



ELTHORNE PARK

— HIGH SCHOOL —

Attendance Policy

1. Introduction

This policy outlines statutory and school expectations and requirements in relation to school attendance and punctuality.

The policy will be reviewed biennially in consultation with students, parents and governors. The next review date will be in November 2020.

Aims and Objectives

The aims and objectives of the policy are to ensure that:

- all students achieve their full academic potential through regular attendance at school;
- students, parents and staff work in partnership to ensure regular student attendance;
- students are punctual to school and to lessons throughout the school day;
- students are safe and accounted for at school and on linked courses;
- students with attendance difficulties are supported and helped to improve their attendance;
- all stakeholders are aware of their responsibilities in relation to attendance processes and procedures.

Good attendance and punctuality is important because:

- Evidence is repeatedly cited showing a direct link between under-achievement and poor attendance and punctuality
- Regular and punctual attenders make better progress, both socially and academically
- Regular and punctual attenders find school routines, school work and friendships easier to cope with
- Regular and punctual attenders find learning more satisfying.
- Regular and punctual attendance encourages responsible learning habits and prepares young people for higher education and for their working life.

Legal responsibilities

Regular attendance is defined to be in accordance with the rules prescribed by the school.

Supreme Court ruling, April 2017

Regular attendance at Elthorne Park High School is considered to be attendance on each day the school is open for the pupils unless there is an authorisable reason to be absent; (Registration Regulations 2006 (amended). Section 444 of the Education Act, 1996).

“If a child of compulsory school age who is a registered pupil at a school fails to attend regularly at the school, his/her parent is guilty of an offence.”

Parents have a legal duty to ensure efficient and full time attendance at school of registered pupils of statutory school age (Education Act 1996). This is the legal requirement. The School Attendance Service aims to work with schools and families to promote good attendance and avoid legal action. However in some cases, parents are prosecuted (taken to court) or have to pay a Fixed Penalty fine.

1 Payment of the penalty discharges liability for the offence. It is an alternative to prosecution. There are 2 levels of penalty notice - £60 (if paid within 21 days of issue), and £120 (if paid later than 21 days but within 28 days). Failure to pay will result in prosecution in Magistrate's Court for irregular attendance, where, on conviction a fine of up to £1000 may be imposed as well as a record of criminal conviction.

2. Responsibilities

As a parent you can support regular attendance by:

- Ensuring your child attend school on each day the school is open for the pupils, unless there is an authorisable reason to be absent. Only the school can authorise an absence
- Phone in to the school with a reason for an absence on each day of absence.
- Absence should only happen
 - a) When your child is significantly/symptomatically ill and therefore unfit to attend school. There should be an observable symptom; 'feeling unwell' is not enough. We may ask for medical verification where absence claimed as illness is frequent, prolonged or where there are absences before or after a school holiday.
 - b) Let us know if there is an unavoidable/unforeseen reason or circumstance which is causing a difficulty
 - c) If your child has a documented medical condition that hinders regular attendance, please let us know.
- A timely reason; satisfactory to the school needs to be given for an absence; otherwise the absence will remain unauthorised

- Arranging all non-emergency medical and dental appointments out of school hours or during school holidays.
- Keeping the school updated by telephone, email or letter of any changes of circumstances. Making sure we always have your current contact numbers; this includes all telephone numbers and emergency contact details
- **If you are leaving** the area or changing schools, please complete a **leaver's form** (available at the school office). Schools and the local authority are obliged to track pupils missing from school. This can be intrusive in the absence of reliable or confirmed information

Elthorne Park High School will:

- Celebrate good attendance and punctuality through our rewards processes.
- Monitor attendance each day including individual lesson attendance.
- Publish our attendance data and set annual targets which will be communicated with and monitored by our governing body.
- Let you know if we have concerns regarding your child's attendance or punctuality. The school will express 'a **concern**' either verbally or by letter. If attendance does not improve or explanations for absence are unsatisfactory you may be invited to a meeting. The school will also outline what the attendance expectations are and what actions will follow and we will seek to support you. You may be asked to agree an Attendance Improvement Contract. A referral may also be made to the Borough's School Attendance Service, whose officers visit the school regularly to review and support attendance and punctuality issues.
- Remind parents of the importance of regular attendance and punctuality in the school literature, on our website, at open evenings, in the Home-School Agreement and in students' annual reports.
- If your child has a documented medical condition, we will wish to discuss this with you. We will devise a care plan with you to support your child in school; this might also require us to refer to the school nurse.
- Where attendance concerns present, the school will offer interventions and work with parents and students to support improved attendance. This may involve referrals to internal or external mentoring, reports and/or reintegration support plans.
- Where attendance concerns persist, escalate the matter to the Borough Court Officer; this includes unauthorised absence due to significant lateness
- Respond to requests made for term time leave although almost certainly not authorise them. If exceptional leave is agreed by the Headteacher, we will write formally to outline the conditions of this; share an expected return date and outline consequences of non-return on that date.

3. Types of absence

Authorised Absence

Some absences are allowed by law and are known as “authorised absences”. That is when the school accept a reason given for absence.

We realise that there are rare, unavoidable occasions when there might be a particular problem that causes your child to be absent such as sudden bereavement, unexpected parental illness or a family crisis. If this happens, please let us know and we shall try to deal with the matter sympathetically. Following such incidents, parents are expected to make any necessary arrangements for their child to return to school as soon as possible (ideally the next day). If the absence is likely to be prolonged Parents must write to the Headteacher outlining reasons.

Please note that when illness is a frequent reason claimed for absence then the school will ask for evidence other than a parent’s word in order to further allow authorisation. The school defines frequent illness as 10 days (20 sessions) missed within any rolling year or where one period of absence extends beyond 5 days without production of medical evidence.

Unauthorised Absence

There are times when children are absent for reasons, which are not permitted by law. These are known as “unauthorised absences”. Examples of unauthorised absence are:

- Waiting for a delivery or repair
- Going for a family day out / Going shopping
- Interpreting or supporting a parent at a meeting
- Sleeping in after a late night
- Because it is your child’s birthday
- Term time holiday
- Parent’s illness (other than in an emergency)
- Where there is no explanation for an absence or the school considers the reason given for the absence unsatisfactory.
- Absence following or prior a period of school closure or authorised leave unless satisfactory evidence to justify has been provided)

Unauthorised Absences are reported to the Local Authority. The School Attendance Service may contact you where unauthorised absence continues to be a problem. The school will then work in partnership with you until matters improve.

Unauthorised absence could result in a Fixed Penalty Fine or other legal action. Sanctions for continued, unauthorised absence include warnings, penalty notices (fines) prosecution in the magistrate’s court or an education supervision order through the family proceedings court.*¹

Persistent Absence

The school monitors attendance daily and reviews weekly. You can expect communication and intervention if attendance falls below our school target (96%) or there are any unusual patterns to absence. The school will discuss what interventions might be appropriate to seek to improve attendance.

If a child’s attendance falls to 90% for whatever reason, he/she is automatically defined by the Department for Education (DfE), irrespective of the reason for absence, as a Persistent Absentee.

Persistent absence is a serious problem for pupils. Much of the work they miss when they are off school is never made up; these gaps in their learning leave children at a considerable disadvantage for the remainder of their school career. Statistics show a direct link between poor attendance and under-achievement - particularly at GCSE level.

Such low attendance is well below our expectations and as such, the school will work in partnership with the parent to improve matters. In such cases, parents might be invited to agree an Attendance Improvement Contract with the school as a way of managing improvement.

