ATTENDANCE AND PUNCTUALITY POLICY
August 2024

Applicable to all sections of the school including the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)

1. INTRODUCTION AND AIMS

At EIFA International School ("EIFA", "School", "we", "us" or "our") we see education as a partnership between family and school. We are committed to providing the highest quality of education for our children, and we look to the Parents ("you", "your" or "yours") to support this objective.

We aspire to high levels of attendance from all pupils and this policy aims to ensure, so far as possible, that every pupil is able to benefit from and make a full contribution to the life of the School. Pupils need to attend school regularly to benefit from their education. Missing lessons leaves children vulnerable to falling behind. Children with poor attendance records tend to achieve less at school.

As an international school, we fully understand the particularities that may affect families in terms of travel and relocation for instance, and we do our utmost to consider and accommodate such circumstances. However, we are bound by laws and regulations, which have been enacted to ensure the educational welfare of all children.

The Government expects the following from schools:

- to promote good attendance and reduce absence, including persistent absence
- to ensure every pupil has high levels of attendance so they can access the education to which they are entitled
- to act early to address patterns of absence
- to encourage parents to perform their legal duties by ensuring their child attends school regularly
- to ensure all pupils are punctual to lessons.

2. LEGISLATION AND GUIDANCE

This policy meets the requirements of the Working together to improve school attendance 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
- EYFS statutory framework for group and school-based providers (DfE, January 2024)
- Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014
- The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024

This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the school census, which explains the persistent absence threshold.

3. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

3.1 The Board of Directors

The Board of Directors is responsible for:
- Setting high expectations of all School leaders, staff, pupils and parents
- Making sure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties
- Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data
- Holding the Head of School to account for the implementation of this policy.

3.2 The Head of School

The Head of School is responsible for:
- Implementation of this policy at the School
- Monitoring School-level absence data and reporting it to the Board of Directors
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils
- Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies.

3.3 The Senior Leadership Team (SLT)

The Senior Leadership Team are responsible for:
- Leading attendance across the School
- Offering a clear vision for attendance improvement
- Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes
- Having an oversight of data analysis
- Devising specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data
- Arranging calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues
- Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families.

3.4 The School Attendance Officer

The Attendance Officer is responsible for:
- Monitoring and analysing attendance data (see section 7)
- Benchmarking attendance data to identify areas of focus for improvement
- Providing regular attendance reports to school staff and reporting concerns about attendance to the senior leaders responsible for attendance and the Head of School.

3.5 Class Teachers/Form Tutors

Class Teachers/Form Tutors are responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes (see **Appendix 1**), and submitting this information to the School's electronic registration system (iSAMS), for both morning and afternoon sessions.

3.6 School Admin Staff

School Admin staff will take calls from parents about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the School system.

3.7 Parents/Guardians

Parents/Guardians are expected to:
- Make sure their child attends every day
- Ensure that their children arrive to School on time
- Call or email the School to report their child's absence before 08:45 on the day of the absence and each subsequent day of absence, and advise when they are expected to return
- Provide the School with more than 1 emergency contact number for their child and ensure that all contact details, including emergency contact details are kept up to date (see Section 4.2)
- Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the School day
- Make any application for an authorised leave of absence in writing to the Head of School, at the earliest opportunity
- Cooperate with the School to explore possible barriers to attendance and to improve it where attendance has been raised as an issue.

3.8 Pupils

Pupils are expected to:
- To be present in person for the duration of each School day
- To arrive on time and for Middle School pupils, attend every timetabled lesson
- Engage with the School's arrangements for recording and managing attendance, as set out in this policy.

4. RECORDING ATTENDANCE

4.1 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.

We will also record:
- Whether the absence is authorised or not
- The nature of the activity if a pupil is attending an approved educational activity
- The nature of circumstances where a pupil is unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

The attendance register is backed up, in the form of an electronic copy, at least once a month. We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 6 years after the date on which the entry was made.
Pupils are required to be in class in time for registration at 08:30 for Middle School and at 08:40 for Junior School.
Middle School pupils without a timetabled first lesson, are expected to be in School by 08:30, in time for registration at 08:40, or within 5 mins before their first timetabled lesson.

The normal school day ends at the following times:

- Nursery/PS and Reception/MS – 15:10 and 15:30 on Friday
- Years 1 to 6 – 15:20 Monday to Thursday and 15:30 on Friday
- Years 7 to 9 – 16:00

4.2 Reporting unplanned/sickness absence

The pupil's parent/guardian must notify the School of the reason for the absence on the first and each consecutive day of an unplanned absence by 08:45 or as soon as practically possible, by calling the School Reception staff on 020 7637 5351. Alternatively, you can email reception@eifaschool.com.

