

# **POLICY FOR ATTENDANCE**

**POLICY REVIEW CO-ORDINATED BY CLIVE MIDDLEDITCH  
(AUTUMN TERM – 2008)**

Elmstead Primary School  
Elmcroft  
Holly Way  
Elmstead Market  
COLCHESTER  
Essex  
CO7 7YQ



## **INTRODUCTION**

Monitoring and controlling school attendance and punctuality is a key part of our school's objectives. The Headteacher ensures that this policy is adhered to and that staff, pupils and parents are aware of the contents. All absences and lateness are carefully recorded. The policy will be reviewed at two yearly intervals.

Parents have the primary responsibility for ensuring that children of compulsory school age receive a suitable education, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise. It is the responsibility of the Local Authority to ensure that parents meet these responsibilities. Attendance enforcement is carried out by the Educational Welfare Service who provide an important link between schools and families.

The Headteacher is required to tell the Local Authority if a pupil fails to attend regularly, or has been absent for a continuous period of ten days and the absence is treated as unauthorised. The Headteacher can, of course, notify the LA earlier if there are other areas of concern.

## **PUPIL REGISTRATION**

The Headteacher is required to maintain two registers:

- an admissions register, which contains a list of all the pupils at the school;
- an attendance register.

The Headteacher is required to ensure that an attendance register for all pupils on the school roll is taken twice each day: once at the start of the morning session and once during the afternoon session. For each pupil, the register must be marked either as present, engaged in an approved educational activity away from the school site, or absent. If the pupil is absent, the register must say whether or not the absence has been authorised by the school.

## **AUTHORISED OR UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE?**

Authorised absence is absence with permission from a teacher or other authorised representative of the school. This includes instances of absences for which a satisfactory explanation has been provided (eg illness).

Unauthorised absence is absence without permission from a teacher or other authorised representative of the school. This includes all unexplained or unjustified absences:

- parents keeping children off school unnecessarily;
- truancy before or during the school day;
- absences which have never been properly explained;
- children who arrive at school too late to get a mark.

## RESPONSIBILITIES OF PARENTS

**Parents have the prime responsibility for ensuring that registered pupils of compulsory school age attend school regularly and punctually. If a child does not attend regularly, parents should work closely with the school and the Education Welfare Officer to resolve the problem. In extreme circumstances, parents found guilty of school attendance offences could be subject to fixed penalty fines and/or a period of imprisonment.**

Elmstead Primary School will encourage a good working relationship with parents by regularly publicising the arrangements for notifying absence and the school's policy towards authorised absence.

Parents are asked to notify the school on the first day of absence between 08.30 – 09.20 either by phone call to 01206 822889 or e-mail to [admin@elmstead.essex.sch.uk](mailto:admin@elmstead.essex.sch.uk). If the school has not been notified of an absence by 09.20 the school office will telephone home to ensure that the child is safe with a responsible adult. **This declared policy of first day contact makes it clear to pupils and parents that absence is a matter of concern and will be followed up, by 10.00 at the latest. This will be recorded in the school telephone log.**

Parents must confirm absences in writing, giving details of reason and date(s). Regulations state that if the school is not informed by parents of visits to the doctor, dentist, illness, holidays etc, then these absences automatically become unauthorised. It is therefore essential that any reasons for absence (even short absences) be given in writing.

**Note:** In the event of illness, the majority of parents telephone the school to inform us of their child's absence, often leaving a message on the answer-phone before the office is open. It is important, for our attendance records, that this is followed up with a short written explanation.

### **EDUCATIONAL WELFARE OFFICER**

The EWO visits the school half termly to monitor attendance data. All cases with attendance below 85% are identified and reasons for absence listed.

### **ACTION BY SCHOOL**

- Registers will be completed accurately at the start of both the morning and the afternoon sessions.
- All staff will monitor attendance closely and bring to the attention of the Headteacher any irregular attendances or children who are away from school.
- The school will regularly remind staff, pupils and parents of the contents of the Attendance Policy, which is also available on our website.
- The school will submit to the DCSF details of the level of absence within our school. Schools are required to inform how many half days have been missed due to authorised and unauthorised absence.
- Discussion will take place between the Headteacher and EWO where attendance falls below 85%.

### **LATE ARRIVAL/ COLLECTION**

Parents are requested to ensure their child(ren) arrive on time for school as poor attendance and lateness disrupt the education of the individual and other members of the class.

Children arriving late enter the school via the front entrance. The school office staff, will enter the child as late on the late register. (Each class register officially closes at 09.20.) This ensures an accurate record in case of fire or other emergencies on the premises. The book is kept in the school office and parents are asked to make sure an entry is also made should they bring or collect their child at other than the normal school times.

The Headteacher is made aware of any child who has had three entries in the late book within a half term period. Parents are contacted in person, by letter, to discuss the school's policy on the matter. A record is also kept in the school office of any children who are collected late at the end of the school day.

## FAMILY HOLIDAYS IN SCHOOL TIME

Parents are asked not to take holidays in school time, but if this is unavoidable then a Leave of Absence Form must be completed and returned to school at least two weeks prior to the holiday. Leave of absence granted for this purpose will be classed as an authorised absence. A total of ten days may be permitted at the discretion of the Headteacher, but holidays in term time are not a right and will not automatically be granted. Leave of absence above this is classified as 'unauthorised absence.' No holidays will be authorised between Easter and Whitsun, as internal assessments and SATs are completed during this time.

In considering any request for holiday absence the school will look at individual circumstances and take into account :

- the age of the pupil;
- the time of year for the proposed trip;
- its nature and parents' wishes;
- the overall attendance pattern of the pupil;
- the pupil's stage of education and progress.

Where the school and the parents fail to reach an agreement and the child is then absent from school, the absence is marked as unauthorised. Where the parents keep a child away for longer than agreed, then the time is also marked as unauthorised. It follows that leave of absence for more than two weeks must be seen as exceptional.

When a pupil is withdrawn during term time, there is disruption to the learning process that can result in the pupil falling behind his/her group. There is a belief, amongst some parents, the Department for Children Schools and Families suggest, that "...this time can be made up by the school providing work for the pupil to complete during the holiday period. However, this does not have the desired effect since the pupil has missed out on quality teaching time." In general terms it is our policy that it is not possible to provide your child with the work that has been missed, on your child's return to school. If you wish your child to continue with some school type activity, whilst on holiday, we suggest that he/she keeps a personal diary or record of the holiday. On return to school it would be unfair to encourage the child to work harder to compensate for the gap in their education. However, important gaps may require the completion of additional work following teacher input.

## **REWARD SYSTEMS**

All pupils maintaining an attendance rate of 96% or above will have this recognised by a certificate awarded at the end of the academic year.

## **TARGET SETTING**

**An attendance of 96% or above is a fixed goal for the school. Anything above that would be unreasonable. Our attention must be focused on those children whose attendance dips below 90%, as this is effectively one day per fortnight and a significant concern.**

**In order for this policy to be successful every member of the school community must make attendance a high priority. We must share our enthusiasm for education, communicate its importance to pupils and all members of the school community.**