

# Endon Hall Primary & Nursery School

'Learning Together and having fun'



## Attendance & Punctuality Policy

**Policy in place:** March 2012

**Policy updated:** Nov 2016; March 2018; Sept 2018; Jan 2019; March 2020

**Review date:** March 2021

### Philosophy and Rationale

The most recent government guidance states that '**central to raising standards in education and ensuring all children can fulfil their potential is an assumption so widely understood that it is insufficiently stated – children need to attend school regularly to benefit from their education**'.

All schools are expected to promote excellent attendance and reduce absence, including persistent absence, ensure every child has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled and act early to address patterns of absence. Parents/carers are expected to perform their **legal duty** by ensuring their children attend regularly and arrive to school on time.

A lot of learning takes place during a school day, and any period of absence will affect learning and progress. We place high importance on attendance, and require parent/carer support with this.

### Core Principles

Endon Hall Primary & Nursery School strives to maintain effective systems of attendance management by working in partnership with parents/carers to maintain good overall attendance and reduce persistent absence. Promoting positive behaviour and excellent attendance is the responsibility of the whole school community.

### Aims

- To create a culture in which good attendance is accepted as the norm
- To demonstrate that good attendance and punctuality is valued by the school
- To maintain and develop effective communication regarding attendance between home and school
- To consistently achieve our target for attendance (95%)
- To follow statutory and Local Authority guidance on attendance and punctuality

### Encouraging Good Attendance

We encourage good attendance by:

- publicising good attendance during assemblies, newsletters and the termly report to the Governing Board
- awarding good attendance certificates and/or rewards to children when they have achieved 100% attendance over the school year

## **Monitoring of attendance**

All schools are required to take an attendance register twice a day. This shows whether the child is present, engaged in an approved educational activity off-site, or absent. If a child of compulsory school age is absent; every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school as either authorised or unauthorised. Only the school can authorise absences, not parents/carers. Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from the school for a good reason such as illness or other unavoidable causes. Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been given, this is why information about the cause of each absence is always required, preferably in writing.

The Headteacher will apply common sense principles to the decision making process but, in general terms, the only legitimate reasons for absence are:

- Religious observance
- Illness of child (medical evidence may be requested)
- Death of close family member
- Urgent medical appointment
- Other agreed exceptional circumstances authorised by the Headteacher.

Wherever possible, action will be taken by the school to improve a child's attendance and investigate and address any underlying cause of problems before considering whether to make a referral to the appropriate team in the Local Authority.

At Endon Hall Primary & Nursery School we aim to work partnership with parents/carers. Therefore, there is an expectation that:

Parents/carers will:

1. Telephone the school absence line, preferably before 8am, on EACH day of absence, leaving a message with: child's name, reason for absence, parent/carer name and telephone number.
2. Inform the school of any **planned** medical absences in advance.
3. Try to make all medical appointments (doctors, dentist and hospital) out of school time.
4. Put all requests for leave in writing and submit this to the school office in advance.
5. Encourage their child/ren to take responsibility for being on time for school and attending school.

School will:

1. Mark the registers in accordance with the law.
2. Telephone parents/carers who have not contacted the school in relation to the absence of their child on a particular day.
3. Maintain records and monitor attendance on a regular basis.
4. Authorise absences in accordance with the government guidelines and this policy.
5. Provide a termly letter informing parents/carers of their child's attendance figure (Appendix 3).
6. Contact parents/carers when the attendance falls below acceptable levels and/or when particular patterns of absence are causing concerns.
7. Provide access to staff with whom attendance related issues can be discussed.
8. Work with external agencies to maintain good attendance and to support the child/family with any issues that may affect attendance and punctuality.
9. Work with relevant external agencies if a child's attendance becomes a concern.

## **Our approach to attendance**

### **Illness**

If your child will not be attending school due to illness, you must notify the school, leaving a message on the school's answer machine. If a child is not in school, and no message has been left explaining the reason for this, the school will telephone the parent/carer, making verbal contact with parents/carers by 10.30am on the first day of absence, to ascertain the reason for absence.

