prosecuted and convicted. Penalty notices are issued per parent per child at £120. However, if paid within 21 days, the cost is £60 per parent per child.

In cases of unauthorised absence, parents/carers will receive a written warning of the possibility of a penalty notice being issued. In cases of unauthorised holidays, warnings will be issued where sufficient notice of the intended absence has been given. This means that, in some cases, penalty notices may be issued without a warning.

Persistent absence

An individual child is therefore deemed to be a persistent absentee if his/her attendance is less than 90% (regardless of whether or not the absences have been authorised).

The Education Welfare officer for the school (from Barnet LA) might wish to discuss your child's attendance if they are classed as a persistent absentee.

Approved educational activity

Children who are educated off site, dual registered or who are engaged in supervised educational activities away from school premises need not be marked as authorised absent, and will be recorded as on an approved educational activity. Parents should still make a formal request for leave to the Headteacher.

Punctuality and registration

Schools are required by law to call attendance registers twice daily: once at the start of the morning session and again during the afternoon session. Parents/carers must ensure that children are on the school premises by 8.45 am. Pupils arriving after the register has closed will be registered with an L (for Late), showing they are present in school but were late enough for their learning to be affected. If a child arrives after 9.15 am, it is classed as an 'unauthorised late'. If a child has six unauthorised lates in any four-week period they can be issued with a fixed penalty notice. An unauthorised late is classed as an absence for the morning session.

The data extracted from accurate and up-to-date attendance registers will be used to support the more effective management of whole-school attendance matters. Such data can be used to:

- support and underpin the target-setting process (e.g. for individual pupils, year groups, identified cohorts or the whole school) in relation to overall attendance and unauthorised absence on a (half)termly and yearly basis
- identify individual children and particular groups of children who are, or may be at risk of becoming, persistent absentees
- facilitate and encourage early intervention
- identify particular types or patterns of absenteeism

- identify possible inconsistencies in the implementation of school policy
- report attendance matters to parents/carers.

First-day response

As a vigilant and caring school, we apply a first-day response to pupil absence. This means making a determined and sustained effort to respond to unexplained absence on the first morning of absence, usually through a telephone call to a parent/carer.

SIGNED H. Cross **HEADTEACHER**

SIGNED  **CHAIR OF GOVERNORS**

DATE June 2017

Reviewed May 18