

Attendance Policy



Written by	Harriet Carter	August 2025
Next review due by		August 2026

1. Introduction

At Earley Springs, we believe in creating the best possible learning environment for all students. Regular attendance is crucial for student success and allows them to make the most of their education. We celebrate student achievements and recognise that consistent attendance is a key factor in their overall growth and development.

This policy outlines our commitment to high attendance rates and explains how we will work together with families to ensure all students are in Earley Springs and ready to learn.

2. Legal Framework

In accordance with guidance from the Department for Education (DfE), Earley Springs is committed to:

- Promoting regular attendance and minimising absences, including persistent absences.
- Ensuring every student has access to a full-time education.
- Taking prompt action to address any concerning attendance patterns.

This policy also reflects the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations and statutory guidance on Children Missing Education (CME). As an independent special school, Earley Springs works in partnership with Kent County Council to ensure all pupils are safe, accounted for, and receiving suitable education.

The Executive Board, Headteacher, and Earley Springs staff will collaborate with parents and carers to achieve excellent attendance at Earley Springs.

The term "parent" includes all natural parents, any person with parental responsibility, and any person responsible for the child's day-to-day care.

3. Core Principles

- Every student has the right to a full-time education, and parents/carers have the legal responsibility to ensure their child attends school regularly.
- Regular school attendance is vital for a child's intellectual, social, and emotional development.
- School attendance contributes to a child's safety and well-being while they are not under direct parental supervision.
- Irregular attendance can indicate potential vulnerabilities for a child.
- The school recognises that some pupils, particularly those with SEND, anxiety or Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA), may require a flexible, supportive and individualised approach to attendance.

4. Key Objectives

- While high attendance supports positive outcomes, Earley Springs recognises that for some pupils with complex needs, progress may be achieved through bespoke, phased or part-time attendance arrangements agreed with parents and professionals.
 - To prioritise student safety and well-being.
 - To foster a shared understanding and commitment to attendance among all stakeholders, including parents, carers, staff, and the Executive Board.
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- To minimise all forms of absence, including persistent absence.
 - To support student success beyond school by preparing them to become responsible and contributing members of society. Students with strong attendance records are more likely to succeed in secondary school, higher education, and their future careers.

5. Promoting Positive Attendance

Earley Springs will actively promote the importance of regular and punctual attendance through various means, including:

- Open communication with families through newsletters, contact books, and regular updates.
- Fostering a welcoming and inclusive school environment where all students feel safe, valued, and respected.
- Emphasising the importance of attendance in all school communications.
- Designating a key member of staff to oversee attendance matters.
- Implementing a structured approach to address attendance concerns, which may include:
 - Initial discussions with parents/carers.
 - Scheduled meetings to discuss concerns and develop support plans.
 - Implementing strategies to assist students in improving their attendance.
- Encouraging a positive attitude towards attendance among students.
- Celebrating and recognising positive attendance through rewards and incentives.
- Utilising our electronic registration system to effectively monitor attendance and promptly investigate any absences.
- Collaborating with external agencies (e.g., GPs, Local Authority Children's Services, School Health Services) to provide support for students and families.
- Adhering to legal requirements for recording student attendance accurately, using appropriate codes for authorised and unauthorised absences.
- Providing support for students returning to school after an extended absence, including potential adjustments to their schedule and a "back-to-school" meeting with parents/carers to develop a reintegration plan.

Where a part-time timetable is agreed, this will be time-limited, regularly reviewed, and implemented in line with statutory guidance, safeguarding requirements and the pupil's

individual needs

6. Parental Responsibilities

Parents/carers have a legal obligation to ensure their child attends Earley Springs regularly and arrives on time. Regular attendance is crucial for a child's overall development and allows them to fully benefit from their educational opportunities. Poor attendance can negatively impact a child's academic progress and may increase their risk of encountering social or emotional difficulties. Earley Springs recognises that attendance challenges may arise due to a child's additional needs, health or emotional wellbeing, and will work collaboratively with families to address these barriers.

Parents/carers are expected to:

- Emphasise the importance of regular and punctual attendance to their child.
- Minimise unnecessary absences.
- Ensure their child arrives at Earley Springs on time each day.
- Maintain accurate and updated contact information with the school.
- Contact Earley Springs immediately on the first day of their child's absence to inform them of their child's whereabouts.
- Provide a written explanation for any absences upon their child's return to school.
- Cooperate with Earley Springs to address any attendance concerns.
- Schedule medical and dental appointments outside of school hours whenever possible.

Ensuring a child's regular attendance at school is a legal responsibility under Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act. Unjustified absences from school may have legal consequences.

7. Student Expectations

Students are expected to:

- Attend Earley Springs every day unless they are ill or the absence has been authorised by the school.
- Arrive at Earley Springs on time.

8. Lateness

Students are expected to arrive at Earley Springs by 09:00. Any student arriving late must report to the office with their parent/carer to explain the reason for lateness. The student will be marked as late on the register (registration code L).

The register will close at 09:30. Students arriving after the register has closed will be marked as late after registration and this will count as an unauthorised absence (registration code U).

9. Absence

A student's absence will only be authorised if approved by the school in advance or if an acceptable reason for the absence is provided afterward.

Only the Headteacher, Harriet Carter, can authorise student absences. A letter or telephone message from a parent/carer does not automatically authorise an absence. If an absence is not authorised, parents/carers will be notified.

