# Bright Futures <br> EDUCATIONAL TRUST 



# Elmridge Primary School 

BRIGHT FUTURES EDUCATIONAL TRUST

## ATTENDANCE POLICY

## Aims

At Elmridge Primary School we are committed to meeting our obligation with regards to school attendance through our whole-school culture and ethos that values good attendance, including:
> Promoting good attendance
> Reducing absence, including persistent and severe absence
> Ensuring every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled
> Acting early to address patterns of absence
> Building strong relationships with families to ensure pupils have the support in place to attend school
$>$ We will also promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

## 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.

## Roles and responsibilities

## The Governing Body

The governing board 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 head of school to account for the implementation of this policy

## The Head of School

The Head of School is responsible for:
> Implementation of this policy at Elmridge Primary 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
> 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
$>$ Working with education welfare officers to tackle persistent absence

The designated senior leader responsible for attendance is Mrs. Rebecca Bolton and can be contacted via 01619804941 or admin@eps.bright-futures.co.uk.

## 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 by 9am and immediately after lunch. Staff promote good attendance through the use of dojo, awarding daily dojos for those who attend school on time.

## School Office Staff

## School office staff will:

> Take calls from parents about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the school system
> Transfer calls from parents to the Head of School in order to provide them with more detailed support on attendance
> Ensure parents log in the late folder reasons for lateness
>Call parents if they have had no communication for a child's absence

## 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 9am on the day of the absence and each subsequent day of absence, and advise when they are expected to return
> Provide the school with more than one emergency contact number, where possible, for their child
> Ensure that, where possible, medical appointments for their child are made outside of the school day

## Pupils

Pupils are expected to:
> Attend school every day on time

## Recording Attendance

## Attendance register

At Elmridge Primary School we will keep an attendance register, and place all pupils onto this register. 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 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

See appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes.
Elmridge Primary School 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.
The register for the first session will be taken from 8:45 to 9:00am. The register for the second session will be taken after lunch (13:00pm for EYFS \& KS1, 13:10pm KS2).

## 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 9:00am or as soon as practically possible by calling the school office.
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.

## 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. Parents/ carers can request a leave of absence by completing the leave of absence request form available from
the school office. That form should be completed and returned to the Head of School for authorisation. 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.

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.

## Lateness and Punctuality

The school day begins at 9am. Children arriving after this time are late.
If your child arrives after 9am they must enter via the school office and be signed in the late book. Your child will receive a late mark in the register. If they arrive after 9:30am this will then be recorded as an unauthorised absence and will be marked as a $U$ on the register.

Persistent lateness impacts adversely upon the children's own and others' learning and it will be dealt with through the class teacher and senior leadership team. Punctuality and lateness will be rigorously monitored. If lateness is persistent there will be further communication from the school to provide additional support with the view to improve punctuality. If there is no improvement or acceptable reasons for persistent lateness, school can request a penalty notice to be issued.

## 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.
> 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(s)
> 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 involving an education welfare officer

## Reporting to parents/carers

The school will regularly inform parents about their child's attendance and absence levels if their absence is below national averages through letters and you may be called for attendance meetings. Attendance will also be reported upon each term via parents' evening and on pupil reports.

## Authorised and Unauthorised Absence

## Approval for term-time absence

Elmridge is unable to authorise holidays during school time in line with national regulations. Parents do not have an automatic right to remove their child from school during term time for leave of absence. If your child is absent for 10 school days they will miss $5 \%$ of their education during the academic year.

The Head of School will only grant a leave of absence to a pupil during term time if they consider there to be 'serious exceptional circumstances'. A leave of absence is granted at the Head of School's discretion, including the length of time the pupil is authorised to be absent for.
The school considers the exceptional circumstances for each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request.

Any request should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated and, where possible, at least four weeks before the absence, and in accordance with any leave of absence request form. The Head of School may require evidence to support any request for leave of absence.

