



THE ECCLESBOURNE SCHOOL

Learning Together for the Future

ATTENDANCE POLICY - September 2024

This is a Non-Statutory Policy. It is to be reviewed annually.
This policy is ratified by Students and Curriculum

1 Intro

This policy has been written to adhere to the relevant Children Acts, Education Acts, Regulation and Guidance from the Department for Education in addition to guidance from the Local Authority. Parents/Carers have the legal responsibility for ensuring their child's regular attendance and failure to do so is a criminal offence under section 444 of the Education Act 1944.

2 Definitions

Authorised absence- An absence is classified as authorised when a child has been away from school for a legitimate unavoidable reason and the school has received notification from the parent/carer. For example. If a child has been unwell and the parent telephones the school to explain the absence.

Unauthorised absence- An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of the school even if the absence is supported by the parent.

Only the Headteacher can decide on whether an absence is authorised or not. Sometimes even if an absence is supported by a parent, an absence will be unauthorised.

3 Aim of this policy

This attendance policy ensures that all staff, governors and parents in our school are fully aware of and clear about the actions necessary to promote good attendance. This policy also supports excellent levels of attendance for all students to enable fulfilment of their potential at The Ecclesbourne School.

This policy is written in conjunction with;

- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy,
- Behaviour and Discipline Policy,
- DfE's School Attendance Guidance (2024)
- Working Together to improve school attendance (2024)
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (2024)

4 Key principles

- High levels of attendance and punctuality levels are promoted and rewarded through the merit system and are celebrated.
- It is the responsibility of everybody at The Ecclesbourne School to improve attendance and punctuality. Where attendance or punctuality fall short of expected standards, steps will be taken to address this, and sanctions may be applied in accordance with the schools behaviour policy and statutory guidance.
- Some students find it harder than others to attend school. The school will work with students, parents and other local partners to remove any barriers to attendance. This may mean referral to external agencies and fines where the school has exhausted all other avenues of support.
- Subject to the terms of this policy, any day-to-day attendance issues that parents or students have should be discussed with the Head of Year. Where more detailed support around attendance is required, parents and students should contact the Head of School or the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

5 Legislation

This policy meets the requirements of the school attendance guidance from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on school attendance parental responsibility measures. These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- Part 6 of [The Education Act 1996](#)

- Part 3 of [The Education Act 2002](#)
- Part 7 of [The Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006](#) (and [2010](#), [2011](#), [2013](#), [2016](#) amendments)
- [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)

This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the [school census](#), which explains the persistent absence threshold.

6 Responsibilities of key stakeholders

6.1 The Governing Body will;

- Take an active role in attendance improvement, recognise the importance of school attendance and promote it across the school's ethos and policies.
- Ensure the school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties.
- Regularly review attendance data, discuss and challenge trends and help school leaders focus improvement efforts on the individual students or cohorts who need it most.
- Ensure staff receive adequate training on attendance, including dedicated training for staff with specific attendance responsibilities and any additional training that would help support students or cohorts overcome common barriers to attendance.
- Require the school to report to the Governing Body on the school's attendance at regular intervals.
- Have a dedicated attendance lead who will drive improvement across the school and act as a central point for school with attendance queries.

6.2 Strategic Leadership Team (SLT) will;

- Support Heads of Year and the Pastoral Support Worker in parental meetings/communication where there are concerns around persistent or severe absence.
- To be highly visible at the start of the school day to welcome students into school and to encourage students to be punctual to school, this includes going into the village.
- Once students are in school ensure they are punctual to am and pm registration and all lessons.
- Where students are attending provision off-site, the Head of School is responsible for ensuring the school is informed of absence promptly.
- To make sure arrangements for School visits and field trips are in place this includes copies of registers and be provided to the Head of Learning Services as part of the Risk Assessment process so that student attendance records are accurate.
- Develop and maintain a whole school culture that promotes the benefits of high attendance.
- Take into account individual needs when implementing this policy, including having regard to the school's obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- Share information and work collaboratively with the local authority, other schools in the area and other partners including, where required, making appropriate referrals in accordance with local procedures, legislation and guidance.
- Regularly monitor, review and analyse attendance and absence data to identify students or cohorts that require attendance support and to set targets for the future this will include attendance contracts where after intervention attendance is still not improving.
- Ensure that all students can access full-time education, putting strategies in place where there is evidence to suggest that this is not the case. This will include the removal of barriers.
- Ensure that all legislation and guidance are complied with and reflected in our policies and procedures, including the statutory attendance guidance issued by the Department for Education, working together to improve school attendance (2024).

