

## **Epping Upland C. of E. Primary School**

### **Attendance Policy**

#### **Statement of Intent**

Epping Upland C of E Primary School seeks to achieve excellent and regular levels of school attendance and punctuality for all pupils.

We recognise the link between attendance and achievement and the effect that poor attendance can have upon a pupil's ability to learn and make progress. Irregular attendance leads to lack of continuity and educational disadvantage for pupils.

#### **School Attendance and the Law**

Under the 1996 Education Act, parents and carers are responsible for ensuring their children attend school regularly and punctually. Failure to do so could result in legal action being taken against them by the Local Authority.

The register is a legal document and schools must, under the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006 take a register at the start of the morning session, and again during the afternoon session. Since September 2006, schools have been required to use statutory registration codes.

Under the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006, only the school (and not parents/carers) can authorise an absence. Where the reason for a pupil's absence cannot be established at the time the register is taken, that absence shall be recorded as unauthorised. If a reason for absence is provided by the parent/carer, the school may decide to grant leave of absence which must be recorded as authorised using the appropriate national code.

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulation 2013 have removed all references to family holidays and leave of absence shall not be granted unless an application has been made in advance and the headteacher considers that leave of absence should be granted due to exceptional circumstances. Headteachers no longer have the discretion to authorise up to ten days of absence. This discretion has been removed by the aforementioned Regulations (2013). Whilst the headteacher will consider all requests on a case-by-case basis, parents must be aware that requests will normally be refused.

Where a family chooses to take a holiday during term time, the absence will be coded as unauthorised (G code) and a Penalty Notice may be issued to each parent for each child (where 5 or more days of unauthorised absence are recorded as a result).

Note: 10 absences = 5 days. Each day is made up of two absences, one for am registration and one for pm registration.

If leave of absence is taken without the request having been agreed, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised. This may result in the Local Authority issuing a Penalty Notice, in accordance with the Essex Code of Conduct (£120 per parent, per child / £60 if paid within 21 days), where there have been 10 sessions or more of unauthorised absence recorded. If this penalty is not paid the Local Authority will instigate legal proceedings against the parent/carer in the Magistrate Court.

In compliance with the Education Act 436A (Chapter 2 Part 6) the school will, after making appropriate checks, report all Children Missing from Education to the Local Authority, Missing Education and Child Employment Service (MECE), who has a duty to investigate the whereabouts of such children and negotiate their prompt return to suitable education.

### **School Responsibility for Attendance of Pupils**

The school will take an attendance register twice a day, at 8.55am at the start of the morning session and at 1.00pm, the start of the afternoon session. The register will show whether a pupil is present, engaged in an approved educational activity off site, or absent.

The register will show whether any absence is authorised or unauthorised

**Authorised** absence is where the school has either given approval in advance for a pupil of compulsory school age to be away, or has accepted an explanation offered as satisfactory justification for absence.

All other absences will be treated as **unauthorised**.

The school adheres to the DfE Guidelines in authorising absence. Parents are unable to authorise absence.

### **Reporting Absences at Epping Upland C of E Primary School**

It is the parents' responsibility to inform the school of a child's absence by 09.30am on the first day of absence, either by telephone, personal visit or a note. Parents need not inform on each further day of absence, although updates as to the expected date of return for a child would be expected should your child be absent for more than two or three days.

If a parent does not inform the school as to a child's absence on the first day, the school will make every endeavour to contact the parent directly to ascertain the reason for the non-attendance.

## Categorisation of Absence

**Only the school is able to approve absence. Notification of absence by the parent does not oblige the school to accept the explanation. The Headteacher decides whether an absence is authorised or unauthorised.**

### Authorised

Illness – if a child is ill or not well enough to attend school.

Medical or Dental Appointment – provided notification is given to the school of any appointment.

Lateness – Registers are taken at 8.55 a.m. All arrivals after this time must report to the school office for registration. Habitual late arrival will be registered as unauthorised absence.

Bereavement – in discussion with the Headteacher, an agreed period of time will be granted as authorised.

Holiday- In considering a request for a holiday to be taken during term time, we will take the following into account.

- The child's attendance maintains 95% and above throughout the school year
- The child's attendance history for previous years.
- The period of absence does not include any internal or external examinations
- There are exceptional reasons as to why a holiday cannot be taken in normal holiday time. (Cheaper prices are not considered to be a valid reason. Essex LA state that education comes before finance as the cost of educating a child for a week far outweighs the savings made by taking time out of school for a cheaper holiday). Where a holiday request is made for days adjacent to a set school holiday, it will only be assumed that the request is being made for financial reasons and will therefore not be authorised unless exceptional reasons can be demonstrated.
- The child's stage of education and their progress.
- Any other factors that the Headteacher considers relevant and appropriate

There will be no authorisation of requests for holidays to be taken during May or during the month of September.

Initial requests for Leave of Absence will be directed towards the Headteacher. If a dispute with parents/carers then ensues because the request is not authorised, the Governing Body will invite parents/carers in to discuss their grievance.

In accordance with Government guidelines, the LA reserves the right to fine parents who take their children out of school for holidays during term time without approval. When it is suspected that a child has been taken on holiday and medical reasons are given for absence, we reserve the right to request a doctor's certificate verifying the illness.