Where large numbers of children are absent from school and it would be difficult to contact all parents/carers verbally by 10.30am, a text message or e-mail may be sent in an attempt to ascertain and/or clarify the reason for the absence.

## **Lateness**

Children should arrive just before the official start of the school day and, when the school gates are opened by a member of staff, should make their way to their classroom where the responsible adult will take a register, recording who is present or absent from school.

**Any children arriving late should enter the school through the main office and report to the office staff**, who will ask the child for a reason explaining their lateness and note their arrival, including for the purposes of fire regulations.

The registers are taken in classes by 9:00am. Any child not in registration at this time will be marked as absent with the appropriate code (if this is known in advance) or 'N', where no reason is known. The registers **officially** close at 9:05am and any child arriving after this time will be marked absent for the session. If a child arrives at school after 9:00am but before 9:05am, parents/carers must sign in at the main office and a 'L' (late) code will be entered. A reason for the lateness will need to be provided and a decision will be made by the school to mark it as an authorised or unauthorised absence. If unauthorised the 'U' code will be used.

If a child reaches 10 'U' absences over a 12 week period due to lateness, there is the risk of a Penalty Notice being issued.

It is worth noting that if a child is 15 minutes late everyday this is equivalent to missing 10 days of school over the year.

## **Leave of Absence**

There is no rule which allows for authorisation to be given specifically for holidays. The Department for Education amended the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations in September 2013, removing references to family holidays as well as the statutory threshold of 10 days, making it clear that Headteachers cannot grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. Since then, further amendments have been made and legally, from 1 January 2018, **any** period of unauthorised leave that does not meet the criteria for exceptional circumstances, must be unauthorised. In addition, this may result in a parent/carer receiving a penalty notice/fine.

Exceptional circumstances include:

- Forced leave (where a parent/carer is in the military service)
- Religious observance (a maximum of two days per academic year absence is allowed for religious observance).
- Death of close family member
- Other agreed exceptional circumstances authorised by the Headteacher (these will be considered on a case by case basis).

If a parent/carer wishes to request a period of leave they are required to complete a leave of absence request form (Appendix 2). Forms are available from the school office or via e-mail. If the request does not meet the criteria for exceptional circumstances, it will be unauthorised. Parents/carers will be informed of this by letter and the request will be noted in the register. This will be monitored by the Local Authority during statutory register checks.

A Penalty Notice for unauthorised leave of absence, if issued, is issued per parent/carer, per child. Therefore, if both parents/carers have day-to-day responsibility for the child, then both parents/carers are asked to sign the leave of absence form. Signing of the form constitutes agreement to the request. If a request is received from (and signed by) one parent/carer, the other parent/carer (if both parents/carers have day-to-day responsibility for the child) will be informed by the school.

It is worth noting that a child who takes a 2 week family holiday in term time (10 school days) will only be able to achieve an attendance of 94.7%. This is assuming the child has no illness or medical appointments for the rest of the academic year. This automatically puts the child into the category of monitoring attendance.

## **Persistent absentees**

Persistent absence is attendance which falls below 90%. We are committed to reducing persistent absence as there are strong and proven links between attendance and educational achievement. Attendance of less than 95% (equivalent to 9.5 days or more absence in an academic year) has been shown to compromise attainment and progress. Attendance of 90% is equivalent to missing 19 days or nearly 4 weeks from school in a year.

Children falling to below 95% attendance will be monitored as to whether their attendance improves or deteriorates. The aim is to avoid a child falling into the Persistent Absence category (less than 90% attendance).

If a child's attendance falls below 90% (persistent absentee), a letter will be sent to the parents/carers of the child, informing them of the school's concerns and offering support to resolve any problems that may be impeding a child from attending. The Local Authority holds statutory powers under the Education Act 1996 to ensure children attend school. If they cannot successfully engage with the family to achieve this, they may use statutory powers to enforce the parents/carers responsibility regarding their child's school attendance. Penalty Notices can be issued or court proceedings can be used to prosecute parents/carers or to seek an Education Supervision Order on the child.

