



**ELSTON HALL**  
Primary School

# **Elston Hall Attendance & Punctuality Policy**

**Reviewed by: B Highman  
Associate Headteacher: Mrs L Dollery**

**Last Review of Policy: May 2018**

## Attendance and punctuality policy

### Introduction

Regular attendance at school is essential to ensure uninterrupted progress and to enable pupils to reach their full potential. The attendance pattern for all children is monitored weekly with the school seeking to work actively with parents to ensure a regular pattern is maintained. We do all we can to encourage the children to attend, and to put in place the appropriate procedures to support this. We believe that the most important factor in promoting good attendance is the development of positive attitudes towards school and learning.

### Aims

- To ensure each child has full access to all areas of the curriculum and the education they are entitled to
- To endeavour to provide support and guidance where appropriate to improve children's attendance and punctuality.
- To monitor and identify patterns in individual children's attendance and punctuality throughout the year, pinpointing irregularities and cause for concern.
- To provide evidence and information for reporting to Parents/Carers, Governing body, LA and DFE.
- To maintain and improve attendance to ensure it is at a minimum of 96% (school target is 97%).
- To reduce lateness
- To comply with the legal requirements of the Education Act 1996

### Each child's attendance can be summarised as:

100%	<b>Outstanding</b>
96%+	<b>Excellent</b> – Well done! This will help all aspects of your children's progress and life in school.
95%	<b>Average</b> – Well done, strive to build on this
91%-94%	<b>Poor</b> – Absence is now affecting attainment and progress at school. Please work with the school to improve the situation
Below 90%	<b>Unacceptable</b> – absence is causing serious concern. It is affecting attainment and progress and is

	disrupting your child's learning. We will work with you and the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) to improve your child's attendance
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### Whole School Involvement

The implementation of this policy is the responsibility of the staff. However, in order to achieve our aims, specific staff have more involvement in the implementation of this policy. These include – Class teachers and teaching assistants, Children, Parents/Carers, School Administration Staff, Education Welfare Officer and Senior Leadership Team.

Named staff with direct operational responsibility for attendance are:

Sandra Preece – Office Administrator

Bridget Highman – Deputy Headteacher

Louise Dollery – Associate Headteacher

Dawn Roe – Educational Welfare Officer

### The Legal Position

Under section 7 of the Education Act 1996, the 'parent' is responsible for making sure that their child of compulsory school age receives efficient full-time education that is suitable to the child's age, ability and aptitude.

Compulsory school age is defined as beginning from the term in which a child turns five. Prosecutions are brought under S440 of the Education Act 1996

### Registers

Registers are STATUTORY LEGAL DOCUMENTS, which must be completed accurately by a member of teaching staff. Attendance registers are taken twice a day: at the start of the morning session and afternoon sessions.

Instructions for completing registers must be followed. The office staff will find out the reason for absences and enter the correct code. If they are in any doubt they will contact Associate/Deputy Headteacher for clarification.

### Absences/ Procedures for Authorising/Unauthorising Absence

- Parents are required to contact school before 9.30am on the first day of absence to confirm the reason of absence and its likely duration.
- If a child is not in school and no reason for absence has been supplied, parents are contacted to clarify the reason for absence.

- Absences can only be **authorised** once the attendance team are satisfied that an acceptable explanation has been provided by parent/carer regarding the absence. It is important that absences can only be authorised by the school and not by the parent/carer. Evidence may be requested to support the explanation.
  - Absences may be **unauthorised** if the reason is unacceptable or not validated. Where no reason is provided for an absence, this will initially be marked with an 'N' in the register but will be altered to an unauthorised absence after 2 weeks if no valid reason is provided. Unauthorised absences will be referred to attendance staff to investigate further.
- Parents who routinely fail to make contact with the school will have all absences unauthorised and a referral to the Education Welfare Service may be made.
  - If an absent child is subject to a Child Protection Plan or is a Child in Need attendance staff should inform Designated Safeguarding Lead immediately that the child is absent.
  - If a member of staff is in doubt about whether an absence should be authorised, then this should be referred to the Associate/Deputy Headteacher.

### Acceptable Reason for Absence

- Illness (evidence may be asked for)
- Days agreed by school as Religious observance
- An authorised Leave of Absence (see Leave of Absence section below)

### Unacceptable Reasons for Absence

- Holiday: whole weeks and odd days (see Leave of Absence section below)
- Unauthorised Leave of Absence (see leave of Absence section below)
- Parent's illness
- Looking after sick relatives
- Looking after brothers or sisters
- Child tells the parent/carer that they do not want to go to school
- Shopping/running errands (e.g. buying new shoes clothes)
- School clothing in the wash
- Oversleeping
- Head lice
- Birthday
- Children in another school on an Inset Day
- Last day of term
- Truancy (absence without knowledge of Parents/Carers)
- Minding the House

- Routine medical and dental appointments are discouraged in school time (school are happy to support parents if they are having difficulties obtaining appointments outside of school hours. If this is the case, children should attend school either side of their appointment).
- Any other reason that the Associate/Deputy Headteacher deems unacceptable

### Leave of absence during term time

Section 444(1) of the Education Act 1996 states: If a child of compulsory school age who is a registered pupil at a school fails to attend regularly at the school, his parent is guilty of an offence.

