Eslington Primary School

we aim high and learn together

Attendance Policy

Updated Spring 2023

Approved by:	Full Governing Body	**Date:** June 2023
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1. Aims

We are committed to meeting our obligation with regards to school attendance through our whole school approach that values good school attendance, including:

- Promoting good attendance
- Ensuring every child has access to full time education
- Building and maintaining a strong relationship with families to enable targeted support to better school attendance
- Reducing absence, including persistent and severe absence
- Acting early to address patterns of absence
- Promoting the importance of arriving to school and lessons on time to support punctuality

2. Roles and Responsibilities

2.1 The Governing Body

The governing body is responsible for:

- Promoting the importance of school attendance across the school's policies and ethos
- Making sure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties
- Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data
- Monitoring attendance figures for the whole school
- Making sure staff receive adequate training on attendance
- Holding the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy

2.2 The headteacher

The headteacher is responsible for:

- Implementation of this policy at the school
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils
- Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies
- Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary

2.3 The designated senior leader responsible for attendance

The designated senior leader is responsible for:

- Leading attendance across the school
- Offering a clear vision for attendance improvement
- Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes
- Having an oversight of data analysis
- Devising specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data

- Arranging calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues
- Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families
- Monitoring and analysing attendance data (see section 7)
- Benchmarking attendance data to identify areas of focus for improvement
- Providing regular attendance reports to school staff and reporting concerns about attendance to the headteacher
- Working with relevant school staff to tackle persistent absence.
- Advising the headteacher (authorised by the headteacher) when to issue fixed-penalty notices

The designated senior leader responsible for attendance is Rachael Taplin and can be contacted via 0191-4334131/0191-4335151 and/or rachaeltaplin@gateshead.gov.uk

2.4 Class teachers

Class teachers are responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the school office on the same day.

2.5 School admin/office staff

School admin/office staff will:

- Take calls from parents about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the school system (Arbor)
- Transfer calls from parents to the Pastoral lead in order to provide them with more detailed support on attendance

2.6 Parents/carers

Parents/carers are expected to:

- Make sure their child attends every day on time
- Call the school to report their child's absence before 9.15am on the day of the absence and each subsequent day of absence and advise when they are expected to return (unless length of time of absence is known and school have already been informed of this.)
- Provide the school with more than 1 emergency contact number for their child
- Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day

2. Pupils

Pupils are expected to:

- Attend school every day on time

3. Recording attendance

3.1 Attendance register

We will keep an attendance register and place all pupils onto this register. Class teachers will take the attendance register using a portable/cardboard version. This will then be recorded onto Arbor, (the online attendance recording system) by office/admin staff.

We will take our attendance register 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
- Absent
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

Any amendment to the attendance register (Arbor) will include:

- The original entry
- The amended entry
- The reason for the amendment
- The date on which the amendment was made

The name and position of the person who made the amendment

Arbor does this automatically as a live/real time system.

See appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes.

We will also record:

- Whether the absence is authorised or not
- The nature of the activity if a pupil is attending an approved educational activity
- The nature of circumstances where a pupil is unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

Pupils must arrive in school by 8.40am (Rose Street Site) and 8.45am (Hazel Rose Site) on each school day.

The register for the first session will be taken at 9.00am and will be kept open until 9.45am. The register for the second session will be taken at 12.45 and will be kept open until 1.30pm.

3.2 Unplanned absence

The pupil's parent/carer must notify the school of the reason for the absence on the first day of an unplanned absence by 9.15am or as soon as practically possible by calling the school admin/office staff (see also section 7).

We will mark absence due to illness as authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may ask the pupil's parent/carer to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents/carers will be notified of this in advance.

3.3 Planned absence

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the pupil's parent/carer notifies the school in advance of the appointment. This includes appointments with CYPS and CAMHS.

