

Harrow Lodge Primary School



ATTENDANCE POLICY AND TERM TIME HOLIDAYS

REVIEWED:	Spring 2026
EFFECTIVE PERIOD:	Summer 2026- Summer 2027
DUE FOR REVIEW:	Spring 2027
RESPONSIBLE PERSON(S)	MRS L SEARLE

1. **INTRODUCTION**

At Harrow Lodge Primary School, we believe that good attendance and positive behaviour are key to children achieving their very best. This policy reflects our commitment to safeguarding, ensuring every child can access their full entitlement to education, and supporting all pupils to thrive both now and in the future.

Regular attendance and punctuality are essential if children are to gain the greatest benefit from school. Missing school can affect learning, confidence, friendships and social development. It can also disrupt the learning of others.

Parents and carers of children of compulsory school age have a legal responsibility to ensure their child attends school regularly. Where attendance is a concern, the school will work closely with families to understand and address any barriers. However, unauthorised absence may result in legal action, including the issue of a Penalty Notice.

Only the school can authorise an absence in line with legislation. This may include illness (with appropriate evidence), religious observance or other exceptional circumstances agreed in advance. A parental explanation does not automatically mean an absence will be authorised.

In line with the Department for Education guidance *Working Together to Improve School Attendance* (2024), we are committed to promoting strong attendance by working in partnership with families and the Local Authority to remove barriers and support every child to attend well.

All partners will 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.

2. PROMOTING REGULAR ATTENDANCE

Promoting good attendance is a shared responsibility between parents, pupils, school staff, the Local Authority and partner agencies.

We recognise that barriers to attendance can be complex and individual. Harrow Lodge Primary School is committed to providing a calm, safe and supportive environment where pupils feel ready and motivated to learn. We will work in partnership with families and external agencies to remove barriers and provide early support where needed.

Regular attendance is essential for academic progress and social development. Children who miss school are at risk of falling behind.

By law, all children aged 5–16 must receive full-time education. The school attendance target is 96%. Pupils whose attendance falls below 90% are classified as ‘persistent absentees’ and may be referred to the Education Welfare Service. Only the school can authorise absence. Failure to ensure regular attendance may result in legal action under the Education Act 1996.

Parents/carers receive attendance information annually in school reports. Attendance is monitored regularly, and families will be contacted if attendance falls below expected levels, including formal contact where attendance reaches 90%.

3. REGISTRATION

The school will keep an attendance register on which, at the beginning of each morning and afternoon session, pupils are 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 Head Teacher. Registers may be needed as evidence in court where parents are being prosecuted for school attendance offences and inappropriate authorisation of absences could compromise proceedings.

Registers will be maintained and completed in SIMS. Should manuscript registers be necessary they must be completed in black ink and any corrections/amendments made in such a way that the original entry, and the correction/amendment, are clearly distinguishable. Correction fluid **MUST NOT** be used on legal documents such as registers.

4. PUNCTUALITY

Punctuality is important. Arriving late disrupts your child’s learning and the learning of others. Persistent lateness is recorded as irregular attendance in law.

Registers are taken at 8:50am. Children should arrive 5–10 minutes before this time.

Arrival after 8:50am will be marked as ‘L’ (late before registers close).

Arrival after 9:20am (or after the start of the afternoon session: 12:30pm EYFS / 1:30pm Years 1–2 / 1:00pm Years 3–6) will be marked as 'U' (unauthorised absence – late after registers close).

Lateness is recorded and reported to parents and will appear on school reports and attendance certificates.

The graph below illustrates how daily lateness quickly adds up to significant lost learning time over a school year.



Poor punctuality is not acceptable. Missing the start of the day means children lose important learning time and key information from their class teacher. Late arrival also disrupts lessons and can cause unnecessary embarrassment. Developing good timekeeping is an essential life skill that supports children both at school and beyond.

5. UNDERSTANDING TYPES OF ABSENCE

We understand that family events and commitments are important. However, regular attendance is vital for your child's progress and continuity of learning. For this reason, leave of absence during term time can only be authorised in exceptional circumstances, as determined by the Head Teacher. These circumstances are usually unforeseen and unavoidable. Family holidays, weddings, birthdays and similar events will not normally be authorised.

If a child is absent immediately before or after a school holiday, medical evidence will be required. Without appropriate evidence, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and may be referred to the Education Welfare Service. All absences are recorded on school reports and shared with secondary schools.

