

St Hilda's Moorland Federation

Egton CE (VA) School and Danby CE (VA) School

Attendance Policy

Effective Date:	November 2022
Date Due for Review:	November 2023
Approved By:	Governing Body
Approval Date:	22nd November 2022
Updated and Approved:	4th July 2023

**Our vision as Church of England primary schools, deeply rooted in a strong Christian tradition, is to:
'inspire learning and develop children's potential as individuals in a caring, happy and distinctively Christian family.'**

The Bible verse that underpins our vision statement, aspirations and ethos is taken from the Bible verse:

" I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full." John 10:10.

We wish to enable our children to flourish in their spiritual, physical, emotional, social, cultural and academic development enabling them to live their lives to the full.

Egton and Danby Schools are small, distinctively Christian, family based learning communities. We learn and grow together. Our key values underpin everything we strive for in our schools:

TRUST

Trust in the Lord and do good. *Psalm 37.3*

FRIENDSHIP

How good and pleasant it is when God's people live together in unity *Psalm 135.1*

RESPECT

In everything, do to others what you would have them do you. *Matthew 7.12*

We live these core values out through our excellent relationships with our children, parents, governors, staff, communities and churches.

Rationale

Our Attendance Policy is underpinned by our Vision Statement and Core Values. At Egton and Danby Schools we believe that every child has a basic right to a full-time, high quality education to enable them to prosper and live life to the full both now and in the future.

Aims:

This policy aims to :

- ensure that all members of our school family, including staff, parents and governors, are fully aware of and clear about the actions necessary to promote good attendance
- maintain a high level of attendance so that pupils can achieve their full potential
- make attendance and punctuality a priority
- work in partnership with parents and provide support, advice and guidance to parents/carers and pupils if required
- raise the awareness of the importance of good attendance
- promote good practice

The Headteacher will:

- work with all members of the school community to ensure high attendance
- implement measures to promote good attendance
- monitor attendance closely and report to the governing body
- contact families where concerns are raised about absence including arranging meetings to discuss attendance issues using professional discretion and understanding
- provide reports and background information to inform discussion and referrals with the Early Help Service
- Liaise with other professionals to determine potential sources of difficulties and reasons for absence.

Governors will:

- review the policy as required and monitor its implementation
- monitor overall attendance
- support the headteacher and school to address issues and measures related to attendance
- Be advised by the headteacher respecting that there may be information that cannot be shared but will inform the headteachers discretionary decision making
- provide the necessary support and committees to follow guidelines for attendance procedures

Teaching Staff will:

- support parents in meeting their parental responsibilities
- work with other agencies and professionals to promote attendance
- keep an overview of class and individual attendance looking particularly for either poor overall attendance, anomalies in patterns of attendance and/ or unusual explanations for attendance offered by children and their parents/ carers
- informing the nominated person where there are concerns and acting upon them
- provide background information to support referrals
- monitor follow-up once actions have been taken to correct attendance concerns
- emphasise with their class the importance of good attendance and promptness
- follow up absences with immediate requests for explanation which should be recorded appropriately
- discuss attendance issues at consultation evenings where necessary
- take and record messages from parents regarding absence

Admin Staff will:

- collate and record registration and attendance information
- take and record messages from parents regarding absence
- contact parents of absent children where no contact has been made
- record details of children who arrive late or go home early
- keep an overview of class and individual attendance looking particularly for either poor overall attendance, anomalies in patterns of attendance and/ or unusual explanations for attendance offered by children and their parents/ carers and reporting concerns to the Head teacher
- provide the headteacher with summary attendance figures as required
- send out standard letters regarding attendance
- First Day Response: contact home if no reason for absence is received (phone call, text message or email by 9.30am)

The Children will:

- be encouraged to have a positive attitude to attending school
- be encouraged to take a pride in their attendance and punctuality
- know why it is important to attend school both now and for their future

Parents will:

