

Attendance Policy

Committee	Learning & Progress
Staff Responsible	Head of Attendance
Adopted	July 2017
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Commitment to Attendance

The staff of Epsom and Ewell High School are committed, in partnership with the parents/carers, students, governors and the Local Authority, to building a school which serves the community and of which the community is proud. Regular attendance is key to achieving the five outcomes of Every Child Matters: staying healthy, enjoying and achieving, keeping safe, contributing to the community, and social and economic well-being.

Research clearly demonstrates the link between regular attendance and educational progress and attainment. We are committed to encouraging and supporting parents in ensuring their children achieve maximum possible attendance and that any problems that prevent this are identified and acted on promptly.

Our expectations:

We expect that all students will:

- Attend school 100% of the time unless the absence is authorised by the Head teacher or the Attendance Officer
- Attend all lessons
- Attend punctually
- Attend prepared for the day

We expect that all parents and carers will:

- Be aware of their legal duty to ensure that their child attends school on a regular, full time basis – Section 7 Education Act 1996
- Ensure that their child arrives punctually and prepared for the day
- Ensure that they contact the school on every day of absence. Calls should be made to the school attendance line before 9am. Medical evidence may be required for students who are off with illness or injury where their attendance levels are under 90% or for those with a prolonged illness (5 days or more)
- Contact the school if a problem occurs that may or has resulted in their child not wanting to attend school
- Be prepared to attend attendance meetings to discuss support for their child
- Arrange holidays outside of term time and medical appointments outside of school hours where possible.

Registers

Under the provision of the Education Act 1996 (s434) and the Student Registration Regulations 1995 the school must keep an attendance register. Any child who is absent from school at the morning or afternoon registration period must have their absence recorded as being authorised, unauthorised or as an approved educational activity [attendance out of school].

Only the Headteacher or a member of staff acting on their behalf can authorise absence. If there is no known reason for the absence at registration, then the absence must be recorded in the first instance as unauthorised.

Categorisation of Absence

Any pupil who is on roll but not present in the school must be recorded within one of these categories.

- **Unauthorised absence**

This is for those pupils where no reason has been provided, or whose absence is deemed to be without valid reason. This includes: Shopping, looking after other children or birthdays, excessive illness without medical evidence. This is not an exhaustive list.

- **Authorised absence**

This is for those pupils who are away from school for a reason that is deemed to be valid under the Education Act 1996.

- **Approved Educational Activity**

This covers types of supervised educational activity undertaken off site but with the approval of the school.

Note: Pupils recorded in this category are deemed to be present for attendance returns purposes.

Registration and Lateness

The school day begins at 8.40am. Morning registration will take place at the start of period 1. The registers will be open between 8.40am and 8.50am. Any student who arrives within this period will be marked present. If a student arrives between 8.50am and 9.10am they will be marked as present but late. Any pupil arriving after 9.10am should sign in at reception and will be marked as having an unauthorised absence unless there is an acceptable explanation e.g. school transport was delayed. In cases for example, where the absence at registration was for attending an early morning medical appointment, the appropriate authorised absence code will be entered.

The afternoon registration will be taken during period 4.

Contents of Attendance Register

The register provides a daily record of all students. It is a legal document that may be required in a court of law as evidence, for example in prosecutions for non –attendance.

The main codes used are as those laid down by the DfE from September 2006:

- / present AM
- \ present PM
- O Unauthorised Absence
- I Authorised Absence for illness
- M Authorised Absence for medical / dental appointment
- C Authorised absence for any other circumstances
- L Late arrival before registers closed
- U Late arrival after registers closed
- G Family holiday not authorised

- V Educational Visit
- B Educated off site
- P Approved sporting activity

Escalation Process

If a child is absent for any reason, it is the responsibility of the parent to notify the school on each day of absence. Parents must make contact with the school before 9am of that day. However if the child is absent and no reason has been provided the following procedure will apply:

First Day Absence

The school will telephone the parent to request reason for absence. School will note any reason given for absence and will categorise it as authorised or unauthorised. A message will be left where no contact can be made.

Second Day Absence

The school will telephone the parent to request reason for absence. School will note any reason given for absence and will categorise it as authorised or unauthorised. A message will be left where no contact can be made.

Third Day Absence

The school will telephone the parent to request reason for absence. School will note any reason given for absence and will categorise it as authorised or unauthorised. If no response is received the school will send a letter and the attendance lead will be informed.

Absences of five days or more may need to be accompanied by medical evidence showing the child was unable to attend school for that period.

Ten Days Absence

Any pupil who is absent without an explanation for 10 consecutive days will be notified to the Local Authority, by submitting a referral to Education Welfare. This is a legal requirement. The school will include details of the action that they have taken.

Where a child is absent from school the following procedure will be followed for welcoming them back: If they've been off for one day, the tutor welcomes them back and checks they are ok. If they are off for a few days, further communication from the tutor will be made and provision made for the student catching up with work.

For longer term absences a meeting with the AHT will take place and a more formal reintegration is implemented with a plan to catch up, some sessions may be provided where the student is given support by the Learning Opportunities Centre (LOC).

Frequent Absence

Whilst a child may be off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents and the child. If your child is reluctant to attend, it is unhelpful 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 usually makes things worse. Education Welfare meets with school staff on a weekly basis to discuss attendance concerns.

In cases where a pupil begins to develop a pattern of absences, the school will try to resolve the problem with the parent/s by:

- Phone call to parent by Head of Year (HoY) and issues discussed with student within school.
- Letter sent to parents stating concerns.
- Meeting at school with HoY.

If this is unsuccessful the school may refer to Education Welfare.

