

**ELLESMERE
PRIMARY SCHOOL**



Engage, Persevere, Succeed

Attendance and Punctuality Policy 2017-2018

Review Date: June 2018

Attendance and Punctuality Policy

Introduction and Rationale

Ellesmere Primary School recognises the importance of good attendance and the impact it has on children's progress, attainment, enjoyment of and relationships within school. Good attendance helps a child to realise their potential. Everyone associated with the school including teachers, children, governors and parents are encouraged to work in partnership to create a culture which promotes and values good attendance. Good attendance will also be promoted via our policy and prospectus, and will be recognised and rewarded as an achievement. The school monitors attendance and ensures quick and early intervention if a problem is identified. The Governing Body has set an attendance target for its pupils of at least 95% and expects all the children to arrive at school on time.

The Attendance and Punctuality Policy is based on the premise of equal opportunities for all.

Legislation

Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 states that *"The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him/her to receive efficient full time education either by regular attendance at school or otherwise"*.

Section 444 (1) of the Education Act 1996 states that *"if a child of compulsory school age who is a registered pupil at a school fails to attend regularly at the school his/her parent is guilty of an offence"*.

Therefore regular and punctual attendance at school is a legal requirement, as well as being essential to enable children to maximise their educational attainments and opportunities.

For the purposes of Education Law the definition 'parental responsibility' lies with whomever the child resides. This could be one parent, both parents and/or carer/s.

Procedure

Children are expected to attend school regularly, unless there is good reason for absence.

There are two types of absence:

- Authorised (where the school approves a pupil absence)
- Unauthorised (where school will not approve the absence)

The school has a duty to safeguard all of its pupils therefore if a child is absent, parents/carers should inform the school on the first day of absence, and each day of absence thereafter, stating the reason. The school office will make telephone contact with home when a child is absent and the parent/carer has **not** notified the school of the absence. If no contact can be achieved or the reason for absence is not accepted the absence will be unauthorised.

1. Punctuality

The school door opens for all pupils at 8.30am. Registration is taken for all pupils at 8.50am and all pupils are expected to be in school for registration at that time.

2. Lateness

Registers are legal documents and are marked twice daily. Once registration has closed, all latecomers will be given a "late after register closed" mark (L) if arriving at school after registration has closed with the number of minutes late being recorded.

Any child arriving after registration has closed, is to report to the main office and signed in using the digital entry sign screen by their accompanying parent/guardian. Any late arrivals after 9.20am will be recorded on the register as **U** which is an unauthorised absence. If the school has been advised that a child will arrive late due to a dental/medical appointment, an attendance mark will be given on arrival. Children who are consistently late for school are disrupting not only their own education but also that of other children. Where persistent lateness gives cause for concern, further action may be taken which may include referral to external agencies.

3. Appointments

The school operates a signing out system for appointments and other periods of absence. Pupils leaving school, for any reason whatsoever, will be signed out, and if appropriate, back in again. This enables the school to monitor absence levels for appointments, and for health and safety reasons should the school need to be evacuated. Parents and Guardians should avoid appointments within the school day, where possible, and inform the school where this is not possible in advance of the appointment.

4. Medical Absence

Absence due to sickness should be reported to the school by 9.15 am on the first day of absence. The school should be kept informed during longer periods of absence. Any medical absence in excess of 7 days (14 sessions) per academic year should be supported by medical evidence. If no medical evidence is received then the absence will be recorded as unauthorised. School will usually contact parents by 11am on the first day if no satisfactory reason for absence has been received. The school will work with all families on an individual basis if medical absences exceed the maximum threshold.

5. Recording and Reporting Absences.

When appropriate, parents will be informed of their child's low attendance level, and invited to discuss their attendance when attendance drops below 90% for no specific medical, or other acceptable reason. The monitoring process will include a three-step referral procedure; this includes the issuing of standard letters. Absence figures will be included in the child's annual progress report. Where a pattern of poor attendance exists and attendance does not improve, despite the school's involvement, the Inclusion Manager will be asked for help and school staff will be used as and when required to support the child and family.