If a child is taken out of school and the absence is not authorised, the MECE (Missing Education and Child Employment) Service may issue a penalty notice of £60 for each child to be paid within 28 days. If the penalty is not paid within the timescale the penalty will increase to £120. If the higher penalty is not paid, the MECE Service can then institute legal proceedings against the parent, in the magistrate's court, under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996, for failing to ensure that their child attends school regularly.

If, after having considered your options, you still believe it appropriate to apply for leave of absence, it is important that you give the Headteacher, as much information as possible as to why you consider your request necessary. Simply stating the request is for a holiday is no longer acceptable and such an application will now be refused.

If your application is refused and you choose to go anyway, your child's absence will be officially marked as 'Unauthorised' and the school will consult with the Educational Welfare Officer to proceed with Penalty Notices.

Religious Observance – a day set aside exclusively for religious observance by the religious body to which the parent belongs will be authorised. Previous notification of this absence will be expected.

Traveller Children – seasonal migration, provided the family indicates that they intend to return.

Excluded Pupils – temporary exclusion will be marked as authorised absence. Permanent exclusion will be authorised pending review or appeal. If the exclusion is conformed, the child's name will be removed from the register.

Exceptional Circumstances – certain circumstances deemed exceptional only by the headteacher will be authorised

***The Headteacher reserves the right to request evidence to support the reasons given for absence.***

## **Unauthorised**

Illness – where a child is regularly ill. The school may require confirmation of illness from a medical professional.

Absence without Parental Notification – where a child is absent from school and the school has not been notified

Lateness – habitual lateness is unacceptable and will not be authorised

Truancy – when a child chooses not to attend school of their own fruition, their absence will be unauthorised.

Holiday – where a child is taken out of school on holiday without the authorisation of the Headteacher.

## **Missing Education and Child Employment Service (MECE)**

Works with schools to reduce persistent absence, improve overall attendance and give advice and support to children, families and schools.

Carries out statutory duties on behalf of the Local authority to ensure parents/carers fulfil their legal requirements in relation to school attendance.

The school may refer a pupil to the MECE service where attendance remains a concern following school intervention. MECE will work with schools and families to address attendance issues. However, if attendance fails to improve, legal action may be taken against parents/carers and could include a Penalty Notice, Education Supervision Order or Prosecution.

## **Attendance Issues**

Where issues of attendance occur the school will take measures to try and reduce absence, by communicating with the parent/carer, in the first instance. Strategies used will depend on the child, family and their circumstances.

School based intervention may include:

- Letters home with regard to lateness, percentage absence rates, refusal of holiday requests.
- Attendance data for the child concerned being sent to parents
- Requests for meetings with members of school staff

Where school based intervention fails to improve attendance, MECE Services may be called upon to become involved. Should the situation still fail to improve, the parent/carer will be informed of the legal proceedings that will be initiated on behalf of the LA.

***Where a child of compulsory school age who is registered at a school fails to attend regularly at the school, the parent is guilty of an offence under Section 444(1) of the Education Act 1996.***

### **Attendance Targets**

Each school has an annual attendance target set by governors. The target for our school is 95% or above. It is expected that the whole school community will work together to achieve this target.

Attainment is strongly linked to attendance, and research has shown that if pupils are to achieve their full potential, they must attend school regularly.

Last updated June 2016

### **ATTENDANCE CODES, DESCRIPTIONS AND MEANINGS**

<b>CODE</b>	<b>DESCRIPTION</b>	<b>MEANING</b>
/	Present (AM)	Present
\	Present (PM)	Present
B	Educated off site (NOT dual registration)	Approved Education Activity
C	Other Authorised Circumstances (not covered by another appropriate code/description)	Authorised Absence
D	Dual Registration (i.e. a pupil attending another establishment)	Approved Education Activity
E	Excluded (no alternative provision made)	Authorised Absence
F	Extended Family Holiday (agreed)	Authorised Absence
G	Family Holiday (NOT agreed <u>or</u> days in excess of agreement)	Unauthorised Absence
H	Family Holiday (agreed)	Authorised Absence
I	Illness (NOT medical or dental etc. appointments)	Authorised Absence
J	Interview	Approved Education Activity
L	Late (before registers closed)	Present

<b>M</b>	<b>Medical/Dental Appointments</b>	<b>Authorised Absence</b>
<b>N</b>	<b>No reason yet provided for absence</b>	<b>Unauthorised Absence</b>
<b>O</b>	<b>Unauthorised absence (Not covered by any other Code/description)</b>	<b>Unauthorised Absence</b>
<b>P</b>	<b>Approved sporting activity</b>	<b>Approved Education Activity</b>
<b>R</b>	<b>Religious observance</b>	<b>Authorised Absence</b>
<b>S</b>	<b>Study leave</b>	<b>Authorised Absence</b>
<b>T</b>	<b>Traveller absence</b>	<b>Authorised Absence</b>
<b>U</b>	<b>Late (after register closed)</b>	<b>Unauthorised Absence</b>
<b>V</b>	<b>Educational visit or trip</b>	<b>Approved Education Activity</b>
<b>W</b>	<b>Work Experience</b>	<b>Approved Education Activity</b>
<b>X</b>	<b>Non-compulsory school-age absence</b>	<b>Not counted in possible attendances</b>
<b>Y</b>	<b>Enforced Closure</b>	<b>Not counted in possible attendances</b>
<b>Z</b>	<b>Pupil not yet on roll</b>	<b>Not counted in possible attendances</b>
<b>#</b>	<b>School closed to pupils</b>	<b>Not counted in possible attendances</b>

Appendix A