Persistent Absence (PA)

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason. Absence at this level is considerably damaging to a child's educational prospects and we need parents' fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

We monitor all absence thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority and you will be informed of this immediately.

PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully through our pastoral system and we also combine this with academic mentoring where absence affects attainment. Parents will be notified by a letter if their child becomes a persistent absentee and be invited to a meeting where an action plan will be drawn up to address the issues identified.

Holiday

School holidays are published a year in advance on the school website and we therefore we do not see any reason for parents and carers to need to take their child out of school during term time. The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013, which became law on 1st September 2013 states that Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances.

If you feel that there is an exceptional circumstance you will need to put your request in writing to the Attendance Officer at least two weeks in advance. On receipt of the application appropriate consideration will be given and parents notified of the outcome.

If a child is taken out of school at any time for the purposes of a holiday, the school is obliged to inform the Education Welfare Officer who is empowered to take further action.

If a child does not return to school on the agreed date from an authorised absence, the school can remove that child from the school roll in accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (as amended)

Any child who is absent in the week leading to or straight after a school holiday may be asked to provide medical evidence to support their absence. Failure to do so may result in an unauthorised code being recorded.

Bereavement

We understand that any child who suffers bereavement may find it a challenging time, however we believe that routine and stability are key. We are sensitive to the different needs of each child and will normally allow authorised short term leave (max 2 days) when there has been a bereavement and a day of absence for a funeral will be authorised.

In the case of an overseas funeral, evidence will unfortunately be required if the absence is longer term.

Illness during the school day

If your child is unwell during the school day he or she must ask for permission to go to the school medical room and, if necessary, parents or carers will be contacted for their son or daughter to go home. Students must not contact parents or carers directly to make arrangements to go home.

Sickness

If your child has been physically sick, please note that we have a 24 hour exclusion policy.

Failure to ensure regular school attendance

Every Student is expected to attend school 100% of the time unless the absence is authorised by the Head Teacher or Attendance Officer.

The Education Welfare Service, acting on behalf of Surrey County Council may issue a Penalty Notice as an alternative to the prosecution of a parent/carer for their child's unauthorised absence from school and requires the recipient to pay a fixed amount.

The amount payable on issue of a Penalty Notice is £60 if paid within 21 days of receipt of the notice, rising to £120 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days.

If the Penalty Notice is not paid within 28 days, the Local Authority must consider a prosecution against the parent/carer for failing to ensure regular school attendance under Section 444 Education Act 1996.

Penalty notices are issued per parent/carer per child, so a family of 2 parents and 2 children will receive 4 penalty notices.

Circumstances when Penalty Notices may be issued

Leave of absence in term time (5 days or 10 sessions or more).

Please be aware that The Education (Pupil Registration)(England)(Amendment) Regulations 2013, which became law on 1st September 2013 state that Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. The Headteacher is also required to determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if leave is granted.

In such cases the Headteacher/Governing Body has to judge whether there are exceptional circumstances and may request that the Local Authority issue Penalty Notices when the absence is not authorised. Warnings will not be given where it can be shown that parents have been notified that such absences will not be authorised.

Pupils identified by police and education welfare officers engaged on Truancy Patrols and who have incurred unauthorised absences

When a pupil is stopped during school hours by the Truancy Team, and there is a history of unauthorised absence, a warning letter will be sent to the parents informing them that their child's attendance will be monitored for the following 15 school days. If there are further unauthorised absences, which may include a pupil arriving late after close of registration, a Penalty Notice will be issued.

Where a parent is failing to ensure their child's regular school attendance, which may include a pupil arriving late after close of registration, and is failing to engage with any supportive measures proposed by the school or Education Welfare. This may include absences due to the pupil arriving late after the close of registration. Before a Penalty Notice is issued, the parent will be sent a formal warning of their liability to receive

Pupils moving schools

The school will only remove a child from roll when they have started at another school or an alternative provision in accordance with regulation 8 of the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006. Children will be expected to attend their current school until they start their new school and any absences at this time will be treated as unauthorised.

The Education Welfare Officer

Education Welfare monitors the attendance of all children on a weekly basis. The Education Welfare Officer (EWO) will work with school staff and parents to promote good attendance and investigate reasons for absence. If attendance problems cannot be resolved by the school then the school will make a referral to Education Welfare. The EWO will try to resolve the situation but if attempts to improve attendance have failed, but unauthorised absence persists, the EWO can use sanctions such as parenting contracts, penalty notices and prosecution.

Failure to ensure regular school attendance, under section 444 of the Education Act 1996, could result upon conviction in a magistrate's court, to a fine not exceeding £2500 or a term of imprisonment not exceeding three months, or both.

Roles and Responsibilities

All staff are expected to:

- Encourage good attendance and punctuality.

Subject teachers are responsible for:

- Keeping a register of attendance for each lesson and raise attendance concerns with their Head of Department.

Form tutors:

- Provide pastoral support to address attendance issues.

Heads of Year:

- Work with families to resolve attendance issues.

Attendance Officer:

- Will ensure morning and afternoon registers are taken and are up to date during periods 1 and 4.
- Contact parents and request reasons for absence.
- Collate daily attendance records and, together with the attendance lead, put in place agreed procedures to monitor and respond to poor attendance and punctuality.

Attendance Lead:

- Monitor and review the attendance policy on an annual basis.
- Monitor and review the attendance procedures and work with the attendance officer and Education Welfare to ensure reasons for absence are identified and interventions are put in place.
- Identify and monitor attendance of PA students.

Headteacher:

- Promote the attendance policy within the school and ensure that it is implemented effectively.

The Governing Body:

- Agree appropriate absence targets on an annual basis.
- Play an active role in ensuring targets are met.