If you believe exceptional circumstances apply, you must complete an “Application to Remove Child from Learning” form, available from the Parent Foyer. Where leave is taken without authorisation, the school is required to refer the matter to the Education Welfare Service and a Penalty Notice may be issued in line with national guidance. This may result in a fine, and repeated offences can lead to further legal action.

Authorised absences include genuine illness (with evidence where required), medical or dental appointments that cannot be arranged outside school hours, religious observance, or other unavoidable circumstances.

We are always happy to discuss attendance concerns with families and to work together to ensure children attend regularly and make the best possible progress.

Parents/carers must notify the school on the first day of absence, stating the reason. If no explanation is received within two weeks of a reminder letter, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised.

Children who have vomited or had diarrhoea must remain at home for 48 hours after the last symptom to prevent the spread of infection.

Where absences are repeated, the school may request written or medical evidence. The school office will advise when this is required. Where absences are repeated, the school may request written or medical evidence. The school office will advise when this is required.

If the authenticity of illness is in doubt, the school will request parents to provide medical evidence to support the illness. If the school is not satisfied with the authenticity of the illness or medical evidence is not provided, the absence will be recorded as ‘unauthorised’ and parents will be advised. Medical evidence can take the form of prescriptions, appointment cards, GP/hospital letters etc.

Illness, medical and dental appointments

- Every effort should be made to arrange medical appointments outside school hours
 - An appointment card or verification by the doctor/dentist/hospital is required
 - Parents are asked to inform the school in advance by letter, email or appointment card if their child has a medical appointment
 - Children should attend school around the appointment wherever possible
 - Children will not be allowed to leave the premises unless they are collected by an adult
- Attendance Policy and Term Time Holidays – Summer 2026-2027

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

- parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily;
- absences which have never been properly explained;
- children who arrive at school too late to get a mark;
- shopping, looking after other children or birthdays;
- day trips and holidays in term time which have not been agreed.

Whilst any child may be off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents/carers and the child. If a parent/carer thinks their child is reluctant to attend school, then we will work with that family to try to understand the root problem. We can use outside agencies to help with this such as the Attendance Officer, School Nurse or the Home School Support Worker.

Reporting Absences and First Day Calling

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. Parent contact on the first day of absence should be the normal expectation. If the school have not been notified by mid-morning of a child's absence, a telephone call or text message will be made to the parent requesting the reason. If no contact is made by the parent and the school cannot make contact with the contacts provided for the child, a home visit may be completed by the school staff or Education Welfare Service. It is essential that parents keep the school updated on a daily basis should a child be absent for more than one day.

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 figures.

Traveller Absences

If a child is unable to attend school due to travelling, evidence must be provided to the school with evidence of the fair, event, etc which will be attended in advance of the absence. If the details are not given to the school before the leave is taken it will be marked as unauthorised and a child may be considered as 'missing in education' and referred onto the relevant agencies. The school must know the whereabouts of all children, at all times, to ensure the safety and wellbeing of each individual child.

Travellers and Show People are granted, by law, up to 200 sessions (100 whole days) 'travelling' each academic year. During this time, the child will be marked on the register as a 'T' (Travelling Absence) if evidence of the event where the family are working is given to the school in advance. Once a child reaches the 200 allowed sessions, the parents will be notified and any further leave will be marked as unauthorised. If you are travelling with a registered tutor, please notify the school of this and information of your child's current curriculum can be shared to ensure the correct work is completed.

6. PERSISTENT ABSENTEEISM (PA)

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when attendance falls to 90% or below across the school year for whatever reason.

Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's education and we need parents' fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

We monitor all absence and the reasons given thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority and we will inform the parents/carers immediately.

If a child is deemed to be persistently absent with an attendance figure of below 90% or below, each period of illness must be supported by medical evidence.

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

All our PA pupils and their parents are subject to a Support Action Plan and the plan may include allocation of additional support through the School Nurse, Home school Support Worker or Attendance Officer.

We may also use circle time, individual incentive programmes, individual targets and participation in group activities around raising attendance.

7. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Head Teacher / Attendance Admin Assistant

- Operational management of the policy.
- Consider requests for authorised absence.
- Give approval in advance in extenuating circumstances, taking account of the child's attendance record to date.
- Authorise absence after it occurs when a satisfactory explanation is accepted.
- Consider the use of a Penalty Notice for unauthorised absence or lateness.
- Complete Head Teacher witness statements on pupil absence for court use.
- Oversee attendance procedures.
- Monitor pupil attendance and take action according to this policy.
- Analyse trends in attendance data to identify appropriate action.
- Investigate reasons for absence exploring any underlying cause either at home or in school.
- Ensure action is taken in response to any difficulties reported [e.g. bullying/behaviour].
- Ensure that anti-bullying and behaviour policies are followed.
- Work in partnership with parents to improve poor attendance.
- Liaise with the Attendance Officer and make referrals as necessary.
- Work with the Attendance Officer towards improved patterns of attendance for referred pupils identifying the course of action that should be taken.
- Make referrals to other agencies where appropriate.
- Work with Class Teachers to agree and implement strategies to re-engage pupils with emerging attendance problems.
- Work with relevant staff to plan reintegration for pupils who have been absent for a period.
- Compile and update standard letters re: under 96% attendance, under 93% attendance, under 90% attendance, notification of reasons for absence, lateness.
- Manage incentives to encourage regular attendance.
- Ensure data is accurate for the termly and annual DFE attendance returns.

Class Teachers

- Registration of pupils at the start of morning and afternoon sessions.
- Prepare and deliver stimulating and enjoyable work for all pupils.
- Alert the attendance lead within the school of any children who demonstrate an unsettled pattern of attendance or whose attendance pattern changes.
- Report percentage attendance at parent consultations; encourage regular punctual attendance; work to secure this.
- Work with the Head Teacher to agree and implement strategies to re-engage pupils with emerging attendance problems.

Attendance Admin Assistant

- Daily overview of attendance.
- Update data.
- Record late arrival and reasons.
- Ensure reasons for absences are accurately recorded.
- Update records using agreed codes.
- Make calls to parents when first day of absence contact has not been made by parents.
- Prepare standard letters requesting reasons for absence when this is unexplained.
- Prepare letters to inform parents when a child's attendance is giving cause for concern and is being monitored
- Collect absence notes and record reasons for absence.
- Meet with the HT and take agreed action.
- Provide attendance reports when requested.
- Liaise with the Attendance Officer on attendance matters.
- Complete the annual DFE attendance returns.

Parents

- Ensure their child attends daily and on time.
- Keep the school fully informed on all matters that might affect attendance and their child in school.
- Telephone school on the first day of any absence to inform school of the reason.

- Provide any medical evidence if requested.
- If attendance becomes a problem – work with the school to improve matters.
- Give serious consideration to whether it is appropriate or necessary to request term time absence.
- Make application for any term time leave of absence prior to proposed dates.

8. THE ATTENDANCE OFFICER

Parents are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any problems together. This is nearly always successful.

If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, the school may refer the child to the Attendance Officer from the LA or the 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 unauthorized absences persist, these Officers can use sanctions such as Penalty Notices or prosecutions in the Magistrates Court. Full details of the options open to enforce attendance at school are available from the school, the Local Authority or the Trust.

Alternatively, parents may wish to contact the Attendance Officer 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.

9. HOLIDAYS IN TERM TIME

There is **no** automatic entitlement in law to time off in school time to go on holiday.

All applications for leave must be made in advance and, at the discretion of the school, only exceptional circumstances will be authorised. In making a decision, the school will consider the circumstances of each application individually, including any previous pattern of leave in term time.

Harrow Lodge Primary School will not authorise any Holidays or Leave of Absence in term time unless the circumstances are exceptional.

Cheap holidays or holidays booked by relatives will **NOT** be considered as exceptional and will **NOT** be authorised.

If children are taken out of school and a request for leave has NOT been authorised, a fine will be issued by way of a Penalty Notice which will be issued by the LA.

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.

Where a historic pattern of sickness arises before or after a school holiday, medical evidence will be required in order to authorise the absence.

10. TARGETS

Targets for the school and for classes will be displayed in the school to encourage participation by all in reaching these.

The minimum level of attendance for any child at Harrow Lodge Primary School is 96% attendance. We will keep parents updated regularly on their child's progress.

11. HOME EDUCATION

On receipt of written notification to home educate your child, we will inform the Local Authority who will get in touch with you to ensure that you understand your full responsibilities. It will be necessary for you to meet with the Head Teacher so that they can offer help and advice. There is no requirement for parents to obtain permission or agreement from the school or the Local Authority to home educate your child but it is important to keep the school informed of your decision.

12. MONITORING AND REVIEW

It is the responsibility of the Governors to monitor overall attendance, and they will request an annual report from the Head Teacher.

The school will keep accurate attendance records on file for a minimum period of three years.

This policy will be reviewed by the Head Teacher every year or sooner if legislation or policy changes.