- Have in place appropriate safeguarding responses for children who are at risk of missing education, having regard to the statutory guidance Keeping Children Safe in Education 2024 (please refer to our Safeguarding and Child Protection policy also).
- Provide information requested by the Secretary of State, including termly absence data collected by the Department for Education.
- Regularly inform parents about their child's attendance and absence levels.
- Ensure that effective systems to record and report attendance data are in place, including accurate completion of admission and attendance registers using SIMS.
- Assign overall responsibility for championing and improving attendance at the school to the Designated Safeguarding Lead.
- Observe and fulfil the responsibilities set out in guidance issued by the Department for Education.
- Share our attendance data on a daily basis through the Department for Education.

6.3 Designated Safeguarding Lead - Children at Risk of Missing Education

- Liaise with Pastoral Support Worker to monitor vulnerable students' attendance. Schools should put in place appropriate safeguarding responses for children who go missing from school, particularly on repeat occasions.
- Where the Designated Safeguarding Lead has concerns about a student, they should use their professional judgement and knowledge of the individual pupil to inform their decision as to whether welfare concerns should be escalated.

6.4 Designated attendance lead

The Designated Attendance Lead ("DAL") at the school is The Designated Safeguarding Lead. The DAL will be responsible for the strategic approach to attendance at the school and will;

- Offer a clear vision for attendance improvement
- Evaluate and monitor attendance expectations and processes
- Oversee attendance and absence data analysis including looking at sub-groups
- Benchmark attendance data against national statistics
- Ensure that key attendance messages are communicated to parents and students
- Provide data and reports to the Governing body via the student and curriculum meeting.

6.5 Pastoral Leadership Team (PLT)

- The PLT (Head Teacher, Heads of School, Heads of Year, Progress Leaders, SENDCO, Pastoral Support Worker, School Nurse and Safeguarding Support Officer) meet weekly on a Tuesday to discuss attendance, punctuality, behaviour, safeguarding, Mental Health and any other concerns.
- Will discuss points of action regarding attendance on individual students/cohorts of students
- The DSL, Heads of School and Pastoral/Attendance officer will send attendance information letters to parents where appropriate.
- The Pastoral/ Attendance support officer will complete home visits with Head of Year/Head of School/DSL where necessary.

6.6 Heads of Year

- Track attendance patterns for individual students.
- Monitor % rate of attendance.
- Interview students with concerning levels of attendance.
- Alert the Head of School to potential difficulties early.

- Meet with parents as appropriate to discuss attendance.
- Attend meetings / home visits with the Pastoral Support Worker / DSL.
- Contact parents if the school cannot verify student whereabouts on the school site.
- To put sanctions in place for students that are not punctual to school or lessons.
- Work with the designated attendance officer in creating attendance or parental contracts where there is continued concerns around attendance.
- Review attendance register for their school and ensure registers are completed.
- A text message followed by a phone call is triggered for all absent students to their parents (this is completed for each day of absence).
- Phone calls are made as quickly as possible to ascertain the whereabouts of students.
- Designated Attendance Officer for Sixth Form will issue lateness texts to parents.

6.7 Form Tutors

- Register their tutor group twice a day by completing the attendance register on SIMS. Morning attendance registers are completed by 9:10am and the afternoon register by 1.40pm.
- To have a conversation with their tutee when they return to school after a period of absence. They should refer any concerns to the Head of Year.
- To alert Heads of Year to any concerning patterns of absence or punctuality.
- On return to school request an absence note from the student.
- If a student is missing from afternoon registration but has been marked present at morning registration or previous lesson the form tutor is to alert the Office Admin Team immediately. The Office Admin Team will check the attendance log to ascertain whether the student has signed out. If this is not the case the Office Admin Team will alert the relevant school offices and will assist in conducting a search of the school site and if the student is not located, then inform the parents immediately.

