

Attendance Policy



We have carefully considered and analysed the impact of this policy on equality and the possible implications for pupils with protected characteristics, as part of our commitment to meet the Public Sector Equality Duty requirement to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations.

Approved by:	The Headteacher and Board of Governors		Date: 23/03/22
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1. STATEMENT OF INTENT

Ellington Infant School is committed to the continuous raising of achievement of all our pupils. Regular attendance is critical if our pupils are to be successful and benefit from the opportunities presented to them. We expect pupils to attend regularly and punctually and we actively promote 100% attendance for all our pupils.

We have high expectations of regular, punctual attendance at our school. Good attendance is fundamental to a successful and fulfilling school experience. We use a variety of methods to promote 100% attendance and good punctuality.

The Governing Board, Headteacher and Staff in partnership with parents / carers have a duty to promote full attendance at school. Staff at Ellington Infants must monitor the attendance of each individual pupil from a safeguarding perspective and it is the legal duty of parents / carers to ensure their child attends school daily.

Ellington Infants will give a high priority to conveying to parents / carers and pupils the importance of regular and punctual attendance. We recognise that parents / carers have a vital role to play and there is a need to establish strong home-school links and communication systems that can be

utilised whenever there is concern about attendance. If there are problems which affect a pupil's attendance we will investigate, identify and strive in partnership with parents / carers and pupils to resolve those problems as quickly and efficiently as possible. We will adopt a clearly focused approach aimed at returning the pupil to full attendance at all times.

2. PRINCIPLES

Ellington Infant School will:

- complete registers accurately at the beginning of each morning and afternoon session
- stress to parents/carers/ the importance of contacting appropriate school staff early on the first day of absence
- display attendance rates in our newsletter and reward good or improved attendance for pupils
- promote positive staff attitudes to pupils returning after absence
- ensure regular evaluation of attendance procedures by senior leaders who will report to school governors
- work towards ensuring that all pupils feel supported and valued.
- monitor and investigate any patterns of lateness or absence
- ensure that children are given the opportunity to catch up with work missed following extended absence with an expectation that this work is supported by parents/carers.

3. PROCEDURES

If no contact is received from the parents / carers of an absent pupil by the first day of absence the Attendance Officer will:

- contact parent/carer by telephone or text. If no response is received and the staff are concerned about the safety and welfare of the pupil telephone calls will be made to other contacts listed in SIMS.
- discuss concerns with the school's Senior Leadership Team (SLT) if no response is received after 2 days of absence. SLT will arrange to contact the parent by telephone or by conducting a home visit in order to ascertain the reason for non-attendance
- when a pattern of absence/lateness is emerging, the following procedures will be implemented:
 - send letter 1 (see appendix C)

If no improvements are seen within two weeks, we will then:

- send letter 2 (see Appendix D)

Below 93% attendance:

- apply for Penalty Notice where there are 10 unauthorised sessions in 100 sessions
- arrange a School Attendance Meeting

- send letter advising of Persistent Absentee (PA) threshold also offering support (see Appendix A)
- if further unauthorised absence is recorded, SLT to discuss possible prosecution with PRU, Inclusion and Attendance Service (PIAS)
- help the pupil's re-integration where a pupil is returning to school after an absence of longer than a week.
- notes, records of telephone calls, and medical evidence should be dated, named and initialled by the office staff/FLO, Assistant Headteacher or Headteacher.

In order to ensure the success of this policy every member of school staff will convey to the pupils that attendance is a crucial part of their education.

4. PERFORMANCE

We will review our progress against National Attendance Targets. We will look at those interventions which have been successful as part of the evaluation process. When evaluating success, the school will consider whether or not:

- attendance has improved
- punctuality has improved
- parental response to absences has improved
- the school has been successful in raising the profile of attendance both within the school, Governing Board and the local community
- pupils are fully aware of the importance of punctuality and regular attendance and the attendance procedures operating within the school
- attendance issues have been included as topics in school assemblies, Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) lessons, or as a theme for any other lessons/assemblies.

5. PRACTICE

The school will recognise the importance of good practice by:

- keeping and maintaining registers accurately (see Attendance Codes)
- maintaining a consistent approach to marking registers
- carefully and accurately inputting data into the SIMs Attendance module
- regularly analysing attendance data
- ensuring prompt follow-up action in cases of non-school attendance
- liaising closely with the school's School Liaison Officer (SLO)
- rewarding excellent attendance.