If your child is absent and the School has not heard from you by 09:00, our Reception team will contact you.

We will mark absence due to illness as authorised unless the School has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

In the cases of longer absences due to a medical condition or repeated absences caused by a chronic illness, the School may ask the pupil's parent/guardian to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. The School may also request similar evidence if the authenticity of the illness is in doubt. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

If the School is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised, and parents/guardians will be notified of this in advance.

4.3 Planned absence

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the pupil's parent/guardian notifies the school in advance of the appointment, in writing, to their child's class teacher.

However, we encourage parents/guardians 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/guardian must also apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence.

4.4 Lateness and punctuality

A pupil who arrives late:
- Before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code and including the number of minutes late
- After the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code.

Our attendance registration takes place daily at 08:40 and all pupils will be marked present, late or absent. Pupils arriving after 08:40 will be marked as 'late'. It is therefore essential that if a pupil arrives late, they collect a late slip from Reception to ensure our registers are updated and accurate. This is important in case an evacuation of the School is necessary, and so that we know exactly where every pupil is at all times.

A pupil arriving after 09:00 without a valid reason will not be allowed into the class until Period 2 in the Middle School. The pupils will be expected to make up the time lost in lessons due to late arrival. Persistent lateness for all pupils will be dealt with by our Pastoral Care Team.

Pupils who arrive after the close of register twice or more in one week will be spoken to face to face or parents will receive a telephone call from the Pastoral Care Team.

Should persistent lateness continue after these initial measures, the School will write to parents and a home-school agreement will be implemented. Middle School pupils who fail to comply with the home-school agreement will be given automatic detentions at school.

We will work with pupils and their families to overcome barriers to good attendance and punctuality.

4.5 Following up unexplained absence

Where any pupil we expect to attend school does not attend, or stops attending, without reason, the school will:
- Call the pupil's parent/guardian on the morning of the first day of unexplained absence to ascertain the reason. If the school cannot reach any of the pupil's emergency contacts, the school may visit the pupil's registered home address
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not
- Identify the correct attendance code to use and input it as soon as the reason for absence is ascertained – this will be no later than 5 working days after the session
- Call the parent/guardian on each day that the absence continues without explanation to ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary. If absence continues, the School will consider involving an education welfare officer.

4.6 Reporting to parents/guardians

The School will regularly inform parents about their child's attendance and absence levels. Parents registered to use the Parent Portal will also be able to access live attendance and punctuality data, on a daily basis.

5. AUTHORISED AND UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE

Authorised absence means that the School has either given approval in advance for a pupil to be away or has accepted an explanation offered afterwards as justification for absence.

5.1 Approval for term-time absence

The Head of School will only grant a leave of absence to a pupil during term time, if they consider this to be 'exceptional circumstances' and in accordance with specific circumstances set out in the 2024 school attendance regulations. A leave of absence is granted at the Head of School's discretion, including the length of time the pupil is authorised to be absent for.
Exceptional circumstances may include:
- The death or terminal illness of a close relative
- Where an absence from school is recommended by a health professional as part of a parent or child's rehabilitation from a medical or emotional issue
- Out of school programmes such as music, arts or sport operating at a high standard of achievement.

The School considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request.
Any request should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated and, where possible, at least 14 days before the absence. Requests should be made in writing via email to the Head of School, sk@eifaschool.com, who may then contact the family to discuss the request.
Please note, the following are **not** considered an exceptional circumstance:
- Family holidays
- Birthdays
- Days out for special treats or family celebrations.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:
- Illness and medical/dental appointments (see sections 4.2 and 4.3 for more detail)
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart
- Study leave
- Other possible 'exceptional circumstances' where the Head of School may grant approval.

Pupils are not allowed to leave the School during the school day, unless accompanied by a member of staff, for a trip, a visit or a sporting activity.

If your child has to leave the school during the day for illness or you are collecting them for a medical appointment, you are required to sign them out at Reception.

5.2 Legal Sanctions

In the most severe cases of unauthorised absences, the School will report these to the Local Authority.
The local authority can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from School, where the child is of compulsory School age, by issuing a penalty notice.
If issued with a fine, or penalty notice, each parent must pay £80 within 21 days or £160 within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the local authority.
Penalty notices can be issued by a local authority officer or the police.
The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice may take into account:
  • The number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year
  • One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission
  • Where an excluded pupil is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason.

If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute or withdraw the notice.

