

# Attendance policy

Edmund Waller Primary School



|                            |               |                            |
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| <b>Approved by:</b>        | Anne Rennie   | <b>Date:</b> February 2023 |
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### 1. Aims

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.

### 2. 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.

### 3. Roles and responsibilities

#### 3.1 The governing board

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 headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy

The safeguarding governor will be the link governor for attendance.

### **3.2 The headteacher**

The headteacher is responsible for:

- Implementation of this policy at the 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

### **3.3 The designated senior leader responsible for attendance**

The designated senior leader is responsible for:

- Leading attendance across the school
- Offering a clear vision for attendance improvement
- Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes
- Having an oversight of data analysis
- 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

The designated senior leader responsible for attendance is the headteacher and can be contacted via the school office.

### **3.4 The attendance officer**

The school attendance officer is responsible for:

- Monitoring and analysing attendance data (see section 7)
- Benchmarking attendance data to identify areas of focus for improvement
- Providing regular attendance reports to school staff and reporting concerns about attendance to the designated senior leader responsible for attendance and the headteacher
- Working with education welfare officers to tackle persistent absence
- Advising the headteacher when to issue fixed-penalty notices

The attendance officer is Margaret Moon and can be contacted via the school office.

### **3.5 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

### 3.6 School staff

School 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 attendance officer and/or senior leaders in order to provide them with more detailed support on attendance

### 3.7 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 1 emergency contact number for their child
- Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day

### 3.8 Pupils

Pupils are expected to:

- Attend school every day on time. They can arrive from 8.50am and should be in the classroom by 9.00am.

## 4. Recording attendance

### 4.1 Attendance register

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.

We 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 at 9.00 am and will be kept open by the office until 9.30am The register for the second session will be taken by 1.35pm.

## **4.2 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 9am or as soon as practically possible by calling the school office. (see also section 7).

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.

## **4.3 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 should complete an absence request form (attached to this policy) for planned medical appointments. 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.

The pupil's parent/carer must also apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence. Go to section 5 to find out which term-time absences the school can authorise.

## **4.4 Lateness and punctuality**

A pupil who arrives late before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code.

Parents of children who are repeatedly late (ten times or more) over a termly period will be contacted by the headteacher by email with the total amount of minutes missed from school.

## **4.5 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 child's parent/carer on the morning of the first day of unexplained absence to ascertain the reason. If the school cannot reach any of the pupil's emergency contacts, the school may contact Lewisham attendance for advice and/or MASH or the police.
- 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.
- 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

## **4.6 Reporting to parents/carers**

The school will regularly inform parents about their child's attendance and absence levels. All children will have their attendance record reported via the annual report at the end of the Summer Term. If a child's absence levels are a concern (e.g. falls below 90%), the attendance officer will be in regular contact with the child's family in order to improve the attendance. Lateness and attendance below 90% will be reported to parents and carers termly.

## 5. Authorised and unauthorised absence

### 5.1 Approval for term-time absence

The headteacher will only grant a leave of absence to a pupil during term time if they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'. A leave of absence is granted at the headteacher's discretion, including the length of time the pupil is authorised to be absent for.

We define 'exceptional circumstances' as visiting an unwell relative or attending a family funeral. In these circumstances, absence will be authorised for no more than two days as long as the child has an attendance record of above 90%.

The school considers 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 two weeks before the absence, and in accordance with any leave of absence request form, accessible via school office or the school website. The headteacher may require evidence to support any request for leave of absence.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments (see sections 4.2 and 4.3 for more detail)
- 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
- Traveller pupils travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh gypsies, Irish and Scottish travellers, showmen (fairground people) and circus people, bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and new travellers. 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
- The school does not operate a flexi-schooling policy. All children that are of statutory school age, must attend full time. In exceptional circumstances, the school may decide to operate a reduced timetable for a fixed period in accordance with local authority guidance. In these cases, a risk assessment will be completed and sent to the local authority.

### 5.2 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 school 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.

Penalty notices can be issued by a headteacher, 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.

## 6. Strategies for celebrating attendance

Good attendance is promoted via the school newsletter.

## 7. Attendance monitoring

### 7.1 Monitoring attendance

The school will:

- Monitor attendance and absence data weekly, 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

The attendance officer reports this data to the headteacher and the local authority. Child-level absence data will be collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. The school will compare attendance data to the national average, and share this with the governing board.

### 7.2 Analysing attendance

The school will:

- Look at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence, and then develop strategies to address these patterns
- 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. This includes vulnerable groups including CLA and SEND. The pupil premium leader analyses the attendance of children eligible for PPG.

### 7.3 Using data to improve attendance

The school will:

- Provide regular attendance reports 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

### 7.4 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

## 8. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the local authority or DfE is updated, and as a minimum annually. At every review, the policy will be approved by the full governing board.

