



**EARL STERNDALE CE PRIMARY SCHOOL**  
**EARL STERNDALE**  
**BUXTON**  
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## **Attendance Policy**

**Autumn 24**

### **Introduction**

For a child to reach their full educational achievement, a high level of school attendance is essential. Every opportunity will be used to convey to pupils and their parents/carers the importance of regular and punctual attendance. School attendance is subject to education laws and this policy is written within that context.

This policy has been written to adhere to the relevant Children Acts, Education Acts, Regulations and Guidance from the Department for Education in addition to guidance from the Local Authority. Parents/carers have the legal responsibility for ensuring their child's regular attendance and failure to do so is a criminal offence under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996.

### **Mission Statement**

Through an emphasis on our five key values in all aspects of our work, it is our mission to nurture and develop the natural creativity of our children and foster a love of learning within a safe environment. The children will grow in independence and be able to relate well to others with a strong personal sense of right and wrong. As a result, they will achieve to the best of their ability in all areas of learning. The school will make a significant contribution to the unity of the local community whilst supporting cohesion in the wider world.

We aim to provide a happy place to learn by encouraging everyone to contribute towards a supportive, stimulating and safe environment both within and outside of our school.

## **Aims and Objectives**

This attendance policy ensures that all staff, governors and parents in our school are fully aware of and clear about the actions necessary to promote good attendance.

### **This policy will aim to:**

- Demonstrate a strong attendance ethos that improves the overall attendance of pupils and reduces the number of persistently absent pupils.
- Develop a framework which identifies roles and responsibilities of the whole school community.
- Highlight a clear structure for promoting good attendance and tackling absence.
- Promote effective, non-bureaucratic systems for monitoring attendance.
- Encourage the use of attendance data and other information to improve school and pupil performance.
- Promote the general importance and legal requirements of good attendance to pupils and their parents/carers.
- Enable early intervention when an individual pupil's absence gives cause for concern.
- Install clear support systems for vulnerable pupils.
- Reward and celebrate good and improved attendance.
- Promote effective partnerships with external support agencies and the Local Authority.

## **Definitions**

### **Authorised absence**

An absence is classified as authorised when a child has been away from school for a legitimate unavoidable 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. Only the head teacher can decide on whether an absence is authorised or not. Sometimes, even if absence is supported by parent, an absence will be unauthorised.

## **Illness**

Parents/carers may be asked to provide medical evidence where there are repeated absences due to reported illness.

## **Medical / Dental Appointments**

Parents/carers are advised where possible to make medical and dental appointments outside of the school day. Where this is not possible, pupils should attend school for part of the day. Parents/carers should inform school of the appointment.

## **Religious Observance**

Earl Sterndale CE Primary School acknowledges the multi-faith nature of British society and recognises that on some occasions, religious festivals may fall outside holiday periods or weekends. Consideration will be given to authorising absence or special leave for religious observance. Parents/carers are requested to give advance notice to Earl Sterndale CE Primary School if they intend their child to be absent.

It is reasonable that no more than one day be designated for any individual occasion of religious observance or festival and no more than three days in total in any academic year. Any further absence will be categorised as unauthorised. In such cases the school may request that a Penalty Notice is issued.

## **Other Authorised Circumstances**

This relates to occasions where there is cause for absence due to exceptional circumstances, for example family bereavement or part time timetable agreed as part of a reintegration package.

## **Unauthorised absence**

An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of the school even if the absence is supported by the parent.

## **Procedures**

Earl Sterndale CE Primary School will ensure there is a whole school approach to improving attendance and reinforcing good attendance by:

- Disseminating the Attendance Policy to all staff.
- Reviewing the Attendance Policy regularly and updating all staff.
- Ensuring the school has strategies in place for collecting and analysing attendance data.
- Promoting the importance of good attendance to parents, carers and pupils through regular whole school letters and other communications i.e. website, newsletters, reports sent home.
- Ensuring parents are aware of our Attendance Policy.
- Seeking to promote the importance of good attendance to pupils and parents/carers during assemblies and at parent events.
- Ensuring a safe and structured learning environment for all pupils
- Delivering informative lessons that are set to pupils' needs
- Ensuring that there is a consistent approach to the use of the escalation of interventions, across all classes and pupils, applying discretion in exceptional circumstances.