- ensure that their child attends school regularly and punctually unless prevented from doing so by illness or attendance at a medical appointment
- contact the school office on the first morning of absence by 9.30am on the first day of absence. Parents can inform school by either telephoning or emailing
- inform the school in advance of any medical appointments in school time. For the absence to be recorded as a medical absence we do require evidence from the doctor or dentist. (Appointment card/letter)
- make requests for authorised absence in term time, only if absolutely necessary as these are not automatically authorised
- talk to the school as soon as possible about any child's reluctance to come to school so that problems can be quickly identified and dealt with
- Recognise that children's achievement depends on good practice

Inclusion

Egton C.E. (VA) and Danby C.E. (VA) primary schools uphold an Equal Opportunities Policy. All children will be included in school activities with special provision being made for children with special requirements. e.g. disabilities requiring assistance for practical activities

Appendices:

Appendix 1	Attendance Procedures and Practice
Appendix 2	Attendance Question and Answer Document
Appendix 3	Sample Attendance Letters
Appendix 4	Statutory Guidance Links

Appendix 1

Attendance Terms, Procedures and Practice

Authorised absence - An absence is classified as authorised when a child has been away from school for a legitimate reason and the school has received notification from a parent or carer. For example, if a child has been unwell and the parent telephones the school to explain the absence. The telephone call must then be followed up with a written notification, upon the child's return. Only the school can make an absence authorised. Parents do not have this authority. Consequently not all absences supported by parents will be classified as authorised.

Unauthorised absence - An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of the school.

Authorised Absence	Unauthorised Absence
Illness	Absence without a valid reason
Medical Appointment / Dental <i>(although it is requested that where possible these are arranged after the school day or during school holidays and appointments should not normally result in a full day of absence)</i>	Latecomers beyond 25 minutes after the session has started
Family Bereavement	Persistent lateness within the first 25 minutes of the day
Religious Observance	Babysitting children including siblings.
Excluded Children	Shopping during school time.
Agreed other educational activity at the discretion of the Head teacher	Special occasions, e.g. birthday.
	Holidays
	Childcare issues

Persistent Absence - a pupil is considered to have persistent absence if their attendance falls below 90%. Parents will be informed at the end of each term if persistent absence is identified (at Headteacher's discretion)

Early Intervention

Class teacher may have an informal 'check in' conversation when attendance reaches 95%

Registration - Registers are legal documents and will be marked twice a day at the beginning of the morning and the beginning of the afternoon. Parents must always give reasons for absence to the school as all absences are denoted by a special code. Schools determine whether absence is authorised or unauthorised in exceptional circumstances, considering factors such as frequency, duration, attendance patterns, i.e. within reason. Each class teacher has the responsibility for keeping an accurate record of attendance. Any pupil who is absent must be recorded at the beginning of the morning and afternoon session. The attendance register must be completed by the class teacher by 9.10am and by 1.10pm. All attendance records are documented using Scholarpack software.

Lateness - Children who are persistently late miss a significant amount of learning, often the most important aspect, as the beginning of the day is where the teacher explains the learning and what each child is expected to achieve. Repeated absence at the beginning of a school session can amount to failure to attend regularly for the purpose of the 1996 Education Act. In our school we will:

- inform parents of our expectations
- contact parents of persistent offenders, and reporting to the Attendance Officer if no improvement
- praise and acknowledge latecomers who improve their attendance
- ensure that all members of our school community know that lateness is actively discouraged, although sensitivity may be appropriate in some cases
- record any pupil who comes into school after registration, but prior to 9.30am, as late in the attendance record
- record any pupil who comes into school after registration, but after 9.30am, as an unauthorised absence for the morning in the attendance record (subject to medical appointments etc.)
- Record any pupil
- keep records of those pupils who are late
- issue letters to parents/carers advising them of the concerns
- provide meeting opportunities for parents/carers to seek support and advice to address these issues.

