



Elmhurst School

Attendance Policy

Approved by: Elmhurst School Local Governing Board **Date:** January 2024

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1. Introduction

Regular school attendance is essential if children are to achieve their full potential.

Elmhurst School believes that regular school attendance is the key to enabling children to maximise the educational opportunities available to them and are more likely to succeed when they attend school consistently. This will help them become emotionally resilient, confident and competent adults who are able to realise their full potential and make a positive contribution to their community.

Elmhurst School values all pupils. It is difficult for the teacher and the class to build their skills and progress if a large number of students are frequently absent. Therefore, as set out in this policy, Family Support Workers (FSW), as well as other members of staff, will work and engage with families to identify the reasons for poor attendance and try to resolve any difficulties.

Elmhurst School recognises that attendance is a matter for the whole school community. Our Attendance Policy should not be viewed in isolation; it is a strand that runs through all aspects of school improvement and is inherent in a child's journey through Elmhurst school. This is supported by our policies on safeguarding, bullying, behaviour and inclusive learning. This policy also takes into account the Human Rights Act 1998, the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and the Race Relations Act 2000.

2. Legal Framework

Section 7 of the 1996 Education Act states that parents must ensure that children of compulsory school age receive efficient full-time education suitable to their age, ability and aptitude and to any special educational needs they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

A child is of Compulsory School Age at the beginning of the term following their 5th birthday. A child ceases to be of compulsory school age on the last Friday in June of the school year in which they reach the age of 16.

Under the Education Act 1996, the Local Authority has a statutory responsibility to ensure that parents secure education for children of compulsory school age and where necessary, use legal enforcement for example issuing a penalty notice for persistent absence without a justifiable reason.

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, require schools to take an attendance register twice a day, once at the start of the morning session and then again during the afternoon session.

The register must record whether the pupil was:

- present;
- absent;
- present at approved educational activity;
- unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances or illness
- arrived late

3. Categorising absence

Where pupils of compulsory school age are recorded as absent, the register must show whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised.

Parents must advise the school by telephone or email on the first morning of absence by 9.30am at the latest and they must provide the school with an expected date of return. FSW will follow this up if no explanation has been given. Verbal explanations are also accepted and alternative arrangements can be agreed with non-English speaking parents/carers. Parents/carers must make themselves known to staff so we can support them appropriately. This could be to a class teacher, FSW or other office staff.

Absence will be categorised as follows:

Illness: In most cases an initial telephone call or email from the parent informing the school that their child is ill will be acceptable. Parents may be asked to provide medical evidence where there are repeated absences due to ongoing illness. This will usually be in the form of an appointment card, prescription etc. Appointments which have been confirmed electronically such as a text message from the doctor will also be acceptable if seen by FSW/Office staff.

Medical/Dental Appointments: Parents are advised, where possible, to make medical and dental appointments outside the school day. Where this is not possible, pupils should attend school for part of the day. The school must be informed as soon as the appointment is made otherwise this may be classed as an unauthorised absence. Parents should provide evidence of the appointment as detailed above.

Other Authorised Circumstances: These will be considered on a case-by-case basis by the head teacher/s and will only be authorised if the circumstances are exceptional.

Excluded (no alternative provision made): Exclusion from attending school is counted as an authorised absence. The child's class teacher will make arrangements for work to be sent home.

Late Arrival: Registration is at 8:50 and pupils must arrive by this time. Parents must ensure their child arrives at the appropriate time otherwise this will be classed as a late and therefore unauthorised.

On arrival after the close of register, pupils must immediately report to the school office, with a reason given for the late arrival, to ensure that we can be responsible for their health and safety whilst they are in school.

Unauthorised absence: Absence will not be authorised unless parents have provided a satisfactory explanation that has been accepted as such by the school.

Below are some examples of unsatisfactory explanations for absence/lateness which have been given to the school by parents in the past:

- A pupil's/family member's birthday
- Shopping for uniforms
- Having their hair cut
- Closure of a sibling's school for INSET (or other) purposes
- "Couldn't get up"
- Illness where the child is considered well enough to attend school
- Holidays taken without the authorisation of school

Leave of Absence and Extended Leave: **The High Court has confirmed that schools, not parents, authorise absence.** A student's attendance forms part of their official school record.

Parents do not have an automatic right to remove their child from school during term time for the purpose of a holiday. **Please be aware that if a child's attendance is 80% or less across their school career it adds up to them missing 2 years of education.**

Guidance from the DFES [DFES September 2006] is more explicit in stating that holidays should not be authorised because of the:

- availability of cheap holidays;
- availability of the desired accommodation;
- poor weather experienced in school holiday periods; and
- an overlap with the beginning or end of term.

