



Policy for Attendance

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Trade Union Representative Approval: N/A

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Related Documents:

References: Equality Act 2010

Revision History

| Version | Date | Summary of Revision | Revision Author |
|---------|---------|---|-----------------|
| 1 | Dec '19 | Trust policy created and recommended for approval | CJH & AO |
| 2 | May '22 | Rewritten to reflect current legislation | CJH |
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Policy Statement

At Edukos Trust we strive to be: **EXCEPTIONAL. TOGETHER.** Creating great schools, ensuring better lives for all who we serve through our 3 core values:

- **Friendly**
- **Growth**
- **Trust**

Purpose

Our policy recognises that high levels of school attendance are significant to raising standards in education and ensuring all children can fulfil their potential. It is an assumption so widely understood but insufficiently stated that children and young people need to attend school regularly to benefit from their education. Missing out on lessons leaves children vulnerable to falling behind and achieving less in both primary and secondary school.

The overall aim of the attendance policy is to:

- Keep children safe and ensure their welfare needs are met in accordance with safeguarding practice.
- Provide a stable environment in which our children can learn.
- Support parents/carers to perform their legal duty by ensuring their children who are of compulsory school age and registered at the academy, attend school regularly.
- Maximise educational opportunities for all our children, ensuring there is a consistent and fair approach with equal opportunities for all.
- Encourage good habits of school attendance with a vision on early intervention by supporting families with children in the Early Years Foundation stage.

Scope

This policy applies to all schools in Edukos Trust.

Responsibilities

The **Trust Board and the CEO** are responsible for monitoring the effectiveness of this policy, ensuring that a consistent approach to Policy for Attendance is applied across the Trust. They are responsible for monitoring attendance figures for the whole Trust.

Local Governing Boards are responsible for monitoring attendance figures for individual schools on at least a termly basis. It also holds the Head Teacher (or nominated senior leader) to account for the implementation of this policy within their individual school.

The **Head Teachers** are responsible for ensuring that this policy and associated procedures are implemented consistently in the school. In addition to this the **Head Teacher and Teachers** will:

- Communicate clearly the attendance procedure and expectations of the school.
- Maintain appropriate attendance data.
- Have appropriate registration processes in place.
- Follow up absences and lateness if parents/carers have not communicated with the school: initially with first-day absence telephone call.

- Inform parents/carers of what constitutes authorised and unauthorised absences.
- To have systematic and consistent daily records which chart absence and lateness.
- To ensure that registers are taken twice daily: at the start of the morning and afternoon sessions.
- Refer matter to the Local Authority Education Welfare Service, where appropriate.
- To promote good attendance.

Parents are responsible for ensuring that they will

- Have children in class ready for teaching by the start of the day.
- Inform the school on every day of absence.
- Work with the school to improve lateness and attendance.
- Avoid medical and dental appointments during the school day.
- Talk to their child if they are worried about their child's attendance at school, it may be something simple that needs their help in resolving.
- Talk to their child's class teacher in the first instance about any barriers to learning.

Equality and Diversity

Edukos Trust is committed to:

- Promoting equality and diversity in its policies, procedures and guidelines;
- Ensuring staff are protected from unlawful direct or indirect discrimination resulting from a protected characteristic (e.g. age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation).
- Delivering high quality teaching and services that meet the diverse needs of its children and its workforce, ensuring that no individual or group is disadvantaged

Good attendance at school is essential for a child's education and establishes a positive working ethos early in life. 100% attendance is certainly possible, but in the event of a child being away from school it is essential that the parent informs the school of the reasons for absence.

The Department for Education (August 2020) state that:

“Central to raising standards in education and ensuring all pupils can fulfil their potential is an assumption so widely understood that it is insufficiently stated– pupils need to attend school regularly to benefit from their education. Missing out on lessons leaves children vulnerable to falling behind. Children with poor attendance tend to achieve less in both primary and secondary school.”