Leave of absence in term time - The head teacher can only authorise leave of absence in term time under exceptional circumstances. The following are examples of the criteria for leave of absence, which may be considered as 'exceptional':

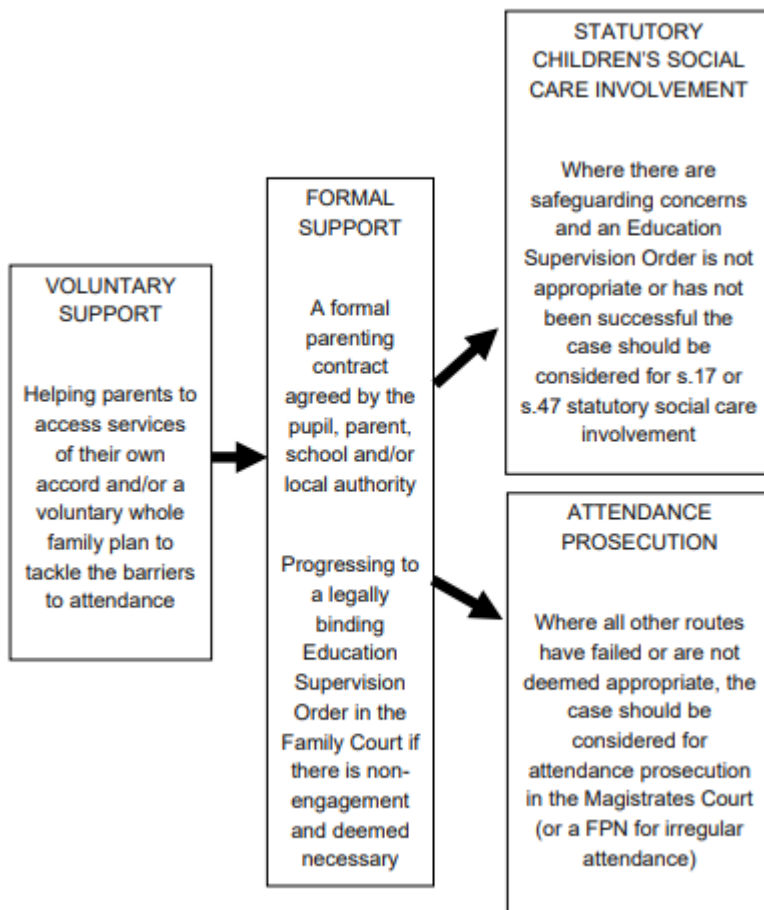
- Service personnel returning from active deployment
- Where inflexibility of the parents' leave or working arrangement is part of the organisational or company policy. This would need to be evidenced by the production or confirmation from the organisation/company
- Where leave is recommended as part of a parents' or child's rehabilitation from medical or emotional problems. Evidence must be provided
- When a family needs to spend time together to support each other during or after a crisis

This is not an exhaustive list the head teacher will consider the individual circumstances of each case when making a decision on this matter.

Where a headteacher feels that there may be exceptional circumstances which does not fit the criteria, they may refer to the local authority for advice. The decision of the Headteacher is, however, final. **The ability to access a reduced cost of a holiday does not constitute an exceptional circumstance.**

Long-term absence - When children have an illness that means they will be away from school for over five days, the school will do all it can to send material home, so that they can keep up with their school work if it is appropriate and the child is considered well enough to engage. If the absence is likely to continue for an extended period, or be a repetitive absence, the school will contact the support services, so that arrangements can be made for the child to be given some tuition outside school.

Parent contracts, Penalty Notices and Prosecutions - the law protects pupils' right to an education and provides a range of legal interventions to formalise attendance improvement efforts, and where all other avenues have been exhausted, enforce it through prosecuting parents. Attendance legal intervention can only be used for pupils of compulsory school age and decisions should be made on an individual case by case basis. The diagram below shows the range of interventions:



Fixed penalty notices are served on parents as an alternative to prosecution where they have failed to ensure that their child of compulsory school age regularly attends the school where they are registered or at a place where alternative provision is provided. Fixed penalty notices are used by our schools where the pupil's absence has not been authorised by the school and the absence constitutes an offence. Fixed penalty notices can be issued to each parent liable for the attendance offence or offences, which should usually be the parent or parents with day to day responsibility for the pupil's attendance.