6. KEEPING THE REGISTER

6.1 The Status of the Register

The register is a legal document and must be kept accurately, neatly and, if not linked directly to SIMS, marked in ink if completed by hand. The register (from SIMS Attendance) may be requested in a court of law as evidence in a prosecution for non-attendance. It may also contribute data to pupils' end of term reports and to records of achievement. It is vital that pupils are aware that registration is a significant part of the school day. We will ensure that all staff involved with the

registration process are aware that the law is very specific regarding the keeping of registers. Marking and keeping the register is of the utmost importance.

6.2 Marking the Register

- no pupil will be marked present unless actually in the room when the register is called or unless he or she has been given permission to be absent by the registering teacher
- registers are finally closed at an agreed time each day **9:10am** and **1:10pm**
- where a pupil misses registration but arrives before **9:10am** with an adequate explanation s/he should be marked as late. Lateness must be explained by a parent/carer when a pupil is marked late in the morning
- where a pupil misses registration and arrives after **9:10am** s/he should be marked as late after the register i.e. unauthorised absence – U
- spaces must not be left on the register
- the data from the registers will be input to SIMs Attendance at the end of each week as a minimum and a percentage attendance report produced and monitored
- the decision to authorise an absence will be made within a maximum of two weeks from the date of the absence.

7. REMOVAL FROM ROLL

Pupils will only be removed from the school's roll and class registers under the following circumstances:

- the school is replaced by another school/school on a School Attendance Order
- the School Attendance Order is revoked by the local authority
- completion of compulsory school age
- permanent exclusion
- death of the pupil
- transfer between academies/schools
- pupil withdrawn to be educated outside the school system
- failure to return from an extended family holiday after both the school and SLO/Education Welfare Officer (EWO) have tried to locate the pupil
- a medical condition prevents their attendance and return to the school before ending compulsory school age
- in custody for more than four months
- 20 days continuous unauthorised absence and both the school and SLO/EWO have tried to locate the pupil.

It is not lawful to remove a pupil from a school roll simply because the pupil has a poor attendance record.

8. ANALYSIS OF ATTENDANCE DATA

Analysis will help to draw attention to deterioration or improvement and target intervention more selectively and help to establish the cause of an absence. Whole school attendance figures should be produced weekly and analysed termly and yearly, this process will indicate factors such as the

effect of seasonal attendance e.g. attendance may decline in the colder months and preceding school holidays.

Weekly figures may illustrate:

- the fall in attendance preceding staff development days, half terms, end of terms
- the effect of ending terms on a Monday or Tuesday
- the effect of activity days, day trips, or residential trips
- the effect of pupil holidays in term time.

Reports from SIMs Attendance will indicate these and other patterns of absence.

9. TYPES OF ABSENCE

9.1 Authorised absences

Only a school can authorise an absence. Parents/carers and the LA do not have the power to authorise absences.

THE KEY POINTS THAT WE CONSIDER WHEN DECIDING TO AUTHORISE ABSENCE ARE:

- it is a legal requirement that registered pupils of compulsory school age attend regularly and punctually
- schools are not obliged to accept a parental explanation for pupil absence
- the headteacher may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances
- schools should always expect regular and punctual attendance, even when the school is aware of family difficulties. Looking after siblings or a sick parent, shopping or going on a trip will not be acceptable reasons for absence
- medical evidence maybe required when attendance reaches 95% and if this is not provided by the parent / carer, the absence should be treated as unauthorised
- where absence is authorised, Ellington Infant attendance team will remain vigilant to emerging patterns of non-attendance
- lateness should be actively discouraged, and persistent lateness treated in the same way as irregular attendance

9.2 Unauthorised Absences

Unauthorised absence is absence without approval from an authorised representative of the school and includes all unexplained absences.

If a child is absent with the approval of the school, for whatever reason, no offence is deemed to have been committed.

The school will need to exercise caution in the authorisation of absence. If no medical evidence is provided by parents/carers, once attendance has reached 95%, the absence may be further investigated and left unauthorised.

The decision taken by the school to authorise absence or not, is of critical importance in determining the level of involvement of the SLO. If the school has authorised a pupil's absence, in effect leave has been given and there is no case in law for the parents / carers to answer.

9.3 Parentally Condoned Absence

This form of absence is equally as damaging to the pupil's educational experience as any other form of absence. It is essential that, when school staff feel that a worrying pattern of non-attendance is emerging they inform the Headteacher who will work closely with other staff and the educational, social and health support services to ensure that the most appropriate and effective intervention is available to the pupil and parents/carers. There is a range of specialist support services, which will assist and advise school and parents/carers on ways forward when these difficulties arise.

