



Attendance and Punctuality Policy

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Author:	Deborah Strain	

Introduction and Background

All Eko Trust schools recognise that positive behaviour, good attendance and punctuality are essential in order to raise standards of pupil attainment and to give every child/young person the best educational experience possible.

This policy is written with the above statement in mind and underpins our ethos. We are committed to meeting our obligations with regards to school attendance by:

- Promoting good attendance and reducing absence, including persistent absence
- Ensuring every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled
- Acting early to address patterns of absence
- We will also support parents to perform their legal duty to ensure their children of compulsory school age attend regularly, and will promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

For the children across the Trust schools to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and be at school and on time, every day the Trust schools are open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

It is an expectation of all the Trust schools that pupils must attend every day, unless there are exceptional circumstances. The decision to authorise absence is the responsibility of the Head Teacher.

Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect a child's learning. Any pupil's absence or late arrival impacts on their learning and disrupts teaching routines and may also affect the learning of others in the same class. Ensuring a child's regular attendance at school is a parental responsibility and persistent absence from school, without an appropriate/good reason, is against statutory requirements and may result in prosecution. In addition, consideration to possible/additional risk factors with absences, e.g. county lines, will be in place, ensuring appropriate risk assessments are undertaken where needed (in line with Eko Early Help, Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy).

This policy has been developed in consultation with school governors/trustees, staff and families. It is consistent with the practices of the relevant Local Authorities. It seeks to ensure that all parties involved in the practicalities of school attendance are aware and informed of attendance matters in school and to outline the school's commitment to attendance matters.

It details the responsibilities of individuals and groups involved and the procedures in place to promote and monitor pupil attendance and punctuality across the Eko Trust.

The 'Attendance and Punctuality Policy' aims to raise and maintain levels of attendance by:

- Promoting a positive and welcoming atmosphere in which pupils feel safe, secure and valued.
- Raising awareness of the importance of good attendance and punctuality with parents/carers and staff

- Ensuring that attendance is monitored effectively and reasons for absences are recorded promptly and consistently.

School Attendance and the Law

This policy meets the requirements of the [school attendance guidance](#) from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE’s statutory guidance on [school attendance parental responsibility measures](#). These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

Part 6 of [The Education Act 1996](#)

Part 3 of [The Education Act 2002](#)

Part 7 of [The Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)

[The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006](#) (and [2010](#), [2011](#), [2013](#), [2016](#) amendments)

[The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)

This policy also refers to the DfE’s guidance on the [school census](#), which explains the persistent absence threshold.

There is no entitlement in law for pupils to take time off during the term to go on holiday.

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 were amended in September 2013. All references to family holidays and extended leave have been removed. The amendments specify that Head Teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are “exceptional circumstances” and they no longer have the discretion to authorise up to ten days of absence each academic year.

Who is responsible for attendance issues in school?

Members of school staff (both teaching and non-teaching) have responsibility for attendance issues in school. See below for a detailed breakdown of these roles and responsibilities.

Attendance matters are reviewed by the Head Teacher, Attendance Lead, DSL and members of the senior management team.

Attendance issues are reported at least termly to the Governing Body.

<u>Role</u>	<u>Responsibilities</u>
Governing Body	Monitor attendance figures for the whole school on at least a termly basis. Hold the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy and continuing attendance improvement.
Head Teacher	Implement the policy at the school Monitor school-level absence data and reporting it to governors Support staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary Set targets with the Trust - communicate this to Governors and staff Follow up on progress with Attendance Lead

Senior member of school staff/Attendance Lead/DSL	<p>Monitor attendance data across the school and at an individual pupil level</p> <p>Report concerns about attendance to the headteacher</p> <p>Work with attendance/education welfare officers to tackle persistent absence</p> <p>Arrange calls, letters and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues</p> <p>Advise the headteacher when to issue fixed-penalty notices</p> <p>Ensure systems are in place that monitor persistent absenteeism and punctuality</p> <p>Ensure registers are up to date - daily</p> <p>Liaise on attendance issues with the relevant Local Authority</p> <p>Attend case reviews and attendance conferences</p> <p>Refer families for intervention (if needed)</p> <p>Carry out home visits</p> <p>Follow up on daily absences</p> <p>Record punctuality issues</p> <p>Follow up on unauthorised absences and CME</p> <p>Any other task around attendance and punctuality delegated by the School leadership</p> <p>Follow Trust policy and the relevant Local Authority Code of Conduct</p>
Support Staff	<p>Encourage children/parents to come to school on time</p> <p>Make the office staff aware of attendance concerns/punctuality concerns</p>
Class teachers	<p>Record attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the school office.</p> <p>Share up to date attendance and punctuality figures with parents/carers at termly meetings</p> <p>Raise concerns regarding punctuality/attendance with DSL/Attendance Lead</p>
School Office	<p>Take calls from parents about absence and record it on the school system. Collate evidence provided by parents for sickness/ appointments etc. and updating registers.</p> <p>Keep registers and monitoring sheets up to date</p> <p>Phone calls home to follow up on attendance</p> <p>Support Attendance Leads through up to date record keeping/monitoring and attending attendance conferences (where needed)</p>

