



ELTHAM
CHURCH OF ENGLAND
PRIMARY SCHOOL
SINCE 1814

Attendance Policy

Written by:	Headteacher	Date:	Summer Term 2026
Approved by:	Full Governing Body	Date:	04.06.2026
To be reviewed:	Autumn Term 2027		



Aims

Eltham CE Primary School is committed to ensuring high levels of attendance and punctuality for all pupils through a culture that values education, inclusion and safeguarding. We will:

- Promote good attendance
- Reduce absence, including persistent and severe absence
- Ensure every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled
- Act early to address patterns of absence
- Build strong relationships with families to ensure pupils have the support in place to attend school
- Promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

Legislation and Guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the [working together to improve school attendance](#) 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 and the 2024 amendment](#)
- [The School Attendance \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) regulations 2024](#)

This policy also refers to:

[School Census guidance](#)

[Keeping Children Safe in Education](#)

[Mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance: guidance for schools](#)

Roles and Responsibilities

The governing board is responsible for:

- Promoting the importance of school attendance across the school's policies and ethos
- Ensuring school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties
- Regularly monitoring and challenging attendance data
- Oversight of disadvantaged groups, SEND attendance and the impact of interventions
- Ensuring staff receive adequate training on attendance, including the use of data to trigger early interventions
- Holding the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy

The headteacher is responsible for:

- Implementation of this policy at the school
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils
- Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies
- Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary

The designated senior leader is responsible for:

- Leading attendance across the school, offering a clear vision for attendance improvement
- Having an oversight of data analysis and identifying patterns of absenteeism

- Devising specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance
- Arranging calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues
- Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families

The designated senior leader responsible for attendance is the headteacher.

The school attendance officer is responsible for:

- Monitoring and analysing attendance data, identifying pupils at risk of persistent or severe absence (see section 7)
- Overseeing the registration process, ensuring accuracy and timeliness
- Benchmarking attendance data to identify areas of focus for improvement
- Providing regular attendance reports to school staff and reporting concerns about attendance to the designated senior leader responsible for attendance and the headteacher
- Working with the Attendance Advisory Service at the Royal Borough of Greenwich to tackle persistent absence

The attendance officer is Sue Day and can be contacted on 020 8850 1528 or via email office@elthamce.greenwich.sch.uk

Class teachers are responsible for:

- recording attendance on a twice daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the school office
- handling attendance issues discreetly, ensuring a supportive approach.

School office staff are responsible for:

- Ensuring accurate recording and tracking of attendance
- Engaging with parents about absence on a day-to-day basis and recording it on the school system
- Transferring calls from parents to the attendance officer in order to provide them with more detailed support on attendance

Parents and carers are responsible for:

- Making sure their child attends every day and arriving on time, unless there is a valid reason
- Calling or emailing the school to report their child's absence before 9.00am on the first day of the absence and each subsequent day of absence, and advising when they are expected to return
- Providing the school with more than one emergency contact number for their child
- Ensuring that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day
- Collaborating with the school to resolve attendance and punctuality issues, seeking support if needed
- Collecting their children on time
- Not taking holidays in term time
- Informing the school of any changes to their contact details

Pupils are responsible for:

- being aware of the importance of school attendance punctuality
- attending lessons and activities at school on time
- speaking to their class teacher if they are having difficulties that may prevent them from attending school regularly or are causing them to arrive at school late

Promoting regular attendance

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everyone's responsibility – parents, pupils and all members of staff. Poor attendance may be an indicator of a safeguarding risk and will be treated as such. To promote regular attendance, the school will:

- Provide regular updates and reminders about attendance via newsletters, the school website and emails
- Remind pupils about the benefits of good attendance and punctuality

Recording Attendance

All pupils are placed on the school's attendance register which is taken at the start of the morning session and at the start of the afternoon session. It marks whether every pupil is:

- Present
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity
- Absent
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

Any amendment to the attendance register includes:

- The original entry
- The amended entry
- The reason for the amendment
- The date on which the amendment was made
- The name and position of the person who made the amendment

We also record:

- Whether the absence is authorised or not
- The nature of the activity if a pupil is attending an approved educational activity
- The nature of circumstances where a pupil is unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

School registers are retained for 3 years.

Pupils must arrive in school by 8.55am on each school day.

The register for the first session is taken at 9.00 am when the gates close.

Children arriving after this will be given a late mark and the number of minutes late will be recorded.

Registers officially close at 9am and if pupils arrive after this time they are regarded as 'late'.

Arrival after 9.30am will result in a 'U' code which counts as an unauthorised absence.

Unplanned absence

Parents and carers must notify the school of the reason for a pupil's absence on the first day of an unplanned absence by 9.00am or as soon as practically possible by calling or emailing the school or through the use of the Sutdybugs App (see also section 7).

We will mark absence due to either physical or mental illness as authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness. The school follows the [NHS guidance](#) when making decisions about whether a pupil is too ill to come to school. we will bring this to parents/carers attention.

Where there are reasonable concerns or repeated absence patterns, the school may request evidence such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence before authorising an absence. If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents/carers will be notified of this.