Valid reasons for authorised absence include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointment (subject to the above)
- 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. A maximum of 2 days will be authorised across one academic year.
- Traveller pupils travelling for occupational purposes - this covers Roma, English and Welsh gypies, Irish and Scottish travelers, showmen (fairground people) and circus people, bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and new travelers. Absence may be authorised only when a traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school, but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision.

Elmridge Primary School understands that holidays are generally less expensive during term time but this does NOT count as a serious exceptional circumstance. Leave which is taken for the following reasons will not be authorised:

- Availability of cheaper holidays
- Poor weather experienced in school holidays
- Overlap with beginning or end of term
- Booked the wrong dates by mistake
- Booked by another family member
- Attending a wedding that is not immediate family
- Family birthdays or other family occasions


## 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 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.

When school receives holiday requests, you will receive a letter from the Head of School informing you that the leave of absence request cannot be authorised in term time for holidays and that the school will be requesting a penalty notice fine upon their return to school if the leave of absence is for more than 5 days.

If children are going abroad to visit sick relatives, school is within its rights to request evidence of this. If we feel the circumstances are genuine and evidence has been provided the absence
will be authorised or some days, e.g., the day of a funeral may be authorised but not a two week absence etc. If we receive no evidence, this will have to be treated as an unauthorised holiday and a penalty notice will be issued upon return.

If leave of absence is taken during term time without the approval of the Head of School, a penalty notice may be issued without any prior warning after 4 days. A penalty notice will not be issued until the pupil has returned from the leave of absence.

Penalty notices can be issued by a Head of School, 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.

## Monitoring Attendance

Elmridge Primary 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.


## Strategies for promoting attendance

At Elmridge Primary School we aim to proactively manage and improve attendance by consistently promoting the benefits of good attendance by:

- creating a school ethos that pupils want to be part of
- giving a high priority to punctuality and attendance
- developing procedures that enable the school to identify, follow up and record unauthorised absence, patterns of absence and parent condoned absence with effective monitoring and intervention
- building strong relationships with families
- celebrating $100 \%$ attendance in half termly assembly
- awarding the class with the best attendance for the week
- communicate our high expectations to pupils and parents/carers
- provide support and strategies to families who need additional support


## 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
> Attendance will be reported to and monitored by the local governing body

## Using data to improve attendance

Elmridge Primary 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

## 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
>Send letters to parents informing them if their child's attendance has dropped below 95\% or below
> Arrange attendance meeting when we feel early intervention is needed

## Links with other policies

This policy links to the following policies:
>Child protection and safeguarding policy
>Behaviour Regulation Policy

## Appendix 1: Attendance codes

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

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


| Code Authorised absence |  |  |
| :---: | :--- | :--- |
| C | Definition <br> Authorised leave of <br> absence | Pupil has been granted a leave of absence <br> due to exceptional circumstances |
| E | Excluded | Pupil has been excluded but no alternative <br> provision has been made |
| H | Authorised holiday | Pupil has been allowed to go on holiday <br> due to exceptional circumstances |
| I | Illness | School has been notified that a pupil will be <br> absent due to illness |
| M | Medical/dental <br> 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) |
| 0 | Unauthorised absence | School is not satisfied with reason for pupil's absence |
| U | Arrival after registration | Pupil arrived at school after the register closed |


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

Appendix 2: Attendance Flow Chart


Appendix 3: Attendance Band

| Letter <br> Name | Attendance <br> Band | \% of Attendance <br> Covered | Purpose of the letter for parents |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
| $96 \%$ or <br> above | Green Band | $96 \%$ up to $100 \%$ | To celebrate your child having great <br> attendance |
| Letter <br> Two | Orange <br> Band | $90 \%$ to $95.9 \%$ | To let you know your child's <br> attendance is dropping close to being <br> a concern. |
| Letter <br> Three | Red Band | Below 90\% | Your child is now considered to be <br> persistently absent from school: we <br> need to be in communication to <br> discuss a plan of action for improving <br> attendance. |

We monitor attendance trends regularly. If your child is in the persistent absenteeism category and has further time away from school we will call you into school for a meeting to discuss how we can work together to improve your child's access to their learning.