9.4 Lateness

A pupil's punctuality is a legal requirement and the parents/carers of a pupil who is persistently late are guilty of an offence. The law treats persistent lateness in the same way as irregular attendance and parents/carers can be prosecuted if late arrival is not resolved. Pupils who arrive late disrupt not only their own education but that of others. Poor punctuality may indicate problems within the pupil's home that the pupil may need help to deal with. For some pupils, arriving punctually may be beyond their control. Often lateness is a result of a lack of firm parenting; the child is confused and often left to cope alone, sometimes at a very young age. There needs to be a careful balance struck between being too punitive and too accepting of a pupil's lateness. Once the reasons for lateness have been established, the parents/carers, pupil and school need to work in partnership to resolve the difficulties.

The register closes at **9:10am**, if a child arrives between **8:55am** and **9:10am** they are marked in as 'late'. If they arrive after this time they are marked in as having an 'unauthorised absence', however, for Health and Safety purposes they will be recorded as being on the premises.

9.5 Following Up Absence

All pupil absence will be followed up as soon as possible (see appendix A for flow chart). The action taken, and the responses received, will always be recorded. Parents/carers are informed through the school website, parent meetings and in newsletters that a text will be sent, whenever possible, on the morning of the child's first day of absence. This will immediately be recorded in the office.

Where a child returns and a reason for absence has not been provided by the parent either by telephone or written note the school may send a standard letter.

9.6 The Role of the Headteacher

The Headteacher is responsible for following up absences but may delegate this responsibility to the Attendance Team, and/or another member of the Senior Leadership Team.

The Headteacher:

- delegates the maintenance of weekly running totals to the Attendance team or other appropriate member of staff
- checks attendance reports regularly
- reports issues regarding absence, including trends of attendance to the Governing Board through Headteacher reports to GB meetings
- reports to other stakeholders and outside agencies when necessary

9.7 Family Holidays in Term Time

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006

Amendments have been made to the 2006 regulations in the [Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#). These amendments, as described below, came into force on 1 September 2013.

Term-time holiday

The [Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006](#) currently allow Headteachers to grant leave of absence for the purpose of a family holiday during term time in “exceptional circumstances” of up to ten school days leave per year. Headteachers can also grant extended leave for more than ten school days in exceptional circumstances.

Amendments to the 2006 regulations remove references to family holiday and extended leave as well as the statutory threshold of ten school days. The amendments make clear that headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. The Headteacher [in consultation with the EWO] should determine the number of school days a child can be away from the school if the leave is granted.

DfE guidelines clearly state that the reference to exceptional circumstances means that the parent must make a strong case for leave of absence during term time.

The Headteacher will consider each request for leave of absence individually and this must be put in writing addressed to the Headteacher stating the reason for the request. The School does not operate a ‘blanket approval’ policy for requests. The following factors should be considered when assessing requests - no one factor should be regarded as conclusive:

- the time of year of proposed leave of absence
- the length and purpose of the leave of absence
- the impact on continuity of learning
- the circumstances of the family
- the overall attendance pattern of the child. A 10 day leave of absence in term time reduces overall attendance to 94.7%. This is without taking into account any absence through illness.

Leave of absence for more than two weeks is also seen as exceptional. The Headteacher will carefully explore with parents/carers why such leave of absence is necessary. Where such absences are sanctioned, they will be counted as an authorised absence.

Where parents/carers fail to abide by the agreement reached with the school and keep a child away from school in excess of the period agreed or, where parents/carers fail to apply for permission, this will be treated as an unauthorised absence.

In order to ensure that the negative impact of leave of absence is minimised, applications for leave of absence will not be considered in the following periods or circumstances:

- During the first term of a new academic year
- During term 5 for Year 2 pupils and during the week of the Phonics Screening Check for Year 1 pupils.
- Where attendance is below 96% unless there are exceptional circumstances.

10. REFERRALS TO THE SCHOOL LIAISON OFFICER

The vast majority of referrals to the SLO are made on the basis of non-attendance and are made when:

- a pattern of irregular attendance has developed
- a period of non-attendance has been established
- letters sent by the school have met with little or no response
- there is a lack of co-operation in ensuring the child's regular attendance
- a parent/carer withdraws a pupil without securing the means of alternative provision
- a pattern of persistent lateness develops
- there are child protection concerns
- there are specific welfare issues which are preventing a pupil from accessing education
- a pupil is withdrawn from school by parents/carers who are moving to a new area and the school does not receive a request for the pupil's records from a school in that area.

