Attendance Policy 2021-2022

At Elmhurst Primary School, the attendance team comprises the following members: Attendance Lead/Family Support worker Ms Ayesha Sahebdin, the office manager Yasmin Begum, the headteacher Sukwinder Samra and the leadership team.

Aims:
The school aims to ensure that all pupils have 100% attendance and excellent punctuality by adopting a proactive approach and acting quickly to address patterns of absence, thereby reducing persistent absence. We passionately believe that every pupil has access to an excellent standard of full-time education to which they are entitled to every day. Since we serve in an area of high deprivation (ie overcrowded substandard accommodation and low household wages), we feel that through attending school we can significantly improve the life chances of our children.

We will support parents to perform their legal duty to ensure their children of compulsory school age attend regularly- pupil attendance is mandatory again and most restrictions have been lifted including shielding for those pupils who are extremely clinically vulnerable. It is a schools' responsibility to record attendance and follow up on absence. The school does have the right to issue sanctions, including fixed penalty notices, in line with local authorities' code of conduct; these were reinstated and are being enforced. *See letter templates.*

The government has outlined its view that it is vital for all children to return to school to minimise as far as possible the longer-term impact of the pandemic on children's education, wellbeing and wider development. It is our view that attending school safeguards the welfare of children whilst they are not in the care of their parents. We do view children with a high level of unauthorised absence as vulnerable.
This policy aims to give clear guidance to all staff about the management of attendance of all children, including those with SEND.

We have robust arrangements for identifying and following up with children missing education
Legislation and guidance
This policy meets the requirements of the school attendance documents from the Department for Education (DfE):
https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-attendance
https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/parental-responsibility-measures-for-behaviour-and-attendance
The schools COVID-19 operational guidance sets out when pupils should self-isolate and when they ought to be tested in the 2021 to 2022 academic year.
and refers to the DfE's recent addendum which was developed in response to Covid-19:
https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-attendance/addendum-recording-attendance-in-relation-to-coronavirus-covid-19-during-the-2021-to-2022-academic-year

Educational settings status form
This form should be completed by midday every working day and sent to the DfE. It does not include pupil level data. This data is being collected to help manage the impact of and response to COVID-19 on the education sector. The form includes the following information:
- numbers of pupils or students attending
- staff absences
- whether our setting is open to all pupils or students

Attendance register

The register is a legal document and needs to not only be accurate but applied consistently across the school. The attendance register will be taken at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the afternoon session on SIMS. It will mark whether every pupil is:
· Present
· Attending an approved off-site educational activity
· Absent
· Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.   (See Appendix 9 for further guidance on codes)

Although school attendance is mandatory, there are some circumstances where pupils cannot attend school due to coronavirus (COVID-19)- we closely follow schools COVID-19 operational guidance which sets out when pupils should self-isolate and when they ought to be tested in the 2021 to 2022 academic year. Pupils not attending a session who meet the criteria for 'not attending in circumstances related to coronavirus (COVID-19)' should be recorded using code X.
 *Pupils who are required by legislation to self-isolate as part of a period of quarantine
 *Pupils who are displaying symptoms
 *Pupils who have tested positive up to the result but once they receive the result then they should be recorded with an I (illness) code

Dinner register
This will be carried out each day by 9.20am on the excel sheet set up by Dona and used to establish numbers of meals for Juniper and to be used as the official register for our fire safety arrangements.

Absence procedures

First day absence procedure:

Parents must notify the school on the first day of an unplanned absence. Parents can notify the school via Parent Mail or by telephone before 9am on the day of absence – they should speak to our attendance officer. All absence information should be written onto the SIMs comment section to ensure there is good ongoing dialogue between the parents, the office staff and class teachers.

If there is no contact on the first day then the attendance officer needs to send the Day 1 absence letter (**see appendix 1 Day 1 absence letter**)

Third day of absence if no contact
If no contact is received from a parent, the Attendance Manager will make calls to all the contact numbers on the child's file and if there is no response after the second day then a member of school staff will make a home visit; this could be our attendance officer or a leadership team member. This must be recorded as a concern on Safeguard. If there is no answer from all available avenues after the third day, this will be reported to the local police/MASH.

Third day of absence if contact
Absence due to illness will only be authorised if appropriate medical evidence is provided in order to support the absence – this is a school requirement by the 3rd day of an absence and parents will receive a letter to request this proof (**see appendix two, Day 3 attendance letter**). It is difficult to arrange medical appointments which are mainly virtual now, so a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence will be considered. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily. If medical evidence is not provided, the absence may be recorded as unauthorised.

