



ATTENDANCE POLICY - SAFEGUARDING

Document Control

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1.1 Legislation and Guidance

This policy is based on Department for Education (DfE) Guidance “Working together to improve school attendance 2024” which highlights the importance of attendance including legal obligations that all parties should be aware of. This policy is also based on the following pieces of legislation, which set out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance, and it has regard to the following guidance and advice:

- 1 Children Missing Education 2024
- 2 Data Protection Act 2018 and UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR)
- 3 Education (Independent School Standards) Regulation 2014
- 4 Education and Skills Act 2008
- 5 Equality Act 2010
- 6 EYFS statutory framework for group and school based providers (DfE 2024)
- 7 “Is my child too ill for school?” NHS 2024
- 8 Keeping Children Safe in Education 2024
- 9 Part 3 of the Education Act 2002 • Part 6 of the Education Act 1996
- 10 Part 7 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006
- 11 Sponsorship Duties (UKVI, July 2023)
- 12 The School Attendance Regulations 2024
- 13 Toolkit for schools: communicating with families to support attendance 2024
- 14 Working together to improve school attendance 2024
- 15 1. Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 requires parents or carers to ensure that children of compulsory school age receive a full-time education that is efficient and appropriate for their age, ability, aptitude, and any special needs. Parents/carers are legally obligated to ensure their child regularly attends the school where they are registered.
- 16 2. A parent or carer who does not ensure their child’s regular school attendance without a valid reason violates Section 444(1) of the Education Act 1996.

1.2 Introduction

Aims and Objectives This policy aims to show Eternal Light School's commitment to meeting our obligations about school attendance, including those laid out in the Department for Education's (DfE) statutory guidance on working together to improve school attendance (2024)

1. The School Attendance and Punctuality Policy is in line with the school's mission statement. School leaders aim to support every pupil in attending school daily, enabling them to reach their academic and social potential.
2. To achieve this aim, the school will work closely with parents/carers, the local authority, and external agencies to offer pupils support in maintaining excellent attendance. The barriers to accessing education are varied and complex, both within and beyond the school gates, and are often unique to individual pupils and their families. Improving attendance is a collective responsibility, requiring effective communication and collaboration. Excellent attendance is vital for academic success. The school will ensure that parents are kept well-informed about the link between attendance and attainment and that when academic progress is at risk, this message is communicated clearly, with support provided to overcome any barriers to attendance.
3. School leaders will ensure a calm, safe, supportive, and stimulating learning environment that motivates pupils to attend and be eager to learn.
4. The school will take a supportive approach first, allowing parents to address any issues before considering legal action as a last resort. Leaders should expect high standards, monitor attendance patterns, listen to parents to understand any barriers and facilitate and formalise support where necessary. Enforcement and legal interventions should only be considered when there is evidence of a lack of parental engagement, and when it is believed this may improve attendance (except in cases of unauthorised leave during term time).
5. This policy should be implemented alongside the Department for Education's 'Working Together to Improve Attendance' guidance document and the school's Behaviour Policy, which sets out the procedures for managing behaviour, including attendance and punctuality.

1.3 Key information for parents.

School starts at	08:05
School ends at	4.35
School registers are closed after 30 minutes after which time, unless a satisfactory reason can be evidence, the absence will be unauthorised and could lead to legal interventions Registers close at	08:25
The Senior Leader responsible for championing attendance (Attendance Champion) is	Hassan Khan
The Senior Leader responsible for championing attendance (Attendance Champion) can be contacted by e-mailing	hassan.khan@eternallightschool.co.uk

1.4 School Commitment

1. Everyone in the school is dedicated to fostering good attendance and punctuality. All staff members are made aware of how their roles influence attendance and punctuality, as well as the expectations for consistently applying the policy and correctly using absence codes. To support this commitment, mandatory training will be provided. The level and frequency of training will vary according to the role, but the core message will remain clear: every staff member plays a part in making a positive impact.

2. The school is committed to listening to and supporting both pupils and parents/carers to help achieve good attendance and punctuality, particularly when absence becomes a concern. The school aims for 100% attendance for all pupils, with a whole-school target of 97%. A pupil who achieves at least 97% attendance in a full school year will have missed fewer than six days of school.

