

# Attendance Policy

## Eppleton Academy Primary School



**Approved by:** Laura Jackson **Date:** May 2024

**Approved by:** The Governing Body **Date:** To be ratified

**Last reviewed on:** May 2024

**Next review due by:** May 2024

## **Eppleton Academy Primary aims to:**

- Promote good attendance and punctuality, and reduce absence, including persistent absence,
- Maintain an attendance rate of a minimum of 96%, with a target of at least 97%,
- Ensure every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled.
- To support parents to perform their legal duty to ensure their children of compulsory school age attend regularly.
- Act early to address patterns of absence
- Build strong relationships with families to ensure pupils have the support in place to attend school

School attendance is subject to various Education Laws and this school attendance policy is written to reflect these laws and the guidance produced by the Department for Education.

## **Good attendance is important because:**

- Statistics show a direct link between under-achievement and poor attendance.
- Regular attenders make better progress, both socially and academically, achieving to their full potential.
- Regular attenders find school routines and school work easier to cope with.
- Regular attenders establish positive life habits that are necessary for future success.

**Eppleton Academy Primary acknowledges that irregular attendance seriously disrupts continuity of learning, undermines educational progress, can lead to underachievement and low attainment and impedes the child's ability to develop friendship groups within school.**

Promoting excellent attendance is the responsibility of the whole school community including pupils, parents, governors and staff.

## **Attendance register**

By law, schools are required to complete an attendance register twice during the school day, and all pupils must be placed on this register.

The attendance register will be taken at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. It will mark whether every pupil is: present, attending an approved off-site educational activity or absent.

The class teacher, or identified staff member, will take an electronic register recording who is present and absent from school from 8:45am. At 8:55 am the electronic register will be saved and closed in the classroom. Any late pupils should then enter the school through the main entrance. Parents (or child if unaccompanied) will be asked for the reason for their lateness. All staff need to be aware that any child arriving late MUST register at the office for purposes of fire regulations.

A second electronic register for the afternoon session will be taken as soon as children return to class at 1pm and will be closed at 1:15pm.

## **Punctuality**

It is important to be on time as the first few minutes of the school day are often used to target the teaching of basic skills, to give out instructions or organise schoolwork for the rest of the day.

If your child misses this short but vital session, their work for the whole day may be affected. Late arrivals are disruptive to the whole class and often embarrassing for your child.

Pupils who arrive after registration MUST be signed in, in accordance with the school procedures.

Arrival after the close of registration with no valid reason will be marked as unauthorised absence and coded 'U' in the register. This means that, despite being in school, they will technically be marked absent for the session. It will be recorded on the register as an unauthorised absence and could result in the issuing of a Fixed Penalty Notice.

We will let you know if we have concerns about your child's punctuality. If lateness persists, parents will be invited to attend a meeting in school to discuss the problem. If the lateness continues a referral will be made to the Local Authority Attendance Service and a Fixed Penalty Notice could be issued or ultimately the parent could be prosecuted.

## How parents can help

We value your support in helping us to maintain high standards.

- There are obviously times when children have unplanned absences and are not able to attend school, for example due to ill health. If this is the case, please notify the school by 9am or as soon as practically possible by telephone. If no message is received we will make every effort to contact you.
- Arrange medical or dental appointments outside of school hours or during breaks wherever possible.
- Notify the school in advance of a medical or dental appointment by showing the appointment card / letter at the school office. The absence will be marked as unauthorised if this is not shared.
- Send in a note explaining the reason for absence on your child's return to school after an illness.
- Keeping us updated by telephone or letter if your child has an extended period of absence due to illness.
- Arrange for children to take holidays during designated school closure times.
- Ensure that the school is informed of changes to contact details such as phone numbers and addresses.

The school will regularly inform parents/carers about their child's attendance and absence levels.

## Following up absence

The school will follow up any absences to ascertain the reason, ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary, identify whether the absence is approved or not and identify the correct attendance code to use.

