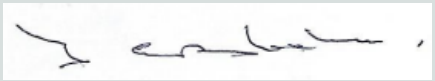
ELMWOOD JUNIOR SCHOOL

Curious Creative Compassionate

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Issue 10

Approved by:	**Curriculum Committee**	**Date: 13/11/24**
Signed on behalf of Curriculum Committee:		**Date: 13/11/24**
Next review:	**36 Months**	
Signed on behalf of FGB:		**Date: 13/11/24**

This policy is one of a series in the school's integrated safeguarding portfolio designed to safeguard children and promote their well-being.

ATTENDANCE POLICY

RATIONALE

Good attendance and punctuality are essential as they are key factors in high achievement. Here at Elmwood, parents, carers, teachers and governors have a responsibility to encourage maximum attendance and punctuality.

Research shows that schools with excellent attendance and punctuality achieve far better results with pupils making <u>significantly</u> greater levels of progress. We want all our children to achieve and, therefore, ask for your support in this matter.

The attendance policy is based on the fundamental ideas highlighted in the School's Inclusion Policy and Equal Opportunities Policy.

The school and other appropriate agencies will work together to achieve our aims.

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child underpins all policies that are implemented at Elmwood Junior School. Specifically for this policy we are seeking to uphold:

- Article 3 – the best interests of the child must be a top priority in all decisions and actions that affect children;
- Article 18 – state organisations must support parents by creating support services for children and by giving parents the help they need;
- Article 28 – every child has the right to an education, which is delivered through the child's regular attendance at school.

AIMS

- To encourage prompt arrival at school
- To encourage regular attendance
- To ensure that routines are in place for monitoring attendance and for early identification of any difficulties
- To teach our children the importance of the above life skills.

The school aims to establish good practice by operating an attendance policy within which staff, pupils, parents, governors and the Education Welfare Service can work in partnership. The school follows the guidance on maintaining registers and monitoring attendance expected by the DFE.

RESPONSIBILITIES

Class Teacher

- Emphasising with their class the importance of good attendance and punctuality
- Keeping an overview of class and individual attendance looking particularly for either poor overall attendance, anomalies in patterns of attendance and/or unusual explanations for attendance offered by children and their parents/carers
- Informing the Deputy Head Teacher/Attendance Officer where there are concerns
- Providing background information to support referrals
- Discussing attendance issues at consultation evenings

Attendance Officer

- Checking registers daily.
- Contacting parents/carers by text or phone on the first day a child is absent where a reason has not been given
- Monitoring individual attendance on a daily basis and contacting parents/carers where attendance is a cause for concern
- Following up specific requests from the Head Teacher for information about individuals
- Providing reports and background information to inform discussion with the school's Education Welfare Officer e.g. Whole School Attendance Percentage, individual attendance 90% and under
- Providing a point of contact between individual teacher, the Head Teacher and the school's Education Welfare Officer
- Liaising with other professionals to determine potential sources of difficulties and reasons for absence
- Ensuring the attendance policy is followed and that the actions from Education Welfare Officer meetings are carried out
- Completion of termly Statutory Poor Attendance Returns where requested by the Educational Welfare Service.
- Half termly meetings with the Educational Welfare Officer

Head Teacher/Deputy Head Teacher/Assistant Head Teacher

- Overall monitoring of school attendance
- Acting as a point of contact for teaching and non-teaching staff where concerns need to be raised or advice sought
- Liaising with other professionals to determine potential sources of difficulties and reasons for absence
- Ensuring the attendance policy is followed and that actions from Education Welfare Officer meetings are carried out
- Liaising with and discussing with parents' issues relating to attendance
- Overall preparation and implementation of the attendance policy
- Half termly meetings with the Education Welfare Officer
- Feedback and discussions with the class teacher over individual cases
- Promotion of attendance issues and punctuality during assemblies
- Demonstrating equality when implementing reward schemes and sanctions