Absence below 93%

If absence continues below 93% then a Zoom meeting will be organised between the family and Attendance officer and or a member of the respective year group leadership team member. This is particularly important as pupils return from the lockdown and enforced absence from school. (**see appendix 3 Low attendance letter/invitation to meeting**). The main feedback and actions must be recorded on the attendance part on Safeguard so that class teachers are aware of any actions.

Absence below 90%-Persistent absence
The persistent absence threshold is 10%. If a pupil's individual overall absence rate is greater than or equal to 10%, the pupil will be classified as a persistent absentee. Although pupil-level absence data collection was suspended for spring 2020, it is important that the school addresses this issue.

The attendance officer to provide members of leadership with a list of pupils whose attendance falls below 90% each fortnight. Members of leadership to arrange virtual meetings with families to share concerns and to set attendance targets and to problem solve any emerging issues (**See appendix 4 Below 90% attendance meeting**)

Attendance below 80%
Where there are patterns of very poor attendance, unrelated to long term medical concerns or Covid related procedures, and attendance is below 80% then the headteacher will conduct a New Vision Attendance Panel with the family and consider penalty notices if in line with statutory guidance. (**See appendix 5 Invitation to attendance panel meeting**). Parents will understand that 80% equates to one whole day off every week A child whose attendance is 80% will have missed ONE WHOLE YEAR of education by the time they leave school

Covid -19 symptoms:
If children are displaying one of the three Covid related symptoms then these need to be communicated to the school and the parents need to organise a test as soon as possible. All messages about absence need to be recorded on SIMs and if they are related to Covid -19 then they need to be passed to the attendance officer who populates the spreadsheet..
The family support worker should follow up on absence linked to Covid symptoms to find out when a test was organised and what the result was.

Medical or dental appointments
Missing registration for a medical or dental appointment is counted as an authorised absence; advance notice is required for authorising these absences with documents provided to the school as evidence of the appointment. However, we encourage parents 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. Parents can inform the school in advance by providing evidence of appointment either on Parent Mail or by telephone; visits in person to the school reception should be restricted in line with the Covid risk assessment.

Lateness and punctuality

A pupil who arrives after the register has closed will be marked as late after registration, using the appropriate code. Punctuality is monitored closely along with attendance; the attendance officer will conduct late gates each half term with a member of the leadership team and pass on concerns to the classteacher. A child who is late 3 times in a term will trigger a poor punctuality letter which the office will send. See appendix 6 Poor punctuality letter to parents.
The reception team including Dona will also pass on concerns where there are repeated incidences of late collection. Concerns with punctuality and late collection may lead to requests for virtual meeting between parents with the year head or member of the leadership team. See Appendix 7 late collection letters.

Authorised and unauthorised absence

The headteacher Sukwinder Samra will meet all parents requesting term time leave. She will not grant any leave of absence to pupils during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances'. The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request. Previous periods of leave, poor attendance below 95% and the year groups concerned are all considered carefully. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the head teacher's discretion. Valid reasons for authorised absence include:
*Illness and medical / dental appointments
*Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong
* Factors which are centred around safety and well-being such as rehousing/ CP matters etc

Children Missing Education
"Children missing education are children of compulsory school age who are not registered pupils at a school and are not receiving suitable education otherwise than at a school." DfE

The procedures the school follows are part of Newham's CME procedures as outlined on Newham, Connect:
http://www.newhamconnect.uk/Services/3074#:~:text=Following%20the%20school's%20consideration%20of,the%20child%20leaves%20the%20country.

This Children Missing Education statutory guidance (September 2016), published by the Department for Education, addresses the statutory duty placed on LA' to identify children not receiving a suitable education and to identify children missing from education in their area. At Elmhurst we do everything we can to follow up on CME pupils and will never take pupils off roll without a forwarding destination. We make CME referrals via the online e-form - www.newham.gov.uk/schoolcme

If after ten days continuous absence the school has been unable to ascertain the whereabouts of a pupil (either a starter who never attended or a child who left without a forwarding school contact) the school will refer the child's details to Newham LA for it to perform further checks. Continuous unauthorised absence can result in children being removed from the school roll once there is authorisation from the CME team.

