



Attendance and Punctuality Policy

Policy Creation & Review	
Author(s)	Sue Ferguson & Lynn Wilson
Last review date & summary of changes	September 2017 <i>(clarify the times of medical appointments, updates to school support measures & timeline changes to reflect legislation)</i>
Ratified by Governing Body	October 2017
Previous Review Date(s)	September 2016 <i>(legal update - Persistent Absence threshold)</i> September 2015 January 2014 April 2013 September 2011
Next Review Date	September 2020

Introduction

This Policy has been agreed by the Governors, the Headteacher and Attendance Manager of Ellen Wilkinson School. It represents our commitment to striving for 100% attendance, which is achievable, and achieved by many children. It sets out the principles, procedures and practice the school will undertake. Strategies, sanctions and possible legal consequences of poor Attendance and Punctuality are also detailed, as well as rewards for, and benefits of good attendance. This policy will be reviewed, amended as necessary and published in accordance with current legislation and guidance.

Principles

- Receiving a full-time, suitable education is a child's legal entitlement.
- It is parents'/carers' legal responsibility to ensure this happens.
- Attending school regularly aids intellectual, social and emotional development
- Attending school regularly safeguards the welfare of children whilst they are not in the care of their parents.
- All children whose attendance is poor will be treated as vulnerable.
- These principles are enshrined in British law, within the Education Act 1996, the Children Act 1989, and other associated pieces of legislation.

Aims of the Policy

- To ensure that all children attend as near full-time as possible, in order to maximise their educational achievement and social development.
- To discharge the school's duty to safeguard its pupils to be best of its ability
- To ensure that all those responsible for children's education, including parents, carers, staff and governors understand and accept their responsibilities in relation to attendance.
- To minimise absence from school, thereby reducing levels of persistent absence.
- To improve the life chances of Newham's children and young people and prepare them to be fully contributing citizens when they reach adulthood.

Policy objectives:

- To safeguard the welfare, health, social and emotional development of children
- To reduce persistent absence
- To reduce or eliminate term time holidays/leave of absence
- To promote commitment to education and high achievement
- To maximise the potential of every individual pupil

Promoting Attendance

The Governors, Headteacher, Attendance Manager and staff will use all possible opportunities to promote the importance of good attendance and punctuality. These include the home/school agreement, newsletters, rewards and incentives for good or significantly improving attendance, focus in every Friday assembly, certificates, and medals. Regular attendance drop in sessions for parents, targeted attendance meetings for parents of pupils identified as having lower than the expected attendance percentage, irregular patterns of attendance.

Headteachers have the discretion to authorise leave of absence in term-time. However in this school that discretion will only be exercised in the MOST EXCEPTIONAL circumstances. Term time leave taken without the Headteachers authorisation will be considered as unauthorised holiday and a penalty notice will be issued.

Authorised Absence

Authorised absence indicates absence which is authorised by the Head teacher or Attendance Manager.

Medical appointments

Medical appointments should be made outside of school hours where possible. If a pupil does have to attend an appointment during school hours then they should return to school as quickly as possible on that day. If your child has a mid-morning or early afternoon appointment, then they can come into school as normal and be collected in time for their appointment, they will be signed off site once collected, and signed back in on their return. Please inform the school of this prior to the date.

As a school we accept telephone/ verbal messages from parents or carers, however, we do request this is followed up by a letter or medical evidence (i.e. prescribed medicine label, doctors / medical appointment card, prescription). The school **cannot** accept Medical evidence from abroad.

When an explanation is received computer records are updated to note this information within the computerised system.

Holidays

Due to changes in legislation (September 2013), we can no longer authorise applications by parents or carers of pupils to take annual family holidays during term time unless in exceptional circumstances. In such cases you are encouraged to discuss this with the Headteacher and complete the required term-time leave application form for authorisation.

Responsibilities of Parents/Carers

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school as AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required, preferably in writing. Medical evidence may also be required in the form of a copy of a prescription, GP note, etc. Types of absence that are likely to be authorised are illness, medical or dental appointments (which unavoidably fall in school time,) emergencies.

We appreciate parents support in notifying us quickly if their child is going to be absent and the reasons for this.

Examples of types of absence that are not considered reasonable and which will not be authorised under any circumstances are:

- Going shopping with parents, Birthdays
- Minding other younger children in the family
- Staying at home because other members in the family are unwell
- Day trips and holidays in term time that have not been agreed
- Arriving at school too late to get a present mark
- Truancy

Reluctant attenders/school refusal

You should do everything possible to encourage your child to attend. However if the reason for their reluctance appears to be school-based, such as difficulty with work, or bullying, please discuss this with the school at the earliest opportunity and the school will do everything possible to sort the problem out. Colluding, even with the best of intentions, with your child's reluctance to attend is likely to make the matter worse

School refusal/school phobia is a psychological condition that usually has been medically diagnosed. Other arrangements may be put in place for a child with genuine school phobia.

