



# **Attendance Policy Support & Guidance**

Revised September 2018

# **Ercall Wood Academy**

## **Success Starts by Being at School**

### **1.1 The Importance of Regular School Attendance**

The importance of regular school attendance cannot be overestimated. Regular attendance is a prerequisite to a good education and securing it must therefore be a high priority for school, governors, LAs, parents and the pupils themselves. By failing to attend school regularly, pupils diminish the value of the education provided for them; they may also damage the learning of others because fluctuations in the size of pupil group may restrict the scope for effective teaching.

Attendance is now increasingly regarded as a measure of the quality of the education offered by a school and the government has indicated that all schools should be aiming for a target of at least 95%. The Government threshold for Persistent Absence is set at 90% (and below) attendance rate.

Schools will wish to encourage and promote good attendance in as many ways and for as many pupils as they can, but they will need to balance this with measures to address the needs of those children who do - for whatever reason - find it difficult to attend. A whole-school approach to attendance will focus primarily on promoting attendance but will also address the issue of truancy and condoned absence where it occurs. In addition schools should ensure that pupils who fall into the 'persistent absentee' category should be closely monitored and support offered.

The whole-school approach to attendance relates to a wide range of other school issues including punctuality, rewards and incentives, re-integration of long-term absentees.

### **1.2 Legal Responsibilities**

The legal framework governing attendance is set by the Education Acts and their associated regulations.

**Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 states that:-**

***The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him/her to receive efficient, full time education suitable to his/her age, aptitude and ability and to any special educational needs he/she may have either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.***

Section 444 further states that: - "The parent of a child of compulsory school age registered at school and failing to attend regularly is guilty of an offence punishable in law. An offence is **NOT** committed if it can be demonstrated that:-

- the pupil was absent with leave (authorised absence),
- the pupil was ill or prevented from attending by unavoidable cause,

- the absence occurred on a day set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil/parents belong,
- the school is not within the prescribed walking distance of the child's home and no suitable transport arrangements have been made by the LA. 'Walking distance' is defined as two miles for pupils under eight and three miles for all other pupils. Telford & Wrekin Council have, however, chosen to define these distances as two miles for infant, junior and primary pupils and three miles for other pupils. Distances will be measured by shortest available walking route.

**The Act also places a legal obligation on:-**

- The LA to provide support to enforce regular school attendance with legal intervention relating to non attendance offences.
- Schools to register attendance and notify the Nominated Attendance Person within school of a child who is absent from school without authorisation for 10 or more days. The LA should be notified of any episodes of absence of 10 days or more under the 'Child Out Of School (COOS)' protocol.
- The governing body to ensure that two school registers are kept, one for attendance and one for admissions (under the Pupil Regulations Education (Pupil Registration)(England) Regulations 2006)

**Philosophy**

Ercall Wood Academy is committed to providing a full and efficient educational experience to all pupils. We believe that, if pupils are to benefit from education, punctuality and good attendance is crucial. As a school, we will organise and do all we can to ensure maximum attendance for all pupils. Any problems that impede punctuality and regular attendance will be identified and addressed as speedily as possible.

It is the policy of our school to celebrate achievement. Attendance is a critical factor to a productive and successful school career. Our school will actively promote and encourage 100 per cent attendance for all our pupils.

Our school will give a high priority to conveying to parents and pupils the importance of regular and punctual attendance. We recognise that parents have a vital role to play and there is a need to establish strong home-school links and communication systems that can be utilised whenever there is concern about attendance.

If there are problems which affect a pupil's attendance we will investigate, identify and strive in partnership with parents and pupils to resolve those problems as quickly and

efficiently as possible. We will adopt a clearly focused approach aimed at returning the pupil to full attendance at all times.

### **Principles**

The school will:

- ensure that all staff are aware of the registration procedures and receive in-service training on registration regulations and associated education law,
- complete registers accurately at the beginning of each morning and during the afternoon session,
- stress to parents/carers the importance of contacting staff early on the first day of absence,
- display attendance rates around the school and reward good and improved attendance of all pupils,
- promote positive staff attitudes to pupils returning after absence,
- consult with all members of the school community and the Attendance Support Team in developing and maintaining the whole-school attendance policy,
- ensure regular evaluation of attendance procedures by senior managers and the school governors,
- work towards ensuring that all pupils feel supported and valued. We will send a clear message that, if a pupil is absent, she/he will be missed,
- have in place procedures which allow absentees to catch up on missed work without disrupting the learning of other class members.

### **Procedures**

If no contact is received from the parents/carers of an absent pupil on the first morning of absence we will:

- follow 'First day contact' procedures and contact the parent by telephone/text message, or if the parent is unavailable send a standard letter requesting information.
- consider sending a second letter if an explanation has still not been received after three days of unexplained absence or send a School Attendance Letter
- refer to the school's Education Welfare Officer (EWO), to follow up absence if no response is received after 5 days of absence and consider a referral to '*Family Connect*' if no contact can be made with the parent.
- Invite the parents into school for an 'Attendance Concern Meeting' (ACM) after a period of absence, unless other action is planned. This meeting should include a senior member of staff, parent, pupil and the EWO. The aim of this meeting will be to identify and resolve the difficulties which are preventing the

pupil from attending school. The parents/carers will be made aware of the legal requirements regarding school attendance,

- Help the pupil's re-integration where a pupil is returning to school after an absence of longer than two weeks. In the event of a pupil returning after a long-term absence then a 'Reintegration Plan' can be implemented. The plan should include all members of the school staff and will be designed to be as supportive of the pupils needs as possible
- Contact **Family Connect 01952 385385** for further guidance on available support.

**In order to ensure the success of this policy every member of the school staff will make attendance a priority and convey to the pupils the importance of their education.**

### **Performance**

It is important to set realistic targets for both attendance and persistent absence; these targets will be set during the Autumn term of each academic year, in consultation with the Governing Body. The Governing Body must approve the school target for attendance to be set for the following academic year. The target should be sent to the Attendance Support Team by the end of the Autumn term at the latest. In compiling an Action Plan, the school will look at those interventions which have been successful as part of the evaluation process.

When evaluating success the school will consider whether or not:

- Attendance has improved
- Persistent absence has reduced
- Punctuality has improved
- Parental response to absences has improved
- Re-integration plans, where implemented, have been successful
- The school has been successful in raising the profile of attendance both within the school, governing body and the local community
- Pupils are fully aware of the importance of punctuality and regular attendance and the attendance procedures operating within school
- Attendance issues have been included as topics in school assemblies, Personal and Social Education (PHSE) lessons, or as a theme for any other lessons

### **Practice**

The school will recognise the importance of good practice by:

- Keeping and maintaining registers accurately
- Maintaining a consistent approach to marking registers
- Regularly analysing attendance data
- Ensuring prompt follow-up action in cases of non-school attendance
- Liaising closely with the school's EWO, if appropriate
- Recording (and retaining) carefully, all telephone messages
- A signed copy of any correspondence to parents is retained by the school

- A referral is made to AST (the Attendance Support Team) for intervention using the electronic ASTR form