PROCEDURES/MONITORING

Absence

- Parents/Carers are required to inform the school on the first day a child is absent. The reason given will be noted in the school's electronic register.
- Unexplained absences will be followed up by the Attendance Officer firstly by telephone call to parents/carers, if there is no reply, then by letter. Several day's unexplained absence where the school is unable to contact the parent/carer, will be referred to the Education Welfare Officer so that they can do a home visit.
- Persistent absence will be discussed with parents and where no improvement is seen, a referral will be made to the Education Welfare Officer. If a particular reason is identified, the school will endeavour to provide support

i) Authorised Absence

Many absences are for good reasons and are, therefore, authorised. These include absence for:-

- Illness (type of illness required)
- Medical
- Religious observance
- Compassionate leave such as bereavement

Where children are persistently absent for illness/medical reasons, the parent/carer will be asked to provide documentary evidence to support the absence.

ii) Unauthorised Absences

These would be absences where the reasons are not considered acceptable by the school or Local Authority. For example:-

- The Parent/Carer or younger sibling is unwell
- Term time holidays
- Parents woke up late and, therefore, do not think they should send their child to school late
- Not aware of school term dates

A long period of absence without any communication from the parents/carers or where a child has been taken abroad and a return date has not been provided, may result in a child losing his/her place in school. When a child is absence for more than 10 school days without explanation or parents have not evidenced a return date (if abroad), a Child Missing in Education referral will be sent to the local authority by the school. The child will not be removed from roll before authorisation has been provided by the local authority.

Parents often want to take their children on holiday during term time and sometimes for extended periods to their home country. The Head Teacher only has discretion to grant leave for exceptional circumstances. This discretion does not extend to family holidays.

iii) Following up Attendance Issues - Procedures

a) The Half Termly Education Welfare Officer Meeting

Each half term the Attendance Officer meets with the Education Welfare Officer to discuss any concerns and follows up the progress of individuals. Prior to the meeting the following information is collected:

- Attendance record for any child with less than 90% attendance
- Attendance record for any child whose absence/punctuality is identified by the school as a cause for concern

Information is shared about previous cases and decisions taken about the next stages of intervention where this is appropriate. Decisions taken are recorded on the attendance monitoring sheet. It is expected that reasonable steps have been taken by the school prior to Educational Welfare intervention.

Following the meeting with the Educational Welfare Officer, class teachers are notified of the outcome and the Attendance Officer will follow up any action agreed with the Educational Welfare Officer

b) School Procedures in Cases for Intervention

Although a range of strategies and actions will be taken on an informal basis, a formal procedure is applied where a pupil's attendance becomes a cause for concern:

- Discussion on an informal level with the child/parent and reminder about the importance of regular attendance and punctuality
- Where an absence is unexplained and telephone calls have been unsuccessful, a letter is sent home requesting a return slip explaining the absence. The letter will state that if a response is not received within a specific timescale, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised.
- If attendance remains erratic, a letter is sent from school drawing attention to the child's attendance and enclosing an individual registration certificate showing the

pattern of attendance. The parent/carer will be advised that the attendance will be monitored and that they will be contacted again if it does not improve.

- If no improvement is seen, a further letter is sent home advising the parent that documentary evidence must be provided for any future illness/medical absence. The letter will contain a warning that if the evidence is not provided, the absence will be unauthorised and could result in a penalty notice being issued.
- Where a parent does not engage with the school or attendance doesn't improve following the letters detailed above, the next stage is for the parent/carer to be invited to a meeting with the Educational Welfare Officer at school. Following the meeting the Educational Welfare Officer will continue to monitor the child's attendance and if there is no improvement, a parenting order may be issued or formal legal action commenced although this will always be a last resort.

At all times we believe that a positive approach which aims for co-operation is essential if improvements in attendance are to be sustained.

Penalty Notices

Any unauthorised leave of absence during term time of 5 days or more can result in a penalty notice being issued by the Educational Welfare Service. The penalties are issued to each parent, for each child, and are for £60 if paid within 21 days rising to £120 if paid between 21 and 28 days.

