



ERNESFORD GRANGE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Primary Attendance, Lateness & Exceptional Leave Policy

Policy on Attendance

Introduction

We believe that children need to be in school for all sessions, so that they can make the best progress possible. To do this it is essential that a child's time at school is maximised and even short absences can have a detrimental effect on children's learning. Any pupil's absence or late arrival disrupts teaching routines, so, in addition to affecting your own child, it may also affect the learning of others in the same class. **Early poor attendance habits follow right through from primary to secondary school and into employment.**

We expect all children to be at school, and on time, every day that the school is open, as long as they are fit and healthy enough to do so. We do all we can to encourage children to attend.

At Ernesford Grange Primary School, we believe that the most important factor in promoting good attendance is the development of positive attitudes towards school. To this end, we strive to make our school a happy and rewarding experience for all children. We will also make the best provision we can for those children who, for whatever reason, are prevented from coming to school.

The Government's guidance on the issue of attendance states an expectation of at least 95%.

1 Legal requirements and Local Authority policy

1.1 Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is your legal responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution. The Law Relating to Attendance:

Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 states that 'the parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him / her to receive efficient full time education suitable:-

- (a) to age, ability and aptitude and
- (b) to any special educational needs he/ she may have either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.'

1.2 Failing to attend this school on a regular basis will be considered as a safeguarding matter. The Law relating to safeguarding:

Section 175 of the Education Act 2002 places a duty on local authorities and governing bodies to have regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State with regard to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and students under the age of 18.

1.3 Under the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, the governing body is responsible for making sure the school keeps an attendance register that records which pupils are present at the start of both the morning and the afternoon sessions of the school day. This register will also indicate whether an absence was authorised or unauthorised.

1.4 There is no automatic right to any leave of absence and all schools in Coventry are encouraged to adopt a policy of not authorising exceptional leave. Department for Education guidance issued in 2013 states that “Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence in term time unless there are exceptional circumstances.” Being mindful of this, only in very exceptional circumstances will the school grant leave of absence during term time.

1.5 Further guidance on leaves of absence can be found within this policy in the Exceptional Leave Policy section.

1.6 Any leave taken without authorisation can lead to parents being issued a **Fixed Penalty Notice**, which is currently £60 per parent per child up to 28 days. After 28 days and up to 42 days this will increase to £120 per parent per child.

2 What are authorised and unauthorised absence?

Authorised absence:

2.1 An absence is classified as authorised when a child has been away from school for a legitimate reason and the school has received notification from a parent or guardian. For example, if a child has been unwell, the parent writes a note or telephones the school to explain the absence. Reasons for absence needs to be specific; the school does not accept the generic terms of ‘unwell’, ‘poorly’ or ‘sick’ etc. The school then records this information on the child’s electronic attendance record.

2.2 Only the school can make an absence authorised. Parents do not have this authority. Consequently, not all absences supported by parents will be classified as authorised. For example, if a parent takes a child out of school to go shopping during school hours, this will not make it an authorised absence. Medical evidence may be required or requested by the school in the case of repeated absence and includes; medical appointment cards or letters, copy of prescriptions, medication packet prescribed by the GP, note from a GP or other health professional. In the event of a child being under the care of a hospital consultant and longer term absence or repetitive absence for appointments is anticipated the school may contact support services to

organise appropriate support to ensure minimal disruption to the child's learning.

Appointments:

2.3 Routine or non-urgent medical appointments (e.g. routine dental and eye check-ups) should be made outside of school hours. If it is necessary to make an unavoidable appointment during the school day (e.g. a hospital appointment with a consultant), an appointment card or letter should be provided, in order for a child's absence to be authorised. Please bring this to the School Office.

2.4 When at all possible, children should attend school before and/or after the medical appointment.

Unauthorised absence:

2.5 An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of both the parent *and* the school. Therefore, the absence is unauthorised if a child is away from school without good reason, even with the support of a parent.

3 If a child is absent without notification

3.1 Where no notification has been received by 9.45 am a text message/call will automatically be sent to the parents/carers to seek clarification as to why the child is absent from school. If no reply is received then a second text message/call will be made. If school remain concerned then a home visit may be carried out to check on the child. If contact has still not be made then the Local Authority may be alerted as a safeguarding precaution.

3.2 Tracking Absence- Absence reports are produced on a daily basis from the first day of absence. If an acceptable reason for absence is given and accepted by the school the absence may be marked as "authorised". The school are under no obligation to accept the reason given for absence when there is doubt as to its validity. The Headteacher will keep under review all pupils whose attendance falls below 90% and keep under consideration reasons given for the absence. This will be reviewed along with the Local Authority who will advise as to whether the school should consider no longer authorising absence or whether to request medical evidence.