6. STRATEGIES FOR PROMOTING HIGH ATTENDANCE

The School will build a culture of high attendance and promote excellent punctuality by:
  • Rewarding strategies for excellent and improving attendance
  • Distributing certificates of achievement
  • Celebrations of good attendance
  • Allocating mentors to those students requiring additional support to attend school
  • Working with families to break down any barriers to good attendance and punctuality
  • Rewarding those pupils with 100% attendance rates with certificates.

7. ATTENDANCE MONITORING

7.1 Monitoring attendance

The School will:
  • Monitor attendance and absence data weekly, half-termly, termly and yearly across the school and at an individual pupil level
  • Identify whether or not there are particular groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern.

The School will compare attendance data to the national average and share this with the Board of Directors.

7.2 Analysing attendance

The School will:
  • Analyse attendance and absence data regularly to identify pupils or cohorts that need additional support with their attendance, and use this analysis to provide targeted support to these pupils and their families
  • Look at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence, if present, and then develop strategies to address these patterns.

7.3 Using data to improve attendance

The School will:
- Provide regular attendance reports to Class teachers in the Junior School, Form tutors in the Middle School and other School leaders, to facilitate discussions with pupils and families
- Work with families and pupils to understand the reasons for absence and offer a range of interventions and alternative strategies to help address the issue
- Use data to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place in order to modify them and inform future strategies.

7.4 Reducing persistent and severe absence

Persistent absence is where a pupil misses 10% or more of School, and severe absence is where a pupil misses 50% or more of School.

The School will:
- Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence
- Consider potential safeguarding issues and, where suspected or present, address them in line with Keeping Children Safe in Education
- Hold regular meetings with the parents/guardians of pupils who the school (and/or Local Authority) considers to be vulnerable, or are persistently or severely absent, to
    - Discuss attendance and engagement at School
    - Listen and understand barriers to attendance
    - Explain the help that is available
    - Review any existing actions or interventions
- Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance
- Consider making an 'Early Help' referral to the Local Authority if a pupil's attendance falls below 90% over a 6-week period
- Report severe absences to the Local Authority, for further support.

8. MONITORING ARRANGEMENTS

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the local authority or DfE is updated, and annually as a minimum by the Senior Leadership Team. At every review, the policy will be approved by the Board of Directors.

9. LINKS WITH OTHER POLICIES

This policy links to the following policies:
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Behaviour Management Policy.

10. GUIDANCE ON CHILDREN MISSING IN EDUCATION

The School Board of Directors must have regard to the statutory guidance 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' when making arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. They ensure the School has appropriate safeguards in place to respond to children who go missing from school, particularly on repeat occasions.

The School must inform the relevant local authority, on a regular basis, of any pupil who fails to attend school regularly, or has been absent without the school's permission for a continuous period of 10 days or more.
The School also has a duty to notify the local authority when a pupil's name is to be deleted from the School admissions register, apart from when the pupil is completing the School's standard transition point.

The School must provide the local authority with the following information:
- The full name of the pupil
- Reason for leaving the School
- The full name and address of any parent with whom the pupil lives
- At least one telephone number of any parent with whom the pupil lives or can be contacted in an emergency
- The full name and address of the parent who the pupil is going to live with, and the date the pupil is expected to start living there, if applicable
- The name of the pupil's other or future school and the pupil's start date or expected start date there, if applicable.

The School will write to families to request this information.

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
K	Local Authority education provision	Pupil is attending a place other than a school at which they are registered, for educational provision arranged by the local authority
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 an approved work experience placement

Code	Definition	Scenario
Authorised absence		
C	Authorised leave of absence	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
E	Suspended or Excluded	Pupil has been suspended or excluded from school `and 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 (either related to physical or mental health)

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	Pupil has been granted study leave
T	Parent travelling for occupational purposes	Pupil is a 'mobile child' who is travelling with their parent(s) who are travelling for occupational purposes
Unauthorised absence		
G	Unauthorised holiday	Pupil is on a 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 for absence has been provided after a reasonable amount of time but no longer than 4 days)
O	Unauthorised absence	School is not satisfied with reason for pupil's absence, or no reason has been established
U	Arrival after registration	Pupil arrived at school late, after the register closed but before the end of the session

Code	Definition	Scenario
X	Not required to be in school	Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
Y2	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances	There is disruption to travel as a result of a local/national emergency
Y4	Whole School Site Closed	Every pupil absent as the school is closed
Y6	Public health guidance or law	Pupil's travel to or attendance at school would be prohibited under public health guidance or law
Y7	Any other unavoidable cause	To be used where an unavoidable cause is not covered by the other codes
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