## Authorised Absence

Some absences are allowed by law and are known as "authorised absences". For example: if a child is ill. We realise that there are **rare** occasions when there might be a particular problem that causes your child to be absent. Please let us know and we shall try to deal with it sympathetically.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

- Illness (Including mental illness) and medical/dental appointments. The school will only authorise a medical absence if the circumstances are unavoidable. If a parent rings the school to confirm the pupil is unwell the school **may** request supporting evidence: medical appointment card, letter from a professional, doctor's note, medication prescribed by the doctor, copy of prescription, print screen of medical notes, as well as letters concerning hospital appointments or any other medical evidence.
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart
- Traveller pupils travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh Gypsies, Irish and Scottish Travellers, Showmen (fairground people) and Circus people, Bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and New Travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a Traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision

The school may choose not to authorise absence without supporting evidence as it is for the school to determine if an absence is to be authorised (Regulation 7 The Education (Pupil registration, England) Regulations 2006)

## Unauthorised Absence

There are times when children are absent for reasons, which are **not** permitted by law.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider essential or reasonable or for those pupils where no reason has been provided.

Unauthorised absences can include:

- Forgetting school term dates
- Oversleeping
- Absences which have not been explained
- Arriving at school after 9:30am
- Leaving school for no reason during the day
- Keeping pupils off unnecessarily without explanation
- Absences due to shopping or looking after other children
- Day trips or family outings
- Problems with uniform /clothing
- Birthdays

No authorisation will be given for any holidays taken during term time.

The school is obliged by law to differentiate between authorised and unauthorised absences. A letter or telephone message from a parent does not itself authorise absence. It is for the school to determine if an absence is to be authorised (The Education (Pupil registration, England) Regulations, 2006)

In addition, a pupil can also be recorded as 'Approved Education Activity'. Pupils recorded in this category are deemed to be present for attendance returns purposes. This covers types of supervised educational activity undertaken off site but with the approval of the school. This would include field trips and educational visits, sporting activities and link courses or approved education off site.

### **Term Time Leave of Absence**

From the 1st September 2013 DFE amended the regulations surrounding holidays in term time. The DFE removed references to family holiday and extended leave as well as the statutory threshold of ten school days. The 2013 amendment to the Education (Pupil Registration, England) Regulations 2006 makes clear that Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances and parents have no entitlement to take their child on holiday during term time.

### **If you would like to request term time leave of absence you MUST put this request in writing to the headteacher Mrs Jackson**

Applications for Leave of Absence, where dates can be known ahead, must be made in advance of the requested date. Consideration is given to each request before a decision is reached by the headteacher, on behalf of the Governing Body (Education (Pupil Registration, England) Regulations 2006). Each case will be judged on its individual circumstances. Any leave of absence that has been declined or where the parents have not sought approval will be recorded as unauthorised. These cases will be referred to the Local Authority and a Fixed Penalty Notice could be issued to each parent for each pupil.

### **Strategies for promoting attendance**

- Providing an environment in which pupils feel welcomed and valued. The school's ethos must demonstrate that pupils feel that their presence in school is important, that they will be missed when they are absent/late.
- Class teachers will ensure that the curriculum is delivered within a culture of inclusion and in such a way that pupils feel that they have and can succeed.
- Individual pupils whose attendance has been a cause of concern will be encouraged to set and achieve personal attendance goals. The school will work with parents to support regular attendance, for example communicating early about issues, acknowledging positive improvements and indicating a named contact in school.

- In our weekly celebration assembly, monitoring of class attendance is shared publicly and we use our 'Classopoly Board' to promote good attendance. All classes, who have achieved over 96%, partake in the game with a range of allocated awards depending on which square they land on.
- School will support and reward pupils with consistently good attendance. Each term, all children who have achieved 100% attendance for the term will receive a 'golden ticket' to a special celebration event. We will also acknowledge children with improved attendance with certificates in assembly. All children who have achieved 100% attendance for the whole year will receive recognition in our end of year celebration assembly in the Summer Term.

### **Persistent absenteeism**

The persistent absence threshold is 10%. If a pupil's individual overall absence rate is greater than or equal to 10%, the pupil will be classified as a persistent absentee.

### **Training of staff**

The school will recognise that early intervention can prevent poor attendance. As such, staff will receive training in identifying potentially at-risk pupils as part of their induction and ongoing training. Staff will receive training to ensure they understand that increased absence from school could indicate a safeguarding concern, and know how such concerns should be managed.

### **Pupils at risk of persistent absence (PA)**

The school will ensure it provides support to pupils at risk of persistent absence (PA), in conjunction with all relevant external authorities, where necessary.