APPENDIX 1

HARROW LODGE PRIMARY SCHOOL'S PROCEDURES FOR TRACKING ATTENDANCE

PARENTS AND CARERS

If a child is absent, the parent or carer must contact the school office by **8.50** a.m. on the first day of absence. The school has an answer phone available to leave a message if nobody is available to take the call.

A parent or carer can also call into the school office and report the absence at the reception desk.

SCHOOL

If your child is absent, we will telephone you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you. Depending on the percentage of attendance, the following actions will be taken:

At 90%	Warning letter to parents
Below 90%	Referral to EWO in process.
Below 95%	Half-Termly text/email warning

The Head Teacher has the responsibility to monitor the work of the office staff to ensure the above procedures are followed.

HARROW LODGE PRIMARY SCHOOL'S PROCEDURES FOR MANAGING LATENESS

- The school gates are opened at **8.30am** and doors open at **8.40am** and the children are expected to be seated and ready for work by **8.50am**.
- Doors close promptly at **8.50 am**. Registers are marked by **9.00am** and a child will receive a late mark if they are not in by that time.
- If the problem persists you may be issued with a Penalty Notice.
- If a child has a persistent late record, parent/s will be asked to meet with the Head Teacher to resolve the problem. Parents can approach school at any time to discuss problems getting a child to school on time and school will do what they can to support the family.
- If a child is going to be late, parents need to telephone the school office by 8.50 a.m. and inform them if a school dinner needs to be booked. Lunch begins at 11.30 a.m. (EYFS), 12.30pm (Years 1-2) and 12:30 pm (Years 3-6) and the catering staff need the final figures for school lunches by 9.20 a.m.
- Alternatively, parents can send in a packed lunch from home if they have not booked a dinner by 9.20 a.m.
- School will encourage good punctuality by being good role models to children and celebrating good class punctuality.
- Each time a class has 100%, a letter from ATTENDANCE will be crossed off. When all of the letters have been crossed out, the class will receive a non-uniform day as reward.

Appendix 2

Attendance Codes

Key to Codes	
	Attending the school
/	Present (AM)
\	Present (PM)
L	Late arrival before the register is closed
	Attending a place other than the school
K	Attending educational provision arranged by the local authority
V	Attending an educational visit or trip
P	Approved sporting activity
W	Attending work Experience
B	Attending any other approved supervised educational activity
D	Dual registration
	Absent – Leave of absence
C1	Participating in a regulated performance or undertaking regulated employment abroad
M	Medical or dental appointment
J1	Interview
S	Studying for a public examination
X	Non-compulsory school age absence
C2	Part-time timetable
C	Exceptional circumstances
	Absent – other authorised reasons
T	Parents travelling for occupational circumstances
R	Religious observance
I	Illness
E	Suspended or permanently excluded and no alternative provision made
	Absent – unable to attend school because of unavoidable cause
Q	Unable to attend because of lack of access arrangements
Y1	Transport normally provided is not available
Y2	Widespread disruption to travel
Y3	Part of the school premises closed
Y4	Whole school site unexpectedly closed
Y5	Pupil in criminal justice detention
Y6	Public health guidance or law
Y7	Any other unavoidable cause

	Absent – Unauthorised absence
G	Holiday not granted by the school
N	Reason not established
O	Absent for unknown circumstances
U	Arrived in school after registration closes
	Administrative Codes
Z	Prospective pupil not on admission register
#	Planned school closure

Appendix 3



Harrow Lodge Primary School

Rainsford Way, Hornchurch, Essex RM12 4BP

Mrs L Searle
Head Teacher

Telephone: 01708 448187

office@harrowlodgeprimary.com

[Date]

Dear xx

In accordance with our procedures to improve attendance and achievement, I am writing to you because xx's attendance has fallen to 90%. A copy of the attendance record is enclosed.

We need to make you aware that, when a child's attendance falls below 90%, they are registered as a persistent absentee and come under the jurisdiction of the Academy Trust's Attendance Officer. We realise that there may be good reason for your child's recent absence and you may have already told us about it. However, it is vital that all pupils at our school attend at least 96% of the time and, therefore, we monitor attendance closely.

Due to xxx's attendance falling to 90%, we are concerned that their education may be affected and their attainment levels may fall which could have an adverse effect, not just on their education, but also on their social and emotional development.

With your support, we would expect your child's attendance to improve. At this point, however, you will be invited to a meeting with the Head Teacher to discuss your child's attendance and any support the school can give you.