In addition, a penalty notice for £60 (£120 if paid late) can also be issued where a child has had 8 or more sessions (4 days) unauthorised absence within a 6 week period. This includes lateness after registers close at 9.20am for 8 sessions or more.

A separate penalty notice is issued for each child at the school who has taken more than 5 days leave of absence or had 8 or more sessions of unauthorised absence within a 6 week period. Each person with parental responsibility living at the same address as the child will receive a separate notice for each child.

If penalty notices remain unpaid the parents/carers can be prosecuted and could receive a fine or even a prison sentence.

See Appendix 1 for Changes taking effect from 19 August 2024

PUNCTUALITY

School doors open at 8.30am and children are expected to be seated in class at 8.40am for registration. Children arriving after 8.40am must go to the office to be recorded in the late register.

Registers officially close for the morning at 9:20am - any child arriving after this time, although marked on site, will be considered absent for the morning session. (See Authorised and Unauthorised absences). Children attend school for a minimum number of hours each week. If children are regularly late, they may be asked to make up the time missed during break/lunch times.

In cases of unacceptable levels of lateness after registers close, the Education Welfare Service as a last resort can issue a penalty notice for £60 rising to £120 for non-payment (see Penalty Notices).

LATE COLLECTION OF CHILDREN FROM SCHOOL

School finishes at 3:10pm and children should be collected promptly from their class's designated playground.

Where children are regularly collected late from school, this will initially be discussed informally with the parents/carers and followed up in writing if no improvement is seen. If the child/children continue to be collected late, the matter will be discussed with the schools designated safeguarding lead which could result in a referral to social care.

TAKING CHILDREN OFF ROLL

If parents are planning to take their children off the school roll they must provide details of the new school their child will be attending. In cases where children have not been allocated a new school place or they are leaving the country, the parent/carer must provide the school with their new address and any other supporting documentation requested by the school. A Child Missing in Education referral will be forwarded to the local authority by the school and the child will not be removed from roll until confirmation has been received from Educational Welfare to do so. If a parent removes a child from school to educate them at home, the following action must be taken in addition to the Child Missing in Education referral.

- The parent must send a letter to the Head Teacher advising them that they are removing their child from school to educate them at home.
- If the child is already known to children's social care, their allocated social worker should be advised immediately.
- If the child is not known to children's social care, but the school has concerns about their welfare, the designated safeguarding lead should make a referral to children's social care via SPOC (Single Point of Contact).
- The school must contact the Local Authority Monitoring and Support Teacher - Elective Home Education, who will contact the parent. The school will be advised when the contact has been made and if the child can be removed from the school roll.

In all cases where a child has been removed from roll, the reason for leaving and the destination school (where applicable) must be recorded on the school's computer system (SIMS). In addition, the school must advise the local authority (School Admissions) within 5 days of a child being taken off roll.

DATA PROTECTION

Elmwood Junior School will collect and process all personal data and sensitive personal data in accordance with the legal obligations as set out in the General Data Protection Regulations 2018. Please see the school's GDPR Data Protection Policy for further information.

We have carefully considered the impact of this policy on all particular characteristics as part of our ongoing process to ensure it is fair and does not prioritise or disadvantage any pupil. This is in line with the Equality Act 2010.

APPENDIX 1

Penalty Notices

A new National Framework for Penalty Notices is being introduced and will affect any penalties relating to unauthorised absence after 19th August 2024. These changes are nationwide.

First Penalty
The first time a Penalty Notice is issued for unauthorised term time absence/persistent absence, the amount will be **£160 per parent, per child.** The amount will be reduced to £80 per parent, per child if paid within 21 days.

Second Penalty
If within 3 years of the first penalty being issued there is further term time absence/persistent absence, a penalty of **£160 per parent, per child** will be issued which must be paid within 28 days. **There will be no early payment reduction.**

Third Offence onwards
If within 3 years of the first penalty there is further term time absence/persistent absence, a Penalty Notice will not be issued and the case will be **presented straight to the Magistrates Court.** Fines could be as much as £2500 per parent, per child.

Cases where parents/carers are found to be guilty in the Magistrates Court can result in a criminal record.