Parents wishing to take their child out of school during term time must send a **written request** to the head teacher **before arrangements are made**. Parents are required to fill in a Leave of Absence form which should be returned to the FSW. The headteacher/s will then consider the request, however, please note that holidays taken during term time will not be authorised. Each request will be considered on a case by case basis taking all the points written in the Leave of Absence form into consideration, for example:

- Length of the proposed leave
- Proximity of examinations and school holidays
- General welfare of the pupil
- Pupil's absence record
- Circumstances of the request
- Purpose of the leave
- Previous term time holidays taken
- When the request was made

Documentary evidence of leave and return dates will be required in order to process the request. Retrospective requests **will not** be considered and therefore **will result** in the absence being categorised as unauthorised.

All requests for leave of absence will receive a written response from the headteacher/s. Where a request has been granted, the letter should state:

- The expected date of return
- That parents must contact school as soon as possible should any delays occur

If the permission to take leave is **not granted** and the pupil is absent, the absence will be **unauthorised**. In most cases the school **will** refer the matter to the County Attendance Team who may issue a Penalty Notice.

Religious Observance Elmhurst School acknowledges the multi-faith nature of British society and recognises that on some occasions, religious festivals may fall outside school holiday periods or weekends and that this necessitates a consideration of authorised absence or special leave for religious observance (Code R).

It is reasonable for a parent to allow their child not to attend school on a day of religious observance. Please note that in circumstances where a religious observance may be dictated to by different religious calendars, the school will authorise absence for **one day only**. Absence in excess of this will be categorised as unauthorised.

Parents are required to give advance notice to the school if they intend their child to be absent due to a religious observance.

Traveller Absence: The aim for the attendance of Traveller children, in common with all other children, is to attend school as regularly and as frequently as possible.

To protect Traveller parents from unreasonable prosecution for non-attendance, the Education Act 1944, section 86, states that a Traveller parent is safe from prosecution if their child accrues 200 attendances (i.e. 200 half days) in a year. Traveller absence (Code T) is acceptable only when the family is engaged in a trade or business that requires them to travel and when the child is attending school as regularly as that trade permits.

It does not mean that part-time education for Traveller children is legally acceptable, nor does it relieve parents of their duties to ensure that their children are receiving suitable education when not at school. Parents must engage with the school to ensure FSW has up to date information regarding the whereabouts of the child. FSW will support and monitor attendance and help to transition as needed.

When in or around Buckinghamshire, if a Traveller family can reasonably travel back to their base school (see below) then the expectation is that their child will attend full-time.

Elmhurst School will be regarded as the base school if it is the school where the child normally attends when they are not travelling. However, the pupil must have attended the school in the last 18 months. Traveller children can register at other schools temporarily whilst away from their base school. In such cases, the pupil's school place at Elmhurst School will be kept open for them whilst travelling. This is to protect them from unfairly losing their place at their school of usual attendance. Parents must Inform Elmhurst school if they are intending to travel.

Elmhurst School can operate effectively as the child's base school only if engaged in ongoing dialogue with Traveller families. This means that parents must:

- Advise of their forthcoming travelling patterns before they happen;
- Inform the school regarding proposed return dates

Elmhurst School will authorise absence of Traveller children if satisfied that a family is travelling and has given indication that they intend to return.

Traveller children will be recorded as attending an approved educational activity when:

- The child is on roll and attending another visited school
- Undertaking supervised educational activity under the jurisdiction of another Local Authority's Traveller Education Service
- The child is undertaking computer-based distance learning that is time evidenced

Where Traveller children are registered pupils at a school and are known to be present either at a site (official or otherwise) or in a house and are not attending school, the absence will be investigated in the same way as for any other pupil.

4. Deletions from the Register

In accordance with the Education Pupil Registration England Regulations 2006, if any pupil falls into the following categories, circumstances will be thoroughly investigated before being deleted from the register:

- The school is replaced by another school on a School Attendance Order
- The School Attendance Order is revoked by the Local Authority
- The pupil has ceased to be of compulsory school age
- Permanent exclusion has occurred and procedures have been completed
- Death of a pupil

- Transfer between schools
- When a parent informs the school in writing that the pupil is to be withdrawn to be educated outside the school system
- Failure to return from an extended holiday after both the school and the local authority have tried to locate the pupil
- A medical condition prevents their attendance and return to the school before ending compulsory school-age
- In custody for more than four months (in discussion with The Youth Offending Team)
- 20 days' continuous unauthorised absence have elapsed and both the Local Authority and school have tried to locate the pupil
- A pupil has left the school but it is not known where he/she has gone after both the school and the Local Authority have tried to locate the pupil

Elmhurst School will follow Buckinghamshire Council's Children Missing Education Protocol when a pupil's whereabouts is unknown. **Only when either the school has solid evidence as seen by headteacher or the Council has advised the school, will a child's name be deleted from the register.**

5. Roles and Responsibilities

Elmhurst School believe that improved school attendance can only be achieved if it is viewed as a shared responsibility of the school staff, governors, parents, pupils and the wider school community.