Exceptional Leave - Term Time Leave of Absence

Amendments to the 2006 School Attendance Regulations make it clear that a Headteacher may not grant any leave of absence during term time for holidays. Leave of absence is only granted in exceptional circumstances (e.g. if there is an emergency) at the discretion of the Headteacher and in accordance with the school policy as agreed by the governing body. There is no entitlement to time off during term time.

- Only in an exceptional circumstance will term time leave be considered. All leave is granted at the Headteacher's decision. Parents wishing to apply for leave of absence need to fill in an application form well in advance and before booking tickets or making travel arrangements (forms are available at the school office and website).
- Parents sometimes confuse 'telling' the school as being good enough, this is not so,
- If a child goes abroad during a school holiday period, the parent must make definite arrangements so that they return in good time for school re-opening. Absence claimed as illness before or after a school holiday must be reported during the period of absence and medical evidence produced on return to school. Otherwise, the absence will be regarded as unauthorised leave.
- If you experience unexpected delays in returning on time for whatever reason, the school will require documentary evidence accompanied with proof of original return dates. i.e. tickets or an official travel plan showing intent to return on time. Medical Documentation should be in English. In certain circumstances if a child remains abroad at the beginning of a school term and absence extended their school place may be at risk
- If term time leave is taken without prior permission from the school, the absence will be unauthorised and you may be liable for a fixed-penalty fine*. Where a child's whereabouts cannot be established he/she may be regarded as a 'Child Missing Education'.
- Except as in the case of an emergency, retrospective approval cannot be given without an application having been made. Satisfactory evidence of an emergency will need to be provided

4. Punctuality

Good punctuality is prerequisite to good learning and shows respect between pupil, family and school. Much of core learning begins immediately in the morning.

- Parents remain responsible for their child's punctuality. Arriving late to school on a consistent basis can have longer-term academic effects. Late arrivals are disruptive to the whole class and often embarrassing for the child. If showing up late to school becomes a habit, children may develop the notion that lateness is acceptable behavior. This belief can negatively impact their future work ethic and employment opportunities.

- Morning registration is at 8.40 am. You need to aim for your child to come through the school gate by 8.35 am at the latest.
- Arrival after the close of registration (particularly if the lateness is frequent or persistent and there is not an acceptable reason) will be marked as unauthorised absence code 'U' in line with the DfE guidance; this has the value an unauthorised absence. When late arrivals are frequent or persistent we will want to discuss this with you.
- Any child who arrives after 8.40am without an authorised reason for absence will be issued with a late detention. These are same day detentions that happen at lunchtime. These can escalate or reports or other monitoring undertaken if persistent.
- All lateness is recorded daily. The number of minutes late and the reason for lateness, if known, will also be recorded. This information can be made available to the courts in the form of a report should a prosecution be the outcome of repeated lateness.
- Please remember that absence for whatever reason disadvantages a child by creating gaps in his/her learning. A good understanding of the work and good progress can only take place when the child is in the classroom regularly and on time.

5. Leavers

School or geographical moves

If your child is leaving our school (other than at the end of Year 11) parents are asked to:

- Give the school comprehensive information about your plans; including any date of a move and your new address and telephone numbers, your child's new school and the start date when known. A destination country or another named local authority without other details is not sufficient.

This should be submitted to our school in writing. A LEAVERS' FORM is available from the school office and website which you should complete and return to the Attendance Administrator.

- When a child leaves and we do not have information about where they have gone, then he/she is considered to be a 'Child Missing Education'. This means that the Local Authority has a legal duty to carry out investigations to ascertain what other education your child is receiving. This will include liaising with Ealing Children's Integrated Response Service (formerly Social Services), the Police, benefits/council tax records and other agencies, to try to locate your child. By giving us the above information, these investigations can be avoided.

Withdrawals:

- Parents who remain resident locally can only withdraw their children from school if they have a confirmed start date at another school or are undertaking to educate the child at home (Home Education). If the latter, this must be confirmed in writing to the school by the parent. Pupils remain registered at school until such conditions are satisfied.