Legislation introduced in September 2013 states that schools can no longer authorise Leave of Absence during term time, unless there is an exceptional circumstance that warrants granting of the leave. If the leave is unauthorised, and the children are absent during the requested time, parents may receive a penalty notice (fine).

If you would like to make a request for a Leave of Absence then:

- Contact the school office to arrange a meeting with a member of the Leadership Team, usually the Deputy Headteacher, before the Leave is planned, and before any booking arrangements are made.
- During the meeting, the reason for the request is discussed, a Leave of Absence form is completed and the Deputy Headteacher will advise the parent/carer on the likely outcome. The discussion will surround whether the Leave is 'avoidable' or 'unavoidable'
- The request is discussed by the Senior leadership team at the school and each request will be considered individually.
- A letter is then sent by school to the parent/carer, informing them of the school's decision whether to authorise/unauthorise the Leave.
- If the request is unauthorised and the parent/carer still decides to take the child out of school for 5+ days, on return from the Leave, the school will notify the Local Authority who will issue a penalty notice.
  - The penalty notice is currently £60 per child, per parent if paid within 21 days of receipt of the notice. It rises to £120 if it is paid between 21 and 28 days of the notice.
  - If the penalty has not been paid within 28 days, the council will either prosecute the original offence, or withdraw the notice. It will only be withdrawn if there is proof it has been issued to the wrong person or it ought not to have been issued in the first place. If a conviction for an offence occurs, this can result in a criminal record.
  - The penalty notice may be issued to any parent/carer who has responsibility for ensuring a child regularly attends school. In a 'split family' circumstance, the penalty will be issued to the parents/carers where it is in the public interest

according to whether the parent/carer assumes responsibility for ensuring the child regularly attends school.

Circumstances which may be classed as exceptional include:

- Leave of Absence applied for by service families
- Serious or terminal illness of a parent, sibling or other close relative
- Significant family trauma has occurred and it is believed that a break is in the child's best interests
- The leave would be of unique and significant emotional, educational or spiritual value to the child
- The benefit of the leave would outweigh the loss of teaching time
- The applied absence is for reasons that are deemed unavoidable

If any of the above are stated, evidence to support the application may be requested. The leadership team may also take previous attendance, attainment and progress, impending examinations or significant school events or the frequency of any other Leave of Absences into account.

The following reasons for Leave of Absence will **not** be classed as exceptional:

- A family holiday (even if planned in term time due to financial reasons)
- Birthday
- Visiting family
- Wedding of a distant family member/friend

Lateness

- The school day begins at 8.55am. Children who are late must enter via the school reception.
- Lateness (before register closes) is categorised with an 'L'. Lateness (after register closes) is categorised with a 'U' and is unauthorised.
- Where lateness is causing concern, parents will be sent a letter reminding them about the importance of punctuality and offering any additional support.
- If punctuality issues continue and a child has a significant number of 'U' marks, a referral may be made to the Local Authority who may take legal action which could result in a fine.

Monitoring Attendance and Punctuality

- All children's attendance figures are printed weekly and children whose attendance has decreased during the week are highlighted
- The EWO, office administrator and Deputy Headteacher meet weekly to analyse attendance patterns, individual and whole school attendance

- Children causing concern will be discussed along with actions taken and progress towards targets.
- All parents receive a letter if attendance falls below 95%.
- Children with attendance less than 90% are identified as causing further concern and are given further intervention
- Children who are regularly late are also identified as causing concern and parents will receive letters if lateness is causing concern

### Procedures for when attendance is causing concern

- If attendance decreases below 90%, parents/carers are invited in to school to meet with Deputy Headteacher and EWO. An EHA (Early Help Assessment) may be offered.
- The pupil's attendance/punctuality will be monitored until it is no longer a concern
- Following school intervention, if a child's absence remains a cause of concern and a child has a significant number of unauthorised absences then a legal referral to the Local Authority by the Education Welfare Officer may be made. School intervention may include meetings, home visits and liaison with other professionals such as the school nurse.
- If parents/carers fail to attend meetings arranged by the Local Authority to discuss attendance issues and attendance, or punctuality does not improve within a specific time, a Penalty Notice could be served.

### Lost Children's Database

If a child has not been present at school for four weeks and no contact has been made with school, following lengthy enquiries by the Education Welfare officer, the child will be off registered from school and will become part of the Lost Children's database.