6.8 Teaching Staff

- All students are registered at the beginning of every lesson using SIMs Lesson Monitor which not only records attendance for that lesson but also punctuality.
- If a student is missing from a lesson but has been marked present at registration or previous lesson the staff member is to alert the Office Admin Team immediately. The Office Admin Team will alert the relevant school offices and will assist in conducting a search of the school site.
- In some cases individual risk assessments may require teaching staff to use the 'SLT call out' facility if a student does not attend the lesson but is marked present. The Heads of Year will inform staff as to who these students are.
- If a member of staff is concerned about a student's absence or notice a pattern of absence from their lessons they should speak with the student's Head of Year or the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or the Deputy DSL's.

6.9 Parents and carers

We expect parents and carers to:

- Ensure that their child arrives at the school on time, in the correct uniform and with the necessary equipment.
- Promote the importance of regular attendance at home.
- Follow the correct procedure for reporting the absence of their child to the school – (see section 7 for further details below).
- Keep the school informed of any circumstances which may affect their child's attendance.
- Not take their child out of education for holidays during term time (see section 7.5 below).
- Inform the school in advance of any proposed change of address for their child(ren), along with the name of the parent with whom the child shall live.
- Observe and fulfil their responsibilities set out in the guidance issued by the Department for Education:

6.10 Students

We expect students to:

- Attend the school regularly and on time.
- Be punctual to all lessons.
- Follow the correct procedure if they arrive to the school late (see section 8 below).

7 Registration

The school maintains an attendance register (SIMS) and uses this to record each students' attendance at the start of the school day and again in the afternoon.

Registration session	Start time	End time
Morning	9.00am	9.25am
Afternoon*	13.30pm	13.40pm

* On a Tuesday due to PDC this is 13.40pm - 13.50pm.

- Students who arrive after the start of a registration session but before the end of the registration session will be marked as late. They must sign into school at the main reception. Where students arrive after the end of a registration session, the process set out at section 8 applies.
- The register is marked using the national attendance and absence codes which can be found in the Department for Education's guidance on attendance - Working together to improve school attendance (publishing.service.gov.uk)
- Where a student attends a registration session but does not attend subsequent lessons, we will treat this as truancy and a non-attendance matter in accordance with the behaviour policy and engage parents where necessary.

8 Late arrival

- If a student arrives at the school after the relevant registration period has ended, they must immediately go to the main reception to sign in and provide a reason for the lateness. In the absence of a satisfactory explanation, the register will be marked as unauthorised absence.
- Persistent lateness will be treated as a disciplinary matter and will be dealt with in line with the behaviour policy and parents/carers will be informed.

9 Reasons for absence and how to report or request authorisation

- Authorised absence - absence will only be authorised where the school has given approval in advance for a student to not be in attendance or has accepted an explanation offered afterwards as justification for the absence. Only the school can authorise absence.
- Unauthorised absence - absence will be marked as unauthorised where the school is not satisfied with the reasons given for the absence.

9.1 Reporting absence to the school

Where a student is to be absent from the school without prior permission, the parent/carer should inform the school by telephone on the morning of the day of the first absence and let the school know when they expect the student to return. If the return date is not confirmed on the first day of absence, parents/carers must contact the school on each day of absence. Where a parent/carer has not done this a text alert is sent immediately followed by a phone call clarifying where their child is and reminded of their statutory responsibility to inform the school of the reason for their absence.

On the day of return to the school parents must also provide written confirmation of the reason(s) for the full period of absence.

In cases of prolonged absence due to illness, the parents/cares may be asked to provide the school with medical evidence, such as a note from the child's doctor. If this evidence is not provided, the absence may be marked as unauthorised.

9.2 Appointments

Medical, dental and other essential appointments for a student should take place outside of school hours where this is reasonably possible.

Where an appointment must take place during school time, the student should attend the school for as much of the day as possible and as much prior notice as possible should be given to the form tutor/school office so that the general office can update the register in advance of the absence

For the time absent from the school to be marked as authorised, confirmation of the appointment by way of an appointment card or letter must be provided.

9.3 Leave of absence (including holidays during term time)

Parents and carers should make every effort to avoid taking students out of education for holidays or other extended leave during term time. The school will only authorise a leave of absence during term time where there are exceptional circumstances.

To request a leave of absence form (referred to as exceptional circumstances form), parents/carers must complete the form addressing this to the Head Teacher at least 4 school weeks ahead of the planned leave for exceptional circumstances.