The following are examples of absences that will generally not be authorised:

- Unspecific illnesses (e.g., "not feeling well")
- Absences due to sibling illness
- Oversleeping
- Inadequately prepared for school (e.g., forgetting uniform)
- Confusion regarding school dates
- Medical or dental appointments that could have been scheduled outside of school hours
- Family birthdays
- Shopping trips
- Family vacations during term time (see "Leave of Absence" below)

The Headteacher may authorise absences in "exceptional circumstances," but this must be requested in advance, and approval is at the discretion of the Headteacher, acting on behalf of the Executive Board. Each request will be considered individually, and the Headteacher's decision is final.

Exceptional circumstances generally include:

- Service personnel returning from deployment abroad when the parent/carer cannot take leave during school holidays.
- Medical recommendations for the child or parent/carer that necessitate an absence from school.
- The death or terminal illness of a close family member.
- Attendance at a wedding or funeral of a close family member.
- Other significant and unavoidable family emergencies.

This list is not exhaustive, and each situation will be evaluated on its own merits. The key principles for determining "exceptional circumstances" are rarity, significance, unavoidability, and a minimal duration.

Persistent unauthorised absences may result in further action, including referral to the Local Authority. Earley Springs will follow appropriate procedures and notify parents/carers in writing before any referrals are made.

Where a pupil's whereabouts are unknown or attendance gives rise to safeguarding concerns, Children Missing Education (CME) procedures will be followed.

10. Leave of Absence

Requests for leave of absence during term time should be made in writing to the Headteacher in

advance. However, medical, therapeutic and mental health-related absences linked to a pupil's SEND or care plan will be considered sensitively and may require supporting evidence.

12. Earley Springs Staff Responsibilities

There is a whole school approach to ensuring excellent attendance with some staff having specific responsibilities.

Harriet Carter has overall responsibility for attendance.

Class teachers or form tutors will keep accurate registers, completing the register at the beginning of each morning and once during the afternoon session. Marking the attendance register twice daily is a legal requirement. Teachers will mark pupils present, absent or late. The class teacher notifies their key worker, of children whose attendance is causing concern.

Attendance Officer:

It is the responsibility of the Attendance Officer to ensure:

- Attendance and lateness records are up to date
- If no reason for absence has been provided, parents are contacted on the first day of absence – admin team will make contact
- Where there has been no communication, letters are sent to parents requesting reasons for absence with a seven day reply deadline before the absence is unauthorised
- The appropriate attendance code is entered into the register (National Attendance Codes)

Headteacher

It is the responsibility of the Headteacher to ensure:

- Monitor persistent absence and communicate with the attendance officer to identify pupils whose attendance requires further intervention.
- Follow the staged approach for managing poor attendance and attend/coordinate any school based meetings.
- To manage referrals and liaison to the KCC Inclusion and Attendance Service. **13.**

Monitoring and Review

Monitoring will include analysis of attendance patterns, persistent absence, SEND-related absence, and the effectiveness of interventions, which will be reported to the Executive Board

This attendance policy will be reviewed and updated annually by the Headteacher. The Headteacher will report on the effectiveness of the policy to the Executive Board.

This policy is available on Earley Springs website and hard copies can be obtained from the

office.

By working together, we can create a positive and supportive environment that prioritises regular attendance and ensures all students at Earley Springs have the opportunity to thrive.

Appendix 1: attendance codes

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	
K Attending education provision arranged by the local authority.	Pupil is attending a place other than a school at which they are registered, for educational provision arranged by the local authority
V Attending an educational visit or trip	Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised or approved by the school
P Participating in a sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
W Attending work experience	Pupil is on an approved work experience placement
B Attending any other approved educational activity	Pupil is attending a place for an approved educational activity that is not a sporting activity or work experience

D Dual registered	Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered.
Absent – leave of absence	
C1 Participating in a regulated performance or undertaking regulated employment abroad	Pupil is undertaking employment (paid or unpaid) during school hours, approved by the school
M Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment
J1 Interview	Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer establishment
C2 Part-time timetable	Pupil is not in school due to having a part-time timetable
X Not required to be in school	Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
C Exceptional Circumstances	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
Absent – other authorised reasons	
T Parent travelling for occupational purposes	Pupil is a 'mobile child' who is travelling with their parent(s) who are travelling for occupational purposes

R Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance
I Illness (not medical or dental appointment)	Pupil is unable to attend due to illness (either related to physical or mental health)
E Suspended or excluded	Pupil has been suspended or excluded from school and no alternative provision has been made
Absent – unable to attend school because of unavoidable cause	
Q Lack of access arrangements	Pupil is unable to attend school because the local authority has failed to make access arrangements to enable attendance at school
Y1 Transport not available	Pupil is unable to attend school because the local authority has failed to make access arrangements to enable attendance at school
Y2 Widespread disruption to travel	Pupil is unable to attend because school is not within walking distance of their home and the transport normally provided is not available and cannot practicably be accommodated in the part of the premises that remains open
Y3 Part of school premises closed	Every pupil absent as the school is closed unexpectedly (e.g. due to adverse weather)
Y4 Whole school site unexpectedly closed	Pupil is unable to attend because of widespread disruption to travel caused by a local, national or international emergency

Y5 Criminal justice detention	Pupil is unable to attend as they are: · In police detention · Remanded to youth detention, awaiting trial or sentencing, or · Detained under a sentence of detention
Y6 Public health guidance or law	Pupil's travel to or attendance at the 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
Absent – unauthorised absence	
G Holiday not granted by the school	Pupil is absent for the purpose of a holiday, not approved by the school
N Reason for absence not yet established	No reason for absence has been established, or the school isn't satisfied that the reason given would be recorded using one of the codes for authorised absence
U Arrived in school after registration closed	Pupil has arrived late, after the register has closed but before the end of session
Administrative codes	
Z Prospective pupil not on admission register	Pupil has not joined school yet but has been registered
# Planned whole-school closure	Whole-school closures that are known and planned in advance, including school holidays

