Attendance Policy

September 2026

Together we strive for excellence

Date adopted by the governing body: February 2026

Review date: September 2027

Principles

At Cubitt Town Primary School we are committed to providing an education of the highest quality for all our pupils and creating a positive community where all pupils feel valued, welcomed and included. Excellent attendance is fundamental to ensuring that children reach their full potential and have the best life chances and opportunities in their future lives. It is the responsibility of the London Borough of Tower Hamlets, all schools, parents/carers and pupils to work in partnership to ensure that all our children receive an appropriate education suitable to their needs. As a school we strive to achieve a goal of at least 96% attendance.

We believe that strong attendance is paramount to developing the whole child. Good habits of attendance and punctuality formed in the primary years help children succeed throughout their education and in their future lives.

Attendance is everyone's business, all of the time. We will work with families through a range of support to ensure that all members of our school community are ambitious to secure the best attendance possible and that children find real purpose and enjoyment in coming to school.

Under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996, it is the legal responsibility of the parent to ensure their children of compulsory school age attend school regularly. Statistics show a direct link between underachievement and attendance below 95%. Regular attenders make better progress both socially and academically.

Expectations

As a parent/carer –

- We expect your child to attend school every day and on time, and any issues preventing attendance to be discussed with your child's class teacher, the school office or the Attendance Lead.
- We expect that, if your child is absent, you will inform the school giving a reason why by completing the online absence form on the school website (**Report pupil absence**) by **8.30am** on each morning of absence. If you are unable to complete the form, please call the school office on **020 7987 4362**.
- If your child is absent due to a medical appointment, they must attend school before and/or after the appointment and bring medical evidence (appointment card, letter or text message) to show the reason for the absence.

- You should inform us promptly of any changes to address, telephone numbers or emergency contacts.

As a school –

- We will contact you if no reason for an absence has been given. The school office and/or Attendance Lead will contact you by phone or may carry out a home visit to obtain a reason for the absence. This is because we have a duty to ensure your child's safety. You may be asked to provide evidence for the absence.
- We will monitor your child's attendance and send you letters/text to notify you of their attendance percentage.
- The Attendance Lead/AWA may contact you to discuss your child's attendance and explore ways in which we can support you to improve it.
- If we believe that your child is absent due to a holiday you may be issued with a penalty notice (see below).
- If your child's attendance falls below 92%, we may refer to the Local Authority Attendance Welfare Officer.
- If your child misses 10 sessions (5 days) in a term they may be placed on the Fast Track initiative (see below).
- We will reward pupils for good attendance and those who make sustained improvements.
- We will monitor absence and call or invite you to a meeting in school if your child's attendance falls below 95%.
- Please note that if your child's attendance is **below 92%** you may be contacted by the school or the Local Authority Attendance Welfare Officer, even if you have informed school about your child's absence.
- We will ask you to provide evidence if your child has a poor attendance record.

Authorised Absence

An authorised absence is when your child has been given permission to be absent from school. It is defined as:

- Genuine illness
- Medical or dental appointments (routine appointments should be arranged out of school time)
- Bereavement – at the Headteacher's discretion
- Religious observance – on days exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the family belongs
- Approved leave in term time where there are exceptional circumstances, as agreed by the Headteacher.

Authorised absence is at the Headteacher's discretion, and you may be required to provide school with evidence of the absence.

Accepted evidence:

- Appointment card or letter
- Letter or note from GP
- Medication or prescription with correct name and dates
- Comment slip or receipt from the pharmacy
- Notification from a medical professional

Routine doctor and dental appointments should be booked at the end of the school day or during school holidays where possible. We know that sometimes you cannot choose hospital appointments, so please make sure you only take your child out of school for the appointment and bring them back to school when it has finished. Your child's absence may be marked as unauthorised for one of the morning or afternoon sessions if your child was expected to return to school. Evidence should be provided for all scheduled appointments.

Unauthorised Absence

An unauthorised absence is when no explanation for absence has been given to school, or if the reason provided does not meet guidelines set out by the Department for Education. It is defined as:

- Holidays in term time where permission has NOT been given by the school
- Late after registers have closed
- Unexplained absence
- Any child whose absence is ongoing and remains unexplained for 10 days will be referred to the local authority as a child missing education
- Taking the rest of the day off before or after a medical appointment
- Staying at home to care for sick relatives or younger siblings
- Birthdays, weddings or anniversaries
- Transport issues, e.g. car broken down

It is important to note that it is the responsibility of the parent to ensure their child attends school regularly and on time. Regular unauthorised absences may lead to a referral to the Local Authority Attendance Welfare Officer regarding your child's poor attendance record, and you may be asked to attend an attendance meeting.

Failure to improve your child's attendance and engage with the support offered may result in legal proceedings. If found guilty of failing to secure your child's

regular school attendance, you could receive a fine of up to £1,000 and a criminal record.

Continuing concerns around school attendance

School will start to ask for medical evidence before authorising any further absences if your child's attendance falls below 96%.

Ultimately, parents/carers can be held to account for failing to ensure that their children attend school punctually and regularly. The London Borough of Tower Hamlets carries out this statutory function to uphold the right of children and young people to access their education.

When necessary, statutory action will be taken under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996, or an Education Supervision Order may be sought under the Children Act 1989. This may take the form of a penalty notice, prosecution of parents in the Magistrates' Court resulting in a fine, or a statutory order.