The penalty is £60 if paid within 21 days of receipt, rising to £120 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days. The payment must be paid direct to the local authority regardless of who issued the penalty notice. Monies are not received by the school and do not benefit the school in anyway. There is no right of appeal by parents against a fixed penalty notice.

Appendix 2 - Attendance Question and Answer Document

Whitby Area Schools Partnership



Absence Questions and Answers for Parents and Carers

Parents of a registered pupil whose child fails to attend the school regularly are committing an offence.

We hope that this Q and A document will help address some of the frequent queries that we get in our schools.

They are only children; does it really matter?

Yes. Research shows that children who attend school for less than 95% of the time can underperform significantly and can have ominously reduced lifetime opportunities.

Can I take a holiday in term time?

That is your choice but you should be aware that there are consequences. Holidays in term time are recorded as unauthorised absences as Headteachers are unable to grant requests unless there are extreme extenuating circumstances. These circumstances would need to be discussed with your school.

What will happen if I choose to take my child on holiday in term-time?

You will be asked to complete a Leave of Absence Request Form. In the majority of cases, you will receive a letter from the headteacher informing you that your application is unauthorised. Your child will get an unauthorised mark on the register. If the unauthorised absence is 5 school days (10 sessions) or longer a request to issue you with a penalty notice will be made.

What is a penalty notice?

This is a fine. A penalty notice of £60 is payable within the first 21 days and rises to £120 thereafter. The Local Authority will take legal action if the penalty notice is not paid within 28 days of date of issue. Legal action may also result in a fine of up to £1000 and a criminal record for each parent/carer

I cannot afford a fine, how will I pay the school?

Fines are not issued by, or paid to the school. The courts issue fines and the revenue is taken by them. If you cannot pay a fine, this is a matter for the courts and is dealt with in line with any other unpaid debts to the Crown. The school has no say in this.

I will not pay the fine, what can they do to me?

The fine increases to up to £1000. If you continue not to pay, you can get up to a 3 month prison sentence.

I did not realise this and I have received a letter re my child's absence. What can I do?

Speak to your child's school. The school is here to help you when and where we can. The first step is to attend a meeting and work with the school. This will be your chance to seek support if there are underlying reasons for the absences. Whilst we cannot act on your behalf, we can point you in the right direction and look to see if there is anything we can do to help. Recognise that there is an issue, and do all you can to reverse any absence trends. Act promptly if you receive notices, attendance letters and/or court notices.

My child has been ill and I have told you this?

All absence impacts on a child's learning and wellbeing, regardless of the reason. Whilst schools respect parents who state that absence has been a result of specific unavoidable illness, this does not negate the fact that their child's learning has been impacted by it. A child, who is absent due to intermittent illness, has missed the same amount of time as a child who has been absent as a result of a parent's failure to bring them to school for unauthorised reasons.

If a parent is subjected to a fine, this can be appealed against on medical grounds, but it should be noted that the absence is not ignored owing to circumstance and may not be seen as 'good reason' in court without specific, long term, medical support and evidence.

To be clear, under policy, absence through illness has the same impact as absence for any other reason and as such is included in your child's absence figures. This is a national requirement.

So, are you saying you want me to bring my child into school when they are ill?

No. Schools must operate under the guidance and advice from the Health Protection Agency for infectious diseases and bugs. But schools do ask parents to consider carefully if absence is really necessary and discuss this with your school.

My child always attends school, yet you say that there are 'unauthorised absences', how can this be?

If your child arrives late, beyond the close of register, the late mark is converted to an unauthorised absence. This is a national requirement, not the schools. This is done because too much time in school has been missed. Arrive late and children may be considered absent; arrive persistently late, and it is easy to fall below the expectation.

I'd like to take my child out of school for a special day on their birthday. Can I do this?

