

# Attendance panels

## Advice for all parents and carers of children attending Hillingdon schools and academies



You have been invited to this panel because your child's school has referred your child to us as they are not attending school regularly. The school has been in telephone contact with you about this and has also written to you.

### What is an attendance panel?

The panels are arranged in order to give pupils the opportunity to improve their attendance at school or academy without legal action being taken against their parents in the Magistrates Court. The panels will involve people you know eg your head of year and people from your child's school and also people you may not know eg the chairperson from the Participation team, the school nurse, the police officer attached to secondary schools only (known as the safer schools officer).

### How will these people help me and my child?

The different people at the panel are there to help and support you and your child, if necessary. Everybody at the panel will want to help your child get the best out of their time at school by making sure they attend school regularly and punctually.



## Why is the letter inviting me to the panel quite harsh?

It is important that you attend the meeting and the letter has to advise you what could happen if your child continues to have poor attendance. It gives you the opportunity to come to the meeting and discuss any problems you may have with your child.

## What will happen when I come to the panel meeting?

When you arrive the chairperson, who will be from the Participation Team, will thank you for coming and introducing themselves. Other panel members present will also introduce themselves.

The chairperson will explain the reason for the meeting and copies of your child's attendance will be handed out to all present. The attendance data will be explained and someone from the school will provide information on what has been happening in regards to the attendance concern.

## Will my child and I be allowed to speak?

You and your child will be given an opportunity to speak if in Year 6 or above. In the case of younger children their thoughts will be captured on a Voice of the Child document by a member of the school staff so that it can be shared at the meeting.

## Will anyone else say anything?

The other people on the panel will be asked if they want to say anything. The school nurse, for instance, may well give some advice if you have said your child has a health problem.

## Will my child and I be expected to do anything else?

The chairperson will write an attendance plan which you will be asked to sign at the end of the meeting. If your child is year 6 or above, they will also be asked to sign. The safer schools police officer or somebody else from the panel will also be asked to sign the attendance plan.

## What happens if I do not sign?

The attendance plan can be used as evidence in court if there is no improvement in your child's attendance and can be used whether you sign it or not.

However, the school and the participation officer want to work together with you and it is in your child's best interests for you to sign.

## What happens if I decide not to attend the meeting?

The meeting will go ahead whether you are there or not and if your child is in secondary school or year six in primary school, they will always be asked to come into the panel meeting with or without you. It is much better if you do come and support your child and have the opportunity to express your point of view.

## Will we be given time to make sure my child's attendance improves before legal action is taken?

The plan will give a review date of about 3/4 school weeks from the meeting date.

## Will I need to go to the review?

You do not have to go to the review, but the chairperson at the panel meeting will advise you of this.

## What happens after the panel meeting?

The Participation Officer will post you a copy of the attendance plan and covering letter.

If you do not attend the meeting and have given no explanation you may receive a home visit or a telephone call to give you a further opportunity to discuss the issue.

## What happens after the review?

If your child's attendance improves greatly then you will be advised that the matter is closed. However we will always be monitoring your child's attendance until they leave school.

## What happens if my child's attendance does not improve?

You will be advised that legal action will be taken that may result in your being prosecuted in the Magistrates Court.

## Further advice

If you would like further advice about Penalty Notices or any issues relating to school attendance please contact:

✉ Participation team  
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