Where an absence raises concern, and no contact has been made with the family, a home welfare visit may take place. Safeguarding procedures will be followed where necessary which may include a referral to children's services or the police

Attending a medical or dental appointment

Attending a medical or dental appointment is counted as authorised as long as the pupil's parent/carer notifies the school in advance of the appointment and evidence of the appointment shown (appointment card, text or letter). We encourage parents/carers to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

Lateness and punctuality

Good timekeeping is a vital life skill. If a child misses the start of the day, they miss learning time as well as disrupt lessons for other pupils. Over a school year:

5 mins late each day	= 3 days lost
10 mins late each day	= 6.5 days lost
15 mins late each day	= 10 days lost
20 mins late each day	= 13 days lost
30 mins late each day	= 19 days lost

The attendance officer will monitor lateness and inform:

- The Headteacher about any recurring incidents of lateness
- Parents/Carers of the school's concerns and arrange a meeting so that the problem can be addressed
- Parents/Carers of incidents of lateness across the academic year within the annual school report

Following up unexplained absence

When a child is absent and the parent has not provided a reason, the school will:

- Call the pupil's parent/carer on the morning of the first day of unexplained absence to ascertain the reason. If the school cannot reach the parent/carer then they may try other emergency contacts
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not
- Identify the correct attendance code to use and input it as soon as the reason for absence is ascertained – this will be no later than 5 working days after the session
- Call the parent/carer on each day that the absence continues without explanation to ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary, on day 3 a visit may be made to home address. If absence continues, the school will consider involving an education welfare officer

Authorised and Unauthorised Absence

Approval for term-time absence

The headteacher will sometimes allow pupils to be absent from school for certain educational activities, or to attend other schools or settings. A leave of absence will only be granted to a pupil during term time if the request meets specific circumstances set out in the [2024 school attendance regulations](#). These circumstances are:

- Taking part in a regulated performance or examination or employment
- Attending an interview
- A temporary, time-limited part-time timetable
- Exceptional circumstances

A leave of absence is granted at the headteacher's discretion, including the length of time the pupil is authorised to be absent for.

We define 'exceptional circumstances' as those that could not be reasonably foreseen and for which there was insufficient opportunity to take the necessary action to resolve the situation arising from those circumstances outside of school hours. The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request. The school may require evidence to support any request for leave of absence.

Valid reasons for authorised absence include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments (see sections 4.2 and 4.3 for more detail)
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart
- Traveller pupils travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh gypsies, Irish and Scottish travellers, showmen (fairground people) and circus people, bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and new travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school, but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision
- If the pupil is currently suspended or excluded from school (and no alternative provision is made)

Other reasons the school may allow a pupil to be absent from school, which are not classified as absences, include (but are not limited to):

- Attending an offsite approved educational activity, sporting activity or visit arranged by the school
- Attending another school at which the pupil is also registered (dual registration)
- Attending provision arranged by the local authority
- If there is any other unavoidable cause for the pupil not to attend school, such as disruption to travel caused by an emergency, lack of access arrangements, or because the school is closed.

Any request for holidays in term time will not normally be authorised unless there are exceptional circumstances. The school expects that holidays should be taken out of school term.

Attendance monitoring

The school expects school attendance to be 95%+ for the majority of pupils.

The school:

- Monitors attendance and absence data every two weeks, termly and yearly across the school and at an individual pupil level
- Identifies particular groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern, their attendance will be monitored with greater scrutiny until it has improved to an acceptable level.

Pupil-level absence data is collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. The school will compare attendance data to the national average, and share this with the governing body.

The school:

- Analyses attendance and absence data regularly to identify pupils or cohorts that need additional support with their attendance, and use this to apply a graduated response to improve attendance (see below)

- Looks at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence, and then develop strategies to address these patterns
- Use data to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place in order to modify them and inform future strategies

Supporting vulnerable pupils

The school recognises that some pupils, particularly those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), may experience barriers to attendance, including emotionally based school avoidance (EBSA), anxiety or other mental health needs. In line with the Equality Act 2010 and the school's inclusive ethos, we will take a personalised and supportive approach to improving attendance for these pupils. This will include working closely with parents/carers, the SENDCo and, where appropriate, external agencies to identify underlying needs and remove barriers to attendance. Reasonable adjustments may be implemented, such as adapted timetables, phased returns, safe spaces or additional pastoral support. Attendance plans will be tailored, regularly reviewed and proportionate, ensuring that expectations remain high while recognising individual circumstances and promoting sustained reintegration into full-time education.

Reducing persistent and severe absence

Persistent absence is where a pupil misses 10% or more of school, and severe absence is where a pupil misses 50% or more of school. Reducing persistent and severe absence is central to the school's strategy for improving attendance. Persistently and severely absent pupils will be closely monitored and supported.

