



East Sheen Primary School

Attendance Policy

Introduction

We expect all children to attend every day when the school is in session, as long as they are fit and healthy enough to do so. Although parents/carers have the legal responsibility for their child's attendance we do all we can to encourage the children to attend. 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 praise those children whose attendance is very good. We will also make the best provision we can for those children who, for whatever reason, are prevented from coming to school.

Poor attendance at school and lateness may potentially be an indicator of abuse and neglect; effective communication with school to explain any absences is essential (see our Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy for more information about Children Missing Education –CME).

This policy has been written to adhere to the relevant Children Acts, Education Acts, Regulations and Guidance from the Department for Education in addition to guidance from the Local Authority.

Please see:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/361008/Advice_on_school_attendance_sept_2014.pdf

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 the category of absence in line with borough policy.

Aims and Objectives

This attendance policy ensures that all staff and governors in our school are fully aware of and clear about the actions necessary to promote good attendance.

Through this Policy we aim to:

- Improve pupils' achievement by ensuring high levels of attendance and punctuality.
- Achieve a minimum of 97% attendance for all children, apart from those with chronic health issues.
- Create an ethos in which good attendance and punctuality are recognised as the norm and seen to be valued by the school.
- Raise awareness of parents, carers and pupils of the importance of uninterrupted attendance and punctuality at every stage of a child's education.

- Work in partnership with pupils, parents, staff and the Education Welfare Service so that all pupils realise their potential, unhindered by unnecessary absence.
- Promote a positive and welcoming atmosphere in which pupils feel safe, secure, and valued, and encourage in pupils a sense of their own responsibility.
- Establish a pattern of monitoring attendance and ensure consistency in recognising achievement and dealing with difficulties.
- Recognise the key role of all staff, in promoting good attendance.

We maintain and promote good attendance and punctuality through:

- Raising awareness of attendance and punctuality issues among all staff, parents and pupils.
- Ensuring that parents have an understanding of the responsibility placed on them for making sure their child attends regularly and punctually.
- Equipping children with the life skills needed to take responsibility for good school attendance and punctuality appropriate to the child's age and development.
- Maintaining effective means of communication with parents, pupils, staff and governors on school attendance matters.
- Developing and implementing procedures for identifying, reporting and reviewing cases of poor attendance and persistent lateness.
- Supporting pupils who have been experiencing any difficulties at home or at school which are preventing good attendance.
- Developing and implementing procedures to follow up non-attendance at school.

Definitions

Authorised absence

- 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.
- 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 mean it is an authorised absence.

Unauthorised absence

- When a child is away from school without the permission of both the school and parent.
- When a child is away from school without good reason, even with the support of a parent.

If a child is absent

- Parents/carers should contact the school office by 9.00am on the first day of the child's absence. The class teacher will record the absence in the register, which is then returned to the office for the correct absence category to be marked by the welfare officer, following receipt of absence notification from the parent/carer. The school office staff will endeavour to contact a parent/carer if a message or reason for absence has not been received. Parents/carers should update the school regularly on the child's condition, contacting the school on day three of the absence as a minimum.

- If a child has a medical appointment a copy of the appointment card or letter should be provided to the school ahead of the appointment. Wherever possible appointments should be made outside of school hours but if not, the child should return to school as soon as possible to complete the school day.
- If there is any doubt about the whereabouts of a child, the class teacher should take immediate action by notifying the school office. The school will then be in contact straight away with the parent or carer, in order to check on the safety of the child.
- All absences are recorded as either authorised or unauthorised. It is important that the school receives accurate information – either by note or telephone notification - to determine the correct category. The Headteacher has the responsibility to determine whether an absence is authorised or unauthorised.
- If a child is unwell on the day before or immediately after a school holiday then proof of illness is required, either a doctor's note or appointment card, otherwise the absence will be marked as unauthorised.

Requests for leave of absence

Children are expected to attend school for all sessions, so that they can make the most progress possible. However, we do understand that occasionally there are very exceptional circumstances under which a parent may legitimately request leave of absence for a child.

Under these circumstances, parents are requested to complete a 'Request for leave of absence' form which may be followed up with an appointment with the Headteacher to discuss reasons for the request. Leave of absence forms are available from the school office.

Parents do not have a right to take their child out of school for holidays. The Headteacher does not have authority to approve absence for general family holidays. Any unauthorised holiday absences of five days or longer will be referred to the Education Welfare Service who may issue parents/carers with a fixed penalty notice (FPN).