6. Application for Exceptional Circumstances - Leave of Absence in Term Time

In September 2013, amendments to the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, make it clear that Head Teachers may not grant any Leave of Absence (holiday) during term time unless there are 'Exceptional Circumstances'. The Head Teacher and members of the Governing Body will determine what constitutes an exceptional circumstance on an individual basis. If parents/carers need to request Leave of Absence in Term Time, they must complete a 'Request for Leave of Absence' form available from the school office. It should be noted that if any application is declined and unauthorised absence occurs of 5 or more consecutive days, then school may apply to the Local Authority for a Fixed Penalty Notice to be issued to each parent/carer as and when required according to the appropriate legislation.

A child's absence during term time seriously disrupts their continuity of learning. Not only do they miss the teaching on the days they are away, but also they are less prepared for the lessons building on that teaching when they return to school. There is a consequent risk of under achievement, which we must seek to avoid. Clearly, there are times when children are unwell and cannot avoid being absent from school. Absence for any reason other than sickness must be avoided.

7. Promoting attendance

The school promotes good attendance in its prospectus. The school reports attendance levels to the head teacher/ governing body. The governing body is responsible for ensuring any attendance issues are dealt with in line with school policy.

Appendix 1 – Fixed Penalty Notice Process

An early intervention process to address **unauthorised absence**.

It is the LA who issue Fixed Penalty Warning Letters and Fixed Penalty Notices in relation to **unauthorised** absence from school. A pupil who accrues 10 or more **unauthorised** absences during a current term can be considered for this process, providing school have notified the parent/carer in writing of attendance concerns and also that appropriate staff have attempted to meet with the parent/carer to discuss these concerns (via Letter 2). If these criteria have been fulfilled then appropriate staff can ask office admin to prepare the relevant paperwork to send to the LA. If the LA agrees to progress matters, a Fixed Penalty Warning Letter is then sent by the LA and states a 15 day monitoring period where there should be no further **unauthorised** absences. If a pupil has any **unauthorised** absence during this period or improved attendance is not sustained immediately after the monitoring period then school can ask the LA to proceed to issuing the Fixed Penalty Notice.

The Fixed Penalty Notice states that there is a Penalty to be paid: £60 per parent/carer, per child (for whom the FPN Warning Letter was sent) to be paid within 21 days. If not paid within 21 days then the Penalty rises to £120 per parent/carer

per child up to the 28th day. If full payment is not received by the 28th day then the LA will prepare paperwork for a Prosecution in the Magistrates' Court.

If found guilty, the parent will receive a Criminal record in addition to the disposal and costs issued by Court.

Fixed Penalty Notice for Non - Exceptional Leave Of Absence in Term Time

Formerly, the Head Teacher had discretion to authorise up to 10 days leave in term time. From September 2013, the law now says that any leave will only be granted in term time in 'Exceptional Circumstances'. If the leave request is deemed to be 'unexceptional', and lasts for 10 consecutive sessions or longer, school can apply direct to the LA for an FPN to be issued (no Warning Letter required)

Appendix 2 - Attendance Letters

LETTER 1: This Letter Is Informative For Parents/Carers

Sent to notify parents/carers that a student has 95% or less attendance, if appropriate to do so, (**unauthorised and authorised absence**), offers parents/carers an initial opportunity to communicate with school if there are specific problems that impact upon attendance.

LETTER 2: This Letter Is For Action by Parents/Carers

Advises parents/carers that since *Letter 1* has been sent, absences have continued (**authorised and unauthorised**). It invites parents/carers into school to discuss the situation to see if there is any further support school can offer. It offers school an opportunity to discuss the consequences of continued poor attendance i.e. Fixed Penalty Notice. The LA will expect a meeting with parents/carers to have taken place **before** the Fixed Penalty Notice process can be considered.

LETTER 3 - MEDICAL EVIDENCE LETTER: This Letter Is Informative For Parents/Carers

School policy states that after a student has taken 14 sessions of authorised illness (7 days) during an academic year, formal medical evidence will be requested before any further illness absences can be authorised. Formal medical evidence does not need to be a letter from the GP, but could be a prescription or prescribed medication or a GP/Nurse signature on a GP Surgery compliment slip or dated GP/Nurse appointment card.

Potential Persistent Absence: 95% and below

Persistent Absence: 90% and below