The school:

- Uses attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence
- Considers potential safeguarding issues and, where suspected or present, address them in line with Keeping Children Safe in Education
- Holds regular meetings with the parents of pupils who the school (and/or local authority) considers to be vulnerable, or are persistently or severely absent, to discuss attendance and engagement at school, explain the help that is available and review any existing actions or interventions
- Provides access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance
- Letters will be sent to parents in the first instance to make parents aware that the child's attendance has dropped below 95%, further to this, parents may be called in for meeting and offered help/support or referred to Local Authority.

Legal sanctions

In education law, parents/carers are committing an offence if they fail to ensure regular and punctual attendance of their child/ren of compulsory school age at the school at which the child is registered, unless the absence has been authorised by the school.

The Local Authority will use the full range of legal measures to secure good attendance. Legal measures will only be considered when there is unauthorised absence and improvements are not being made.

Penalty Notices

The school or local authority can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child/ren from school, where the child is of compulsory school age.

The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice may take into account:

- The number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year
- One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission

- Where an excluded pupil is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason
- If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute or withdraw the notice.

If issued with a first Penalty Notice, parents must pay £80 within 21 days or £160 within 28 days. Penalty Notices are issued per parent, per child. The payment must be made directly to the local authority.

If a second penalty notice is issued to the same parent in respect of the same pupil, the parent must pay £160 if paid within 28 days.

In a case where the national threshold is met for a penalty notice for a third time within 3 years from the first penalty notice, alternative action will be taken instead.

Notice to improve

If the national threshold has been met and support is appropriate, but parents do not engage with offers of support, the school may offer a notice to improve to give parents a final chance to engage with support.

A notice to improve will be issued in line with processes set out in the local code of conduct for the local authority area in which the pupil attends school. They will include:

- Details of the pupil's attendance record and of the offences;
- The benefits of regular attendance and the duty of parents under section 7 of the Education Act 1996 which states that all learners should attend school regularly and punctually: This means that learners must attend school by law and parents and carers are legally responsible for making sure this happens. Parents who are found guilty of breaking the law on attendance may be taken to court and face fines of up to £2500, and in some cases imprisonment. EWO's can also use court proceedings to seek an Education Supervision Order or Attendance Order on the child. During these court proceedings the magistrates may consider issuing a parenting order which would include parents attending parenting skills sessions;
- Details of the support provided so far;
- Opportunities for further support, or to access previously provided support that was not engaged with;
- A clear warning that a penalty notice may be issued if attendance doesn't improve within the improvement period, along with details of what sufficient improvement looks like, which will be decided on a case-by-case basis;
- A clear timeframe of between 3 and 6 weeks for the improvement period;
- The grounds on which a penalty notice may be issued before the end of the improvement period.

Leaver Form

For safeguarding purposes, parents/carers are required to complete a Leaver Form, available from the school office, if transferring their child to a different primary school, providing their new address (if relevant) and the school their child is transferring to. Without this information a child becomes a 'Child Missing in Education'.

Child Missing Education (CME)

The school recognises that children going missing from education could be at risk of significant harm, and as such further information is provided in the Safeguarding and Child Protection

Policy. If a child has been absent from school for 20 consecutive days without good reason and their whereabouts are unknown, the school has a legal obligation to report the child as missing in education to the relevant local authority. Any child who ceases to attend school without notification as to their new address and/or the school they are transferring to will also be reported as a child missing education.

Elective Home Education (EHE)

Parents have a right to withdraw their child from school to 'Elect to Home Educate'. Parents must inform the school of their decision to home educate in writing. Once the school receives this notification, we will inform the Local Authority and await confirmation to remove the child from the school roll. It is important that the decision to elect to home educate is discussed and carefully considered. We encourage parents to talk to us about any difficulties you/your child may be having. Once your child has been taken off roll, their place will be allocated and may not be available to your child should you change your mind at a later date.

Appendix 1: Common Attendance Codes Explained:

Code	Meaning	Explanation for Parents and Carers
/	Present (AM)	Your child was present at school during the morning registration period.
\	Present (PM)	Your child was present at school during the afternoon registration period.
L	Late Before Register Closes	Your child arrived after the start of the school day but before the register closed. This is recorded as present.
U	Late After Register Closes	Your child arrived after the register had closed. This is recorded as an unauthorised absence for that session.
I	Illness	Your child was absent due to illness, including mental or physical health reasons, and the absence has been authorised by the school.
M	Medical or Dental Appointment	Your child was attending a medical or dental appointment. Wherever possible, appointments should be made outside school hours.
C	Authorised Leave of Absence	The Headteacher has agreed an absence due to exceptional circumstances. Requests for leave should be submitted in writing in advance.
G	Unauthorised Holiday During Term Time	An absence for a family holiday that has not been authorised by the Headteacher. Parents do not have an automatic right to withdraw children from school during term time.
N	Reason Not Yet Provided	The school has not received a reason for the absence. Parents should contact the school as soon as possible. If no satisfactory reason is received, the code may be changed to an unauthorised absence.
O	Unauthorised Absence	The child is absent from school without an authorised reason.
R	Religious Observance	The child is absent due to observing a recognised religious festival or religious observance.
V	Educational Visit or Trip	The child is attending a school-organised educational visit or trip and is recorded as present.
B	Educated off site	
P	Approved sporting activity	