Monitoring

All absences are monitored. High levels of unauthorised absences, regular days off or long period of absence will be investigated by the school's designated Attendance Officer. Internal monitoring may also identify one or more specific groups of children at the school who have levels of absence higher than the national average for that group, which will result in the school taking appropriate action. The internal monitoring system will focus on, amongst others, the following groups:

- Looked after children
- Free school meals eligibility
- Gender
- Years groups
- First language
- SEND

Absences during term time

The Education (pupil registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 explanatory note states:

Regulation 7 of the 2006 Regulations is amended to prohibit the proprietor of a maintained school granting leave of absence to a pupil; except where an application has been made in advance and the proprietor considers that there are exceptional circumstances relating to the application.

It is the policy of this Trust not to authorise any absence other than illness or those with exceptional circumstances. Unauthorised absences may result in prosecution proceedings, or a Fixed Penalty Notice. If a Fixed Penalty Notice is issued, a separate Notice would be issued to each parent for each child.

AS OF THE 1st SEPTEMBER 2013, THE RATE PER PARENT PER CHILD WILL BE £60 IF PAID WITHIN 21 DAYS AND RISING TO £120 IF PAID BETWEEN 22 AND 28 DAYS.

If the penalty notice is not paid each parent may be liable to prosecution at the magistrates Court, and if proved, each notice may receive a criminal conviction and/or fine to the maximum of £1000 plus costs.

- There are approximately 195 school days (390 sessions) a year which your child is expected to attend. There are also approximately 71 days (142 sessions) of school holidays. This is over 13 school weeks. Please ensure that your holidays are taken during this period.

Lateness

Punctuality is an important life skill. It is also polite.

Children who are consistently late are disrupting not only their own education but also that of other children. Lateness is considered to be an equally serious absence. Parents/carers of children who seem to be developing patterns of lateness will be reminded by letter of the importance of good time keeping. If lateness persists parents/carers will be invited to attend the school to discuss the problem with the schools designated Attendance Officer.

- Children must be in class at the beginning of the school day. Registers will be taken as soon as possible after that time.
- Children arriving late, but before the register has closed will be coded L, any child arriving after the register has closed will be marked as U, which equates to an absence. All registers will be closed 20 minutes from the beginning of registration.
- Due to site security, any child arriving after the register has closed will have to enter via main school office, where their attendance will be recorded accordingly by Office staff. If necessary, children will then be escorted to their class.
- If a child is late owing to a medical appointment, they will receive an authorised coded of 'M'. Prove of the appointment may be required prior to the appointment or on arrival at school.

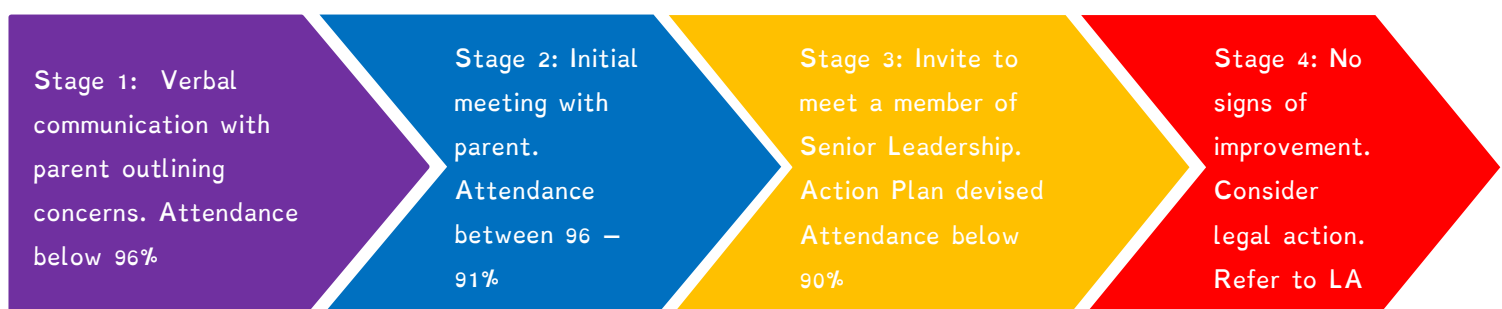
We advise parents/carer that where possible all doctors and dentists appointments be made outside of school hours or alternatively during school holidays. However, there is an acceptance that not all appointments can be pre-planned, especially ones for medical specialist or hospital treatment. Therefore, in theses circumstances, we may ask parents/carers to provide a copy of the appointment letter.