1.5 Responsibilities

Eternal Light School will:

1. Develop and regularly review the Attendance and Punctuality Policy.
2. Establish and assess attendance and punctuality targets as part of the school's annual operating statement, strategic plan, and target-setting process.
3. Deliver training to all staff, enabling them to actively contribute to improving attendance in line with their specific roles and responsibilities.

The attendance office:

Eternal Light School will:

4. Monitor attendance on a daily, weekly, half-termly, termly, and annual basis, contacting parents/carers of pupils identified as at risk to address absences and encourage an early return to school.
5. Ensure attendance and punctuality data is displayed in prominent locations visible to pupils.
6. Where necessary, visit homes or make a referral to the Bradford local authority's Attendance Improvement Team.
7. Issue appropriate sanctions for pupils whose attendance and punctuality are of concern.
8. Manage arrangements for pupils who need to attend appointments during school hours.
9. Coordinate a support plan for pupils returning to school after a prolonged absence.

Parents/carers will:

1. Parents/carers should be aware that it is an offence for their child to be absent from school without a valid reason. Only the school can decide if an absence is considered 'authorised'. It is also their responsibility to ensure their child arrives at school on time, wearing the full uniform, and is ready and equipped to learn.
2. Parents/carers should inform the school if their child is unable to attend, providing the reason for the absence and the expected date of return. Where possible, appointments should be arranged outside of school hours, and holidays should be avoided during term time.
3. If leave of absence during term time is required for exceptional circumstances, parents/carers must submit a completed at least one month in advance, where possible (refer to the term time leave and holidays policy). All absences should be requested by completing our online Absence Request Form (<http://eternallightschool.co.uk/absence-request-form-2/>).

Similarly, absences requested during the last week of each half-term are also more likely to be refused due to half-term assessments. Do not book any non-refundable travel tickets before getting your request approved. The school cannot alter their rules because parents have already booked tickets without consulting the school

Pupils will:

1. Pupils should aim to achieve 100% attendance and punctuality by arriving at school on time every day. They should come to school well-prepared and with a positive attitude, ready to enjoy their learning and achieve their best.

2. Pupils should take pride in maintaining excellent attendance and punctuality. They should be punctual to all lessons and ensure they are registered for every timetabled class. If they are unable to be registered for any reason, they must inform the relevant member of staff.
3. If a pupil is absent, any communication regarding this should be passed to the appropriate staff member. Additionally, if any barriers are preventing regular attendance, pupils are encouraged to speak to the relevant member of staff to seek support.

1.6 Registration

1. The school will ensure that an attendance register is taken at the start of the morning in tutor time and the first session in the afternoon.

2. Registers will be marked using the [Department for Education Attendance and Absence Codes](#)

3. All appointments should, where possible, be arranged outside of school hours. Parents/carers are required to provide advance notice for any medical appointments that necessitate time off school, by providing a medical card and/or a text screenshot to ensure the absence is authorised.

Time away from school for appointments should be kept to a minimum, and pupils are encouraged to attend school before and after appointments whenever possible.

Pupils leaving school during school hours

4. Pupils are not allowed to leave school unaccompanied during school hours for any reason, including if they are suspended or feeling unwell. Pupils should only be collected from school by an authorised adult, preferably a parent or carer. Parental consent over the phone for a pupil to walk home alone during school hours will not be accepted.

5. The only exceptions to this policy are when a pupil is on a regularly reviewed, short-term reduced timetable or when written permission has been provided by the parents for the pupil to attend a scheduled appointment.

1.7 Absences

1. On each day of absence, parents/carers must contact the school before the morning registration period begins. If no information is received, the school will reach out to the parent/carer of the absent pupil to enquire about the reason for the absence.

2. Parents/carers should contact the school every day until the pupil returns, or provide information about the expected length of the absence and the reason, such as recovering from an operation. In these cases, a 'check-in' date must be agreed for when the absence will be reviewed.

3. If a reasonable explanation is not provided within five days of the absence starting, the absence will be marked as unauthorised. In such cases, legal action may be considered. It is the responsibility of the Headteacher, not the parent/carer, to decide whether an absence is authorised or unauthorised. These decisions will be made in line with DfE regulations and guidance.