A parent should request a Leave of Absence by either asking for a 'Leave of Absence form' from the school office or by e-mailing into the school for the attention of the headteacher. eslingtonprimaryschool@gateshead.gov.uk

However, we encourage parents/carers to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

The pupil's parent/carer must also apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence. Go to section 5 to find out which term-time absences the school can authorise.

3.4 Lateness and punctuality

A pupil who arrives late:

Before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code

After the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code unless there is a legitimate reason for the lateness and an alternative code is more appropriate.

When there are ongoing punctuality issues, our Pastoral lead will contact home or the transport team to understand the reasons for the persistent lateness. Support and solutions will then be offered. Punctuality will be monitored in the same way as persistent attendance.

3.5 Following up unexplained absence

Where any pupil we expect to attend school does not attend, or stops attending, without reason, the school will:

- Call the pupil's parent/carer on the morning of the first day of unexplained absence to ascertain the reason. If the school cannot reach any of the pupil's emergency contacts, the school may ask the child's social worker or contact the police to get involved.
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not
- Identify the correct attendance code to use and input it as soon as the reason for absence is ascertained – this will be no later than 5 working days after the session
- Call the parent/carer on each day that the absence continues without explanation to ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary. If absence continues, the school will consider making a home visit, contacting the social worker or early help worker as appropriate and involving the Local authority's attendance team.

3.6 Reporting to parents/carers

The school will regularly inform parents about their child's attendance and absence levels. This will be during the October and February Parental Consultations and recorded on the end of year report submitted to parents/carers in June.

4. Authorised and unauthorised absence

4.1 Approval for term-time absence

The headteacher will only grant a leave of absence to a pupil during term time if they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'. A leave of absence is granted at the headteacher's discretion, including the length of time the pupil is authorised to be absent for.

We define 'exceptional circumstances' as unforeseen events or situations whereby the headteacher deems an absence from school necessary for the well-being of the pupil.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request. We do not consider pupils SEND as a reason or 'exceptional circumstances' to take them on holiday during term time as this would apply to 100% of pupils at Eslington.

Any request should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated and, where possible, at least 4 weeks before the absence, and in accordance with any leave of absence request form, accessible via the school website or via the school Office. The headteacher may require evidence to support any request for leave of absence.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

- Illness and medical/dental/CYPS/CAHMS appointments.
- 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.
- To attend the funeral or wedding of a close family member.

4.2 Legal sanctions

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

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

Penalty notices can be issued by a headteacher, local authority officer or the police.

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

- The 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.

5.Strategies for promoting attendance

Eslington promote good attendance by:

- Linking the behaviour and attitude points system intrinsically to attendance. If a child is absent from school for a legitimate medical reason or the absence is authorised, the pupil will receive 3 points out of 5 for every session. When an absence is unauthorised and we know that it is due to the pupil's behaviour or attitude at home, they will receive 0 points for each session missed. The points are rewarded via our whole school rewards system and through a choice of social activity on a Friday afternoon.
- Celebrating attendance by awarding certificates at the end of a term during the praise assembly for parents and carers. This recognises most improved attendance.
- Displaying positive attendance messages around schools.
- Identifying poor attendance or a decline in attendance. Then individualised strategies will be discussed with the child and family to improve attendance. This plan will be reflected in their attendance marks.
- Implementing individual programmes to ensure that families and pupils are supported to improve attendance. The headteacher will sometimes approve for two members of leadership to collect a child from home with the permission from parents when deemed safe to do so.

6. Attendance monitoring

Rachael Taplin, Attendance lead and Pastoral lead monitors all pupil attendance regularly. All pupils with attendance below 90% are tracked on a spreadsheet. The persistent non-attendee information is added half-termly but weekly checks against the spreadsheet take place. The attendance lead meets the Headteacher termly to discuss any anomalies or specific cases we need to think about more carefully in terms of specialised support from school.

The attendance lead analyses the data against categories such as LAC, year groups etc.