The school will support good attendance, respond to concerns and promote improvements by:

- Implementing an escalation of intervention.
- Monitoring and analysing pupil attendance data.
- Implementing the identified strategies for promoting good whole school attendance.
- Implementing the identified strategies for tackling unsatisfactory attendance.
- Managing individual pupil casework files.
- Taking an active lead in delivering whole school initiatives when necessary.

- Making referrals to appropriate external agencies and the Local Authority as required.
- Contacting parents/carers when appropriate and recording all contact.
- Record all actions (letters sent, newsletters, home visits) in an appropriate manner.

The staff will support and promote good attendance by:

- Highlighting to the Headteacher any pupils causing concern.
- Talking to their class about the importance of good attendance.
- Promoting whole school initiatives, reward schemes and celebrations.
- Delivering a diverse curriculum in a child-centred learning environment.

The parents/carers of our pupils will be expected to support good attendance by:

- Talking to their child about school life and taking an interest in their child's educational progress.
- Avoiding unnecessary absence such as holidays in term time.
- Contacting school when their child is absent and providing a reason for the absence.
- Ensuring their child attends punctually every day.
- Engaging with intervention strategies provided by school if their child's attendance becomes highlighted as a cause for concern.

**Strategies for promoting good whole school attendance will include:**

- Updating the whole school community about attendance matters through newsletters and the school website.
- Ensuring positive communication with parents fosters good attendance.

## **Strategies for tackling unsatisfactory attendance will include:**

- A standard approach of escalation regarding school warning letters.
- Tailored plan of support for all pupils under 90%.
- A commitment to maintaining written correspondence to parents/carers when this is deemed necessary.
- Attendance Panel meetings.
- Parenting contracts with agreed targets.
- Requesting Penalty Notices.
- Referral to the Local Authority for consideration of implementing legal proceedings.
- Referral to the School Nurse where medical issues are a concern.
- First day calling procedure.
- Home Visits in certain circumstances.
- Referral to support agencies.
- Casework with identified pupils/families.

## **Responsibilities**

All members of school staff have a responsibility for identifying trends in attendance and punctuality. The following includes a more specific list of the kinds of responsibilities which individuals might have.

## **Roles and Responsibilities**

Earl Sterndale CE Primary School believes that improving attendance will involve a whole school approach with every member of the school community having a role to play as a member of staff, a governor, a pupil or a parent.

At Earl Sterndale CE Primary School, Mr D Holden, the Headteacher, leads on attendance with the support of Mrs R Gill, Class 1 teacher and Mrs C Hicks, the School Business Assistant.

The day to day responsibility for managing attendance issues lies with Mr Holden.

Attendance data is reported to the Local Authority and Department for Education termly through the census and to the Governing Body termly at Full Governing Body meetings. Attendance is discussed as part of the agenda during Governors meetings and an Attendance Report is presented to the Governors at each Full Governors Meeting.

No individual Governor is responsible for attendance. Where necessary Governors will be appointed to attend Attendance Panels.

In signing the school's Home School Agreement, parents agree to ensure their children will attend school every day as far as is practicably possible.

### **Registration**

The school doors open at 8:50 a.m. and children are expected to be in school by 9:00 a.m. this gives plenty of time for all pupils to come into their classroom and be ready to learn when lessons start.

Each class teacher has the responsibility for marking the attendance register at the beginning of the morning and afternoon session.

All attendance records are documented using Integris MIS. Attendance registers are legal documents and these must be kept secure and preserved in line with the relevant retention schedule

### **Late arrival at school**

At Earl Sterndale CE Primary School all pupils are expected to arrive on time for every day of the school year. The school day begins at precisely 9:00 a.m. and we advise all parents/carers to ensure their child is on site prior to this. All pupils arriving after this time will be recorded in the register.

The school register will officially close at 9.30 am. All pupils arriving on or after this time without explanation will be marked as having an unauthorised absence for the morning session.

All pupils who arrive late, or after the close of registration, will be asked to provide an explanation for their lateness, and, where necessary, parents/carers will be contacted in respect of the late arrival. Repeated arrival after the close of registration will result in a referral to the school's Attendance Team and may also result in a request for a Penalty Notice or legal proceedings to be considered. Children who are persistently late after close of register soon fall behind with their learning.