The Headteacher will:

- Establish a range of evidence-based interventions to address barriers to attendance.
- Monitor the implementation and quality of escalation procedures and seek robust evidence of the escalation procedures that work.
- Attend or lead attendance reviews in line with escalation procedures.
- Establish robust escalation procedures which will be initiated before absence becomes a problem by: Ensuring letters are sent to parents.
- Regularly reviewing attendance across the school including how attendance is recorded
- Reviewing all applications for leave of absence in exceptional circumstances
- Engaging with external attendance support
- Using fixed penalty notices where appropriate

### **Family Support Worker**

The academy employs a Family Support worker one day a week to support with attendance concerns. If identified as persistently absent, our Family Support worker will work with families to identify barriers and support families in overcoming them. This can take a variety of forms including informal and formal plans, with direct work in school and at home with adults and children and may involve unannounced home visits. They work closely with the headteacher to monitor and review interventions including:

- Welcoming pupils back following any absence and provide catch-up support to build confidence and bridge gaps.
- Meeting with parents to discuss patterns of absence, barriers to attendance, and any other problems they may be having.
- Establishing plans to remove barriers and provide additional support.
- Reviewing weekly progress and the impact of support.
- Making regular contact with families to discuss progress.
- Considering what support for re-engagement might be needed, including for vulnerable groups.

Where a pupil at risk of PA is also at increased risk of harm, the school will work in conjunction with all relevant authorities, e.g. social care, to support the pupil in line with the school's duty of care.

### **Reporting to parents**

- We will report on individual attendance and punctuality termly during parent's evenings and written reports.
- We will remind parents of the importance of regular attendance in newsletters and the school website.
- We will publish our attendance rate in newsletters and the website.

### **Children Subject to a Child Protection Plan or Looked After by the Local Authority**

- If a child is subject to a Child Protection Plan or identified as a Child in Need attendance is carefully monitored and reported at Core Group Meetings.
- If a child is Looked After by the Local Authority attendance is carefully monitored and reported at termly PEP meetings.

### **Children Missing in Education**

**Definition:** A Child Missing in Education (CME) is defined as a child or young person of compulsory academy age who is not attending school, not placed in alternative provision by an LA, and who is not receiving a suitable education elsewhere. This definition also includes children who are receiving an education, but one that is not suitable; this could include children who are not receiving full-time education suitable to their needs, e.g. age, ability, aptitude, special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

Children go missing from education for a number of reasons including:

- they don't start school at the appropriate time and so they do not enter the educational system
- they are removed by their parents
- behaviour and/or attendance difficulties
- they cease to attend, due to exclusion, illness or bullying
- they fail to find a suitable school place after moving to a new area
- the family move home regularly
- problems at home

The law requires all children between the ages of 5 and 16 to be in full time education.

If children have been absent from school for 10 consecutive days, they will be reported as 'Missing in Education' to the LA in one of the following routes:

- By emailing: [ehaat@togetherforchildren.org.uk](mailto:ehaat@togetherforchildren.org.uk)
- By telephoning 0191 561 2837.
- By completing a CME referral form. Referral form can be located <https://www.togetherforchildren.org.uk/schools/children-missing-education>

We will not remove a child from roll without completing form CME1 and liaising with the local authority that this is the correct action and ensure that all children removed from the school register are, in accordance with Regulation 8(h)(iii) of the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006.

### **Attendance monitoring**

We will closely monitor your child's attendance and alert you if we feel that there is an issue. The school undertakes a range of measures to support pupils where attendance is an issue. Any child whose attendance is 96% or less will be closely monitored and if attendance falls below 93% the family will receive a letter of concern. If attendance continues to be a concern, further letters and meetings in school will take place in order to discuss issues and offer appropriate support and actions. Please see *Appendix 1* for our full list of attendance procedures.

If your child is experiencing difficulties you should contact the school at an early stage and work together with staff in resolving the difficulties. This is nearly always successful.



Where we fail to see an improvement in a pupils' attendance it may be necessary to make a referral to an appropriate external agency to ensure the pupil receives the support required and it is important that parents work with the relevant external agency in order to improve their child's attendance.

**If there is no improvement in attendance.** Parents will be informed that their son/daughter's attendance will be passed onto the Local Authority Attendance Service who will assess the case to determine the appropriateness of use of statutory enforcement procedures i.e. Fixed Penalty Notices, Magistrates Court or seek an Education Supervision Order on the child. The maximum penalty on conviction is a fine of £2500 and / or 3 months imprisonment, a parenting order can also be imposed.