Long-term absence

When children have an illness that means they will be away from school for over five days, the school will, when appropriate, do all it can to send material home, so that they can keep up with their school work.

If it seems likely that the absence will continue for an extended period (15 days or more), or be a repetitive absence, the school will contact the Local Authority (LA). The LA have the responsibility to arrange suitable full-time education (or part-time when appropriate for the child's needs) for children who are unable to attend a mainstream or special school because of their health. In some cases, where a child is hospitalised, the hospital may provide education for the child within the hospital and the LA would not need to arrange any additional education, provided it is satisfied that the child is receiving suitable education. See link to statutory guidance below.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/education-for-children-with-health-needs-who-cannot-attend-school>

Repeated absences

- Absence data is closely monitored by the School Welfare Officer and discussed with the Headship Team.

- The school will contact the parent or carer of any child who has an unexplained absence requesting details.
- If a child has a repeated number of absences, the parents or guardians may be asked to visit the school and discuss the problem.
- The Education Welfare Officer (EWO) visits the school on a regular basis and will review all cases where attendance has fallen below 90%.
- When attendance is below 90% proof of absence will be required, for example in the case of illness a letter or appointment card will be required or permission to speak to the doctor's surgery (see appendix 1).
- If attendance does not improve, the EWO will arrange a visit with the parents/carers at school or home and seek to ensure that the parents or carers understand the seriousness of the situation.
- The School and EWO will work with the family to support an improvement in attendance so that the case can be closed.
- If these interventions do not achieve an improvement further action by the EWO may include a Fixed Penalty Notice or prosecution of the parents/carers.

Lateness

- The school gates open at 8.40am to allow children to be in class and ready to start learning by 8.50am.
- Children arriving after 8.50am will be deemed as late and marked in the register accordingly (code L). Children who are persistently late miss significant learning opportunities - the start of the day is a particularly important time to share information for the day. Children arriving after 9.30am will be marked as an unauthorised absence for that session (code U).
- Parents / children are required to report to the office, to ensure that the attendance register is updated.
- Late entries will be monitored regularly and lateness figures will be reported in pupils' end of year school reports.
- The school will contact the parent/carer of any child who is repeatedly late for school. The parents or guardians may be asked to visit the school and discuss the problem. If the situation does not improve, the school may involve the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) who will arrange a visit at school or at home and seek to ensure that the parents or guardians understand the seriousness of the situation. Together the school and EWO service will identify strategies with the parent or guardian to resolve the lateness issues.

Rewards for good attendance

- Classes meeting the school target of 97% attendance are celebrated each week in assembly. The 'attendance bear' is awarded to classes with 100% attendance.
- The school's attendance targets are set in line with borough expectations and a weekly report is published in the newsletter.

Monitoring and review

- It is the responsibility of the Governors, who are also responsible for this policy and for seeing that it is carried out, to monitor overall attendance.
- Attendance will be reported at each Children, Families and Community Committee Meeting, and shared in the governor dashboard.

- The school will keep accurate attendance records on file for a minimum period of three years.
- The school's Welfare Officer will be responsible for monitoring lateness and attendance throughout the school. Any concerns about a child's absence will be brought to the attention of the Headteacher and agreed procedures put into place.

Agreed by Governors Date: Spring 2022

Review Date: Autumn 2024

Appendix 1 –

Dear Parents/Carers of _____ ,

Absence Monitoring

In our regular monitoring of absence xxx appeared on our list of pupils whose attendance is below the borough target of 97%. Attendance below 90% is also tracked by the school's Education Welfare Officer (EWO) who has responsibility for monitoring regular absences at the school.

's attendance is currently % for the period 20XX to 20XX. This percentage equates to sessions missed, a session being half a day.

Regular attendance throughout the year is essential if pupils are to fulfil their potential at school. If there are any concerns or circumstances affecting your child's attendance that we should be aware of please could you make an appointment to see me or Debbie Canner at your earliest convenience.

While your child's attendance remains below 90% the EWO will stay involved; so for future absences please could you provide evidence by way of a medical appointment card/letter or give written permission for the school to contact your GP in order that we can mark the absence as authorised and can verify to the EWO that the absence was genuine. Your own verbal/ written confirmation will suffice once attendance has recovered above 90%.

Yours sincerely,