

Eleanor Palmer Primary School Attendance and Punctuality Policy

Introduction

At Eleanor Palmer, attendance and punctuality are a high priority. Regular attendance ensures all children can take full advantage of the educational opportunities provided, with clear links between high attendance and good academic outcomes. We want motivated enthusiastic learners who get to school on time, ready to learn and who establish good habits for lifelong learning. We work to achieve this by ensuring our Eleanor Palmer Values underpin a teaching and learning ethos and a school culture in which children want to be on time and in school.

We work in partnership with parents and carers to ensure they fulfil their legal responsibility to make sure that their children come to school regularly and on time. In turn, the school has a legal duty to mark the register and record the attendance of every child on roll and to specifically code which children are absent or late and why. There is a statutory requirement that schools publish statistics about their attendance rates. We fully support all initiatives from our Local Authority and comply with all Camden's guidance and expectations. We have challenging targets set each year against both local and national averages.

Above all, we want families to value education and share our consistent message that learning is precious and not a minute should be wasted.

What are authorised absences?

Authorised absences involve children having time out of school for approved reasons, for example: illness, urgent medical appointments, attendance at funerals, religious observance or visits to secondary schools.

The school will need an explanation from parents or carers before registration on the first day of absence (or as soon as is practically possible), if they are to authorise the child's absence. This is then coded in the attendance register by the class teacher or school office.

Every effort should be made to arrange routine dentists and GP appointments outside school hours. However, it is understood that specialist hospital or clinic appointments may have to be made during school hours. We encourage children to attend school before or after these appointments to limit lost learning.

If a child has vomited or has diarrhoea, we ask that they remain off school for 48 hours from the last instance of sickness in order to limit the spread of infection

Exceptional Authorised Leave

As per Department for Education guidance the Co-headteachers must be satisfied that there are **exceptional circumstances** based on the individual facts and circumstances of the case which warrant the leave.



Parents who wish to take their children out of school for these exceptional circumstances during school time must make this request to the Co-headteachers, in writing, by email (head@eleanorpalmer.camden.sch.uk) or in person. It is important to make the request in good time before the period of requested leave; it is not acceptable to tell the school afterwards. The Co-headteachers will respond by phone, email or in person.

Each request for exceptional leave will be considered as a separate case and the Co-headteachers' decision will consider the following:

- The reason for the leave and why it could not be taken in school holidays
- The number of days requested
- Previous requests for leave during term-time
- The child's attendance and punctuality record (broadly speaking we would expect a pattern of attendance consistently at or above 95%)
- The child's stage of education
- Any additional needs of the child
- The child's current attainment and level of progress, their attitude to learning and any impact the leave will have on their learning.

We are not unsympathetic to difficult or special circumstances and will always consider requests for absence that, if then authorised, are recorded as 'other circumstances'. Examples of this might be urgent trips to see ill relatives, or special opportunities in sport or music.

There is no entitlement to holiday in term-time. We strongly discourage missing school in term time. Children miss crucial work and friendships and may lose their sense of engagement and involvement with school life. Requests for a day or two off at the start or end of term are considered in the same light. The start and end of term are important markers in the school year. Each term begins with sharing plans, expectations and preparing children for the term ahead. On the last days of each term we have EP traditions that anchor the school year, enhance a sense of belonging for children and help create lifelong memories of school. In the summer term the last few days of term also provide a vital transition into the next academic year.

Any period of leave taken without the agreement of the school, or more than that agreed, will be classed as unauthorised and may attract sanctions such as a Penalty Notice. Previous good attendance or your child's education ability are not considered when the school makes the decision.

While we wish to support children pursuing sport, music or other after school lessons, there is no entitlement to leave school early to travel to these sessions regularly.

What are unauthorised absences?

Unauthorised absences involve children having time out of school without explanation, or where the reason for absence is one that the school cannot authorise, for example: a holiday, birthdays, baby-sitting for younger siblings, too tired, late nights, not realising term had started or because other members of the family are ill.

If the Co-headteachers do not authorise a holiday or exceptional leave in term time, and either is still taken, or days are taken in excess of those agreed with the school, this is always classified as unauthorised.

The Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006 state clearly that if a child has failed to return to school 10 days later than the agreed return date, that the child's name be deleted from the admission register i.e. the school place is taken away.