Any pupil who comes into school after 9:15 will be marked as late. Records are kept of those pupils who are late; this is documented on the electronic register for each pupil (Attendance code L).

Any child who arrives for school later than 9:30 will be marked as late after close of register (Attendance code U). This is an unauthorised absence for the whole session and will affect your child's overall attendance percentage and can be used to calculate absence thresholds for legal decision making.

Children who have attended a dentist or doctor's appointment and subsequently come to school later than 9:30 will have the absence recorded as a medical absence (Attendance code M).

If children are persistently late arriving at school, we will have a conversation with parents to try to resolve any issues they may be having.

### **Absence procedure for Earl Sterndale CE Primary School**

If a child is absent from school, the following will be initiated:

- If there is no contact made from the pupil's parent/carer, a telephone call home will be made in the morning.
- The school will telephone home if a pupil leaves the school without permission.

In certain circumstances the school may also:

- Visit the home of the pupil.



- Invite parents/carers to discuss the situation in school.
- Invite parents/carers into school for an Attendance Panel Meeting.
- Invite parents/carers into school to discuss and offer a Parenting Contract.
- Request a Penalty Notice and/or send a legal proceedings warning letter.
- Refer the matter to an appropriate external agency.

### **Expected absence procedure for parent/carer**

A parent/carer has a legal responsibility to ensure that their child attends school regularly. Failure to do so could result in legal action being taken.

If a child is unavoidably absent from school parents/carers are expected to:

- Contact school by telephone call or text before close of register at 9.30 a.m. on the first day of absence, identifying the reason for absence and the expected date of return
- A telephone call will be required in all circumstances.
- If no reason is provided, a letter will be sent home asking for the reason for absence.

### **Leave of absence in term time**

Parents/carers are strongly advised to avoid taking their children on holiday during term time. Parents do not have an automatic right to remove their child from school during term time for the purpose of a holiday. Leave of absence will not be granted unless there are 'exceptional circumstances' to support the request. Each request will be considered carefully by the head teacher and passed over to Governors if necessary.

Parents/carers wishing to apply for leave of absence during term time must send a completed leave of absence form (available in the school office) to the Headteacher before arrangements are made.

Retrospective requests will not be considered and therefore will result

in the absence being categorised as **unauthorised**. In such cases the school may request that a Penalty Notice is issued.

Earl Sterndale CE Primary School acknowledges all absences result in lost learning and directly affect a child's education. As such, applications for leave of absence in term time will only be authorised in exceptional circumstances, with a minimum of 4 weeks' notice, and where a pupil's attendance for the previous academic year has reached the school target.

It is recognised that a pupil who takes 10 days holiday in term time will only be able to achieve a maximum of 94.7% attendance for the full academic year.

The law stipulates that the cost of a holiday is not reasonable grounds for claiming it as an exceptional circumstance.

Where applications for leave of absence in term time are refused and families take the holiday without authorisation, a Penalty Notice may be requested for each parent, for each child.

### **Persistent Absence**

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' (PA) when their attendance drops below 90% for any reason. Over a full academic year this would be 38 sessions or 19 days. Absence at this level is causing considerable damage to a child's educational prospects.

All pupils who are PA, or are considered to be on track to becoming PA, will be referred to the school's Attendance Team and may also be referred to appropriate external agencies for targeted support.

If parents fail to engage with support and their child continues to have unsatisfactory attendance, a request may be made to the Local Authority to pursue legal proceedings.

Parents found guilty in a Magistrates' Court of failing to secure their child's regular attendance at school under the provisions of the

Education Act 1996, will receive a criminal record and a maximum penalty of a £1000 fine under a Section (1) offence and a £2500 fine and up to a 3 month prison sentence, under a Section (1a) offence.

### **First Day Contact**

Where a child is absent from school and we have not received any contact from the parent, then we initiate a first day contact process. Office staff check all of the registers each morning to identify those pupils who are absent without explanation and, as a safeguarding requirement, make contact with the parents of these children by telephone.

### **Applications for Leave of Absence in Term Time**

In September 2013 the government introduced new regulations making it clear that head teachers **must not** give approval for any leave of absence during term time, including holidays, unless there are exceptional circumstances.

Any requests for term time leave should be made on a Leave of Absence Form available from the school office and handed in at least 6 school weeks before the first date of the requested absence whenever possible. You must have received written authorisation before your child can be absent from school.