Schools have the responsibility to decide whether an absence can be authorised on medical grounds. Where attendance falls below 90%, parents/carers will be asked to provide written evidence from a medical professional that their child is too unwell to attend (e.g. appointment cards, letters, copies of prescriptions). There is no need to request a GP doctors note, as this can cause confusion and could have a financial implication.

## **Working together to ensure good attendance and punctuality**

Parents/carers whose children are experiencing difficulties should contact the school at an early stage and work together with staff in resolving any problems. Letters are sent to parents/carers termly (see Appendix 3) to keep them informed of our monitoring and to proactively engage in supporting attendance/lateness to improve. This support process is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be resolved in this way, the school or the parent/carer may refer the child to the Education Welfare Worker (EWW) from the Local Support Team. He/she will also try to resolve the situation with voluntary support (if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed).

Parents/carers or children may also wish to contact the Local Support Team directly to ask for help or information. They are independent of the school and will give impartial advice. Their telephone number is available from the school office or by contacting the Local Authority.

If these processes are not successful and the absence/lateness remains a concern, penalty notices may be applied in line with government, Local Authority and school policy.

## **Penalty Notices / Fines**

A penalty notice leads to the initiation of a fine, initially of £60 per parent/carer. If this £60 is not paid within 21 days from the date of issue it rises to £120. If after 28 days of the date of issue the £120 is not paid the Local Authority will prosecute the parents/carers under Section 444(1) of the Education Act 1996. This will lead to a hearing in the Magistrates Court and may result in a fine of up to £1,000 per parent/carer. The maximum penalty on conviction is a fine of £2500 and/or 3 months imprisonment.

## **Monitoring/Evaluation**

We believe this policy will only be effective if we ensure consistency across the school by regular monitoring.

Weekly attendance figures will be shared with children in Well Done assembly and with parents/carers via the school Newsletter. Termly attendance figures for individual children will be reported to parents/carers and the collective termly attendance figures will be reported to the Governing Board. We will maintain a strong link with the Education Welfare Worker in order to support us in monitoring attendance and punctuality.

<b>Role of the Governing Board</b>	<p><b>The Governing Board is responsible for:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ ensuring that the attendance and punctuality policy is in place</li> <li>▪ termly monitoring of progress towards these targets</li> </ul>
<b>Role of the Headteacher</b>	<p><b>The Headteacher is responsible for:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ the implementation of the policy</li> <li>▪ monitoring of school attendance and punctuality, including monitoring trends (acknowledging the colour coding system – see Appendix 1)</li> <li>▪ working alongside the Education Welfare Worker to meet targets for attendance and address attendance concerns</li> <li>▪ supporting parents/carers where appropriate to improve their child/ren’s attendance and/or punctuality</li> <li>▪ putting in place a system for parents/carers to report a child’s absence</li> <li>▪ reporting to the Governing Board the attendance figures and progress towards achieving the set targets</li> <li>▪ informing parents/carers of their commitment to this policy</li> <li>▪ informing parents/carers of their child/ren’s attendance on a termly basis (see Appendix 3)</li> <li>▪ monitoring lateness, leave of absence and persistent absenteeism, in line with this policy</li> <li>▪ following Safeguarding procedures in relation to attendance and punctuality</li> <li>▪ approving, refusing and/or considering a Penalty Notice for unauthorised Leave of Absence requests, in line with this policy, only approving leave where exceptional circumstances apply</li> <li>▪ informing parents/carers, in writing, of the outcome of their Leave of Absence request</li> <li>▪ considering a Penalty Notice for persistent absentees</li> <li>▪ considering a Penalty Notice for persistent lateness</li> </ul> <p><b>* All decisions to issue Penalty Notices and/or enforce this policy are made at the Headteacher’s discretion</b></p>
<b>Role of the Teaching Staff</b>	<p><b>Teachers are responsible for:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ setting an example of punctuality and good attendance</li> <li>▪ implementing the policy</li> <li>▪ ensuring that the registers are taken at the designated times (9am and 3.05/3.15pm) and are accurate and up to date</li> <li>▪ monitoring class and individual attendance patterns</li> <li>▪ informing the school office of any concerns</li> <li>▪ emphasising with children the importance of punctuality and good attendance</li> <li>▪ taking child/ren not collected on time at the end of the school day into school and checking any collection arrangements/messages with the office, waiting with the child/ren (for up to 10 minutes) then asking the office to contact parents/carers accordingly.</li> </ul>

