



EDWINSTREE MIDDLE SCHOOL  
A Voluntary Controlled Church of England Middle School

## **ATTENDANCE POLICY**

**Date: March 2016**

**Written by: Deputy Headteacher**

### **AIM**

Edwinstree School seeks to create an inclusive and caring, learning environment underpinned by our Christian values. We aim to provide an education of the highest quality for all pupils and recognise that this can only be achieved by supporting and promoting excellent school attendance for all.

### **STATUTORY FRAMEWORK**

The Education Act of 1996 states that parents and carers are responsible for ensuring their child(ren) attend(s) school regularly and punctually at the school where he/she is a registered pupil. Failure to do so could result in legal action being taken against the parents. The school is obliged by law to differentiate between authorised and unauthorised absence. A letter or a phone call from a parent does not in itself authorise an absence. Only if the school is satisfied as to the validity of the explanation offered by the letter will the absence be authorised.

### **SCHOOL ATTENDANCE AND THE LAW**

The register is a legal document and school, under the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006, take a register at the start of morning sessions, and again during the afternoon session. Since September 2006, schools have been required to use statutory registration codes (see appendix A).

Time off for a family holiday is not a legal right. Holiday will only be agreed in exceptional circumstances. Application for a leave of absence must be made in advance, according to the school procedure. If a holiday is taken without prior permission from the school, or where the request for leave was not agreed, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised. This may result in legal action being taken against the parent/carer by the Local Authority.

### **ROLES, RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

As an inclusive Christian community, it is the responsibility of everyone within the school community to improve attendance at Edwinstree School, including pupils, parents and school staff. Staff will work together to provide an environment in which all pupils are eager to learn, feel valued members of the school, and look forward to coming to school every day. It is the responsibility of all staff to set good personal examples of attendance and punctuality. The Deputy Headteacher has overall responsibility for any matters relating to school attendance.

## **Pupils**

Attendance should be in line with the government minimum expectation currently at 96%, and all pupils should be punctual to school. We expect all pupils to be responsible for maintaining their own high level of attendance and punctuality, and to arrive at all lessons on time and fully equipped to learn.

On the occasions when pupils return from an absence, they should hand to their tutor an absence note from their parent/carer explaining the reason for absence.

If a pupil arrives late to school, it is their responsibility to sign the late book on arrival to school held at the school reception with the school receptionist. The pupil will then be given a late sticker to put into their Record of Achievement Diary (ROA) so that teachers and parents are aware that the pupil has arrived late into school.

If a pupil is experiencing problems that may prevent them from attending school regularly, they should speak to their tutor in the first instance.

## **Parents/Carers**

Parents are responsible for ensuring that their child attends school regularly, punctually, properly equipped for lesson, and wearing school uniform. If a child is prevented from attending, or is late, parents are requested to notify the school as soon as possible in writing. A pupil's absence from school must be considered as unauthorised until a satisfactory explanation in writing is forthcoming from the parent/carer. Parents will be promptly informed of any concerns which may arise over a child's attendance. Parents whose child's attendance is a cause for concern will be contacted initially by the Form Tutor, and if necessary, by the Deputy Headteacher or the Attendance Improvement Office (AIO). Parents should avoid, if at all possible, making medical/dental appointments for their child during school hours.

## **The School**

The Deputy Headteacher will lead the school's work in promoting regular and improved attendance ensuring that the Attendance Policy is consistently applied throughout the school. The Deputy Headteacher will meet the Attendance Improvement Officer every half term to discuss pupils' needs and record any unauthorised absences. Pupils who are deemed to be Persistent Absentees (under 90%) will also be discussed and strategies decided upon to improve their attendance. The essence of an inclusive Christian community is the acceptance that disaffection, underachievement, non-attendance and exclusion exist but that the school and local community can share and address these issues. We need to acknowledge that we are all part of the solution and are accountable for the creation of a learning environment in which everyone feels valued and safe.

## **REGISTRATION**

Registers will be called promptly by the Form Tutors at **8.50am** and at **1.10pm**. They will be marked in red or black pen in accordance with the list of symbols as set out on the register front sheet (Appendix A).

If a pupil fails to arrive before the register closes, he/she will be marked as absent.

Pupils who arrive after the register has closed should report to the office and complete the late book, which is held with the school receptionist. The register will then be appropriately amended by the office staff. If a child arrives in school after the registers have been closed, a written note will then be required explaining the absence.

Letters are automatically generated on SIMs requesting an absent or late note and signed by the Deputy Headteacher. In the event of a persistent absence the Deputy

Headteacher will contact the parents, and if necessary, the Attendance Improvement Officer will be contacted to make a home visit.

The Deputy Headteacher will check the paper registers once a week to ensure that correct procedures are being followed. Information relating to attendance will be passed on to the Local Authority when requested.