No, children do not have a right to a day off for their birthday. In fact, most children like to be at school to be with their friends on their birthday. Absence for a 'birthday day' will be marked as an unauthorised absence and can contribute to your child's overall absence figure which may lead to a fine.

One of my children is ill. Can I keep the rest of my children home?

No. As a parent it is your legal responsibility to ensure that your child/children attend school. Siblings and other children in the family must still attend school even if one child is poorly. Sibling absence will be marked as an unauthorised absence and can contribute to your child's overall absence figure which may lead to a fine. Your school may be able to offer a solution. Contact your school.

I am poorly and am unable to bring my child to school. Can I keep them at home with me?

No. As a parent it is your legal responsibility to ensure that your child/children attend school. The Absence will be marked as an unauthorised absence and can contribute to your child's overall absence figure which may lead to a fine. Your school may be able to offer a solution. Contact your school.

My child takes part in lots of activities after school. Please can I take them home early?

No. Even if your child is missing the last 15 minutes of the day, they will still be missing an important part of their school day. Early release for clubs and events will only be allowed if your child is competing or the event is recognised as gifted and talented in this area.

What if I have children in other schools?

The schools in the Whitby area liaise closely together. When a Leave of Absence form is submitted and there are siblings in other schools contact is often made between schools.

As a parent it is your legal responsibility to ensure that your child/children attend school. Siblings and other children in the family must still attend school even if one child is poorly/absent who attends a different school.

Appendix 3 - Sample Attendance Letters

Initial Warning Letter

Re:.....D.o.b:.....

School:.....

As your child's current attendance stands at%, it falls below the threshold of a persistent absentee as defined by the Department for Education (90%) The absences also include unauthorised absences under the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006.

Your child's attendance will now be closely monitored by the school for the next 10 school days. Should 's attendance continue to be of concern, it will become necessary to arrange an Attendance Panel Meeting in accordance with the next stage of the School Attendance Procedures. You will be expected to attend this meeting, bringing your child with you when requested.

Any further absence your child may have due to illness must now be supported by medical evidence before authorisation is possible by the school and it remains your responsibility to provide this evidence.

May I remind you that it is the legal duty of parents/carers to secure the regular and punctual attendance of their child at school or other educational placement.

Failure to do so is an offence under the Education Act 1996 Section 444 and, following referral to the Local Authority for statutory intervention, may be dealt with by the following: a Prosecution in the Magistrates Courts under s444 (1) or (1A) of the above Act, a Penalty Notice being issued which is a fine of £60 if paid within 21 days rising to £120 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days, or an application made to the Family Courts for an Education Supervision Order under Section 36 of the Children Act 1989.

You will have the right to pursue your own legal representation regarding the above.

Should you wish to discuss this matter further, please do not hesitate to contact me on the school telephone number.

Under Percentage Attendance Letter

Name : D.o.b:

School :

Please find enclosed/attached the current registration certificate for your child.

He/she has only achieved % attendance so far this academic year. As an acceptable level of attendance is a minimum of 95%,(school target) the school are concerned about this level of absence.

Please note that should your child's absence reach 85%, the school may be required to make a referral to the Early Help Service to enable support for your family and child.

Irregular school attendance may have a serious impact on your child's academic progress if it is allowed to continue. You as parent are legally responsible to ensure that his/her regular and punctual attendance is maintained.

We understand there may at times be unavoidable and genuine reasons for your child's absence. The school should be informed of this as soon as possible.

However, if your child continues to have absences from school, you may be requested to provide medical or other evidence before any further absence can be authorised. Medical evidence can be in the form of a doctor's note, appointment card or prescription.

Should you have any queries, or require further support, please do not hesitate to contact me on the above telephone number.

Appendix 4 - Statutory Guidance Links

[Working Together to Improve School Attendance](#)

[DfE Summary Table for Responsibilities for School Attendance](#)

[Securing Good Attendance and Tackling Persistent Absence](#)