Pupil-level absence data is collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. We compare our attendance data to the national average, and share this with governors.

We collect and store electronically attendance data weekly for internal purposes – for example, to track the attendance of individual pupils, identify whether or not there are particular groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern, and monitor and evaluate those children identified as being in need of intervention and support.

## Legal sanctions

Under Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act a pupil is required to attend regularly at school and should a pupil fail to attend regularly legal action may be taken. A parent may receive a Fixed Penalty Notice or could be fined up to £2500, face three months in prison and receive a parenting order. An Education Supervision Order could be sought.

If issued with a fine, or penalty notice, each parent/ carer must pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the local authority.

The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice ultimately rests with the headteacher, local authority office or the police, following the local authority's code of conduct for issuing penalty notices.

The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice may take into account:

- A number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year
- One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission
- Where an excluded pupil is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason

If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute or withdraw the notice.

The school or local authority can fine parents/carers for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age.

## Links with other policies

This policy links to the following policies:

- Child protection and safeguarding policy
- Behaviour policy

## Legislation & Guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the [working together to improve school attendance](#) from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on [school attendance parental responsibility measures](#). These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- Part 6 of [The Education Act 1996](#)
- Part 3 of [The Education Act 2002](#)
- Part 7 of [The Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)

- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006 \(and 2010, 2011, 2013, 2016 amendments\)](#)
  - [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)
- It also refers to:
- [School census guidance](#)
  - [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#)
  - [Mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance: guidance for schools](#)

This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the [school census](#), which explains the persistent absence threshold.

This policy complies with our funding agreement and articles of association



**ATTENDANCE PROCEDURES**

**“Parents have a legal duty to ensure the regular and full-time attendance at school of registered pupils”**  
(Education Act 1996).

At Eppleton Academy Primary we aim to work with families to promote good attendance. We therefore have the following attendance procedures in place:

**1. Telephone call to parents/carers on the first day of absence by 9:30am.**

This is carried out by office staff if there has been no contact/communication made by parents giving reasons for absence. If no contact can be made by telephone messages will be left and further phone calls will be made. A member of SLT will be informed of the concern.

If on the second day of absence still no further contact is made then all known contacts will be called to try to determine the welfare of the children and the reason for absence.

The school will always follow up any absences in order to:

- Ascertain the reason for the absence.
- Ensure the proper safeguarding action is being taken.
- Identify whether the absence is authorised or not.
- Identify the correct code to use to enter the data onto the school census system

If there is still no reason for absence or where we continue to be concerned we may make a ‘home visit’ or request the police to undertake a ‘Safe and well’ welfare visit.

**Please note, if children are already on CP, CIN or EH plans (with involvement from Together for Children) or if there are safeguarding concerns which are being monitored then professionals will be contacted or house visits will occur on the first day of absence.**

If children have been absent from school for 10 consecutive days, they will be reported as ‘Missing in Education’ to the LA.

2. Parents updated termly at parent's nights and in pupil reports of their child's attendance levels.
3. **STAGE 1 - Initial letter of concern/verbal discussion from senior lead.** When attendance falls below 93% or if there is persistent lateness or persistent absence.
4. **STAGE 2 - Second letter of concern.** Sent if no improvement to initial request. Parents invited in for a meeting to discuss attendance.
5. **STAGE 3 - Third letter sent to parents.** If no improvement in an agreed amount of time, a formal School Attendance Meeting with senior leads (Headteacher/AHT) will take place where an Action Plan/Parenting Contract is drawn up.
6. **Further weeks of monitoring.** Close monitoring using the Action Plan/Parenting Contract and a meeting to review.
7. **STAGE 4 - If no improvement in attendance.** Parents will be informed that their son/daughter's attendance will be passed onto the Local Authority Attendance team who take over at this point and decisions made whether parents will be prosecuted (taken to court) or have to pay a Fixed Penalty (fine) if unauthorised absences continue.

**Please Note:**

If parent fails to attend a meeting, appropriate staff will proceed with the Action Plan/Parenting Contract and will be delivered to the child's home by a senior lead where they will be asked to sign them.

Senior leads / Family Support worker can visit Parents and Guardians when necessary including making unannounced visits. If attendance improves School will continue to monitor attendance.