



Attendance Policy

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| Date adopted by the governing body | 11 th November 2020 |
| Date to be reviewed | November 2021 |
| Signed: Chair of Governors | |
| Signed: Headteacher | |

Aims

For a child to reach their full educational achievement a high level of school attendance is essential. We are committed to providing an education of the highest quality for all our pupils and endeavour to provide an environment where all pupils feel valued and welcome. Parents and pupils play a part in making our school successful. Every child has a right to access the education to which he/she is entitled. Parents and teachers share the responsibility for supporting and promoting excellent school attendance and punctuality for all. It is our duty to consistently strive to achieve a goal of 100% attendance for all children. Every opportunity will be used to convey to pupils and their parents or carers the importance of regular and punctual attendance. For our children to take full advantage of the educational opportunities offered, it is vital your child is at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. The routines children develop around attendance and punctuality at school are the same as the expectations of any future employer in the world of work. High attainment, confidence with peers and staff, and future aspirations depend on good attendance.

Good attendance is important because:

- statistics show a direct link between under-achievement and absence below 95%
- regular attenders make better progress, both socially and academically
- regular attenders find school routines, school work and friendships easier to cope with
- regular attenders find learning more satisfying
- regular attenders are more successful in transferring between primary school, secondary school, and higher education, employment or training.

To help us all to focus on this we will:

- provide information on all matters related to attendance in our newsletter and on the website
- report to you on how your child is performing in school, what their attendance and punctuality rate is and how this relates to their attainment
- celebrate good attendance
- reward good attendance through certificates and rewards

Responsibilities of the school's attendance leader

A member of the senior leadership team will oversee, direct and co-ordinate the school's work in promoting regular and improved attendance and will ensure the attendance policy is consistently applied throughout the school. This person will also ensure that attendance is both recorded accurately and analysed. She/he will ensure that attendance issues are identified at an early stage and that support is put in place to deal with any difficulties. If absence is frequent or continuous, except where a child is clearly unwell, staff will discuss with parents/carers the need and reasons for their child's absence and will encourage them to keep absences to a minimum. A note or explanation from a pupil's home does not mean an absence becomes authorised. The decision whether or not to authorise an absence will always rest with the school.

Responsibilities of classroom staff

- Ensure that all pupils are registered accurately.
- Promote and reward good attendance of pupils.
- Liaise with the attendance leader on matters of attendance and punctuality.
- Communicate any concerns or underlying problems that may account for a child's absence.
- Support pupils with absence to engage with their learning once they are back in school.

Responsibilities of pupils

- Attend every day unless they are ill or have an authorised absence.
- Arrive in school on time.
- If not with a parent when arriving at the office, take responsibility for registering at the reception desk

Responsibilities of parents/carers

Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is a parent/carer's legal responsibility (Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act) and permitting absence from school that is not authorised by the school creates an offence in law.

Parents will:

- inform the school on the first day of absence
- discuss with the class teacher any planned absences well in advance
- support the school with their child in aiming for 100% attendance each year
- make sure that any absence is clearly accounted for by telephone or text on the first and subsequent days of absence, or by letter if a phone is unavailable
- avoid taking their child out of school for non-urgent medical or dental appointments
- only request leave of absence if it is for an exceptional circumstance
- register the reason for their child's lateness and sign out for urgent medical appointments during the school day

Lateness/punctuality:

It is important to be on time at the start of every day. We start work immediately and if your child is late they will miss important learning time. It also causes disruption to the lessons of others and pupils find it embarrassing to arrive at this time which can then lead to possible further absence.

- The school day begins at 8.45 a.m. and all **pupils are expected to be in school by this time.**
- All lateness is recorded daily. This information will be required by the courts, should a prosecution for non-attendance or lateness be necessary.
- Arrival after the close of registration will be marked as unauthorised absence and coded *U* in line with East Sussex County Council and Department of Education guidance. This mark shows them to be on site, but is legally recorded as an absence.
- If a pupil is late due to a medical appointment, they will receive an authorised absence, coded *M*. Please be advised that, where possible, doctors and dentists appointments must be made outside of school hours or during school holidays.

Pupils who are consistently late are disrupting not only their own education but also that of the other pupils. Ongoing and repeated lateness is considered as **unauthorised absence and will be subject to legal action.** Parents, guardians or carers of pupils who have patterns of lateness will be contacted to discuss the importance of good time keeping and how this might be achieved. If lateness persists parents, guardians or carers will be invited to attend the school and discuss the problem and support offered. If support is not appropriate or is declined and a child has 10 or more sessions of unauthorised absence due to lateness recorded in any 10 week period, the school will be required to issue parents with a Penalty Notice in accordance with 'East Sussex County Penalty Notice Guidance for schools and academies'.

What to do if my child is absent?

A child not attending school is considered a **safeguarding** matter. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required. If your child is absent you must:

- contact us as soon as possible on the first day of absence and on each subsequent day
- send written confirmation on the first day back after an absence

If your child is absent we will:

- contact you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you – this is because we have a duty to ensure your child's safety as well as their regular school attendance. Please ensure that we always have an up-to-date contact number so that we can contact you.
- If we cannot contact you, we will use the contact details of other family members and friends which you have provided.