## 9. Links with other policies

This policy links to the following policies:

- Child protection and safeguarding policy
- Behaviour policy

## Appendix 1: attendance codes

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

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

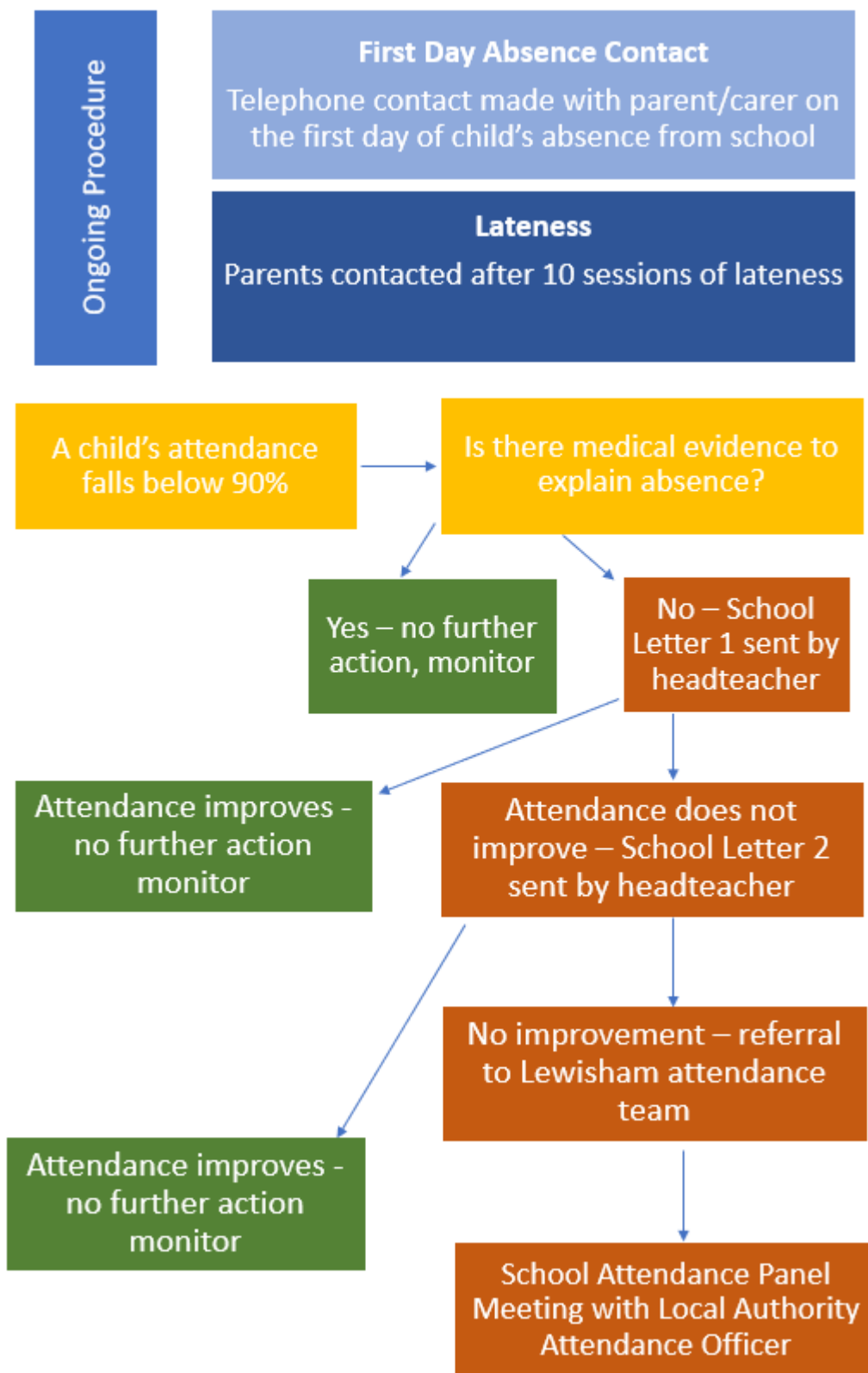
| Code                      | Definition                  | Scenario   |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------|--|
| <b>Authorised absence</b> |                             |  |
| C                         | Authorised leave of absence | Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances |
| E                         | Excluded                    | Pupil has been excluded but no alternative provision has been made         |