3.3 If any child's attendance at the school falls below 85% and the absence is unauthorised, the Local Authority will be asked be asked to intervene. Where a child is identified as post registration truancy and has no valid reason for leaving the school grounds he/she will be marked as unauthorised absence.

3.4 The following three groups will be tracked on a termly basis:
Below 85%– persistent absentees (triggering Local Authority intervention)
85-92.9% - cause for concern (triggering school intervention/support and Local Authority monitoring)

93-94% - below average attendance.

4 Lateness

4.1 Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If a child misses the start of the day they miss valuable learning time and do not spend time with their class teacher getting vital information and news for the day. Late arriving pupils are sometimes unsettled, may disrupt lessons and can be embarrassed about their lateness. If parents are experiencing difficulties, they should contact the school to work with them to ensure best outcomes for the child and to avoid Local Authority intervention.

How we manage lateness:

4.2 The school day starts at **8.55 am** and we expect children to be in class at that time. Children who are not in class by that time will need to register at the office and will receive a late mark. The afternoon session starts at **1.15 p.m.** Registers are closed at **9.15 am** for morning sessions and **1.30pm** for afternoon sessions. In accordance with Local Authority regulations, if a child arrives in school after that time they will receive a 'U' mark that shows them to be on site, but this will **not** count as a present mark. This may mean that parents could face the possibility of a Penalty Notice if the problem persists. If a child has a persistent late record, parents will be informed by letter or asked to meet with a member of school staff and/or attendance officer to resolve the problem. We encourage parents to approach us at any time if they are having problems getting their child to school on time in order that we may offer support.

4.3 Pupils who are persistently late after registration (10 U's in five weeks) are referred to the Local Authority, who may, if no improvement is made, instigate legal proceedings such as issuing a Fixed Penalty Notice.

5 Missing children

5.1 If a child is missing and their whereabouts are unknown, the school will follow the Local Authority procedures in taking immediate steps to locate that child as soon as possible.

5.2 Removal from Roll- In the event of school transfer or a pupil moving to another area, a pupil will normally remain on roll until notification is received from the receiving school. . Should no notification be received the school will make every effort to locate the pupil in conjunction with the Local Authority. If unsuccessful, a missing person form must be completed and sent to the Local Authority and the pupil removed from roll after twenty days.

5.3 In the case of unauthorised holidays, pupils' names will be removed from the roll after twenty days of absence. Parents are made aware of this before the leave of absence, and by letter when the child's name has been removed from the roll.

6 Requests for Exceptional Leave of Absence

6.1 If parents wish to take their child out of school during term time, a request for leave of absence must be made on the “**Application for Exceptional Leave of Absence**” form as soon as possible before the exceptional leave is due to begin, except in an emergency, in which case the application will be considered on an individual basis. Application for Exceptional Leave of Absence forms can be obtained from the School Office or the school website and a copy is attached at the back of this policy. A decision from the school will be given within five working days.

6.2 The appropriate information and documentation must be provided to back up the Application for Exceptional Leave of Absence form.

Exceptional leave during the school day

6.3 Parents are expected to arrange medical appointments out of school hours where possible. Children must not be taken out of school without previous agreement (unless in an emergency). Parents must report to the school office, and then the school staff will collect children from the classroom and bring them to the parent/guardian at the office.

6.4 On return to school during the day parents must report to the school office so that the register can be adjusted accordingly. The child will then be escorted/sent to their class as appropriate.

6.5 Parents should inform the school office of any unexpected events which may result in a delayed return to school.

Exceptional leave during term time

6.6 We follow Local Authority and government guidance on parents taking children out of school for holidays during term time, which is **not** to authorise, and absence for this purpose will be treated as unauthorised absence. Consequently, both parents of the child(ren) will receive a Fixed Penalty Notice from the Local Authority (see school’s Attendance Policy) regardless of whether they agree with or attend the holiday themselves.

6.7 Application for Exceptional Leave of Absence will only be authorised by the Headteacher in very exceptional circumstances. **Department of Education guidance now states that, “Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence in term time unless there are exceptional circumstances.”**

Requests for Exceptional Leave

6.8 Except in an emergency, permission must be sought from the school at least 4 weeks before the exceptional leave is due to begin and in advance of making any arrangements. Emails and letters requesting exceptional leave

will not be accepted. All requests must be made on an **Exceptional Leave of Absence Form**, which can be obtained from the school office or website. Evidence of any travel bookings, if applicable, may be requested by the school.

6.9 Each request for exceptional leave of absence is considered by the Headteacher. Should the request fall outside the school's Attendance Policy, the application will be considered by a Governor on behalf of the Governing Body. Reasons for exceptional leave may be logged on to the child's records and will be shared as part of the transfer/transition process.