The attendance lead submits data into the Local Authority half -termly about any Pupils Missing out of Education (PMOE)

6.1 Monitoring attendance

The school will:

- Monitor attendance and absence data half-termly, termly and yearly across the school and at an individual pupil level
- Identify whether or not there are particular groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern

Pupil-level absence data will be 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. The school will compare attendance data to the national average, and share this with the governing body

6.2 Analysing attendance

The school will:

- Analyse attendance and absence data regularly to identify pupils or cohorts that need additional support with their attendance, and use this analysis to provide targeted support to these pupils and their families
- Look at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence, and then develop strategies to address these patterns

6.3 Using data to improve attendance

The school will:

- Provide regular attendance reports to class teachers, and other school leaders, to facilitate discussions with pupils and families
- Use data to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place in order to modify them and inform future strategies

6.4 Reducing persistent and severe absence

Persistent absence is where a pupil misses 10% or more of school, and severe absence is where a pupil misses 50% or more of school.

The school will:

- Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence
- Hold regular meetings with the parents of pupils who the school (and/or local authority) considers to be vulnerable, or are persistently or severely absent, to discuss attendance and engagement at school
- Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance
- Adapt learning strategies within school using school resources to support poor attenders. An example of this maybe access to our Nurture provision.
- A letter will invite parents/carers into school to discuss any wider issues and try and to help school understand the root causes of poor attendance. These first few meetings will take place with the Pastoral lead in an informal and supportive way. This is when a supportive plan will be explored and implemented.
- Closer monitoring will take place involving persistent non-attenders with the Headteacher and Pastoral Lead. When necessary, a referral into school's psychotherapist will be made.

7. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the local authority or DfE is updated, and as a minimum annually by Rachael Taplin, Pastoral Lead and Michelle Richards, Headteacher. At every review, the policy will be approved by the full governing board.

8. Support

The school will:

- Build relationships with pupils and families to encourage regular school attendance.
- Analyse and use data and relationship knowledge to prevent regular absence.
- Using resources (School based and external services) to intervene early with support.
- Use targeted support for persistent/severe absences.

9. Links with other policies

This policy links to the following policies:

- Child protection and safeguarding policy
- Behaviour and Nurture policy

10. Legislation and 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

This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the school census, which explains the persistent absence threshold

Appendix 1: attendance codes

The following codes are taken from the DfE's guidance on school attendance.

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	Pupil is present at morning registration
****	Present (pm)	Pupil is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Pupil arrives late before register has closed
B	Off-site educational activity	Pupil is at a supervised off-site educational activity approved by the school
D	Dual registered	Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
J	Interview	Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
P	Sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
V	Educational trip or visit	Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised, or approved, by the school
W	Work experience	Pupil is on a work experience placement

Code	Definition	Scenario

Authorised absence		
C	Authorised leave of absence	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
E	Excluded	Pupil has been excluded but no alternative provision has been made
H	Authorised holiday	Pupil has been allowed to go on holiday due to exceptional circumstances
I	Illness	School has been notified that a pupil will be absent due to illness
M	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment
R	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance
S	Study leave	Year 11 pupil is on study leave during their public examinations
T	Gypsy, Roma and traveller absence	Pupil from a traveller community is travelling, as agreed with the school
Unauthorised absence		
G	Unauthorised holiday	Pupil is on a holiday that was not approved by the school
N	Reason not provided	Pupil is absent for an unknown reason (this code should be amended when the reason emerges, or replaced with code O if no reason for absence has been provided after a reasonable amount of time)
O	Unauthorised absence	School is not satisfied with reason for pupil's absence

U	Arrival after registration	Pupil arrived at school after the register closed and no other code is deemed more appropriate.

Code	Definition	Scenario
X	Not required to be in school	Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
Y	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances	School site is closed, there is disruption to travel as a result of a local/national emergency, or pupil is in custody
Z	Pupil not on admission register	Register set up but pupil has not yet joined the school
#	Planned school closure	Whole or partial school closure due to half-term/bank holiday/INSET day