



**Elmtree Grove School**

# **Attendance Policy**

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### 1. Introduction

Elmtree Grove School is a special independent school that caters for learners with social, emotional and mental health needs. We believe that all young people should have access to an educational experience that is fundamentally happy, inclusive, individual and positive. It is founded on 4 core principles that embody our dream and support us in our commitment to creating a truly meaningful and individual provision for young people of all backgrounds, experiences that equip young people with the tools they need to actively participate in and develop, their own positive educational experience throughout their academic career before stepping foot into the wider world.

Our 4 core Principles:

- Community for all
- Individually inclusive
- Support for all 'creating strong foundations

therefore, the attendance of our learners is crucial for their development.

We will provide an environment where all learners feel valued and welcome. We have high expectations for our learners and work towards a goal of 100% attendance for all learners. Every opportunity will be used to convey to learners and their parents or carers the importance of regular and punctual attendance, and the link this has to achievement and attainment. Elmtree Grove School promotes early intervention and prevention of poor attendance. School attendance is subject to various Education laws and this school attendance policy is written to reflect these laws and the guidance produced by the Department for Education and Skills. Each year the school will examine its attendance figures and set attendance/absence targets. The school will review its systems for improving attendance at regular intervals to ensure that it is achieving its set goals. This policy will contain within it the procedures that the school will use to meet its attendance targets.

### 2. School Procedures

#### 2.1 Absence

Any learner who is absent from school at the morning or afternoon registration period must have their absence recorded as being authorised, unauthorised or as an approved educational activity. Only the Head of School or a member of staff acting on their behalf can authorise absence. If there is no known reason for the absence at registration, then the absence will be recorded as 'no reason given' and a phone call made to the parents, followed by a letter if a reason is still not obtained. On the first day of absence parents should telephone the school to inform them why their learner is unable to attend, they will then need to report daily. The school is then able to mark the register appropriately as either an authorised or unauthorised absence. The decision to authorise or unauthorise absence rests with the school. If a learner is absent from school, he/she should not be on the school site during the day of the absence.

## 2.2 Lateness

We take into consideration the fact that our learners are brought into school through local authority transport. In order for our learners to understand punctuality we have a bigger window to arrive. We want our learners to get into the habit of arriving on time and achieve positive punctuality, a skill needed for learners moving forward into adulthood. Morning registration will take place at 09:00am, any learner arriving between 9:00am and 9:15am marked as late. If they arrive after 9:15am, they will be marked as having an absence, unless we have been given notice from a learner's transport. Afternoon registration will be at 13:20.

## 2.3 Ten Day's Absence

Any learner who is absent without an explanation for 10 days consecutive school days in a term will be notified to the SEN lead within the learner's Local Authority. We will submit a referral to the Child Missing from Education team. The school will include details of the action that they have taken.

## 2.4 Persistent and Frequent Absence

The Senior Leadership Team regularly monitor registers to identify any emerging attendance concerns. In cases where a learner begins to develop a pattern of absences, the school will try to resolve the problem, depending on severity, using strategies such as:

- Designated Safeguarding Lead talking to the parent and learner.
- A letter from the Designated Safeguarding Lead.
- A meeting with the Designated Safeguarding Lead.
- A support plan
- A referral to the LA Safeguarding team

Due to the additional needs our learners have, we will try to work hand in hand with our learners and families to deal with any concerns or issues the learner may have that stops them from attending school. We understand that certain circumstances may stop a learner from wanting to come to school and our staff members are experienced to deal with social issues relating to the learner and their family. We work in a trauma informed way and are aware that learners who have experienced trauma require a lot of additional support. We will ask our Engagement and Inclusion officer to collaborate with learners who are persistently absent on a 1:1 basis. Where attendance falls below 90%, the school may request medical evidence (and provide parents/carers with guidance on acceptable examples of medical evidence) for all future illness absences. The school may also refer the learner to the School Nurse or the Specialist nurse in the Education Welfare Service if there is a high level of absence for medical reasons. If medical evidence as requested is not provided, the absence will be marked as unauthorised. A high level of unauthorised absence will result in a referral to the Education Welfare Officer who will issue a Penalty Notice warning. A monitoring period will then follow, and if attendance does not improve within the monitoring period, a Penalty Notice will be issued which carries a fine of £160, reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days. For learners with appropriately evidenced illness, the school will follow appropriate protocols to offer support.

## 2.5 A Welcome back

It is important that, where appropriate, on return from an absence all learners are made to feel welcome. This should include a discussion about the best way for the learner to catch up on missed work where appropriate and be brought up to date on any information that has been passed to the other learners.

## 2.6 Absence notes

The school will retain notes of evidence for absence from parents explaining absence as per current protocol/legislation.

## 2.7 Promoting / improving absence.

The school will use opportunities as they arise to remind parents/carers that it is their responsibility to ensure that their learners receive their education. We will provide data to all parties relating to their EHC plan.

## 2.8 Leave of absence

At Elmtree Grove School, we believe that a leave of absence should be avoided if possible as it can have a damaging effect on a learner's education and overall achievement. Only in exceptional circumstances, where sufficient evidence is provided to substantiate the circumstances will any absence from school be authorised.

The school policy is as follows:

1. Parents must request leave of absence to the Head of School as far in advance as possible.
2. The request must include the reason, why it is necessary to take such absence during term time, including evidence such as a medical certificate. For an emergency trip, evidence of last-minute booking of flights must be provided.
3. The request should be made in writing using the leave of absence form (available from the office). Emergencies should be followed by email.

On receipt of an application for leave on the appropriate form together with any supporting documentation, consideration will be given to the circumstance. Without the appropriate evidence, all leave of absence will be unauthorised.

A decision on whether or not to authorise absence will take into consideration:

1. Learner's current attendance level;
2. Learner's current academic achievement and attainment.

Any leave of absence that is not authorised is very likely to result in a Penalty Notice being issued by the learner's local authority. The Penalty Charge Notice currently carries a fine of £120.

## 3. Attendance targets

The school will set attendance targets each year. Progress towards these targets will be analysed regularly by a member of the Senior Leadership Team and strategies adopted in line with this policy will be implemented to achieve or exceed the target. It is the responsibility of the parents, staff and learners at Elmtree Grove School to ensure good attendance and achievement of targets.