Persistent Absentee (PA)

A child is defined by the Government as a '**persistent absentee**' when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason. Absence at this level will cause considerable damage to any child's education, if not addressed and improvements made.

Whilst it is acknowledged that children can be absent because of illness, there are also times when they can be reluctant to attend. If this is the case, the school will start having conversation with the parents/carers and child, if appropriate, at the earliest stage to gain a clearer understanding of any barriers.

Our schools monitor all absence, plus the reasons given for not attending school and will take the necessary steps to support the child, should their attendance show signs of deterioration. If a child's attendance falls below 90%, the school will invite the parents/carers to a meeting with the Attendance Officer, and member of senior leadership. During this initial meeting, an Attendance Action Plan will be devised, in conjunction with parents/carers, and the child, if appropriate, which will outline all parties contribution to improving the child's attendance. If after a period of 4 weeks, there are no signs of improvement, the school will either offer further strategies or consider referring the case to the Local Authority for possible legal action.



Signing Out

The school office is responsible for overseeing the procedures for releasing children when parents/carers have made a request, or the child is too ill to remain in school. The child(ren) can only be released to a parent or authorised person. When the authorised person arrives, the school office is responsible for ensuring the completion of the 'signing out' process. The school office will then input the appropriate absent code on the electronic register, if appropriate. However, if a child leaves the school site, with an authorised adult, after either the morning or afternoon register has been taken, the original mark will remain and the signing in/out record will be referred to in the event of an evacuation to ensure all children can be accounted for.

Authorised Person

The Authorised Adult should be a responsible person and could include:

- a. Parent/Carer
- b. Family member
- c. Child minder
- d. Neighbour
- e. An older sibling who has the parent/carers written permission to collect the child from school.

NB: If there is a change to the regular authorised adult, for any reason, please notify the staff by informing them as soon as possible either at the door in the morning or via a phone call to the school office.

Procedures for failure of digital registration software

In the event of the digital registration software failure, manual attendance registers will be used for to complete registration. Completed registers will be returned to the school office, and uploaded to the system once the problem has been resolved.

Alternative Provision

Schools are responsible for the safeguarding and welfare of children educated off-site. Where this is the case, they will have reciprocal arrangements in place with the alternative provider to ascertain attendance information. This should be provided daily. All unexplained and unexpected absences will be followed up by the home school in a swift and timely manner.

The school will use the appropriate code (B) to indicate that the child is accessing alternative provision, thus demonstrating the school has confirmed that the education is supervised and appropriate measures are in place to safeguard children.

Religious observance

Our trust recognises that there may be times where children of different faiths observe religious festivals that fall outside of school holidays and weekends, schools will allow authorised absence for these times. Parents will be aware of these dates and should give the school written notification in advance.

Promoting good attendance

We celebrate good attendance throughout the year in various ways, this encourages commitment to learning. Further details are available in your school.

Local Authority Education Welfare Service

The Education Welfare Service also has a statutory responsibility under the Education Act 1996 to pursue non-school attendance and persistent lateness.

Section 444 of the Education Act states that 'if a child of compulsory age, who is a registered pupil at a school, fails to attend regularly at the school, the parents are guilty of an offence.'

The Education Welfare Service may issue a Fixed Penalty Notice or prosecute parents when children do not attend school regularly.

A Fixed Penalty Notice, when requested by a Head Teacher, can be issued as long as the following criteria apply:

- 20 sessions or more unauthorised absences by the child during a 12 week period.
- Other than in specific circumstances*, the liable parent/carer will receive a formal warning of the possibility of a Penalty Notice being issued and given 15 school days to affect improvement. Within the 15-day period, further unauthorised absence will trigger the issue of a notice without warning.

*the deliberate taking of a holiday in term time without/against school permission (where it can be clearly demonstrated that the parent/carer understood that permission had/would not be given) and where this has created a period of unauthorised absence in the current term if at least 10 sessions (5 days).

In exceptional circumstances the Local Authority reserves the right to:

- Issue a penalty notice for a first offence
- Issue a penalty notice without warning

Holidays in term time

Any holidays during term time are to be discouraged.