Promoting Regular Attendance

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is the responsibility of parents/carers, pupils and all members of Eko Trust staff. To ensure consistency all Trust schools will:

- Give parents/carers details on attendance, e.g. in newsletters and at admission interviews
- Report to parents/carers on their child's attendance in pupils' school reports
- Contact parents/carers should their child's attendance fall below 95%
- Celebrate excellent attendance, e.g. by displaying and reporting individual and class achievements during weekly assemblies
- Reward good or improving attendance

- Work in close partnership with the ‘Attendance Management Services/Local Authority’ contracted in by individual Trust schools
- Contacting parents/carers when their child’s punctuality is a concern, e.g. 3 instances of being late/late after registers have been closed.

Attendance register

We will keep an attendance register, and place all pupils onto this register.

We will take our attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. It will mark whether every pupil is:

- Present
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity
- Absent
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

- The original entry
- The amended entry
- The reason for the amendment
- The date on which the amendment was made
- The name and position of the person who made the amendment

See appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes. [School attendance guidance](#) (p12 - 15)

We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

Understanding Types of Absence

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the Trust schools as either ‘AUTHORISED’ or ‘UNAUTHORISED’. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required.

Authorised absences may be planned or unplanned; they are mornings, afternoons or whole days away from school for an unavoidable reason like illness (although parents/carers may be asked to provide medical evidence for an absence before this can be authorised), medical or dental appointments which, unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable causes. However, we encourage parents/carers 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.

The pupil’s parent/carer must also apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence.

Unauthorised absences are those which are not considered reasonable and for which no ‘leave’ has been given. This type of absence can lead to the Local Authority using sanctions such as ‘Penalty Notices’ and/or legal proceedings.

Unauthorised absence includes:

- parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily e.g. because they had a late night or for non-infectious illnesses or an injury that would not affect their ability to learn
- absences which have never been properly explained
- children who arrive at school too late to get a mark on the attendance register

- shopping trips
- looking after other children or children accompanying siblings or parents to medical appointments
- their own or family birthdays
- holidays taken during term time without leave - 3 days unauthorised absence will lead to a penalty notice being triggered by the Local Authority
- day trips
- staying home due to weather conditions (e.g. snow) unless directed to do so by the school
- other leave of absence in term time which has not been agreed

It is a rule of the Eko Trust schools that a leave of absence shall not be granted in term time unless there are reasons considered to be exceptional by the Head Teacher/Attendance Lead, irrespective of the child's overall attendance.

Only the Head Teacher/Attendance Lead (or his/her designate (not the local authority) may authorise such a request and all applications for a leave of absence must be made in writing to the school which the child/children attend. Where a parent removes a child when the application for leave was refused or where no application was made to the school, the issue of a penalty notice should be requested by this school.

Exceptional leave will be granted only in extraordinary circumstances. However, Eko Trust schools will not agree exceptional leave during term time:

- during examinations and test periods (these are set a year in advance in the Trust/Examination Board's assessment calendars)
- when a pupil's attendance record already includes any level of unauthorised absence (regardless of the number of instances) or they have already been granted authorised leave within an academic year

NB There is a higher rate of absence and application for leave in July and September. These are key transition points and absence during these key times are often detrimental to children. This is especially very important in September as children need to settle into their new classes at the start of the academic year as quickly as possible

Whilst any child may occasionally have time off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best worked through between the school, the parents and the child, and at the earliest stage possible. If a parent thinks their child is reluctant to attend school then specific staff (Attendance Lead/home – school support worker etc.) will work with that family to understand the root problem and provide any necessary support.