Where a leave of absence is requested as above, the Head Teacher will consider the specific facts and circumstances relating to the request. The decision:

- will be confirmed in writing
- is solely at the Head Teacher's discretion and
- is final.

Where permission is granted, the Head Teacher will confirm the number of days and dates of absence which are authorised.

If permission is not granted and the parents/carers proceed to take their child out of the school, the absence will be marked as unauthorised and parents may be issued with a penalty notice or be subject to prosecution by the local authority (see 9.3)

9.4 Religious observance

We recognise that students of certain faiths may need to participate in days of religious observance. Where a day of religious observance:

- falls during school time and
- has been exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the student belongs,

the absence from the school will be authorised.

We ask that parents/carers notify the school by writing to the student's form tutor in advance where absence is required due to religious observance.

10 Reducing persistent absence and poor punctuality

10.1 The school will use data to target attendance improvement efforts to the students or groups of students who need it most. In doing so, the school, led by the DAO, will;

- celebrate excellent attendance and punctuality through Prize Day, the merit system and school assemblies
- the pastoral leadership team to put in place coherent and clear strategies to support students with low attendance and poor punctuality
- monitor and analyse weekly attendance patterns, proactively using data to identify students at risk of poor attendance, where attendance is falling below 90% the school will look at the reason for absence and take the necessary action given the circumstances of the absence
- provide regular attendance reports to relevant leaders and the Governing Body looking at overall patterns of data and also sub-groups, looking for trends
- identify students who need support from wider partners as soon as possible and deliver this support in a targeted manner this will include completing Early Help assessments with Derbyshire and Derby and using Out of school tuition where a child is absent due to medical issues
- conduct thorough analysis of half-termly, termly and full year data to identify patterns and trends
- benchmark school attendance data at each level against regional and national levels
- monitor the impact of school strategies and actions to improve attendance on particular students and particular groups
- work with the local authority and other local partners to identify groups
- hold regular meetings with the parents or carers of students who the school and/or local authority consider to be vulnerable, this will include drawing up attendance contracts with the parents/carers

10.2 Our procedures for managing unexplained absences is;

- A text will be sent immediately to the parents/carers informing them that the child is absent from school
- This will be followed up with a phone call to ascertain the reason for their absence and remind them of their parental duties to report absences
- Where a parent believes their child is in school but the school cannot locate the child then we will contact the police to report them as missing from education (CME)
- Where we cannot make contact with any member listed as contacts for the student, we will do a home visit that day to ascertain their whereabouts
- If a child is absent that is subject to Section 47/S17 we will also inform the social worker of their absence and the reason as to why they are absent
- Where further concerns are presented we will write to the parents/carers and invite them in for a panel attendance meeting

10.3 Where absence or punctuality is a cause for concern, for example because there is;

- a pattern of unauthorised absence
- a question over the reasons provided for a particular absence or late arrival
- persistent truancy or lateness
- we will make contact with the parents/carers with a view to working together to support improved attendance and/or punctuality.

Failure to attend or arrive at lessons on time may also be dealt with as a disciplinary matter in accordance with the behaviour policy.

Absence will be classed as persistent where it falls below 90% across the academic year. Absence at this level is very likely to hinder educational prospects and we expect full parental co-operation and support to urgently address these cases. Intervention steps may include implementation of an attendance action plan, referral to other agencies and/or seeking to put in place a parenting contract.

Where out of school barriers to attendance are identified by a medical profession, the school will signpost and support access to any additional services.

Where parents/carers have failed to ensure that their child of compulsory school age is regularly attending the school and wider support in accordance with this policy is not appropriate or effective, we may consider issuing a penalty notice. A penalty notice is a fine (£60 if paid within 21 days, £120 if paid within 28 days) imposed on parents.

When considering whether to issue a penalty notice, we will have regard to:

- section 6 of the Department for Education's guidance; Working together to improve school attendance (publishing.service.gov.uk)
- the local authority's Code of Conduct for issuing penalty notices.

In the event that a penalty notice is issued but is not paid within 28 days, the local authority will decide whether to proceed to prosecution. The local authority also has separate powers to prosecute parents if their child of compulsory school age fails to attend school regularly.