All staff will:

- Actively promote the importance and value of good attendance to pupils and their parents
- Form positive relationships with pupils and parents
- Contribute to a whole school approach which reinforces good school attendance; with good teaching and learning experiences that encourage all pupils to attend and to achieve
- Comply with the Registration Regulations, England, 2006 and other attendance related Legislation
- Implement systems to report, record and monitor the attendance of all pupils, including those who are educated off-site
- Analyse attendance data to identify causes and patterns of absence in partnership with class teachers and FSW
- Inform FSW if specific causes of concern arise regarding pupils
- Contribute to the evaluation of school strategies and interventions
- Work with other agencies to improve attendance and support pupils and their families
- Document interventions used to a standard required by the Local Authority should legal proceedings be instigated

Request that Parents will:

- Talk to their child about school and what goes on there. Take a positive interest in their child's work and educational progress
- Instil the value of education and regular school attendance within the home environment
- Encourage their child to look to the future and develop aspirations
- Contact the school if their child is absent to let them know the reason why and the expected date of return. This must be done by 9.30 on the day of absence either by telephone, email or in person. If language is an issue, please talk to one of the FSW workers or office staff
- Not take their child out of school during school times. This includes making appointments during school hours. Where this is not possible, written evidence must be provided, otherwise this may be recorded as an unauthorised absence
- Ask the school for help if their child is experiencing difficulties, this could be attendance related, social or personal
- Inform the school of any change in circumstances that may impact on their child's attendance

- Support the school; take every opportunity to get involved in their child's education, form a positive relationship with school and acknowledge the importance of children receiving the same messages from both school and home
- Encourage routine at home, for example, bed times, homework, preparing school bag and uniform the evening before
- Not keep their child away from school to go shopping, to help at home or to look after other members of the family
- Take opportunities to engage with FSW and advise them of any support needs that they may be able to help with
- Not take their child on holiday during term-time

6. Using Attendance Data

All pupils' attendance will be monitored and will be shared with the Local Authority/Senior Leadership Team and other agencies if a pupil's attendance is a cause for concern. Action is triggered if a child's attendance drops below 96%. All information shared will be done so in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.

Attendance data will be tracked and then monitored every half term and action taken for every child whose attendance has dropped below the school's attendance target percentage of 96%. This may be in the form of closer monitoring, letters sent to families advising of this low attendance or involvement with the County Attendance Team in situations where attendance has dropped significantly. This attendance data is also regularly shared with class teachers, phase leaders, the Senior Leadership Team and the school's governing board.

This attendance data will be used to trigger a school response as set out in Appendix 1.

Attendance data will also be used to identify emerging patterns and trends to inform whole school strategies to improve attendance and attainment.

7. Support Systems

Elmhurst School recognises that poor attendance is often an indication of underlying issues in a child's life. This may be related to home or school life. If possible, parents should make the school aware of any difficulties or changes in circumstances that may affect their child's attendance and/or behaviour in school. This will help the school identify any additional support that may be required for the child.

Elmhurst School also recognises that some pupils are more likely to require additional support to attain good attendance. Elmhurst FSW are available to help with strategies for none attendance, support for children experiencing difficulties in any way and help with family support in times of need.

Support offered to families will be child-centred and planned in discussion and agreement with both parents and pupils. Improving school attendance requires everyone, including the parent and child, to be working together. The school will implement a range of strategies to support this which could include use of the Learning Lounge, Learning Mentors and the school's Emotional Literacy Support Assistant.

8. Legal Sanctions

Where intervention fails to bring about an improvement in attendance, Elmhurst School will notify the Buckinghamshire County Attendance Team.

The County Attendance Team or school, may invite parents to attend a Parenting Contract Meeting and issue a formal warning of a Penalty Notice.

Parenting Contracts (Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003). A Parenting contract is a voluntary agreement between the Council, school and the parent. It can also be extended to include the child and any other agencies offering support to resolve any difficulties leading to improved attendance. The contract will outline attendance targets and will detail agreed actions that will help to achieve the target. The contract will be reviewed regularly.

The contract can be used as evidence in a prosecution should irregular attendance continue. Penalty

Notices (Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003) Penalty Notices will be considered when:

- Intervention has failed to bring about improvement and further unauthorised absence has occurred following written warning to improve
- A pupil has taken leave of absence i.e. for the purpose of a holiday in term time and the absence has not been authorised by the school

A Penalty Notice gives the parent the opportunity to avoid a prosecution. A £60 fine, per parent/carer, per child must be paid within 21 days. The fine increases to £120 per parent/carer, per child if paid after 21 days but within 28 days of the date the Notice was issued.

Failure to pay the Penalty Notice may result in a prosecution under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996.

Prosecution: The school will provide the Local Authority with evidence required for a prosecution under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996. This is to ensure that parents realise their own responsibilities in ensuring attendance at school and most importantly about returning children to education.

Appendix 1

Attendance Flowchart