The importance of good attendance

All pupils School should aim for 100% attendance. Where a pupil's attendance falls below 90%, this is seen as 'persistent absence'. Where a pupil's attendance falls below 50% this is seen as 'severe absence'. Attendance at school below 90% is the equivalent of missing half a year of schooling between Years 7 and 11. The negative impact on progress is measurable. Evidence shows that a pupil's progress and attainment is adversely affected if their attendance falls below 90%; national statistics indicate that if a pupil's attendance drops below 90% their GCSE attainment is likely to drop by an entire grade. In the case of any pupil whose attendance does fall below 90%, the School will contact parents so that clear strategies to support the pupil which aim to improve attendance can be put in place and if necessary, an attendance contract can be agreed.

Information Sharing

Personal information about attendance will only be shared in accordance with legal obligations and with due regard for government guidance on attendance, safeguarding, and children missing education. The school, local authorities, and other local partners will collaborate and share data on individual cases where it benefits the pupil, such as with health services in cases of medical conditions or with the police in instances of extra-familial harm. Where appropriate, the school will participate in regular targeted support meetings.

The school is legally required to share information from attendance registers with the local authority, which includes, at a minimum, new pupil and deletion returns, attendance returns, and sickness returns. Under the Education Acts, local authority officers have the right to access attendance and admission registers at all types of schools to carry out their duties and facilitate joint working between schools and local authorities. These officers are also permitted to take digital or physical copies of the school's registers.

The school must provide specific pupil information upon request to the Secretary of State. To meet this requirement, the school uses an electronic management information system that stores the necessary data and is accessible to the Department for Education (DfE). This system is also used to monitor pupil-level attendance and identify trends in attendance patterns. When necessary, the school is expected to notify a pupil's social worker or youth offending team worker in the event of unexplained absences.

1.8 Term time leave and holidays

Absences requested during the final week of each half-term are more likely to be refused due to the timing of half-term assessments. Parents are advised not to book any non-refundable travel tickets before receiving approval for their request, as the school cannot adjust its rules simply because tickets have already been purchased without prior consultation.

Once leave has been approved, it is the responsibility of both the parents and students to ensure that any missed work is collected from the school or individual teachers and completed to the required standard. All leave requests, regardless of the duration or reason, must be submitted using the appropriate forms.

The school does not impose fines for unauthorised absences. However, unauthorised absences may result in the pupil's name being removed from the register. Similarly, failing to inform the school of your child's absence will be treated as an unauthorised absence and could lead to the same outcome. If an absence is recorded as unauthorised, the pupil will lose their place at the school, and the school is obligated to inform the local authority of any pupils removed from the roll.

In cases of continuous absence, the school will report the matter to social services, who will open a Children Missing in Education (CME) case for the pupil. Parents should not assume that leave will be granted simply because it was approved in the past or for another student, as each situation is unique. The Senior Management Team (SMT) will assess each request individually, considering the reasons provided, the pupil's attendance and punctuality, academic progress, and the potential impact of the absence after consultation with relevant staff members.

Absences due to circumstances beyond your control, such as hospital admissions or missed flights, must be supported with appropriate documentation upon the pupil's return to school.

1.9 Managing absence/lateness

Eternal Light School understands that on occasion pupils may have to miss school due to ill health. Parents are asked to:

- adopt a sensible approach to illness, keeping pupils off school only when it is necessary.
- contact school by 8.30am indicating the reason for absence.
- explain absences lasting three or more consecutive days or repeated absences over a term. If a pupil is absent for three or more consecutive days the attendance officer will contact home and if necessary, a support plan or external referral will be put in place.

If a pupil is absent during morning registration and no communication has been received from home, the school will make efforts to determine the reason for the absence. As part of

its duty of care, the school will take reasonable steps to follow up on any unexplained absences. If there is no response from the parents or carers, the school will contact other emergency contacts to establish the pupil's whereabouts and reason for absence. If necessary, the school may conduct home visits and collaborate with external agencies such as Bradford Children's Social Care to ensure the pupil's safety and well-being. For any pupil with a Child Protection Plan, Children's Social Care will be notified on the first day of an unexplained absence.

Ongoing or severe absence may be considered educational neglect, and any concerns will be reported to Children's Social Care. The school will adhere to statutory guidance regarding children missing in education (CME) and report the case to the appropriate authorities as required.