The Head Teacher may not grant any leave of absence, including those for holidays, to children during term time unless they consider there to be an 'exceptional circumstance'.

'Exceptional circumstance' means that the parent must make the case as to why their child should be treated differently to the norm. All requests will be treated on an individual case by case basis.

Parents/carers should make a request for authorised absence in term time, only if absolutely necessary, as these are not automatically authorised. Parents/carers need to request a 'Holiday Form', which needs to be completed 4 weeks prior to the leave of absence date.

Parents/carers are reminded that leave of absence taken from school without permission may result in the issuing of a fixed penalty notice, issued by the Local Authority.

It must be noted that there is no obligation on the part of the school or teachers to provide schoolwork to be completed by children whilst away on holiday.

The circumstances of each case should be taken into account, 'blanket approval' policies are not acceptable.

When considering a request for leave of absence we will take into account:

- The amount of time requested
- The child's general absence/attendance records
- Previous requests made for holiday absence and whether these are occurring annually/frequently.
- Proximity of public exams, e.g. SATs
- Child's educational needs and their ability to catch up

- General welfare of the child
- Circumstances of the request
- When the request was made

All requests will be responded to with a written response confirming the length of time requested and how the request will be coded, e.g. whether it is authorised or unauthorised.

Where attendance has or is likely to fall below 90%, if the holiday is taken, all requests for holiday absence will be unauthorised, except in exceptional circumstances for example, where the previous absence has been due to prolonged medical/hospital needs. The Head Teacher will use their discretion in this matter.

If, following a period of 10 days authorised absence, the child fails to return to school for a further 10 days, the school will seek advice from the Education Welfare Service leading to the possibility of removing the child from the school register.

Part time timetables

All compulsory aged children are entitled to a full-time education. Only in exceptional circumstance would a part-time timetable be granted, but this arrangement will be short term, and should not exceed longer than 6 weeks.

If a part time timetable is authorised, the school must notify both the CEO and the Local Authority Education Officer for Safeguarding. A period when the child is not in school, must be recorded as an authorised absence (Code C).

Children Missing in Education (CME)

Position Statement – national definition of children who are not receiving a suitable education:

“A compulsory school age child who is not on the roll of a school, not placed in alternative provision by a local authority and who is not receiving a suitable education at home” (revised statutory guidance for local authorities in England to identify children not receiving a suitable education January 2009).

ERYC's Children Missing from Education protocol is designed to support professionals across Children and Young People Services, partners and stakeholders in their combined efforts to safeguard children who are missing in education. Its aim is to identify the practical steps to be taken by professionals to locate and track children and young people missing from education.

If any child is absent without explanation for 10 consecutive days, the school will notify the Local Authority, by submitting a referral to the Education Welfare Service. The school will include details of the actions taken to ascertain reason for their absence from school. No child will be removed from roll without consultation between the Head Teacher and Education Welfare Service, when appropriate.

Please refer to ERYC's CME protocols.

Bullying/Harassment

Our schools do not condone bullying or harassment by children, members of staff or parents. If any form of this behaviour occurs, it will be dealt with as a very serious matter. No one should feel they cannot attend school for fear of being bullied or harassed.

Child Criminal Exploitation and Child Sexual Exploitation

Children who go missing or are persistently absent from school may be an indicator of exploitation, especially if other key factors are also present. Some other potential signs of criminal or sexual exploitation are:

- missing from home and/or being found out-of-area;
- unexplained acquisition of money, clothes, or mobile phones
- excessive receipt of texts/phone calls and/or having multiple handsets
- relationships with controlling/older individuals or groups
- leaving home/care without explanation
- suspicion of physical or sexual assault/unexplained injuries
- parental concerns
- carrying weapons
- significant decline in school results/performance
- gang association or isolation from peers or social networks
- self-harm or significant changes in emotional well-being.

In our trust we monitor absenteeism daily to ascertain children's whereabouts to ensure they are safe from harm. We will work endlessly with all statutory and non-statutory agencies, including parents/carer to protect any child at risk or at possible risk of this form of abuse. If any member of staff is concerned about a child who is regularly absent and also presents with any of the signs listed above, they must inform the Designated Safeguarding Lead immediately, as per the school's Child Protection policy.