Vulnerable pupils
Vulnerable Children Children who are Looked After ("LAC"), subject to a Child Protection Plan ("CP"), and/or Children in Need ("CIN") will be treated with the highest priority and will be known to the Attendance Team at Elmhurst Primary School. Any unexplained absence will be followed up immediately by a telephone call to the home, a home visit or a call to The Newham Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub ("MASH"), in order that a same-day visit can be made. Children with Special

Educational Needs ("SEND") will be treated with similar priority in order that their time in school can be maximised, and their learning supported to the greatest extent possible.
Any absences for LAC are reported to the Welfare Call on the first day of absence.

References:
The Childrens Act 1989 http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/contents
The Education Act 1996 http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1996/56/contents
Keeping Children Safe in Education 2020:
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachme
nt_data/file/892394/Keeping_children_safe_in_education_2020.pdf

Elective home education (EHE)

The school strongly discourages all parents choosing to homeschool their children. More parents are considering this option due to the impact of Covid -19. Any requests need to be put in writing and the parents need to attend a meeting with the headteacher or deputy headteacher to explain their reasons for withdrawal. At this stage most issues can be ironed out. If parents still insist on home schooling then they will be informed in writing about the Newham EHE Procedure Information for Parents document available on Newham Connect.

The school needs to send the referral form (appendix 8) back to the LA EHE team with the parents' signed letter and the child stays on roll for a period of 10 school days to allow time for the EHE team to process the request and attempt to engage the family further to seek a resolution (if necessary) before removal from roll. After this time, if it is agreed that the pupil will become deregistered, then the school can backdate the attendance to the date specified by parents.

Strategies for promoting good attendance
The school rewards promotes and rewards good attendance through a range of strategies:
*Weekly trophies are given out to the classes in each key stage with the highest attendance during the certificate assemblies
*100% attendance for the year is rewarded with a school trophy
* Carrying out the return to school sheet (see appendix 10) with older pupils in years 5/6 after a period of absence and asking them to sign it
* Regular newsletters and letters to parents highlighting the importance of good attendance

Publication of Information

This policy can be found on the school's website and hard copies are available from the school office for parents to view.

Review and Amendments

This non statutory policy will be reviewed annually by the headteacher Sukwinder Samra and ratified by the Governing Body.

Updated 21/09/2021

Appendix 9:

The following codes are taken from the DfE's guidance on school attendance.

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	Pupil is present at morning registration

\	Present (pm)	Pupil is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Pupil arrives late before register has closed
B	Off-site educational activity	Pupil is at a supervised off-site educational activity approved by the school
D	Dual registered	Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
J	Interview	Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
P	Sporting Activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
V	Educational trip or visit	Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised, or approved, by the school
W	Work experience	Pupil is on a work experience placement

Authorised absence codes

Code	Definition	Scenario
C	Authorised leave of absence	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
E	Excluded	Pupil has been excluded but no alternative provision has been made
H	Authorised holiday	Pupil has been allowed to go on holiday due to exceptional circumstances
I	Illness	School has been notified that a pupil will be absent due to illness This now includes for pupils who have tested positive after they test positive.
M	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment
R	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance
S	Study leave	Year 11 pupil is on study leave during their public examinations
T	Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence	Pupil from a Traveller community is travelling, as agreed with the school

Unauthorised absence

Code	Definition	Scenario
G	Unauthorised holiday	Pupil is on holiday that was not approved by the school
N	Reason not provided	Pupil is absent for an unknown reason (this code should be amended when the reason emerges, or replaced with code O if no reason

Code	Definition	Scenario
		for absence has been provided after a reasonable amount of time)
O	Unauthorised absence	School is not satisfied with reason for pupil's absence
U	Arrival after registration	Pupil arrived at school after the registration closed

Code X: not attending in circumstances relating to Coronavirus (COVID-19)

Code	Definition	Scenario
X	Not attending in circumstances relating to coronavirus	This code is used to record sessions where the pupil's travel to or presence at school would conflict with guidance relating to the incidence or transmission of coronavirus

Administrative codes

Code	Definition	Scenario
X	Not required to be in school	This code should continue to be also used for pupil of non-compulsory school age who is not required to attend school
Y	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances	School site is closed, there is disruption to travel as a result of a local/national emergency, or pupil is in custody
Z	Pupil not on admission register	Register set up but pupil has not yet joined the school
#	Planned school closure	Whole or partial school closure due to half term/bank holiday/INSET day