Parent/carers may be issued with a penalty notice fine or prosecution should leave of 5 days or more be taken which is not authorised by the Headteacher, or where repeated incidents of leave in term time for less than 5 days occur or where the unauthorised absence contributes to wider poor attendance that meets the legal threshold. (Attendance code G).

### **Addressing Attendance Concerns**

The school aims for attendance of at least 96%.

It is important for children to establish good attendance habits early on in their school career. It is the responsibility of the Headteacher and the governors to support good attendance and to identify and

address attendance concerns promptly. We rely upon parents to ensure their child attends school regularly and punctually and therefore where there are concerns regarding attendance parents are always informed of our concerns.

If parents are struggling to ensure their children are attending school regularly, they should contact the head teacher to discuss a plan for improving attendance.

If a child's attendance does not improve and absences are unauthorised this may lead to consideration of parental responsibility measures which include the issue of penalty notice fines or other statutory action.

### **National framework for penalty notices**

The new national threshold for consideration of legal action is 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks. A school week means any week in which there is at least one school session. This can be met with any combination of unauthorised absence, including lates after close of register (Attendance code U) and unauthorised leave in term time (Attendance code G).

If your child's absence falls into this category the school will decide if further offers of support is likely to improve the situation or if a request for legal action should be submitted to the Local Authority.

## Appendix A – Letter to parents from DCC

School attendance update 2024/5

Dear parent/carer,

We are writing to you because the Department for Education (DfE) have introduced some new guidance for schools and Local Authorities (LAs) for managing school attendance. They have also introduced a new national framework for penalty notice and amended the law. These changes come into effect from the 19 August 2024 and all schools and LAs across the country will be expected to follow the new statutory guidance.

Support first

The importance of regular attendance at school cannot be stressed enough. All schools and LAs are expected to promote school attendance and provide support to remove barriers where a pupil is struggling to attend school. This may mean that the school raises the issue of attendance even if your child has only had a couple of days off ill. This is not because they don't believe you. By working with you, schools can step in early to help to prevent patterns of absence developing. Schools may identify other underlying issues that are making your child reluctant to attend school and be able to help you and your child. For this to be successful parents need to work with the school. Where it can be demonstrated that a parent/carer is not fulfilling their parental responsibility to ensure that their child receives a suitable full-time education then the school can consider requesting that the LA take further action. This can be in the form of a penalty notice, prosecution, or the school may suggest other formal interventions.

National Framework for penalty notices

To provide consistency, the Government have introduced a new national framework for when schools and LAs believe that they have

exhausted all offers of support and the parent/carer is not engaging with the attempt to improve their child's attendance at school. The threshold for when a school should consider next steps is 10 sessions (5 school days) of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks. A school week means any week in which there is at least one school session. This can be made up of any form of unauthorised absence including late after close (attendance code U) of register and odd days of unauthorised absence (attendance code O) which add up to 5 days within a 10-week period. At this point the school will consider if it is likely that the attendance will improve with further support. They may then decide to refer the case to the LA for formal monitoring. This may proceed to legal action if the attendance does not improve. Education Penalty Notices are issued to parents of statutory school age children. They can be issued to each parent or carer who is deemed liable for the child's absence from school. The new costs and process is outlined below:

**First Offence** - The first time a Penalty Notice is issued for Term Time Leave or Irregular Attendance the amount will be: £160 per parent, per child paid within 28 days. Reduced to £80 per parent, per child if paid within 21 days.

**Second Offence (within 3 years)** -The second time a Penalty Notice is issued for Term Time Leave or Irregular Attendance the amount will be: £160 per parent, per child paid within 28 days.

**Third Offence and Any Further Offences (within 3 years)** - The third time an offence is committed for Term Time Leave or Irregular Attendance a Penalty Notice will not be issued, and the case will be presented straight to the Magistrates' Court.

Term time holidays

Pupils should not be taken out of school during term time unless it is unavoidable. Schools are required to consider requests for leave of absence in term time and should only approve the leave if there are exceptional circumstances. If a request for leave is denied and the pupil is absent for 5 days or more then the school is expected to refer

the case to the LA. The LA will issue a penalty notice with no requirement for a formal warning to be issued. Penalty notices can also be issued where a pupil is absent for repeated incidents of unauthorised leave in term time that fall below the 5-day threshold. In every case, the request for the Penalty Notice comes in from the school to the LA for the process to be completed.