<b>Role of Parents/Carers</b>	<p><b>Parents/Carers are responsible for:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ ensuring that their children are punctual and know the importance of good attendance</li> <li>▪ informing the school EACH day of absence</li> <li>▪ informing the school of any changes to their contact details</li> <li>▪ adhering to Government regulations, guidance from the Local Authority, and the school's policy, regarding Leave of Absence (including holidays) during term time, punctuality and unauthorised absence</li> <li>▪ completing the relevant Leave of Absence forms (see Appendix 2), signed (if in agreement with the request) by the parents/carers with day-to-day responsibility for the child/ren, to request term time leave and submitting the request 1 month in advance of the requested leave of absence period</li> <li>▪ collecting their child/ren on time at the end of the school day</li> <li>▪ signing their child/ren into school (if arriving after the register has closed)</li> <li>▪ notifying the school office if they are unable to collect their child on time at the end of the school day and/or making alternative arrangements for collection and informing the school office of them with as much notice as possible</li> </ul>
<b>Role of Children</b>	<p><b>Children are responsible for:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ arriving at school on time</li> <li>▪ knowing the value of good attendance</li> <li>▪ attending school whenever they are well enough to do so</li> <li>▪ attending classes during the school day and not playing truant</li> </ul>
<b>Role of the School Office Staff</b>	<p><b>The office staff are responsible for:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ implementing the policy with the Headteacher</li> <li>▪ monitoring individual and class attendance on a daily basis</li> <li>▪ keeping the Headteacher informed of attendance figures and trends</li> <li>▪ compiling attendance data for the Headteacher, the Governing Board and the EWW</li> <li>▪ ensuring registers are checked, appropriate codes are issued, and are kept up to date</li> <li>▪ making verbal contact with parents/carers (by 10.30am on the first day of absence) of children who are not in school, where the parent/carer has not provided a reason for absence</li> <li>▪ ensuring children who arrive late are registered, with the appropriate code applied</li> </ul>

## Attendance Colour Codes

<p><b>95% - 100%</b></p> <p><b>WELL DONE! THIS IS EXCELLENT!</b></p> <p>Excellent attendance – well done! Children make the most of their education giving them the best potential for achieving academic success.</p>
<p><b>90% - 94%</b></p> <p><b>GOOD</b></p> <p>Be careful – if your child is in the yellow group they could be missing up to 19 days of learning in the whole year. 90% attendance over 5 years is equal to half a school year missed.</p>
<p><b>Less than 90%</b></p> <p><b>PERSISTENT ABSENTEE</b></p> <p><b>DANGER – with this level of absence your child is missing more than 4 weeks of learning in the school year. SEVERE LOSS OF LEARNING TIME.</b></p>

Endon Hall Primary & Nursery School



Request for leave during term time

To the Headteacher of: Endon Hall Primary & Nursery School

Date: .....

I request a leave of absence from school during term time for:

my child (full name) .....

for the period from (date) ..... to (date) .....

Destination: .....

The exceptional circumstances and reason for this request are: -

.....  
.....  
.....

I have (an)other child(ren) in this/another school as follows:

Child(ren) (full name/s)..... School(s) attended .....

.....  
.....

Signature of 1<sup>st</sup> parent/carer ..... Print Name: .....

Signature of 2<sup>nd</sup> parent/carer ..... Print Name: .....

**Please return the completed form to the school office at least 1 month before the Leave of Absence is due. The school will write to you and inform you of the decision on whether the request is authorised or not.**

**For Office Use Only**

Current Attendance .....%

Number of school sessions taken as leave during term time this academic year .....