Absence from Nursery

Children in our Nursery are not attending the main school and therefore their attendance is not statutory. However, it is in Nursery that the foundations for lifelong learning are being established and we place the same high value on attendance and punctuality as we do throughout the school. Therefore, we ask that parents and carers **request** absence from the Co-heads as outlined above.

Routines for managing and improving attendance

- A member of the senior staff and our school-keeper are at the school entrance every morning. The bell is rung promptly at 9am; classroom doors are open from 8:45am to allow for a gentle start.
- Parents and carers of children in Nursery must come into the classroom with their child and stay with them until 9am. This helps the children to settle and to begin to be independent with morning routines e.g. hanging up coats and book-bags, putting water-bottles away and starting early work before the register.
- At every Friday assembly 'Be Here Bear' is awarded to the class with best attendance as measured as a percentage of the week. This has proved highly motivating to children. The winning classes dress the bears in a topic related outfit.
- A clear and consistent message about the value of school attendance is given at all times by all members of staff and we model excellent punctuality and committed attendance ourselves.
- Our approach is swift, direct, and relatively informal when children are late or unexpectedly absent. We follow up as soon as possible with daily phone calls soon after 9am, to families of children who are absent without an explanation.
- Parents and carers are requested to update the school on each day of absence. The exceptions to this are for known ongoing medical treatments or illnesses eg. chicken pox, planned surgery etc.
- Parents and carers are encouraged to speak directly to a member of staff rather than emailing regarding absence. This gives the opportunity to discuss the cause of absence, the potential to advise and, in some instances, to encourage children who have recovered enough to join their class later in the day, rather than miss a full day of learning.
- The Co-heads are given weekly updates on attendance and punctuality by class and analysed in terms of groups. The attendance of any child causing concern is immediately flagged and attendance of children on the Child Protection Register or recorded as a Child in Need monitored closely.
- Attendance for children eligible for Free School Meals or Pupil Premium, or for those with an EHCP is tracked and shared with the Governing Body every half term.
- At the end of each term, letters are written to all parents whose child's attendance has fallen below 95%. This may be due to illness and/or other acceptable reasons, but it is good to highlight to parents and carers as they may not realise how odd days add up.
- Class teachers will update parents about their child's attendance and punctuality percentage at each of the three Parents' Evenings throughout the year, giving the opportunity to discuss the impact on learning and to review any reasons behind poor attendance and timekeeping.

Our aim is to work in partnership to improve attendance and punctuality together. A child's annual attendance and punctuality record is shared in the end of year school report.

Punctuality

Punctuality is very important and sets important lifelong habits. At Eleanor Palmer all children should be in school by 9:00am. Classrooms are open from 8:45am to provide additional learning opportunities and a soft start, so that children are settled and ready for learning as soon the school day starts at 9am. The register is marked promptly after the bell is rung at 9.00am and always by 9.05am, after which arrivals are marked as late.

Late arrivals will be marked as such by the teacher or by administrators in the school office. Late arrivals are asked to report to the school office to provide reason for lateness.

Children arriving after 9.35, i.e. 30 minutes after registration closes, and who do not have a good reason for doing so (for example a dental appointment) are marked as an unauthorised absence.

Routines for monitoring and improving Punctuality

- A member of our senior staff and our school-keeper are at the gate every morning.
- The bell rings promptly at 9am.
- Late marks are issued after 9:05 am consistently, across all classes, if a child is not in their classroom ready for registration.
- The school gates close promptly at 9:05am.
- The reason given for lateness is recorded in the school diary and register when provided.
- As with the attendance prize in assembly, we have 'Punctual Polar Bear', won by the class with the best punctuality for the week.

Involvement of the Education Social Worker

Every child's cumulative absence from school - authorised, exceptional and unauthorised - is monitored remotely by the local authority and the Education Welfare Service. They scrutinise all records and registers and, with the Co-headteachers' agreement, contact all those with attendance figures below 90%. Below 90% triggers a letter, below 85% is a significant cause for concern and would involve a meeting and further action.

The school also makes referrals to the Education Welfare Officer where there are concerns about attendance or punctuality. This will not simply be due to relatively low attendance figures or unauthorised exceptional leave, but also if there are patterns e.g.-regularly missing Fridays, taking long weekends or always returning to school late after a school break.

If attendance and punctuality concerns persist and parents make no effort to work with the school and local authority to make improvement, the school supports the Education Welfare Service's right to fine parents and if necessary to take court action.