School Procedures

Registration and punctuality procedures

Registers are taken twice a day, once at the start of the school day at **8.55 am.** and once during the afternoon session **at 1pm.** The registers will remain open for 30 minutes in the morning and 15 minutes in the afternoon. Pupils arriving before the end of the Registration period will be coded L (Late before registers close) which is a present mark. The number of minutes late will be recorded. Pupils arriving after the registers have closed will be coded U (Late after registers close) which counts as an unauthorised absence.

The morning registration period starts at 8.55a.m and ends at 9.25.am.

The afternoon registration period starts at 1p.m and ends at 1.15 pm.

Only the Headteacher or Attendance Manager can authorise absence. If there is no known reason for the absence at registration, then the absence will be recorded as unauthorised, until a satisfactory reason is provided. If the reason given is not satisfactory in the school's view, and/or evidence of the reason cannot be provided, the absence will be coded as O (Unauthorised absent). Absence notes received from parents/carers will be kept for the remainder of the academic year; or longer if there are concerns that require further investigation or legal action. If a pupil is persistently late the School's Attendance Manager will arrange to meet with the family as soon as the pattern is identified.

First Day Absence Contact

Parents are expected to notify the school if their child is unable to attend for any unavoidable reason, such as illness etc. If the school does not receive notification, a text/telephone call on the first day of absence will be made by the school to try to ascertain the reason. First day contact will be carried out as early as possible in the school day, in order to notify parents whose children may have set off for school, but not arrived.

If the child is still absent on the second day without contact from the family, a telephone call will be made to the home, If no telephone contact is made a home visit will take place. If no contact can still be made, a letter will be posted through the door asking the parent to contact school. **(This is in line with safeguarding procedures)**

The family may be asked to come to school for a meeting.

Continuing Absence

In the event of an absence of three or more days without contact from the family, a home visit will be made. Any child who is absent without explanation and who has a pattern of erratic attendance of 90% and below, or persistent lateness after registers close will be investigated further and parents required to attend a formal review meeting with the Attendance Manager. This process may include visit to the home, targets set for improvement, sources of support signposted if needed, and ultimately court action or a Penalty Notice recommended if there is no improvement.

Frequent/Persistent Absence

Regular trawls of the registers will be made to identify pupils with a pattern of absences that may lead to Persistent Absence (PA), that is to say absence of 10% or more (from September 2015 in a half term or an overall attendance of 90% or less. The Attendance Manager will be responsible for identification of any emerging concerns, and putting in place actions for each pupil of concern. Initially the school will try to resolve the problem with parents/carers, but if the pattern continues the school will refer to the School Health Adviser if the problem appears to be a medical one. In cases where there appear to be issues requiring outside intervention to support the family and the child, referral's may be made for external agency support. All PA pupils and their parents will be subject to an Action Plan. Such a plan may include allocation of additional in-school or external support. Examples of unjustifiable reasons for absence from school would be:

- Going shopping with parents, Birthdays
- Minding other younger children in the family
- Staying at home because other members in the family are unwell
- Day trips and holidays in term time that have not been agreed
- Arriving at school too late to get a present mark
- Truancy

Consequences of Poor Attendance /Punctuality

For pupils whose attendance and/or punctuality fails to improve, after a range of interventions and support measures have been tried by the school, the ultimate consequences may be one of the following:

- A Penalty Notice carries a fine of £60, per parent, per child. If the fine is not paid within 21 days of receipt of the notice it rises to £120 per parent, per child which has to be paid in 28 days of receipt of the notice. If not paid at all, court action may be initiated by the Local Authority.
- The school may ask the Local Authority to initiate court action under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996, which could lead to fines of up to £2,500, or even imprisonment.
- Action may be taken (under the Children Act 1989) to protect the welfare and development of the child.

Children Missing Education (CME)

Procedures for trying to trace children who cease to attend without prior notification are covered in detail in the CME Policy and Procedures. However, if, after ten days continuous absence school has been unable to ascertain the whereabouts of a pupil, they will refer the child's details to the Local Authority for it to perform further checks that are not available to school. If after 21 days continuous unauthorised absence, their whereabouts cannot be traced, they will be removed from the school roll.

Non starters

Pupils who are allocated places but fail to start are also treated as CME. If the school has been unable to make contact with the family during a ten-day period after their expected arrival, they will refer the pupils to the local authority CME team for further checks.

Vulnerable Children

Children who are Looked After (CLA), subject to a Child Protection Plan (CP) or Children in Need (CIN) will be treated with highest priority and will be known to the Attendance Manager. Any unexplained absence will be followed up immediately by a telephone call to the home, a home visit or by a call to the AMS Duty Desk Tel: 07805770436, in order that a same-day visit can be made. Children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) will be treated with similar priority in order that their time in school can be maximised, and their learning supported to the greatest extent possible.

Monitoring Attendance & Punctuality

The Attendance Manager monitors attendance on a weekly basis. Data is discussed quarterly at the schools Safeguarding meetings to see if there is any further support that can be put into place to help improve individual's attendance and punctuality. This may be more frequent depending on need.

Attendance figures are reported to the Governing Body termly in the Head teachers Report and submitted to the DFE annually.