Referrals will be made to the Kent LA PRU, Inclusion and Attendance Service by the Headteacher where necessary.

11. CHILDREN MISSING FROM SUITABLE EDUCATION

The Education and Inspections Act 2006 places a new duty on schools in England and Wales to make arrangements to identify children of compulsory school age who are deemed to be missing education. Pupils who are deemed to be missing education will be referred to the Education Welfare Officer within five school days. This process does not replace any of the Child Protection Procedures. Existing safeguarding procedures and mechanisms for reporting and recording child protection concerns are to be observed at all times.

12. TIMING OF THE SCHOOL DAY

Start of school day 8:50 am

Morning Break KS1 10.30am

Lunchtime EYFS 11.45 KS1 12pm

End of school day 3:10pm

If the school wishes to change the timing of the beginning and end of the school day, the Headteacher will seek and follow guidance given by the Local Authority.

13. PENALTY NOTICES FOR UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE

Penalty notices for absence from school have been issued since April 2005. Following consultation on a Code of Conduct, it was agreed that Penalty Notices would be issued by the PRU, Inclusion and Attendance Service based on requests from the school or police.

If issued, the penalty will be £60 if paid within 21 days, rising to £120 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days. Failure to pay the penalty in full by the end of the 28-day period may result in prosecution by Kent County Council. **Please note that a Penalty Notice is issued to each parent for each child.**

The following circumstances will be considered as appropriate reasons for the issuing of penalty notices:

- where an excluded child is found in a public place during school hours during the first five days of exclusion
- overt truancy (including truancy sweeps)
- parentally-condoned absence
- holidays in term time
- delayed return from extended holidays without prior school agreement
- persistent lateness after the register has closed.

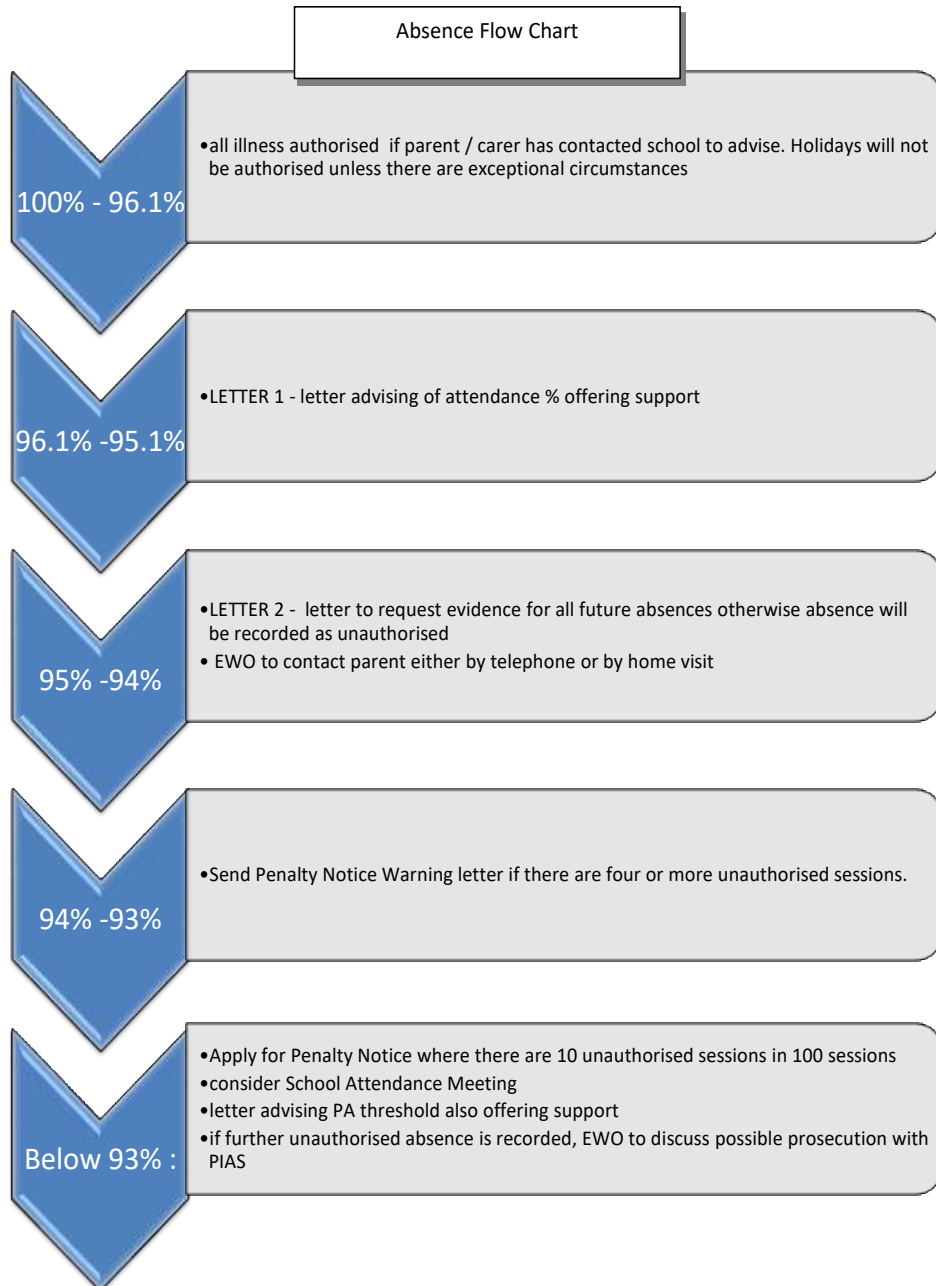
A pupil has to be absent from school in one, or a combination of these circumstances for at least ten sessions in any 100 sessions before the issuing of a penalty notice can be considered. (10 sessions is equivalent to 5 days).