Where school intervention is not successful the Eko Trust schools will make use of outside agencies to help with this such as the School Nurse, Local Authority Officers or Social Services.

Absence Procedures

If a child is absent from school parents/carers must follow the following procedures:

- Contact the school on the first day of absence before 9.00 am. All Trust schools have answer phones available to leave a message if nobody is available to take the call, or call

into school personally and speak to the office staff. Many schools also have the option to email if there is a problem with the phone line.

- Contact the school on every further day of absence, again before 9.00am
- Ensure that the child returns to school as soon as possible

If a child is absent all Eko schools will:

- Telephone or text parents/carers on the first day of absence if they have not heard from the parents/carers. This is done in order to gain an explanation for the absence. If the Trust schools have not been able to ascertain where a child is then the child's absence will be recorded as 'unauthorised'. This will stay on the child's registration certificate until evidence for the absence is provided.
- If a Trust school has not been able to get a response from parents/carers for a second day, a home visit will be carried out by school staff (ideally 2).
- A home visit will be carried out on the first day of absence for all children with SEND and children who have been identified as 'vulnerable'. If there is no-one at the child's home address, a letter will be left at the address for the parents/carers in order to inform them to contact the school as soon as possible to discuss the absence.
- If a child is absent for a third day – without contact having been established between the Trust school and parents/carers - then the school will seek advice from the Local Authority and reserves the right to report the child to the police as the child will then be classified as a 'missing child'. This process may be accelerated for the most vulnerable pupils.
- Write to parents/carers again if their child/children's attendance drops below 94.9%.
- Invite parents/carers into school for a meeting to discuss a child/children's attendance with the School Attendance Management Officer, Child and Family Support Worker or Head Teacher/Attendance Leader if a child's absence drops below 92%.
- Refer the child/children to the Local Authority to request a formal 'School Attendance Meeting' if attendance deteriorates following the above actions, and to request that home visits are carried out by the Attendance Management Officers.

Parents/carers are expected to contact the school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any problems together. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, the school may refer the child to the Attendance Management/Local Authority.

Attendance Management/Local Authority Officers work with schools, families and other professionals to reduce persistent absence and improve overall attendance. If attendance does not improve, legal action will be taken in the form of Penalty Notices (see Annex A), prosecution in the Magistrates Court or the application of an Education Supervision Order, designed to strengthen parental responsibilities and ensure improved attendance.

If a leave of absence is authorised, the Eko schools are not expected to provide additional work for children to do during their absence. Parents will however be advised to support appropriate level revision, e.g. read and practise times tables with their children. Parents/carers will also be advised to let the child/children write a diary while they are away which should be presented on the child/children's return to school. In addition there may be signposting to remote education resources.

Persistent Absenteeism (PA)

A pupil is defined by the Government as a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason. Absence at this level will cause considerable damage to any child's education and we need the parents/carers' fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

Eko Trust schools will monitor all absence, and the reasons that are given, thoroughly. If a child is seen to have reached the PA mark (90% attendance) or is at risk of moving towards that mark we will inform the parents/carers. PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully.

We also combine this with academic tracking where absence affects attainment. All our PA pupils and their parents/carers are subject to school based meetings and support plans which may include:

- allocation of additional support through the School Nurse, Local Attendance Adviser, Home School Liaison Worker, Local Authority or Social Care.
- We may also use individual incentive programmes, individual targets and participation in group activities to support us in raising attendance.

Within our special schools it is noted that attendance is often lower. Individual circumstances are considered in writing of support plans, including short term mentoring and short term tuition in the community to re-engaged and re-integrate. This will always be monitored tightly and for specific amounts of time.

In all cases, reviews of attendance must consider safeguarding and risk factors.

Lateness

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If a child/children miss the start of the day they will miss important work and do not spend time with their class teacher getting vital information and news for the day. Late arriving pupils also disrupt lessons, it can be embarrassing for the child and can also encourage further absence.

Good time-keeping is a vital life skill which will help our children as they progress through their school life and out into the wider world.

How Eko Trust schools manage punctuality

Each Trust school will inform parents/carers of the exact start time of the school and when children can begin to come into school. Registers will be taken promptly and children will receive a late mark if they are not in by that time.

Children arriving after the school gates are closed will be required to come into school via the school office, and, if accompanied by a parent or carer, the parent/carers will sign them in and provide a reason for the lateness to the office staff. The office staff will keep a formal

record of lateness. Where a child comes in late by him/herself, the office staff will record this.