Second day absence

If, after a day, contact has not been established with any of the named parents/carers and your child has not been seen, we will make all reasonable enquiries to contact, including making enquiries to wider family.

Ten days' absence

We have a legal duty to report the absence of any pupil who is absent without an explanation for 10 consecutive days. If the child is not seen and contact has not been established with the named parent/carer then the local authority is notified that the child is 'at risk of being missing'. ESBAS staff will visit the last known address and alert key services to locate the child.

Continued or ongoing absence

If your child misses 10% (three weeks/sessions) or more schooling across the school year, for whatever reason, they are defined as *persistent absentees*. Absence for whatever reason disadvantages a child by creating gaps in his or her learning. Research shows these gaps affect attainment when attendance falls below 95%.

We monitor all absence thoroughly and all attendance data is shared with the local authority and the Department for Education. If your child has had absence and their attendance level is falling towards 90%, we will contact you and, depending on the reasons for the absence, will:

- invite you in to discuss the situation with our attendance officer or Headteacher. During this meeting we will complete an Attendance Improvement Agreement which will set out what parents and school are doing to support your child's attendance. Following this, the attendance will be monitored and reviewed.
- As soon as 10 unauthorised sessions occur within 10 school weeks of the meeting, the school will be required to issue parents with a Penalty Notice in accordance with 'East Sussex County Penalty Notice Guidance for schools and academies'.
- If absence continues to be an issue following a penalty notice being issued, the school may refer the matter to ESBAS (Education Support Behaviour and Attendance Service).

Request for leave of absence

From 1st September 2013 new guidance issued by the Department for Education (DfE) applied to **all** requested absences in term-time. An absence during term-time, including family holidays, is not a right. Any absence from school disrupts a child's learning. In addition, children returning from a

term-time absence generally require additional time from teachers to catch up on the teaching they have missed. This can have an impact on the education of other pupils in their class. Therefore, the DfE only allows a Headteacher the discretion to authorise an absence if they believe that there are **exceptional circumstances**. These are rare. We do not count visiting family, restricted leave dates from work, birthdays, reduced priced holiday, mistaken dates for term time or other similar reasons as **exceptional circumstances**. As a school we have many parents whose work may limit their leave dates but we know that employers are mindful to ensure that where possible employees with children can have some leave during a year in school holiday times.

Parents/carers wishing to apply for leave of absence will need to complete an absence request form at least 14 days before the proposed absence. The Headteacher will then make the decision whether the absence is considered to be an exceptional circumstance. If it is considered not to be an exceptional circumstance, it will be unauthorised and the Headteacher may request the local authority to issue a Penalty Notice. This is a fine of £120 per parent for each child – the fine is reduced to £60 if paid within 21 days. If the fine is unpaid court action can follow.

If term-time leave is taken without prior permission from the school, the absence will be unauthorised and the Headteacher will write to the parent/carer asking that they present evidence of exceptional circumstances for the absence. If this is not provided by the specified date the school will request a Penalty Notice be issued.

Appendix

Understanding types of absence

Pupils are expected to attend school every day for the entire duration of the academic year, unless there is an exceptional reason for the absence. There are two main categories of absences:

- authorised absence: when the school has accepted the explanation offered as satisfactory justification for the absence or given approval in advance for such an absence. If no explanation is received, absences cannot be authorised
- unauthorised absence: when the school has not received a reason for absence or has not approved a child's leave absence from school after a parent's request. This includes parents giving their children permission to be off school unnecessarily, such as for birthdays or to look after siblings and also includes where no reason has been given for an absence.
- A school can, if needed, change an authorised absence to an unauthorised absence and vice versa if new information is presented. Any changes will be communicated to parents/carers. An example of this would be where a parent states a child is unwell but on return to school there is evidence they have been on holiday.

My child is trying to avoid coming to school. What should I do?

Children are sometimes reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents/carers and the child. If a child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and may make things worse. Contact your child's class teacher immediately and openly discuss your worries. Your child could be avoiding school for a number of reasons – difficulties with school work, bullying, friendship problems, family difficulties. It is important that we identify the reason for your child's reluctance to attend school and work together to tackle the problem.

What can I do to encourage my child to attend school?

Make sure your child gets enough sleep and gets up in plenty of time each morning. Have a regular morning routine. Ensure that he/she leaves home in the correct clothes and properly equipped. Show your child, by your interest, that you value his/her education. Be interested in what your child is doing in school and chat to them about their day. For many parents, your child attending school may be your first experience of being separated from them. This can seem daunting at first for both of you, but consistency and a caring, supportive home and school life will make the transition a quick and easy experience for you both.

Leavers

If your child is leaving our school (other than when transferring to the secondary school) parents are asked to:

- Give the attendance officer comprehensive information about their plans, including any date of a move and your new address and telephone numbers, your child's new school name/ address and the start date when known. This should be submitted to our school in writing
- If pupils leave and we do not have the above information, then your child is considered to be a *child missing in education*. This requires schools and local authorities to then carry out investigations to try and locate your child, which includes liaising with Children's Services, the Police and other agencies. By giving us the above information, these investigations can be avoided. Thank you for your help in this.