7 Long-term absence through child's accident or illness

7.1 If a child is under the care of a hospital consultant and a consultant's letter has been produced, and the absence is likely to continue for an extended period, or to be a repetitive absence, the school may contact the support services so that arrangements can be made for the child to be given some tuition outside school.

7.2 If there are repeated bouts of illness the school may contact parents/guardians to ask for written medical evidence for any future illness related absence. This evidence could be a doctor's note, appointment card, or a copy of a prescription. The school may seek written permission to make their own further enquiries.

8 Repeated unauthorised absences

8.1 The school will contact the parent or guardian of any child who has an unauthorised absence. If a child has a repeated number of unauthorised absences, the parents or guardians will be asked to visit the school and discuss the problem. If the situation does not improve, the school will then contact the Local Authority support services, who may visit the home and seek to ensure that the parents or guardians understand the seriousness of the situation.

8.2 The governors, supported by the Local Authority, reserve the right to consider taking legal action against any parents or guardians who repeatedly fail to accept their responsibility for sending their children to school on a regular basis. There is a fast track to court procedure for parents of pupils whose attendance consistently falls below the expected levels without appropriate reasons. These parents are at risk of receiving a fine up to £2000, a criminal record, probation and a possible custodial sentence.

9 Attendance targets

9.1 The school sets attendance targets each year. These are agreed by the senior staff and governors at the annual target-setting meeting. The targets are challenging yet realistic and based on attendance figures achieved in previous years. When it is setting targets, the school considers carefully the attendance figures for other similar schools, as well as national figures and those achieved by other schools in the city.

10 Monitoring

10.1 It is the responsibility of the Governing Body to monitor overall attendance and the head teacher will produce an annual report. The governing body also has the responsibility for seeing that this is carried out. Governors will therefore examine the information provided in the report to satisfy themselves that attendance meets the required levels.

10.2 The school will keep accurate attendance records for a minimum period of three years after a child has left the school. The legal status of school registers is stressed to all staff and meticulous effort is made to ensure they are accurate. Registers are maintained electronically, which allows staff to add comments about the reason for absence, arrival time for lateness, the efforts made by school to contact home and the outcome of these efforts.

10.3 The rates of attendance will be reported in the school prospectus and at least annually in governors' report.

10.4 Class teachers are responsible for monitoring attendance in their class, as well as for taking action on day-to-day absences, according to the school's procedures. If there is a longer-term worry about the attendance of a particular child, they must report this to the Headteacher and Learning Mentor, who will contact the parents or guardians.

Review

This policy will be reviewed by the governing body every two years, or earlier if considered necessary.

Approved by Governors_____

Title_____

Date_____



APPLICATION FOR EXCEPTIONAL LEAVE OF ABSENCE

This application must be submitted to the **School Office** at least **4 weeks** before the proposed period of exceptional leave.

As recommended by the Local Authority, the school has a strict policy on Exceptional Leave. This applies to **ALL** the children of the school community. A copy of this and the school's Attendance Policy can be obtained from the School Office and from the school's website. Please note that you are expected to take family holidays during the school holidays and your child's absence for this purpose will be treated as an **UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE**.

Name of child 1	Class
Name of child 2	Class
Name of child 3	Class
Name of child 4	Class
Proposed date(s) of absence	From: _____ to: _____

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Please give details and reasons for the proposed absence

Signature of
Parent/Guardian

Date:

Your application will be considered by the Headteacher and a decision from the school will be given within 5 working days. If the reasons fall outside the criteria set out in the school's Attendance Policy, the request may be considered by a Governor on behalf of the Governing Body. Evidence of travel bookings may be required including return flights. Your child's attendance record will be taken into consideration.

If permission is refused and your child is absent for the above period, it will be recorded as unauthorised absence, referred to the Local Authority and you may receive a Fixed Penalty Notice.

School office use only:

	Initials	Date
Seen by Headteacher		
Form returned to parents/guardians		

Primary Attendance & Exceptional Leave Policy

School Office Use	
Current Attendance	%
Agreement Reached:	
In this instance I am able to authorise this leave request	
Further information/meeting required, please contact school office	
I am unable to authorise this leave	
This Leave is not authorised because:	
Your child's attendance record is below LA guidelines	
Your child has already taken Exceptional Leave	
The leave falls during an assessment period	
The new school year has only just begun	
Exceptional Leave will cause a detrimental gap in your child's learning	
Exceptional Leave will disrupt the continuity of your child's learning	
The reason for your request is not acceptable	

Headteacher Signature _____

Date _____