### New registration codes

You might find that your child's attendance report looks slightly different next year. The DfE have amended some of the codes to include numbers as well as letters. These new codes are to enable schools, LA and the DfE to better understand the reasons for absence. For example: Code C: Leave of absence for exceptional circumstance. Code C1: Leave of absence for the purpose of participating in a regulated performance. The important thing for you as a parent is still the C which means that the absence was authorised. There is also a new code which has been introduced for pupils who are on the school roll but are temporarily being provided with an alternative education by the local authority, such as a home tutor. Code K: Attending education provision arranged by the local authority. Full details of all of the changes can be found by visiting the Government webpage: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-improve-school-attendance>

Derbyshire County Council will be publishing its updated code of conduct for penalty notices and all the necessary updated information on Education Welfare page in time for the start of the new term in September. We appreciate that there are a lot of changes for September and for many of you these will have little or no impact. However, if your child is anxious about attending school, please speak with your child's teacher or the attendance/family support workers within the school. They are there to explore what support can be provided to help your child to attend school regularly.

# Appendix B – Attendance poster for schools

## school attendance update September 2024

### Attendance categories

- 95 to 100% - as expected
- 91 to 94% - at risk of persistent absence
- 80 to 90% - persistent absence
- 51 to 79% - at risk of severe absence
- Less than or equal to 50% - severe absence

### Support first approach

Missing school means children fall behind. This not only impacts on their future achievement, but also adds additional stress and worry as the pupil attempts to catch up. This can affect their mental health and that of their family.

Schools will always try to offer support to remove barriers to attendance before considering any form of legal intervention however they can only do this with the support of parents. If you do not engage with this support the school may feel that they have no choice than to request the Local Authority consider taking legal action against you for failure to secure your child's regular attendance at school under section 444(T) of the Education Act 1996



### Penalty Notice Fines for School Attendance are Changing

With the introduction of the new National Framework for Penalty Notices, the below changes will come into force for Penalty Notice Fines for unauthorised absence after 19th August 2024.

Education Penalty Notices are issued to the parents of statutory school age children and can be issued to each parent or carer who is deemed liable for the child's absence from school.

#### • First Offence

The first time a Penalty Notice is issued for Term Time Leave or Irregular Attendance the amount will be:  
£160 per parent, per child paid within 28 days.  
Reduced to £80 per parent, per child if paid within 21 days.

#### • Second Offence (within 3 years)

The second time a Penalty Notice is issued for Term Time Leave or Irregular Attendance the amount will be:  
£160 per parent, per child paid within 28 days.

#### • Third Offence and Any Further Offences (within 3 years)

The third time an offence is committed for Term Time Leave or Irregular Attendance a Penalty Notice will not be issued, and the case will be presented straight to the Magistrates' Court. Magistrates' fines can be up to £2500 per parent, per child.



### Can my child take a holiday in term time?

The simple answer is NO – pupils can only take leave of absence during term time if this is approved in advance by the school. Leave taken without permission may result in a penalty notice and or prosecution.



## Appendix C

### Earl Sterndale CE Primary School - Absence Monitoring Procedure

The Headteacher is the designated person responsible for attendance, and works closely with the School Business Assistant who establishes a routine that ensures regular monitoring and review takes place.

<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Action</b>
<b>Daily</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Class teacher has initial responsibility for dealing with concerns which should be raised with the Headteacher.</li></ul>
<b>Weekly</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• School Business Assistant to raise absence concerns or issues with Headteacher when compiling registers.</li><li>• Action to be taken by the school with regard to students whose absence is causing concern. Discussions may take place with the LA.</li></ul>
<b>Monthly / half termly</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Inform LA of any children whose attendance meets the criteria for concern.</li><li>• Monitor identified pupils or groups.</li></ul>
<b>Termly</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Discuss progress towards targets at Full Governing Body meetings and provide a summary report on attendance prepared for Governors. Send a copy to LA if necessary.</li></ul>
<b>Yearly</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Headteacher (as designated member of school staff responsible for attendance) to attend meeting with LA to review and renew Annual School Attendance Plan if necessary.</li></ul>