### Celebrating Good Attendance

We work hard to ensure our school's attendance improves and are keen to reward our pupils for their excellent attendance.

- Attendance certificates and prizes are awarded termly by the school in assemblies
- Class teachers are encouraged to praise individuals and class attendance regularly
- Weekly class rewards for 100% attendance are awarded – pupils receive a sticker for the class chart and a gold sticker for their jumper
- Attendance staff will regularly report attendance to other school staff to raise awareness and encourage good attendance.

- Parents are also kept informed through a termly newsletter

### Setting Targets

The National Average for attendance is currently 96%. However, Elston Hall has maintained attendance above this level for a number of years and therefore has set a school-based target to maintain and improve attendance further, towards a target of 97%.

### Race Equality & Equal Opportunities

All children have equal access to a full education regardless of their gender, disability or ability. We are committed to providing a safe and happy school free from racist intimidation or harassment of any kind and for all our children to achieve their full potential.

### Reporting Attendance

Attendance is reported to pupil and parents in a variety of ways:

- Annually on the annual academic report
- Attendance issues will be addressed by teachers during parent evenings
- Through ongoing intervention throughout the year
- By publishing attendance and punctuality results on the school web site and newsletters
- Letters sent home for under 95% attendance.

Information is transferred to other schools, in line with GDPR, by way of;

- Electronic data systems
- Common Transfer forms
- National Curriculum assessment records
- Passing on of annual reports

The school is required to make attendance returns to the DfE and the LA

### Roles and Responsibilities

The Associate/Deputy Headteacher should:

- Ensure legal requirements are being met with regard to attendance and punctuality
- Be responsible for the operational management of the attendance policy
- To review policy and procedures at least annually with all staff
- To discuss attendance and punctuality with new Parents/Carers and children, and during transition meetings

- To analyse authorised and unauthorised absence regularly with attendance staff and EWO to discuss any attendance issues
- Reward and celebrate attendance
- Send letters home regarding attendance and lateness
- Identify and monitor individual absences and lateness, identifying patterns and trends and target improvements
- Make the school Attendance and Punctuality Policy available to parents
- Hold regular meetings to address attendance issues and implement strategies to increase attendance and reduce Persistent Absence
- Hold Leave of Absence meetings with parents/carers requesting a Leave of Absence
- Report attendance analysis to governors through the Headteacher's Report
- Ensure the Senior Leadership team and office administrator are made aware of any changes to guidelines surrounding procedures for absence and punctuality.

The Governing Body should:

- Know and understand the schools policy and procedures for absence and lateness
- Have a designated governor responsible for monitoring and supporting the school with attendance and punctuality.

The Education Welfare Officer should:

- Weekly, document individuals across school whose attendance has decreased, reasons for this and actions to improve it.
- Liaise with the Deputy Headteacher and office administrator weekly regarding the analysis of absence and lateness
- Advise the Deputy Headteacher and office administrator on actions to increase attendance, reduce persistent absentees and reduce lateness, in regards to the law.
- Lead meetings in school with parents/carers where attendance has decreased below 90%
- Conduct home visits where applicable
- Document each specific intervention and action for persistent absentees, using the school's record.
- Send legal referrals to the Local Authority.
- Send penalty notices for Leave of Absences to the Local Authority
- Liaise with the Local Authority surrounding Children Missing in Education and any other applicable attendance concerns.

The office administrator:

- Monitor individual attendance and lateness daily, identifying any patterns and absences

- Liaise with the Deputy Headteacher and Education Welfare Officer weekly regarding absence and lateness
- Produce reports for class teachers summarising individual and whole school attendance.
- Communicate with Parents/Carers on attendance and punctuality
- Record and store information from parents in an appropriate manner
- Process letters for parents, following weekly discussion with Deputy Headteacher and EWO, and keep a copy on file.
- Update attendance log detailing letters sent to families.
- Process letters in response to Leave of Absence requests, raise fines for any fixed penalty notices and keep a recorded log of all actions.

Class teachers should:

- Ensure that registers are completed in accordance with Attendance and Punctuality procedures
- Date any written letters received from parents/cares regarding lateness or attendance and file in register wallet
- Record any verbal messages from parents/carers regarding attendance or lateness and send to the Attendance Office.
- Raise any concerns regarding attendance or lateness with attendance staff.
- Complete registers by 9:00am and 1:30pm

Parents and Carers should:

- Parents should ensure children attend school every day and punctually
- Parents should follow the schools policy and procedures
- Contact school to inform of any absences by phone or letter on the first day of the child's absence
- Provide evidence of medical conditions which may affect a child's attendance
- Inform school of any changes in family circumstances particularly new addresses or telephone numbers.

The relationships developed between parents and school is essential to reinforce positive attitudes to teaching and learning which will therefore encourage positive attendance.