Trust schools may send home 'late notes' or letters in order to keep parents/carers informed of their children's punctuality. From time to time the Child and Family Support Worker, Head Teachers/Attendance Leads will undertake a 'Late Gate' check, greeting late arrivals at the main entrance to the school and speaking to parents/carers.

At **9.30 am** the registers will be closed. In accordance with the Regulations, if a child arrives after this time, they will receive a mark that shows them to be on site, but this will **not** count as a present mark and it will mean they have an unauthorised absence. This may mean that parents could face the possibility of a Penalty Notice if the problem persists.

If a child has a persistent late record parents/carers will be asked to meet with the school Attendance Lead/Attendance Management Officers, School Welfare Officer and/or Child and Family Support Worker. Eko Trust schools expect all parents/carers and staff to encourage good punctuality by being good role models to the children and to celebrate good class and individual punctuality.

Deletion from Roll

For any pupil leaving an Eko Trust school, *other than at the end of year 6 or 11*, parents/carers are required to complete a 'Pupil Removal/Off Role' form which can be obtained from any of the school offices.

This provides the school with the following information:

- Child's name,
- class,
- current address,
- date of leaving,
- reason for leaving,
- new home address,
- name of new school, and
- address of the new school.

This information is essential to ensure that we know and safeguard the whereabouts of all of our pupils.

For children with Education Health Care Plans there must also be a professionals meeting to ensure any move is in line with the meeting of pupil needs and will meet statutory obligations in line with the EHCP.

Summary

All Eko Trust schools have a legal duty to publish and supply absence figures to parents/carers and to promote attendance.

Equally, parents/carers have a duty to make sure that their child/children attend school, on time, every day.

All Eko schools will be persistent in their following up of absence, with sure diligence and concern for the pupil, their welfare and as part of our safeguarding responsibilities.

All Eko Trust staff and the Governing Bodies are committed to working with parents/carers and pupils as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible.

Additional guidance:

[Improving school attendance: support for schools and local authorities - GOV.UK](#)

[Texting parents: our key to success in tackling absence - Teaching](#)

EKO TRUST – LOCAL AUTHORITY CODE(S) OF CONDUCT

The Government requires Local Authorities to issue a code of conduct

1. Purpose of the code

The Government has made it clear that it expects Local Authorities to have a 'Code of Conduct' in place so that the full range of measures for improving attendance are available to schools. Regular school attendance is both a legal requirement, and essential if the children are to achieve better outcomes in education and maximise the opportunities available to them.

The purpose of the local Code of Conduct is to ensure that Penalty Notices are issued consistently and fairly across the Local Authority area, in accordance with the relevant legislation, and that suitable arrangements are in place for the administration of the scheme.

Regulations specify that the following must be included in the Code:

- Means of avoiding the issue of duplicate notices
- Measures to ensure that a notice is not issued when proceedings for an offence under S.444 of the 1996 Act have been decided upon or are under way
- The occasions when it will be appropriate to issue a Penalty Notice
- A maximum number of two Penalty Notices that may be issued to a parent in a twelve month period, in respect of any individual child.

The Code will be reviewed annually in consultation with local partners:

- The Local Authority
- Governing Bodies and Headteachers of Schools
- Police

2. Background Legislation

In February 2004, the Anti-Social Behaviour Act, S.23, Sub-section 1 added sections 444A and 444B after S.444 of the Education Act 1996. These sections enable Penalty Notices to be used as an alternative to prosecution, and provide parents with the opportunity to discharge

liability for conviction of an offence under S.444 by paying a financial penalty to the Local Authority.

Section 103 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 enables Penalty Notices to be issued to parents in relation to an excluded pupil should they fail to ensure their child is not present in a public place during school hours in the first five days of each and every fixed period or permanent exclusion without reasonable justification.*

It is incumbent upon parent(s) in such circumstances to provide proof of reasonable justification, for example, that the child or young person needed to attend a pre-arranged medical appointment, or a medical emergency requiring the child to be supervised elsewhere than at home. Persons authorised to issue Penalty Notices must have regard to The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007, the guidance issued by the Secretary of State, and the following legislation:

- Human Rights Act 1998
- Disability Discrimination Act 1995
- Data Protection Act 1998

The Education ((Penalty Notices) (England) Amendment Regulations 2013 amended the timescales for payment of Penalty Notices as from 1 September 2013. A Penalty Notice incurs a fine of £60 per parent, per child if paid within 21 days, which rises to £120 per parent, per child, if paid within 28 days. Furthermore, the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 were amended from 1 September 2013, removing references to family holiday and extended leave as well as the statutory threshold of ten school days.