Exceptional circumstances

Parents do not have the right to remove their children from school during term time. Leave of absence in term time will only be considered if parents/carers make a request to the school on the appropriate form giving the exceptional reasons for the request and providing information to support their application. Please note that 'exceptional' means 'very unusual'. Therefore, a second request for absence based on 'exceptional circumstances' is unlikely to be authorised.

The Headteacher will decide whether or not the absence will be authorised. Parents/carers who take their children out of school during term time without authorisation may be issued with a penalty notice.

Children Missing Education

If there is no contact between school and the family and the child's whereabouts are unknown, it is possible for a child to be removed from the school roll. This will only happen in circumstances where children do not return to school for ten days after an authorised absence, or are absent from school without authorisation for twenty consecutive school days, and the school and local authority have been unable to establish the child's whereabouts after reasonable enquiries.

Fast Track Initiative

Fast Track places pupils on a structured programme with monitored periods giving the opportunity for improvement. Where unauthorised absence continues, parents will be invited to attend a formal attendance meeting to discuss the reasons for poor attendance and to examine any support needs. Parents may be issued with a

penalty warning letter and subsequently a penalty notice for irregular school attendance if unauthorised absence persists.

Cubitt Town Primary School works closely with the London Borough of Tower Hamlets and follows local authority and Department for Education guidance on attendance. Our attendance target is at least 96%.

As a school, we classify attendance as follows:

96% and above	**Attendance is at or above our minimum expected level.**
92% – 96%	**Attendance is a concern and requires improvement to achieve our expected level.**
Below 92%	**Attendance at this level is a significant concern.**

Attendance is presented as a percentage; the table shows days of learning missed over the year:

Attendance percentage	Weekly	Termly	Yearly
98%	30 minutes	1¼ days	4 days
95%	¼ day	3½ days	10 days
90%	½ day	7 days	19 days
85%	¾ day	10 days	28 days
80%	1 day	14 days	40 days

Over five years, children with an average attendance of 85% – 90% will have missed half a school year of education, while children with an average attendance of 80% will have missed the equivalent of a whole school year.

Department for Education guidelines class any child who misses 10% or more of their possible sessions (attendance of 90% or below) as persistently absent.

Lateness

Breakfast Club runs every day in the school hall from 8.00am for pupils who have a place. Gates open before the start of the school day and close promptly at the start times below. Children should arrive at least five minutes before their start time.

Year group	Gates opens /	lessons begin
Nursery (morning)	8.45am	8.45
Reception, Year 1 and Year 2	8.45am	8.55am
Years 3 – 6	8.55am	8.55am

Pupils who arrive after the gates have closed must be signed in at the front office by their parent/carer before they go to class. Late marks can lead to poor attendance, and it is the parent's responsibility to ensure children are at school on time. If your child is persistently late you may be invited to a meeting to discuss this, persistent lateness will be referred to the Local Authority Attendance Welfare Officer, and you may be issued with a penalty notice.

Being late to school has a significant impact on the amount of learning time lost over a school year.

The table gives you an indication of how much time is lost if your child is regularly late.

Minutes late per day	Number of hours lost over a year	Number of days lost over a year
5 minutes	15 hours 50 minutes	3.4 days
10 minutes	31 hours 40 minutes	6.9 days
15 minutes	47 hours 30 minutes	10.3 days
20 minutes	63 hours 20 minutes	13.8 days
30 minutes	95 hours	20.7 days

Holidays in term time

The Department for Education states that **no child is expected to be absent from school on holiday during term time.** We expect that parents will take their child on holiday during the approved school breaks. It should be noted that there are **175 days each year** when a child is not required to be in school.

In exceptional circumstances the Headteacher may authorise a leave of absence and will decide how many days are authorised. Most authorised requests are for children with an excellent attendance record **(in most cases 96% or over)**, but there can be a degree of flexibility depending on the circumstances of the request.

If your child needs to leave the area or country and will miss school due to exceptional circumstances during term time, you **MUST** speak to the Attendance Lead or the school office. All exceptional leave requests **MUST** be made before the first day of absence with sufficient notice. All parents who wish to request exceptional leave **must complete the request for leave form.**

Requests that **MAY** be considered:

- Bereavement of a close family member
- Participation in a sporting event at city, regional or national level
- Recognised examinations for music or dance
- Other exceptional circumstances agreed on an individual basis by the Headteacher

You will **NOT** be given permission for:

- Availability of cheaper holidays
- Absence during statutory assessments (e.g. Phonics Screening Check, Multiplication Tables Check, Key Stage 2 SATs)
- Trips away, e.g. sporting or musical events, day trips, shopping
- Taking a long weekend away
- General family celebrations
- Illness of a family member

If you take your child **without permission** the following could happen:

- You could be referred to the London Borough of Tower Hamlets and may be issued with a penalty notice on your return of **£80 per parent per child** if paid within 21 days (e.g. a family with 2 parents and 2 children would be fined a total of £320). If the fine is **not paid within 21 days** it will increase to **£160 per parent per child** if paid within 28 days (e.g. the same family of 4 would now have a fine of £640). A second penalty notice within three years is

charged at £160 with no reduction. Failure to pay the fine can result in prosecution.

- Your child could lose their school place at Cubitt Town Primary School.

If your child is granted exceptional leave, your child must return to school on the agreed return date. If they do not, we will have no alternative but to start proceedings, registering your child as 'a child missing education'. This could put your child at risk of losing their place in school.