We would like to remind you that it is your legal responsibility to ensure your child attends school regularly and on time and it is at the school's discretion as to whether any absences are authorised.

If you have any concerns or wish to discuss this further, please do not hesitate to contact me. I look forward to seeing an improvement in xxx's attendance.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs Susan Asser
Chair of Governors
Cc Attendance Officer

Appendix 4

Role of Parents

Parents are responsible in law for ensuring that their children of compulsory school age receive an effective education suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs which they may have. Most parents fulfil this responsibility by registering their children at a school.

Parents are requested to:

- Ensure that their children arrive at school on time, properly dressed and in a condition to learn.
- Instil in their children an appreciation of the importance of attending school regularly. Parents will impress upon their children the need to observe the school's code of conduct, to complete their homework on time and follow the school rules.
- Take an active interest in their children's school career, praising and encouraging good work and behaviour and attending parents' evenings and other relevant meetings.
- Work in partnership with the school to resolve issues which may lead to non-attendance.
- Ensure that they are aware of the attendance policy.
- Notify the school if their child is absent. This should be done as soon as possible - on the first day of absence. They should also provide an explanation for the absence.
- Try to avoid arranging medical/dental appointments during school hours.
- Telephone the school office by 8:50 a.m. if their child is unwell and cannot attend school.

At Harrow Lodge Primary School, we set attendance targets each year. The targets are challenging yet realistic, and based on attendance figures achieved in previous years. The school considers carefully the attendance figures for other similar schools when setting its own targets. Parents are expected to support the school in meeting these targets by honouring the Attendance Policy.



Harrow Lodge Primary School Attendance Leaflet for Parents

The purpose of this leaflet is to share with parents our policy on school attendance and term time holidays based on guidance from the Local Authority and the Academy Trust. We hope you find the leaflet informative and useful.

Our Principles

We expect all children on roll to attend every day when the school is in session, as long as they are fit and healthy enough to do so. We do all we can to encourage the children to attend, and to put in place appropriate procedures. We believe that the most important factor in promoting good attendance is development of positive attitudes towards school. To this end we strive to make our school a happy and rewarding experience for all children. We will make the best provision we can for those children who, for whatever reason, are prevented from coming to school. To promote good attendance, we work together in partnership with parents, in order to achieve excellent levels of attendance and punctuality for all pupils. We also work closely together with other divisions of the Education Department, with other departments of Havering Council and with relevant external agencies.

This leaflet highlights the key features of our Attendance policy. A copy of the comprehensive Policy is available from the school office and on our website.

An absence is classified as authorised when a child has been away from school for a legitimate reason and the school has received notification from a parent or guardian. For example, if a child has been unwell and the parent writes a note or telephones the school to explain the absence. Only the school can authorise an absence. Parents do not have this authority. Consequently, not all absences supported by parents will be classified as authorised. For example, if a parent takes a child out of school to go on holiday during the school term, this will not mean it is an authorised absence.

Absence will be authorised by the Head Teacher if:

- The pupil is absent with leave (defined as 'leave granted by any person authorised to do so by the Local Body of Governors).
- The pupil is ill or prevented from attending by any unavoidable cause.
- The absence occurs on a day exclusively set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong.
- If the pupil is the child of traveller parents who temporarily leave the area giving reasonable indication of their intention to return.

Absence will be unauthorised if:

- No explanation is forthcoming from the parent to the Head teacher.
- The Head Teacher is dissatisfied with the explanation.
- The pupil is seen shopping during school hours.
- The pupil is on a family holiday without permission.
- The pupil has been taken abroad for a wedding or parental medical reasons.

Role of the School

A member of the office staff checks the registers on a daily basis and notes any absences unaccounted for. Families are then contacted to try to ascertain the reason for absence. Parents/carers are asked to phone the school office before 8.50 am. The school may be able to help in certain circumstances e.g. if a child is unable to attend school due to the parent/carers ill health.

If we are unable to contact parent/carers and have had no note, phone call or verbal message, a letter will be sent home asking for the reason for absence.

Parents/carers will be asked to produce a doctor's note if a child regularly has time off due to sickness.

Depending on the percentage attendance the following actions will be taken:

Below 96%	Initial alert to Y5 & Y6 child
At 90%	Warning from the HT
Below 90%	Referral to Attendance Officer.
Below 95%	Text/Email warning to Parents

The Head Teacher has the responsibility of monitoring the work of the office staff to ensure the above procedures are followed.