The amendments made clear that Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. Where leave is granted, Headteachers should determine the number of school days a child can be away from school and the date for return.

3. Circumstances in which a Penalty Notice can be issued

In agreement with local partners, circumstances which may result in the issue of a Penalty Notice are identified. e.g:

- a) Where parents persistently fail to ensure their children attend school and attendance is 90 per cent or below in a term i.e. 12 or more sessions of absence in a 12 week period, with no acceptable reason, and no other legal sanctions are underway
- b) Term time leave is taken without obtaining the agreement of the school and the parents have been warned that a Penalty Notice may result,
- c) Unwarranted delayed return from term time leave without school agreement.
- d) Persistent late arrival after the registers have been closed (U co only) (10 sessions or more)
- e) Parents' or carers' failure to make arrangements to ensure that children who have been excluded from school due to misbehaviour are not in a public place at prescribed times during the first five school days of any exclusion, without reasonable justification.*

** It is incumbent upon the parent(s) in such circumstances to provide proof of reasonable justification, for example, that the child or young person needed to attend a pre-arranged medical appointment, or a medical emergency requiring the child to be supervised elsewhere than at home.*

4. Authorisation to issue a Penalty Notice

This is LA specific.

5. Who can be issued with a Penalty Notice?

Anyone defined as a parent under Section 576 Education Act 1996 is a parent for the purposes of these provisions. This means:

- all natural parents, whether they are married or not
- any person who, although not a natural parent, has parental responsibility (as defined by the Children Act 1989) for a child or young person
- any person who, although not a natural parent, has care of a child or young person.

Having care of a young person means that a person with whom the child lives and who looks after the child, irrespective of what their relationship is with the child, is considered to be a parent in education law. A parent means each and every parent coming within the definition (whether acting jointly or separately) and should not be taken to mean that provisions only apply to parent in the singular. As with prosecutions under Section 444 Education Act 1996, a Penalty Notice may be issued to each parent liable for the offence.

6. Maximum number of Penalty Notices that can be issued

This is agreed with local partners.

7. Amount of Penalty and Payment Arrangements

The penalty for each parent is £60 for each child, if paid within 21 days of receipt of the notice. The penalty increases to £120 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days of receipt of the notice. (Service by post is deemed to have been effective, unless otherwise proved, on the second working day after postage by first class post). Arrangements for payment are detailed on the Penalty Notice.

The prosecution is not for non-payment of the notice but is a prosecution for irregular school attendance (Section 444(1) Education Act 1996). Therefore the reasons for issuing a PN need to accord with S.444 of the Education Act 1996 and associated legislation. There is no statutory right of appeal against the issuing of a Penalty Notice.

*A Penalty Notice can only be withdrawn either:

- a) where it was issued outside the terms of the local Code of Conduct
- b) Where it should not to have been issued or has been issued to the wrong person
- c) where the Penalty Notice contains material errors, or
- d) where after the expiry of 28 days the penalty notice is unpaid and the LA has not started legal proceedings or wishes to take such action under section 444.

All penalties paid to the LA will be used in the administration of the Scheme, and any associated legal proceedings.

8. Procedures for issuing Penalty Notices

In line with local arrangements

COVID [Addendum: recording attendance in relation to coronavirus \(COVID-19\) during the 2021 to 2022 academic year - GOV.UK](#)

As new schools join Eko Trust, the Code(s) of Conduct for the respective Local Authorities will be added to the Trust Attendance and Punctuation Policy. For LA specific information:

Newham: Applicable to Earlham Primary School, Gainsborough Primary School, Kaizen Primary School and Eko Pathways.

[LONDON BOROUGH OF NEWHAM CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLES SERVICE ATTENDANCE MANAGEMENT SERVICE Penalty Notice Code of Conduct – Oct](#)

Barking and Dagenham: Applicable to Pathways.

[London Borough of Barking and Dagenham Penalty Notice Code of Conduct for Irregular School Attendance](#)

Hackney: Applicable to Hackney New School Primary.

[Education Attendance Service - Penalty Notices – Code of Conduct](#)

Suffolk: Applicable to Rushmere Hall Primary.

[Suffolk Attendance penalty notice code of conduct](#)