The (above) request for leave is **agreed**/is **not agreed** by the Headteacher.

Rationale to decline request: .....

Date (including date notification of decision letter was sent to parent/carer): .....



**Guidance Notes for Parents requesting Leave in Term Time**

1. Parents who want the school to consider granting leave of absence in school term time should read these notes carefully, **complete the attached form and send it to the head teacher**. This form should be sent to the school in time for the request to be considered **well before** the desired period of absence. Parents are strongly advised not to finalise any booking arrangements before receiving the school's decision regarding their request. Headteachers cannot authorise any leave of absence unless the request is received before the period of absence begins.
2. The Department for Education makes it clear that head teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are **exceptional circumstances**. Head teachers now also determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted.
3. There is no automatic right to any leave in term time.
4. Staffordshire County Council understands the challenges that some parents face when booking holidays particularly during school holidays. However, we believe that, in order to ensure children receive the best education and prospects, that they should be in school during term time.
5. Each case will be considered individually and on its own merits. Parents need, therefore, to consider very carefully before making any request for leave of absence. In considering a request, the school will take account of: -
  - the **exceptional** circumstances stated that have given rise to the request
  - the stage of the child's education and progress and the effects of the requested absence on both elements
  - frequency of similar requests
  - whether the parent made the request in advance
  - students/pupils on examination courses or due to take SATS will **not** normally be granted leave of absence.
6. Where parents have children in more than one school a separate request must be made to each school. The head teacher of each school will make their own decision based on the factors relating to the child at their school. However, Headteachers may choose to liaise with each other as part of their decision-making process.
7. Should the school decide to grant leave of absence, but the child **does not return to school at the time s/he was expected to** (i.e. following the expiry of the granted leave of absence period) and no information is available to the school to explain/justify the continuing absence this absence will be recorded as unauthorised.
8. Should the school decide **not to grant leave of absence** and parents still take their child out of school, the absence will be recorded as **unauthorised**, which may be subject to a Penalty Notice fine of £60 **per parent\* per child**. This fine will increase to £120 if not paid within 21 days. Failure to pay the £120 fine within the period 22 to 28 days may lead to Court proceedings.
9. The Local Authority will continue to monitor all school absences during term time and support head teachers in challenging parents who ignore the law.

\* Generally the DfE states that parents include all those with day to day responsibility for a child.

**Endon Hall Primary & Nursery School**



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**Every Child Matters and Every Lesson Counts:** School attendance is vital for young people to reach their full potential. School attendance is a priority for **Endon Hall Primary & Nursery School** and we closely monitor attendance. We want to work together with parents/carers to help ensure **excellent** attendance and punctuality from every child.

Dear Parent/Carer,

**TERMLY ATTENDANCE LETTER**

Endon Hall Primary & Nursery School closely monitors the attendance of all children and, as part of this process, we would like to inform you of your child's current termly percentage attendance level. We understand that some absence due to illness is unavoidable; however, we do have a duty to report on attendance.

Below is your child's current attendance level, together with the school's attendance target.

**Name of Child:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Term:** \_\_\_\_\_

Attendance	
Authorised Absence	
Unauthorised Absence	
School Target	95%

The information below shows how attendance can affect children's learning and progression.

<b>95% - 100%</b> <b>Excellent attendance – well done! Children make the most of their education giving them the best potential for achieving academic success.</b>
<b>90% - 94%</b> <b>Be careful – if your child is in the yellow group they could be missing up to 19 days of learning in the whole year. 90% attendance over 5 years is equal to half a school year missed.</b>
<b>Less than 90%: PERSISTENT ABSENCE</b> <b>DANGER – with this level of absence your child is missing more than 4 weeks of learning in the school year, which constitutes SEVERE LOSS OF LEARNING TIME.</b>

It is vital that all children attend school regularly in order to maximise their educational and other opportunities. If you require any further information or support, please do not hesitate to contact the school.

Yours sincerely,

Miss V Lewis  
Headteacher