Following a request for the issuing of a penalty notice a check is made that the request meets the conditions of the Code of Conduct. A warning letter from the Attendance Service will then be sent to the parents/carers explaining that unless their child attends full time for the 15 day monitoring period, a penalty notice will be issued.

For cases of unauthorised holiday during term time, the Headteacher will write to the parent advising them that the holiday will not be authorised. A warning letter is not issued by the PRU, Inclusion and Attendance Service for term time holidays.

The school will inform individual parents/carers, where attendance is a concern that they are at risk of a referral for a penalty notice.

Appendix A – Absence Flow Chart



LETTER 1

Dear

Re: xxxxx's attendance

During each term we examine in some detail the attendance records for our pupils. This is because the Government expects primary school children to attain at least 96% attendance record. Attendance and punctuality are considered when examining these records and xxxx's has been raised as a concern.

As you can see from the enclosed Registration Certificate xxx's attendance currently stands at **xxx%** with **xx unauthorised absences** and **xx lates**.

Sometimes it comes as a surprise for parents to hear that their child's attendance is low as it may seem that they have only had the odd day off here and there, but it doesn't take long before occasional absences start having a marked effect on attendance figures.

We would like to make you aware of this concern and offer the support of the school, if there is anything that we can do to help improve the attendance of xxxx, please speak to either Miss West (Family Liaison Officer), Mr Ahmet (Headteacher) or Mrs Tong (Attendance Officer).

We hope to see an improvement in xxxx's attendance in the coming weeks, if not you will be asked to attend an Attendance Improvement Meeting in school.

Yours sincerely

Mr A Ahmet Headteacher

LETTER 2

Dear

Re: xxxxx's attendance

Following on from the letter dated XXXXXX that was sent to you regarding XXXXXX's attendance.

Unfortunately, we still have concerns about XXXX's attendance so would therefore like to invite you to attend an Attendance Improvement Meeting with Mr Ahmet (Headteacher) and Miss West (Family Liaison Officer) to discuss attendance and explore how we can work together to improve XXXXX's attendance.

This meeting will be held on XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX at XXXXXXXXXXXX

Yours sincerely

Mr A Ahmet Headteacher

Religious Observance Examples

Example 1

If a family want to travel to visit other family members to celebrate Eid then the two days for the Eid festival would be approved and coded R, but the headteacher does not need to approve any travel or holiday time with family, nor do they have to approve absence as a result of fasting. They would instead consider the child and the request and use their discretionary powers to consider whether to approve any further days, other than the two days for religious observance.

Example 2

A Jewish Orthodox family request to remove their child from school to attend a Jewish conference in America and request to keep their child at home during the last week of term so they can avoid participating in any Christian Christmas celebration. The school should consider the request to attend the Jewish conference as they would any other leave of absence request, as although the event itself is religious the conference is not a day of religious observance set aside within the Jewish Orthodox calendar. In terms of the child being removed from the school to avoid participating in any Christmas festival, parents/carers do have a right to withdraw the child from a celebration or an act of worship not of their religion, so it would be important for the school to discuss with the parents/carers where there are activities that their child is withdrawn from and the school should provide an alternative activity. Where there are usual learning activities and classes going on up to the end of term, then parents/carers do not have the right to withdraw them and any absence would be unauthorised and a Penalty Notice would be considered.