## **PENALTY NOTICES**

In accordance with Hertfordshire Local Authority, Edwinstree will, in liaison with the Attendance Improvement Officer, comply with the government's code of conduct with relation to truancy, for Hertfordshire County Council to deliver penalty notices for unauthorised absences. (A full copy of Hertfordshire guidance is available on request). From February 2016, the circumstances in which a penalty notice may be issued are as follows:

- Penalty notices may only be issued in cases of unauthorised absence
- The pupil must have at least 15 sessions (half days) unauthorised absence in the current and/or previous term
- The school must have sent a formal warning to the parent
- The school/academy/police or Attendance Improvement Officer considers that issuing a penalty notice could avoid further absence
- Issuing a penalty notice does not conflict with any other legal action being taken
- A maximum of two separate penalty notices will be issued to a parent within any twelve month period
- Penalty notices will be issued for pupils of compulsory school age, up to the end of the spring term of year 11
- A penalty notice will not be issued in respect of a pupil who is looked after by the Local Authority without the prior agreement of the Central Attendance and Employment Support Team Manager on behalf of the County Lead for Attendance

### **The right to appeal against the issue of penalty notices**

There is no statutory right of appeal once a penalty notice has been issued. The Local Authority may withdraw a notice if it has been issued incorrectly. If the penalty notice has been issued in accordance with Hertfordshire's Code of Conduct there is no facility to overturn the decision to issue the notice.

### **Effect of issuing penalty notices**

If the penalty is not paid in full before the expiry of the period for paying it the Local Authority named in the notice shall either institute proceedings against the recipient for the offence or shall withdraw the notice.

### **Payment of penalty notices**

The amount payable is £60 (per parent) if paid within 21 days or £120 (per parent) if paid after 21 days but within 28 days of receipt of the notice. Separate notices are issued to each parent in respect of each child. Penalty notices are sent by first class post and are deemed to have been received on the second day after posting. Arrangements for payment are detailed on the penalty notice and payment by cheque, postal order and by debit/credit card is accepted.



## **Attendance: a guide for Parents/Carers**

### When does my child need to be in school?

Your child should aim to arrive at school between 8.30am-8.40am. The bell goes at 8:37am in order for tutors to collect their tutees and welcome them into the classroom. The register will be called at 8.40am. If your child arrives after this time, he/she must enter via the school reception and sign the late book, which is held with the school receptionist.

### What happens if my child is late?

If your child arrives after the register has been closed, he/she will be marked as absent (unauthorised), unless an acceptable reason has been given. It is the responsibility for the children who arrive late to school, to sign the late book on arrival to school held at the school reception with the school receptionist. The pupil will then be given a late sticker to put into their Record of Achievement Diary (ROA) so that you are aware that your child has arrived late into school.

Tutors will set a break or lunchtime detention if there is no valid reason for lateness.

Parents are required to provide a note to explain the reason for lateness. If the school authorises the lateness, then no detention will be set.

If a pupil arrives late to school on a regular basis, the Deputy Headteacher will contact parents to arrange a meeting to discuss reasons or difficulties for lateness.

### What should I do if my child cannot come to school?

We expect a first day absence call before 9.30am.

On the day your child returns to school, you should write an absence note on a piece of paper to explain the reason for absence to be given to your child's tutor. Following a reason for absence, the tutor will then pass the note to the Deputy Headteacher, who will decide whether or not the absence is to be authorised or unauthorised. If your child is unable to come to school for a period of time, it is appropriate to telephone the school to notify the length of absence if possible. If there is a concern from the school, the tutor will contact you at home.

In the case of recurring absences through illnesses you may be required to produce a medical certificate or other medical evidence or to provide details of medical personnel to enable the school to make direct contact.

### Can we take family holidays during term-time?

In line with government legislation, the school policy and Hertfordshire County Council state all family holidays should be taken in school closure periods. A 'Leave of Absence' may be granted in exceptional circumstances where the application has been made from the parent or carer. The Headteacher will only grant a leave of absence if they consider there to be exceptional reasons for absence from school

during term time. Where an absence has been unauthorised and the time still taken off school, the school has a duty to notify Hertfordshire Local Authority's Education Service, and a fixed penalty fine may be issued.

#### What is a Penalty Notice and when would one be issued?

The law states that parents/carers are committing an offence where their children (of compulsory school age) are absent from school without good reason. A Penalty Notice is a financial penalty issued by Hertfordshire Local Authority for unauthorised absences from school. Where the penalty is not paid in full and/or within the prescribed time limit, Hertfordshire County Council is required to start legal proceedings against the parents/carers in the Magistrates Court.

#### What happens if my child's attendance level falls?

The school monitors the children's attendance very closely. Where a child's attendance is considered to be too low, Hertfordshire County Council requires that the school will take action.

Attendance rate falls below 95% - a letter will be sent home from the school to inform the parent/carer that their child's attendance levels requires improvement and the child's attendance will be closely monitored.

Attendance rate falls below 93% - a letter will be sent home from the school to inform the parent that the school are unable to authorise any further absences until further medical evidence is provided to the school.

Attendance rate falls to 90% or below – a meeting will be arranged with the parent/carer at the school to discuss attendance and support that the school can offer.

Where attendance does not improve, the school will contact the Attendance Improvement Officer.