|                             |                                   |   |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------|---|
| <b>H</b>                    | Authorised holiday                | Pupil has been allowed to go on holiday due to exceptional circumstances  |
| <b>I</b>                    | Illness                           | School has been notified that a pupil will be absent due to illness   |
| <b>M</b>                    | Medical/dental appointment        | Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment   |
| <b>R</b>                    | Religious observance              | Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance   |
| <b>S</b>                    | Study leave                       | Year 11 pupil is on study leave during their public examinations  |
| <b>T</b>                    | Gypsy, Roma and traveller absence | Pupil from a traveller community is travelling, as agreed with the school   |
| <b>Unauthorised absence</b> |                                   |   |
| <b>G</b>                    | Unauthorised holiday              | Pupil is on a holiday that was not approved by the school   |
| <b>N</b>                    | 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) |
| <b>O</b>                    | Unauthorised absence              | School is not satisfied with reason for pupil's absence   |
| <b>U</b>                    | Arrival after registration        | Pupil arrived at school after the register closed   |

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

Appendix 2: Attendance Monitoring and Intervention



### Appendix 3: Letter 1

Dear \_\_\_\_\_

**Child's Name** \_\_\_\_\_ **DOB** \_\_\_\_\_ **Attendance** \_\_\_\_\_

As part of our commitment to improving the attainment of our pupils we monitor pupil attendance on a regular basis. During our regular monitoring of pupil attendance, we identify any pupil whose attendance causes concern. We then issue a first letter to register our concern with parents. We are therefore writing to you due to your child's current level of attendance:

|                        |  |
|------------------------|--|
| Attendance             |  |
| Authorised Absence     |  |
| Unauthorised Absence   |  |
| Absence due to illness |  |

The information below shows how attendance can affect your child's future progression.

**Above 97%: Less than 6 days absence a year**

Excellent attendance! These young people will almost certainly get the best grades they can, leading to better prospects for the future. Pupils will also get into a habit of attending school which will help in the future.

**95%: 10 days absence a year**

These pupils are likely to achieve good grades and form a habit of attending school regularly.

**90%: 19 days of absence a year**

The Government classes young people in this group as "Persistent Absentees", and it will be almost impossible to keep up with work. Parents of young people in this group could also face the possibility of legal action, and fines being taken by the Local Authority.

Young people in this group are missing a month of school per year; it will be difficult for them to achieve their best.

**Please ensure that absences due to illness are supported by medical evidence, as it is a parental responsibility to ensure regular attendance.**

If you have any queries or would like to talk to anyone about this letter please do not hesitate to contact me via the school office.

Yours sincerely

Anne Rennie  
Headteacher

## Appendix 4: Letter 2

Dear \_\_\_\_\_

**Child's Name** \_\_\_\_\_ **DOB** \_\_\_\_\_ **Attendance Percentage** \_\_\_\_\_

Since we wrote to you on \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_'s attendance has failed to improve significantly. This is below what we expect and to put this into perspective 90% attendance is equivalent to missing 38 sessions or 19 school days school per year.

Ongoing low attendance is a factor often linked to low levels of academic success. It is important that low attendance is dealt with as early as possible to prevent poor habits of attendance forming with \_\_\_\_\_. Poor attendance habits now will make it increasingly difficult for you to ensure your child attends school regularly as they get older.

We wish to help you improve the attendance. If you would like to discuss **any issues please** contact me via the school office and I will be happy to talk with you.

We would appreciate your support to make sure that the attendance improves. All absences through illness will not be authorised without suitable medical evidence, it is your responsibility to provide this

The school will continue to monitor the situation and should the attendance not improve you will be referred for a School Attendance Panel Meeting with the Local Authority Attendance Officer. This may result in a Fixed Penalty Notice or Legal action.

**I must remind you that the Education Act 1996 states that it is the responsibility of the parent/carer to ensure that their child regularly attends the school due I at which they are on roll. A failure to do this could result in legal action being taken by the Local Authority.**

Yours sincerely

Anne Rennie  
Headteacher

### Absence Request Form

Authorising absence during term time is entirely the school's decision and not a parental right. It is our view and the view of Lewisham Local Authority that any absence is potentially damaging to a child's academic progress and may unsettle the child socially. For this reason, absence will only be authorised in term time if there are exceptional circumstances. **Holiday in term time is never authorised and parents and carers are at risk of receiving a penalty notice if they take their children out of school for this reason.** Please see the school's attendance policy for further details.

Child's full name: \_\_\_\_\_ Class: \_\_\_\_\_

1<sup>st</sup> day of absence requested: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of return to school: \_\_\_\_\_

Exceptional circumstances given for absence request:

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Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Once you have completed this form please return it to the school office. You will receive a copy of this form with the outcome of your request in due course. **Please note that if your child's attendance falls below 90% the absence will not be authorised.**

Child's attendance \_\_\_\_\_

Request for leave will be authorised.

Request for leave is unauthorised.

NOTES:

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Headteacher. Date \_\_\_\_\_