

School Attendance Policy



Autumn 2016

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At Eastway Primary School we believe that for children to gain the greatest benefit from education it is essential that they attend school regularly and punctually. They should only be absent from school when it is absolutely necessary.

School absence will disrupt a child's learning and may affect their academic progress. It may also disrupt their friendships and impact on their social and emotional development. Children may be at risk of harm if they do not attend school regularly.

School attendance is given a high profile throughout the school because we know how important it is. It is discussed at school assemblies, parents' evenings, staff meetings and governors' meetings. It is also included in all school reports and newsletters. We also provide visual displays highlighting the importance of good attendance and punctuality in prominent positions throughout the school.

Reward Systems

Our school has a system of rewards for children whose attendance is good or excellent. These include individual stickers, certificates, prizes and celebrations for good and excellent attendance and class rewards (Rio).

Sickness

If your child is sick it is important that you inform the school as soon as possible. Parents/carers are also asked to send in a note to explain the reasons for any absence. If the sickness continues for more than a few days we would expect you to consult your doctor. If your child has ongoing health problems the school nurse may be able to help.

Medical Appointments

If a child has a doctor or dental appointment, parents are asked to avoid appointments during school hours. If this is not possible, parents/carers should make sure that children are in school for their morning and afternoon session mark; if they do need to leave school during the day, please make sure that they are back in school as soon as possible afterwards.

Parents/carers of children who are required to attend hospital appointments may not be able to select appointment times. If a child's appointment will disrupt their time in school, parents are asked to bring a copy of the appointment letter from hospital into the school office before the appointment so that our registers can be marked accordingly.

Action Plans

If a child's attendance becomes a source of concern school will write to the parents/carers and they may be invited to a meeting or school attendance panel. The meeting will give an opportunity to discuss any concerns and to agree an Action Plan or Parenting Contract to support the family.

Persistent Absence

If a child's attendance falls below 90% they will be defined by the Department of Education as Persistently Absent. At this level their progress and development may be significantly

impaired. The case may be referred to the Education Social Worker who would contact the family and offer to visit them at home to address any concerns and offer support.

Lateness

Children need to be in school and ready to learn by 9:00am each day when the registration period begins. It's important that all children make a good start to the day and are ready to learn. If a child arrives after 9:00am but before 9:30am [when registers close] they will be given a late mark [L]. Children who arrive late are often embarrassed and may not be in the best frame of mind to begin learning. They may miss out on something important. If children arrive after 9:30am [when registers close] they will be marked with a [U] which equates to an unauthorised absence.

Parent's legal responsibilities

If a child of compulsory school age fails to attend regularly at a school at which they are registered, or at a place where alternative provision is provided for them, the parents may be guilty of an offence and can be prosecuted by the local authority. Only local authorities can prosecute parents and they must fund all associated costs.

Local authorities have the power to prosecute parents who fail to comply with a school attendance order (section 443 of the Education Act 1996) or fail to ensure their child's regular attendance at a school (section 444 of the Education Act 1996)

Section 444 has two separate but linked offences: Section 444(1): where a parent fails to secure the child's regular attendance; and section 444(1A) where a parent knows that the child is failing to attend school regularly, and fails to ensure the child does so. Section 444ZA7 applies the offence to where parents fail to secure the regular attendance of their child at a place where the local authority or governing body has arranged alternative provision.

There are statutory defences for parents to use under the 1996 Act.

The fines available to the courts if parents are found guilty of the section 444 (1) offence include a level 3 fine of up to £1,000. If they are found guilty of the section 444 (1A) the fine is at level 4, up to £2,500 and the court can also sentence them to imprisonment for up to three months. Local authorities have the power to prosecute parents of pupils found in a public place during school hours after being excluded from school⁸. The fine is a level 3 fine of up to £1,000.

Penalty Notices

Penalty notices 14 are fines of £60/£120 imposed on parents. They are an alternative to the prosecution of parents for failing to ensure that their child of compulsory school age regularly attends the school where they are registered or at a place where alternative provision is provided.

The penalty is £60 if paid within 21 days of receipt rising to £120 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days. The payment must be paid direct to the local authority. The parents can only be prosecuted if 28 days have expired and full payment has not been made.

There is no right of appeal by parents against a penalty notice. If the penalty is not paid in full by the end of the 28 day period, the local authority must decide either to prosecute for the original offence to which the notice applies, or withdraw the notice.

This information is from: www.gov.uk/government/publications/parental-responsibility-measures-for-behaviour-and-attendance

Holidays in term time

Parents are discouraged from withdrawing their children from school in term time for family holidays because this may impact on their progress. Head Teachers may only authorise holidays in term time in exceptional circumstances. Parents who believe their circumstances are exceptional are asked to complete a Leave of Absence Request form and to make an appointment with the Head Teacher to explain their reasons for the request which will assist the Head Teacher's decision. Parents who withdraw their children for unauthorised holidays in term time may be issued with a Fixed Penalty Notice (as discussed above).

Any absence requests other than for illness or medical needs must be made prior to the absence via a Leave of Absence form, which can be requested from the School Office.

Further advice and guidance

Further advice and guidance may be found on the Department of Education website:

<http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/pupilsupport/behaviour/attendance>